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FOR THE MODERN PHOTOGRAPHER

MARCH / APRIL 2015

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IT'S PLAYTIME!

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joy of being a kid

the organized
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43 Smart tools & tips

MODERN
ART

The breathtaking eye
of artist Peggy Wong

A WAY
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{On the Cover}

Cover photo by Jill Cassara

Jill, based in Ann Arbor, Mich., photographed her daughter, Simone, in the bathtub. "We were ready for spring whether it was ready or not for us," she says. The image first appeared as part of Clickin Moms' 2014 Voice Collection. jillcassara.com

Gear & Settings: Nikon D700 with Nikkor 50mm f/1.4G lens; f/3.2, 1/320, ISO 800



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MEET CREATIVE PEOPLE

FLOWER CHILD

Jessica Dixon of the Petal Company is known throughout Northern California for her blooming boho crowns, seasonal wreaths and artisan bouquets. Peace, love and flower power!

BY LORNA GENTRY PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEG SEXTON

WHEN OTHER little girls tended lemonade stands, 6-year-old Jessica Dixon ran a flower stall selling corsages and bouquets. “I’ve always been a flower child,” says Jessica. No surprise, then, she followed her bliss when she grew up and became a florist — no surprise to anyone except her parents, that is. “They wanted me to be a schoolteacher, which is why I have a degree in liberal studies. They weren’t exactly happy when I graduated and started my own company.”

They soon came around, though. After stints as a landscape designer and working as a florist in a grocery store, Jessica opened The Petal Company in 2010. Her business has grown exponentially ever since. Her company is located in her hometown, Pleasanton, Calif., 40 miles west of San Francisco and the inimitable San Francisco Flower Mart, source of nearly all her flowers. A patron of the Mart for 10 years, Jessica now has relationships with three local growers. “Sometimes I’ll shop online if I need something like peonies flown in from New Zealand, but usually I go to the Mart.”

Jessica creates her floral artwork in a design studio situated in a warehouse and runs a separate in-town retail shop where she stocks candles, vases, fresh flower bouquets and a variety of seasonal wreaths, one of her signature creations. She makes her wreaths from fresh plants, including cotton, laurel, fall leaves, variegated holly with bright red berries, and evergreen boughs woven among leathery magnolia leaves. To advertise the newest creations she posts photos on Instagram, one of her chief modes of advertising; it spreads



the word and boosts sales, but it also makes her vulnerable to design poachers. “A lot of retailers follow me on social media, so often when I post something, a week or two later I’ll see [my design] in grocery stores. It’s frustrating!”

To be a trendsetter in such a competitive market requires more than talent, and Jessica knows how to stay ahead of the zeitgeist. Most of her clients are women between the ages of 25 and 32, many of them brides-to-be. Designing flowers for a wedding is a process of discovery, she says, because most people don’t know what they want. With more than 500 weddings under her belt, Jessica’s natural perceptiveness is now so finely honed that after an initial consultation, she can distill the client’s ideas into a floral plan. “I put together a custom Pinterest board for each client with photos of flower options based on budget, the time of year the wedding will be, the buzzwords she uses, the colors she mentions, any inspirational photos she has. I also note what she’s wearing when we meet because it tells me her style.”

Trending among bridal couples these days is the boho wedding style, so Jessica receives





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numerous requests for floral crowns. “We’ve had orders for crowns for brides, flower girls and even for dogs!” Wedding crowns tend to be larger than festival crowns, and she can choose delicate specimens such as peonies, since they need last only one day. For other kinds of crowns she uses hardy flowers, such as thistle and baby’s breath.

Colors come in and out of vogue, Jessica says, but blush and ivory have been popular for a while. “At least 40 percent of my weddings last year were those colors. Peach and coral have been popular, too. These days we’re getting more into woodland flowers. Bouquets in the last few years have gotten larger and more natural, free-form and flowy versus tight and compact as in years past.”

If Jessica could whisper into the wedding photographer’s ear, she’d plead for detail shots of her floral creations taken early in the day. “In California the weather is nice so there are many outdoor weddings, but we do fight the elements. In the summer it can be 90 or 100 degrees. Anything over 70 is difficult for a flower, especially in the sun. We want our flowers photographed as soon as possible so it looks its best.” ©





To see more of Jessica Dixon's work, visit her on Instagram ([instagram.com/thepetalcompany](https://www.instagram.com/thepetalcompany))



FROM THE ARTIST

Meg Sexton is a wedding and portrait photographer based in the San Francisco Bay area ([megsextonphotography.com](https://www.megsextonphotography.com)). She specializes in lifestyle portraits and outdoor winery and estate weddings. **Gear:** Cameras: Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EOS iDs **Lenses:** Canon 35mm f/1.4L, 50mm f/1.2L, 85mm f/1.8, 100mm f/2.8L **Lighting:** Canon Speedlight 580EX II, CyberSync Trigger Transmitter

