



THE PORTRAIT SYSTEM

POWERED BY SUE BRYCE EDUCATION

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Welcome to the first edition of the Portrait System Magazine powered by Sue Bryce Education. Here you'll find portraits created by photographers around the world, as well as helpful and inspiring advice for business owners.

Portrait photography is on the rise and we wanted to highlight some amazing portraits from many diverse and talented photographers. Whether you're just starting out or you're a veteran to the industry, this magazine is meant to empower and spark your imagination.

Please enjoy these incredible portraits and words of wisdom.
We look forward to sharing future issues with you!

-SUE BRYCE
& THE PORTRAIT SYSTEM TEAM



Canon EOS R
Profoto B2duo
Profoto M shallow white umbrella + diffuser
Profoto XL deep white umbrella + diffuser

Light above and close to backdrop. Feathered light on camera right. White v-flat to reflect light on camera left.



SARAY TAYLOR-ROMAN

Taylor-Roman Portrait
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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

My greatest hurdle as a photographer was embracing the artist within me. For the longest time, I considered myself just a business woman with a camera. It was not until I started submitting to The Portrait Masters that I realized I could be both. I submitted clients work with the only goal of reaching accreditation. However, the positive feedback I received from world-renowned portrait masters allowed me to realize that being a successful business woman and an awarded portrait artist were not mutually exclusive titles. Being one of the first three fellows with The Portrait Masters with over fifty silver merits has encouraged me to keep pushing my own artistic and skill-based boundaries and keep being more open about this dialogue-like process with my clients who trust me to create a unique piece for them.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

To those of you getting started I would say, trust the system and the process. Everything you need to succeed as a boutique portrait photographer is in Sue Bryce Education. Don't try to reinvent the wheel. I'm a polyglot and I compare this to learning a language. When you start learning a language, you don't go and do your thing. There is a lot of repetition involved, a lot of mimicking, a lot of doing the same thing over and over until you can come up with your own sentences. It's the same with this. Do the 12-week startup. Do the steps week by week. Keep at it. It wasn't until the end of my second year that I started making changes based on my personality and what I observed worked best for me and my clients. Now, everything from lead acquisition to marketing to photoshoot process, to sales, to the last step with every client is highly customized to what works for me and I find is as efficient and as profitable as possible. But it didn't start that way. Enjoy the process. That's the fun part!

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

In my third year in business, I read a book called the E-Myth, and it was probably the best advice I've read since then. It was about treating my baby business as if I was about to sell it. At first, I could not even fathom the idea of selling this amazing business! I mean, are you kidding me? This is the type of work I would do even if I didn't get paid. However, the point of the book was to systematize the business to such a degree it could function without me, and that if I ever decided to (gasp!) sell it, I could. This hasn't happened over night. I'm on my 6th year and things are finally falling into place. I have now a couple sales people who have an average sale of \$3000. And I have an associate photographer who can take work in my absence. And I'm in the process of opening a second location in a place that I absolutely love to visit and vacation once a month. While at first the goal was to replace my teaching job, once I understood what being a business owner meant, I didn't want just a job, I wanted a life of financial and time freedom and that meant having a business I could sell one day.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

My style depends on who I am photographing. As a portrait photographer, I specialize in personal branding and fine art. I love to work with professionals looking to set themselves apart in their industry. This work is modern, inviting, and magazine-like. My fine art work, which has been internationally awarded, is about creating magical visual narratives that help my clients celebrate a milestone in their lives. This work is highly creative, and it stems out of a dialogue between my clients, their desires, their fears, and/or their aesthetics, and my skillset and imagination. It's absolutely exhilarating getting to create unique pieces for and with my clients. BEST job ever!

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

I get the most joy when I work with anyone who does not believe they are photogenic because I love to show them otherwise. It never gets old when they see themselves for the first time through my eyes, and they see what I saw in them. When it comes to business coaching, my favorite part is when my clients see the potential they have and start taking action to realize their dreams.



D'ARTAGNAN WINFORD

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Charging my worth.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Don't fret, it will come to you, but only if you practice, practice, practice!

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Know your worth and add tax.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Fine art portraiture.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Creating beautiful works for my clients and seeing the disbelief and joy on their faces.

Natural light in studio.



JORDAN VOTH

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Continually finding ways to improve my work and push it to the next level.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Shoot as much as you possibly can. Experiment to find your style. Don't rush the process. Try very hard not to compare yourself to others (especially those who have been doing this for years).

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Always make time to shoot for fun and never stop learning.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Natural and earthy.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Documenting moments for people to remember forever.

