





THE ART OF CANDOR

Page Bertelsen follows the
light, and her unique
artistic vision, to success

INTERVIEW BY JEFF KENT

With her distinctive style, Page Bertelsen is carving out a niche of her own in wedding photography. One of San Francisco's most sought-after photographers, Bertelsen combines fine art inspiration with a distinctive documentary style that's rooted in her Northern California upbringing. Her images speak to the particular aesthetics of the denizens of the Bay Area. The look is very California, but the images also reflect the



influence of her classical training at the International Center of Photography (ICP) in New York, as well as the Santa Fe Photographic Workshops. The clients she draws are progressive, artistically inspired couples, who treasure the outdoors and the timeless cast of natural light. *Professional Photographer* talked to Bertelsen about the process of discovering her vision and building her business in wedding photography.

How did your artistic vision develop?

During my time at ICP, I studied the history of photography, looking at all the great portrait, landscape and photojournalistic icons. I would walk the streets, and still do, looking at light and form, and then composing photographs. I've also taken workshops with professionals whose photography and technique I admire, and not necessarily because they shoot weddings. With this foundation, I come to each wedding with a focus on light, composition, color and design, and I understand how to lead the viewer's eye to tell the story of the day.



How does this come to life for your clients?

Weddings have become creations by and about the couple. I photograph to provide my clients with a visual storyline that represents their personality and style. I include scene-setting photographs that give the story a sense

of place, with both wide-angle scenic photos and detail shots. I use ambient light whenever possible, and emphasize composition, light and emotion in all my images. Clients appreciate my ability to unobtrusively capture candid moments and emotions.



Artistically, what sets you apart from other photographers in your marketplace? I don't describe myself as a wedding photographer, but as a photographer who shoots primarily weddings. That's a big distinction. I was trained and educated at a fine-art photography institution. From that base, I grew into photographing people and events using the same appreciation for light and composition and technical proficiency. Images that are striking to me are always about light. I mix digital capture with film capture from a medium-format Hasselblad camera. Taking images with that camera is a much more deliberate process. The Hasselblad images tend to be the ones my clients like to print large and hang on their walls.

How does your other work—personal projects, travel photography, landscapes, architectural images—influence your wedding work? Photographing subjects other than weddings adds to the sophistication of my wedding images. For example, through a portrait project on

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cancer survivors, I learned not only to slow down for intentional and meaningful composition, but also the importance of each area of the frame. I learned to appreciate the power of focusing on eyes and hands to add an emotional connection. All of that is very relatable to wedding photography.

How do you feel that professional wedding photography has evolved in recent years? Wedding photography used to consist of static, posed, formal images taken during certain universal moments during the wedding day. Several years ago, the field moved into more photojournalistic and candid coverage. I think both styles still exist, but there is a new genre emerging that is blurring the boundaries between editorial, lifestyle and even fashion photography to put more of an emphasis on the design and details of the wedding day.

Today's clients have more sophisticated expectations of their wedding photography. They're more involved in the creation of their wedding day, so photographers need to complement that design in the style of the images.

What do you see as the biggest challenges for the future of professional photography? With the availability of inexpensive digital cameras and the onslaught of digital filter applications,



a big challenge will be educating clients about the importance of a trained and talented eye for making beautiful, timeless images. It will become increasingly important to stay conscious and intentional while making images, and to understand what makes a good image as opposed to just taking a picture.

The challenge for photographers in an image-saturated world is to stay true to themselves and their unique vision. That's been said many times, but it will become more and more critical in the coming years—and more and more of a challenge. As photographers, we need to continually challenge ourselves every time we pick up a camera, rather than just sticking with what's comfortable. It's in that challenge that we become better photographers. ■

To see more from Page Bertelsen, visit pagebertelsen.com.