Canon 5d Mark II f/2.0, ISO 100, 1/1000 Natural Light





I photographed this using constant light with a softbox. My clients wanted an edgier more editorial look to their maternity photos. To achieve this, I posed them in a relaxed, intimate, confident position, and brought out an air of seriousness in their expressions. Also, keeping the backdrop stand and the edge of the backdrop in the frame added to the editorial stylistic feel we wanted.



HEIKE DELMORE

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

My biggest hurdle as a photographer was not having my own commercial studio location. When I first started out, I transformed my garage into my studio. I felt people wouldn't take me as seriously or think my work was professional. The interesting thing was, when I stopped worrying about where I was shooting, and gave my full attention to the experience and photos I was creating, my fear went away. That is, clients didn't flinch or mention the location. They saw the work I produced, and they didn't care where we were shooting as long as their photos looked great.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

To people who are just getting started, I would say, just keep going. It's harder at first to find clients, but it will get easier. Momentum is everything. It's like rolling a boulder up a hill — it's hard at first, but once you reach the top and go down the other side, I promise you, it gets easier.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

The best advice I ever received was to stop thinking you're selling something and start understanding that you are actually helping and serving your clients.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

I would define my personal style as editorial, confident, and real. I believe the eyes and expression in every one of my clients' photos are what draws people in.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

The greatest joy in my work is seeing my clients happy. I shoot a lot of personal branding, and when I see my client's success rise from using their personal branding photos, there is no greater feeling or reward.



This is a composite of two photos taken with a Canon 5div. Model Anyiech Chut.



KATE WHYTE

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

I think my biggest hurdle is the same as many people's. Getting out of your own way and gaining confidence in your abilities is something a lot of us struggle with, and I'm no different. Imposter syndrome is real sometimes, but I think I'm finally at a level where I don't second guess myself very often, and I know I'm capable of producing polished, beautiful work.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Try not to compare yourself to others too much. Focus on your own journey. Take inspiration from more than just other photographers. Find it in your surroundings, in art, in nature, in design. Eventually, you will carve out your own style.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Always think about referrals. Most of my business is word of mouth, so make sure you interact with every client keeping that in mind.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Elevated and empowering.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Finally having the skills and knowledge to accurately execute an idea. Also, the connections I am lucky enough to make with clients and models, make up artists, and stylists.



This was taken with a Canon 5div. Taken with a Profoto D2 1000 bounced off a white wall behind me.



JOANNA BOOTH

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

My greatest hurdle as a photographer has been valuing my work. It's funny because when people give me compliments, it makes me happy, yet uneasy — which is totally weird. Instinctively, when people say my work is amazing, or thank you for a great experience, my initial response is, "You're welcome. Here are all your images for free." Because that's the nice thing to do, right? Wrong! It has definitely been a journey to understand how to take a compliment, while in the same breath asking for compensation. The best way a client can thank me is to purchase tons of images, leave a great review, and refer me to their friends. I really value that a lot.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

My advice to new photographers is to learn as much as you can. I am still learning and pushing myself into new things. My approach has always been to focus on one element or aspect of photography at a time. I learn most things pretty quickly. However, as I grow in understanding my own capabilities, I know that I need to provide enough room to grow within that skill. This has been paramount in my success because I know that being a fast learner is equally as important as developing and expanding on that knowledge. In the past, I was just a purveyor of new skills — like an artist collecting all the paint brushes. The excitement of being able to figure things out quickly was the goal. However, I realized that there are only so many hypothetical brushes that can be used at a time. I've also learned the art of blending with my brushes. So over time, you learn the beauty of perfecting how to use your brush to create images that speak to you, and that is significantly gratifying. Another important piece of advice is to not get caught up in what other people are doing. What's for you is for you. That's a very hard concept for me as I am naturally competitive and always strive to be the best in whatever I do. But the key to that is to be the best in what only I can do. If I feel frustrated or less confident in my progress when listening to others, I almost immediately have to reflect on where I started. That provides me joy — the simple understanding that I am accomplishing amazing things, and my progress is still moving forward.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

When running any kind of business, you will get lots of advice about what are the best practices that will aid in your success. The best advice I received was buy what you need — not what you want. The second best advice was invest in your business, but also invest in yourself. Your business won't grow if you don't spend money. My goal is to keep my business flourishing and that requires investing in it. I analyze every expense and purchase to determine if it adds to my experience. I eventually want to be debt free. So I am slowly working towards that goal as well as increasing my savings and retirement.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

People always ask how I would define my style. That is an interesting question for me to answer. When I listen to clients who call and inquire about my services, I see a trend in how they describe Sanguine Portraiture. Most use the adjectives elegant, regal, queenly, artistic, and timeless. I would agree with those descriptions. I would also include that my images are very subtle, which enhances a vogue, yet classic feeling. There's a lot that goes into my style of posing. I am a director when clients are in my studio. Each position was created by me. I often joke that when they come to the studio, expect it to be like participating in a game of Twister or Simon Says. Because when clients move around on their own, it's generally a distraction for me. So I always slow down the pace of movement. I like to catch those in-between spaces when clients actually relax after I guide them into a pose. I also really enjoy creating things with fabric. So whether I draped a couch to create an old Rembrandt style, created a dress from a curtain panel, or made a couture gown from four yards of velvet, the creative elements are my favorite and bring me the most joy.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

I love to surprise my clients with gifts. That is probably my most favorite thing to do. I also love it when clients see their photos for the first time and are brought to tears. The fact that people have reservations about how they look, but trust me to create these mini masterpieces of themselves is what I love to do. I also love showing off how I transform their images in Photoshop. It's so fun to hear their gasps of delight when they watch me take an unedited image and shape it into art.



TRUE MOUA

True Moua Photography
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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Believing in my own work.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Trust yourself. Don't worry about what others have to say.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

You define your own success.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

By taking elements that I love in my personal life, along with elements I'm drawn to in photography, and blending them to create my style.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Knowing that I get to make a difference in how someone sees themselves.



LEON MCDONALD

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Staying fresh creatively.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Learn to value what you do. Don't ever give your work away.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Understand consumer behavior and give more for more when it comes to sales.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Emotive.

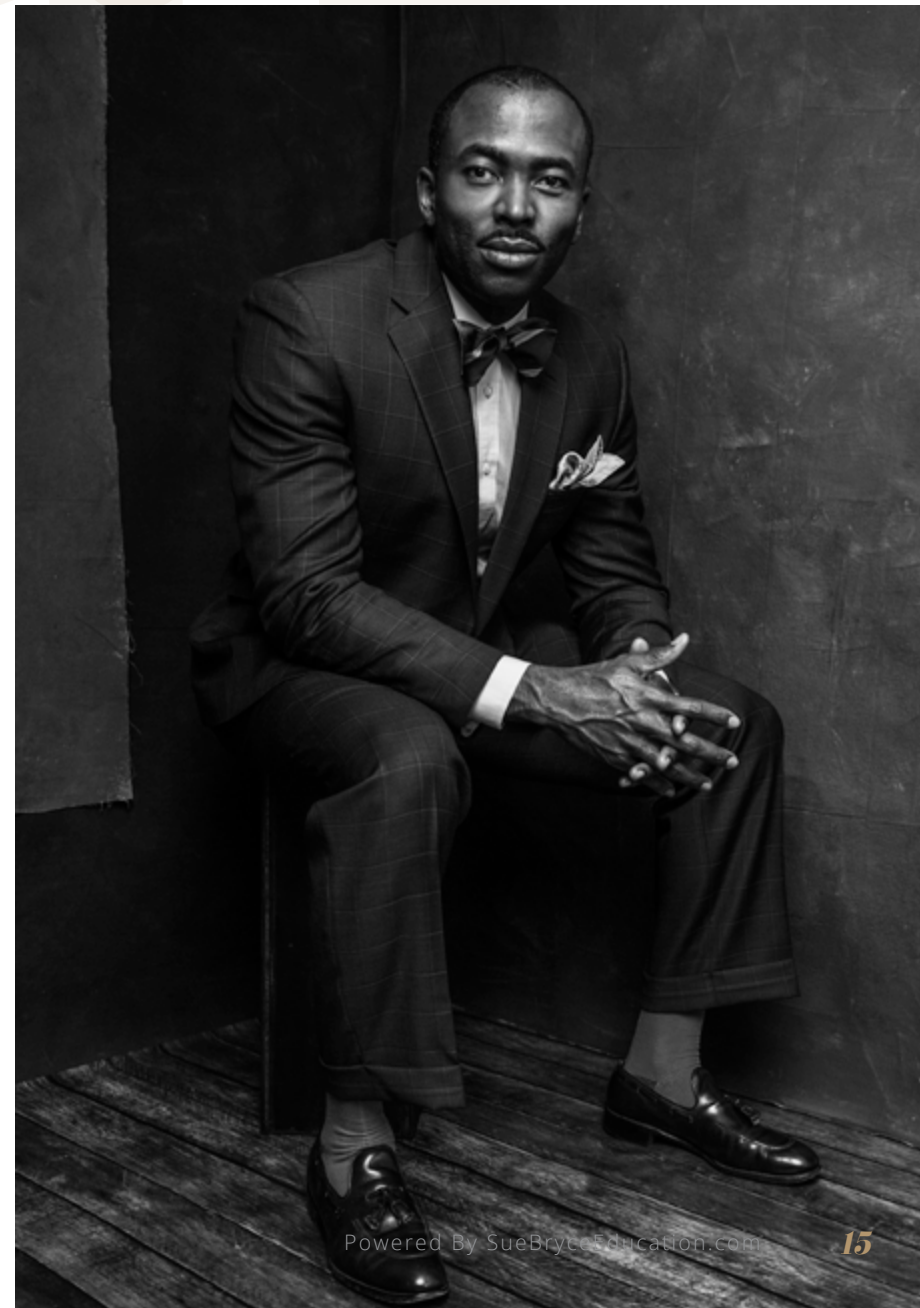
WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Creating something that will enrich the lives of my clients — something that will also enrich the lives of others in their family.

One 47 inch octabox, high and feathered



Natural Light before sunrise.





HADONICA MURPHY

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Learning to just trust myself — that has gotten better over time. Finding my self value was very important to lead to my trust.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Self value is key. Once you know your value, you won't accept anything less.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Not everyone is going to be your client. You could be a \$25 dollar photographer, and someone will still call you expensive.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

It's a mixture, depending on my mood. With seniors, it's fun and edgy — more bright. Maternity clients, kind of light and airy. And my boudoir can be light or dark. It depends on the vibe the client gives me.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Being able to watch my clients transform. Women who have never been photographed finally feeling beautiful.



TWYLA JONES

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Balancing raising three wild boys and growing my photography and education business.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Shoot what you love, and you will attract others who love it, too!

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

It's ok to say no.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Cinematic and emotive.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Creating a fun experience for my clients, and delivering galleries that exceed their expectations.



MATTHEW JORDAN SMITH

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

The biggest hurdle for me as a photographer has been breaking through the color barrier to get work across the board. As a Black photographer in America, you fight to get work, but you also fight to get all types of work. I was only given Black assignments and overlooked for other jobs. I moved to Japan to break away from this, so I could be seen as a Black photographer who can shoot all types of assignments.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

To photographers who are just getting started, I would ask them to learn how to do one type of work better than anyone else. Don't worry about trying to be great at everything because that's impossible. If you focus on one area and work to master it, you'll become known for this and be able to charge more and work more. Find the one area you love best and stick to it like glue. It's fun to do everything, but people remember you better when they can identify you with one area of photography.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

The best advice I ever received regarding photography was to always have a personal project and to always plan for slow periods. The business will always have peaks and valleys, so if you've prepared for them, you'll be able to weather the storm.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Clean, crisp, and sharp. I love creating images that pop off a page. My goal has always been to create beautiful images of women that make my subjects look beautiful and also feel beautiful.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Creating timelessly beautiful images gives me joy, but working on personal projects with a creative team is the best feeling in the world. There is no better feeling in the world than to create something that connects with the viewer and stays with them for decades.

I love shooting in the studio, but I also enjoy working outside the studio from time to time. This image was shot in a Las Vegas hotel bath. I've worked with this model for years, and we always come up with great images. I wanted to give an old Hollywood feeling reminiscent of Marilyn Monroe. To create the feel, I used the Light & Motion CLX10 constant light with barn doors and a fresnel head adapter. I wanted to have my light just on my subject, and this light is the perfect tool to achieve this look. My camera was the Nikon Z7 with my trusted 105mm 1.4 lens. This image is shot at f/1.4.



FELICIA REED

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

My greatest hurdle was learning to value myself. Once I did all the self work and value work, there my confidence came.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

I would say, do the work. Do the self-value and self-worth work. You will fail, no doubt. Take those as lessons and learn from them. Surround yourself with accountability partners that lift you. Find a mentor, and just keep showing up till you blow up.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Give more value than the money you receive!

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Modern, sexy, chic.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

I consider my work a ministry! I love how women just allow themselves to be vulnerable and share their stories with other women to help with their healing. My message is reveal it to heal it. Someone out there is or has gone through what you have gone through and needs to know they are not alone, and they will get through it.

F/8, ISO 100, 1/100
Canon 5D Mark III, 24-70 mm lens, Profoto B1



MAPUANA REED

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HONOLULU, HAWAII, USA

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

I consider myself a bit of an introvert, so I guess my biggest hurdle would be putting my work out there. When I first became a photographer in 2009, the first thing I wanted to photograph was cultural legacy portraits, but at the time no one else was doing it. It was something that I felt was so beautiful, and I held close to my heart. I didn't want to put it out there and be judged. I didn't want someone to judge something that I loved so much. I felt protective over my culture, and I wanted everyone else to see and feel what I felt when I looked at these legacy portraits. It was the fear of being judged that held me back for way too long.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Be ready to fail, and don't think of failing as a bad thing. Think of it as growth. When you fail, GET BACK UP! Don't stay there, get up and get ready for the next round. Every time you get back, you are taking one step closer to growth. My grandmother Vaitai once told me "When your canoe sinks, you swim. You don't go down with the canoe."

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

It's something that Sue says a lot: "You will only be as successful as the amount of pain you are willing to endure. The faster you accept the pain, the faster you move through it."

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

My style of photography is a little bit of Sue Bryce mixed with deep-rooted Polynesian cultural. It's a bridge that brings the past of our ancestors and connects it to who we are today.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

The greatest joy in my work is knowing that I have helped in some way to connect us to our ancestors from our past with my legacy portraits. The legacy portraits are so powerful. They connect us to our roots and our ancestors. It's the bloodline that runs through us from generations before. It's who we represent. It's our aiga (family). Creating these legacy portraits for families is truly one of my greatest joys in life, and this is how I honor my culture.



FELIX KUNZE

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Photographed with a bank of lights to mimic the natural light coming from the left. (Groups Setup from the Lighting Series)

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Having the confidence to say no to things that don't serve my career.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

When I was starting out in England, everything just looked so boring, and it wasn't until I figured out: a) lighting and b) choosing my subjects with more intention, that things started coming together for me.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

There's no place for pride in business.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

I create painterly portraits of interesting people around the world.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

There's a trifecta of joy that I feel only on occasion, but when it comes, it is so special. My favorite moment is when all three of these coincide: a) I love the images I created, b) the client loves their image, and c) I get paid handsomely. It ticks all the boxes.



JASMINE NEWTON

Javon Renee Portraits
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, USA

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Instagram: @javonreeneportraits



Natural Light
Canon 70D
Lens 18-135mm
ISO 800
Exposure 1/80 sec at f/3.5
Focal Length 22mm

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Learning how to value myself in the beginning.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Use what you have. You don't have to have all the fancy equipment and studio to get started.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Only do what makes your ship go faster.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Simple, elegant, and soulful.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Watching someone see themselves for the first time or for the first time in a while.



Two umbrella lights
Canon 5D mark 3, 17-40, f.8, 1/200, iso 50



ANTHONY PONCE DE LEON

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, USA

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Oh man, I would have to say the biggest and most consistent issue I've faced is working through imposter syndrome. The difference between being a talented photographer and a working photographer is owning your abilities and confidently selling it to the world. I have had to get told no by so, so many potential clients before I got over it and didn't let it hurt my little artist heart. What they don't tell you right away is that even the big dogs get told no all the time.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Comparison is the thief of joy. You're going to be seeing work from all over the world by the great artists of every generation, and you won't help but compare yourself to them a little bit. My best advice to folks just getting started would be to stay focused and learn one step at a time and at their own pace. Photography is a very wide art form, and it can't be learned all at once. Find what your bliss within it is, and chase it without getting distracted. Let the work of others inspire you rather than discourage you.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

So the nuts and bolts of the photography business isn't romantic. Familiarity with tax rules, proper invoicing, pricing, licensing rules, scope of work, deliverables, etc, are essential to a long run in the industry. Staying organized is the difference between shooting professionally for one year vs shooting for ten years. It really doesn't matter how talented you are if you can't manage the business end of photography. Knowing how to run a business will also put clients at ease. If you maintain a tight ship, you'll be treated as a captain. Stay organized.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

I would hope that my style could be described as bold and provoking. I'm a commercial photographer, which means sometimes I shoot teacups or bobby pins or fancy couch pillows. BUT no matter what I'm shooting, my images have strong lighting or color or movement. They'll look like I took them. You'll know my work when you see it, and that's my style.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

I love the diversity of my professional life. Photography is so open ended, you'll end up meeting so many different people from every part of life. You'll get to get into places that the public isn't allowed. The ladder goes up forever, too. You could be one email away from shooting something across the country. You could be taking photos of the president one day. The thrill of all the possibilities is a lot of fun. You get what you put into it, and that's an incredible gift that not every industry gives.



I shot this with a large (5 ft) octabox on camera right and a v-flat reflector on the left. Backdrop is oliphant.



ASHLEIGH TAYLOR

Ashleigh Taylor Portrait

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA, USA

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

My greatest hurdle has been not comparing myself to others — whether it's their work or their business. I grew up very competitive and always comparing myself to others, and in an industry with so much talent and so many “rockstar businesses,” I got very caught up in comparing and never feeling good enough in the beginning. Sue Bryce Education (specifically Sue) taught me how to value myself and that the only person I am competing against is the photographer I used to be. Once I got clear on loving my own style and voice and business, I saw so much more success in both my skills and business.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Well, I would say join Sue Bryce Education because that changed my life and career. I also would say, get good at connecting with people. That's what photography AND running a good business are all about — communication and connection. Once I got over myself and started seeing networking, phone calls, public speaking, etc, as a way to connect with people and build relationships, things really changed for me. I notice most photographers want to just do the shoot but not put themselves out there in terms of making connections with the community and with leads. Don't be scared to say the wrong thing. Just open your heart, speak truth, and find your voice.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

I remember Sue teaching me that when you sense there is an issue with a client, pick up the phone and call them! Don't try to text or email, as the tone will get bad and only make things worse. She taught me not to get defensive, to listen and be of service, and to ask the client, “What is your ideal resolution to this?” and go from there. It's not often I have issues with clients, but when you are in business for years and have a full calendar, every once in a while there is bound to be an issue. This advice from Sue has saved my butt in those instances and turned potentially scary/bad situations into ones that were resolved with love, service, and ultimately a happy customer.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

I think of my style as very crisp and clean and editorial-inspired. I really like the focus to be on the client and accentuate her beauty through flattering light, beautiful wardrobe, makeup/hair styling, and posing. I think my work also has a sensual quality to it.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

All the women I meet and photograph bring me SO much joy! I feel so lucky to meet and work with so many inspiring, beautiful, confident women. While they may not be celebrities, each woman who walks through my studio door has a powerful story to tell, and I love bringing that out in images. I find great joy in creating a cover girl experience for my clients. I particularly love to work with women over 50. I have found a lot of joy in knowing that the best is yet to come in life, as evidenced by my vivacious clients.



RICHARD WOOD

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Finding/developing a niche. I can get bored quickly doing the same things over and over. I love what I do and my own art, but much of my time in the past mightn't have been what both commercial and domestic clients want. So it's been a series of hurdles, finding a balance or compromise, creating a style or aesthetic that not only I want to go to the studio and enjoy creating, but people want to purchase and own.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Be you. Create you.

Nothing will bring you more joy than being able to faithfully feel proud of what you have created, knowing it's all yours. Create what comes from your heart, rather than imitating what someone else is making work for them. There is a lot of 'same, same' in the photography industry. Those that stand out are the ones brave enough to be innovative and create something different that belongs to them.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

"Get out of your own way." –Sue Bryce, 2011 INFOCUS Conference, Rotorua, New Zealand.

And it's so true. We can always be quick to blame others or other elements in our surroundings, etc. But at the end of the day, how have we reacted to those obstacles? The question will always remain, what have you done and how could you've done better? All blocks to your success are put there by you.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

A subtle, creative narrative.

Even my simple portraits have a subtle narrative if the viewer can spot it/feel it.

Some could say some of my bigger illustrative pieces are not 'subtle,' but that's because they haven't found the quieter subtleties which are often the most meaningful.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Seeing my work become someone's personal or family 'taonga' (treasure).

My most favourite was the family of a young Maori girl, Teani. I know purchasing the portrait of their little girl was not an easy feat financially. It was proudly framed very beautifully and ornately and was then taken on a tour through New Zealand and presented to extended 'Whakapapa' (family).

When you can create a product that is treasured with that respect and pride, especially in our New Zealand culture, you feel like you've done a great thing.

The 'Painterly Small Modifier Rembrandt' setup. In this instance, I also used a grid on my main light (beauty dish). I used a large soft box for fill. For me, this portrait displays the intentional 'femininity' fashioned by males in the earlier centuries. Produced in a modern format but old style brings this aesthetic into discussion.



KITTI McMEEL

Kitti McMeel Portraits

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

From a business perspective, it took awhile to feel confident in saying my prices. I still struggle with the vision I have in my head not quite being attained in my images, but hope springs eternal!!

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

I never feel satisfied, so I am constantly struggling with “what do I do now?” Don’t wait to be sure of the direction you want to take. Try things on to find what will speak to you. Remember that time is a limited commodity. No one is promised tomorrow. Do not allow yourself to think you can’t do what you want. Stop putting obstacles in your way. Just keep putting one foot in front of the other.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Service. Your business is not about you, it is about your client. Go out of your way to treat your clients the way you would like to be treated, and you will never regret it.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

My style is still evolving as I have only been a photographer for 6 years. But I do have a goal for my work. I am part of a disappearing demographic — women in their 60s. I feel that the older I get, the more society pushes me aside. I see it everywhere — among colleagues, in public. I see it when I post an image of an older woman vs a younger woman. When did we stop valuing growing older? I really got the impact the first time I heard “OK Boomer.” I want to photograph my peers in an authentic way that demonstrates the intrinsic value obtained with the passage of time. It’s a work in progress. :)

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Connecting with people. There is nothing like that moment when you see the light turn on in the person in front of your camera, and they start to flow with the process. Having great sales is awesome, but seeing that light and maybe making a difference in someone’s life, well that’s priceless.

This was shot in my studio. I wanted to achieve Rembrandt lighting using natural light. Shot perpendicular to the window using black v-flats to shape the light and block out most of the window light. Mark IV, 50mm, 1/320, f2.8, ISO 100



BETHANY JOHS

Bethany Johs Portrait Studio
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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

My biggest hurdle as a photographer has been learning to give up control of things I needed to outsource or delegate. I was burning out trying to juggle everything when I had resources ready to take some of those tasks off my plate. I'm training my assistant, my husband, and my son to help in these areas, so I can focus my full attention on marketing and selling.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

I would tell people who are getting started to try not to be discouraged when things don't happen right away. We fall down a lot before we learn to walk and that goes for running a business, too. Learn from these lessons and keep putting one foot in front of the other. One day, you'll look back and see how far you've come.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

The best advice I've ever received about being in business was a simple statement from Sue Bryce who said, "Get out of your own way." I learned that every hurdle I faced, I put it there. Every time I thought something couldn't be done, I realized it was my inner voice creating that obstacle. I was the only person holding myself back out of fear and shame. Sue has given us an abundance of resources through Sue Bryce Education to build an empire, but her Self Value videos are priceless.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

I would define my style as simple, clean, classic, timeless, and vintage. I want to create legacy portraits that will withstand the test of time.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

I get the greatest joy out of doing what I love. I've been an artist for as long as I could hold a crayon. Ever since I was a little girl, I've been sketching or painting the female form. Now I paint with light and even though the medium has changed over the years, my fascination with portraiture has remained the same. I love that I wake up every day with enthusiasm for what I do. With each day, I'm a step closer to living the life I've always dreamed of, and it brings me joy knowing that I can design the life I've only imagined until now.



f/4.0, ISO 640, 1/160
Nikon D750, Sigma 50mm 1.4 Art
Window light



JAI MAYHEW

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Gaining the confidence to truly trust my instincts. As artists, there's the technical side of what we do (lighting, camera settings, retouching) and also the creative side (concept, posing, styling), and when mixed together, those skill sets produce work that's uniquely ours. You have to confidently sharpen and grow both sides to produce bold, remarkable work.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Educate yourself! Education can take you anywhere, and right now education is everywhere. It's so accessible. Sue Bryce Education, The Portrait Masters, YouTube — there are so, so many resources out there! Just start watching videos, start educating yourself, and then start shooting. Start before you think you're ready — armed with all that education. Just start shooting.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

"You are a business owner, not a camera owner." That changed my entire mindset around pricing and sales and how I run my business. While my soul's identity is rooted in my art, when it comes to my client work and my studio, I have to be a businesswoman first.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

My style is sensual, feminine, and classic. I grew up in Germany watching Old Hollywood movies (over and over), and it utterly shaped my love for glamour and dramatic lighting and gorgeous gowns. I've tried to shoot harder looks, edgier styles — it's just not how I see beauty. My soul connects with soft but sensual imagery, and I try for a little taste of romance in my work. Something classic and timeless.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

On the surface, it's creating something beautiful and artistic, something you're proud of. But it goes deeper than that. I want to know that I'm growing as I'm creating art. I want to be challenged by my work.

Photographed on location with natural light as the key and a large silver scrim for fill.



I photographed this image of my daughter after the sun had set with my Profoto B10 light. I used my Nikon D850 paired with my 24-70mm 2.8 lens.



D'ANN BOAL

Smitten & Swoon

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smittenandswoon.com

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

Riding the waves of ups and downs. Every artist comes upon times when they feel inspired and confident, and others when they feel discouraged and frustrated. Not letting either wave fully wash me over has been my greatest hurdle to sticking to this craft and honing my artistic voice.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Find a mentor you trust and admire who can teach you their craft!

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

To value myself. Today, I run a six-figure photography business, and if it wasn't for my mentor telling me to never undervalue myself, I wouldn't have been able to be profitable from the beginning.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

My style is inspired by light and by the golden Colorado landscape. I love creating peaceful and creative images to capture the beauty and magic of childhood.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

So many things bring me joy with photography! As a photography educator, I love teaching emerging photographers what has taken me years to learn. I love watching my clients eyes well up with tears when they view their gallery of images. I love watching my children pour over our yearly photo albums, laughing and smiling at all the memories I've been lucky enough to capture.



JASON VINSON

Vinson Images

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

The business side of things. I can spend all day shooting and editing, but when it comes to the clerical side of things, I have a hard time getting motivated.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Find what you like and try your best to replicate the results. Learning to create what you enjoy looking at will not only help you define your style, but it will be a learn-by-fire way to grow quickly and in the right direction.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

Find what you enjoy doing in your business and outsource the rest.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Dramatic, cinematic, and bold.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Creating work (in camera) that leaves people scratching their heads with curiosity as to how it was done.



This was a portrait taken at a famous basketball court outside St. Louis, MO. The problem is that the most photographic element is the court floor. So I had the couple lay on the floor of the court as I climbed to the top of the basketball hoop. The idea here was to incorporate the interesting court floor while also showing an element that clued viewers into where we were. The hoop also added a nice framing element. Lastly, just as we started to shoot, a huge storm started to roll in which came with lots of strong winds. This added to the mood of the image by having her hair blowing as well as the net flapping in the wind.



There was a large window diffused with sheer curtains behind me and a constant light peeking over the black v-flat behind her.

Canon 5D Mark IV
f/2.8
ISO 640
1/125



NIKKI CLOSSER

Nikki Closser Photography
PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN, USA

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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

My brain feels a bit like a tornado and staying organized with everything is a struggle. I've managed to come up with my own systems, but I've definitely hacked my way through managing the business end of being a photographer. For years, I've been wanting to hire someone to help me with the clerical side of things, but I haven't because I'm not sure how to get everything organized enough to even teach someone how to do what I need them to do.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Make the decision that you are going to have a successful business and don't waver from that! Every day, take at least one step forward — even if it's a tiny step. Don't let everything overwhelm you and keep you from taking action. And don't try to recreate the wheel! Find a business model that works for you, and make it your own.

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED ABOUT BEING IN BUSINESS?

I could rattle off fifty things Sue Bryce has taught me that have propelled me to get to where I am today. The three things that stick out the most are:

Stop thinking about “the how,” and just start doing it.

If something is going wrong in my business, it's something I'm doing (or not doing). Self-reflection and growth are key.

Your current situation with money is a direct reflection of what is going on inside of you. This absolutely changed my life. (I can't recommend enough to watch the videos about money on SBE!)

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Simple and clean with a bit of glam and elegance.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

Making someone feel beautiful and confident brings me so much joy! Also, having this career allows me to have a pretty dreamy life. (I used to be a social worker, and it wasn't quite as dreamy.) Doing something I love that also gives me the flexibility to spend so much time with my husband and our kids and to focus on what brings us happiness is incredible!



LUCAS MOBLEY & KATHRYN STEVENS

Lucas Mobley Photography
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WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST HURDLE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER?

So far, the greatest hurdle as photographers is to get out of our own way — to allow the image to make itself.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GETTING STARTED?

Tintype is one of the most satisfying methods of photography we've practiced. It's also, hands down, the most difficult. This is wonderful, but don't even consider getting into this if you don't have a high threshold for both mental and physical exhaustion, beyond what you've experienced with digital or other analog photography methods. We recommend finding a mentor or support as trouble-shooting everything takes an enormous amount of time, and it can be really helpful to talk to people who have done it all before!

HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR STYLE?

Our style is "stripped down" to the basics. Our goal with each image is to create a straight-forward, yet timeless image that allows people to really see themselves beyond their usual experience of themselves.

WHAT GIVES YOU THE GREATEST JOY IN YOUR WORK?

The greatest joy in our work is to witness our clients really "see" themselves through these images. When you create a large format tintype portrait, one of the most special moments in the process is watching the image appear in the fixer. It feels like magic, but it's science (and a lot of trust) and sharing that moment is a mix of anticipation, curiosity and wonder that often somehow transcends their usual experience of seeing themselves. Watching people experience themselves in the image as it appears, is smile-inducing every single time!

This image was created using the wet plate collodion method on 8x10" aluminum, in studio.



THE **PORTRAIT** SYSTEM

SUE BRYCE
EDUCATION

suebryceeducation.com