



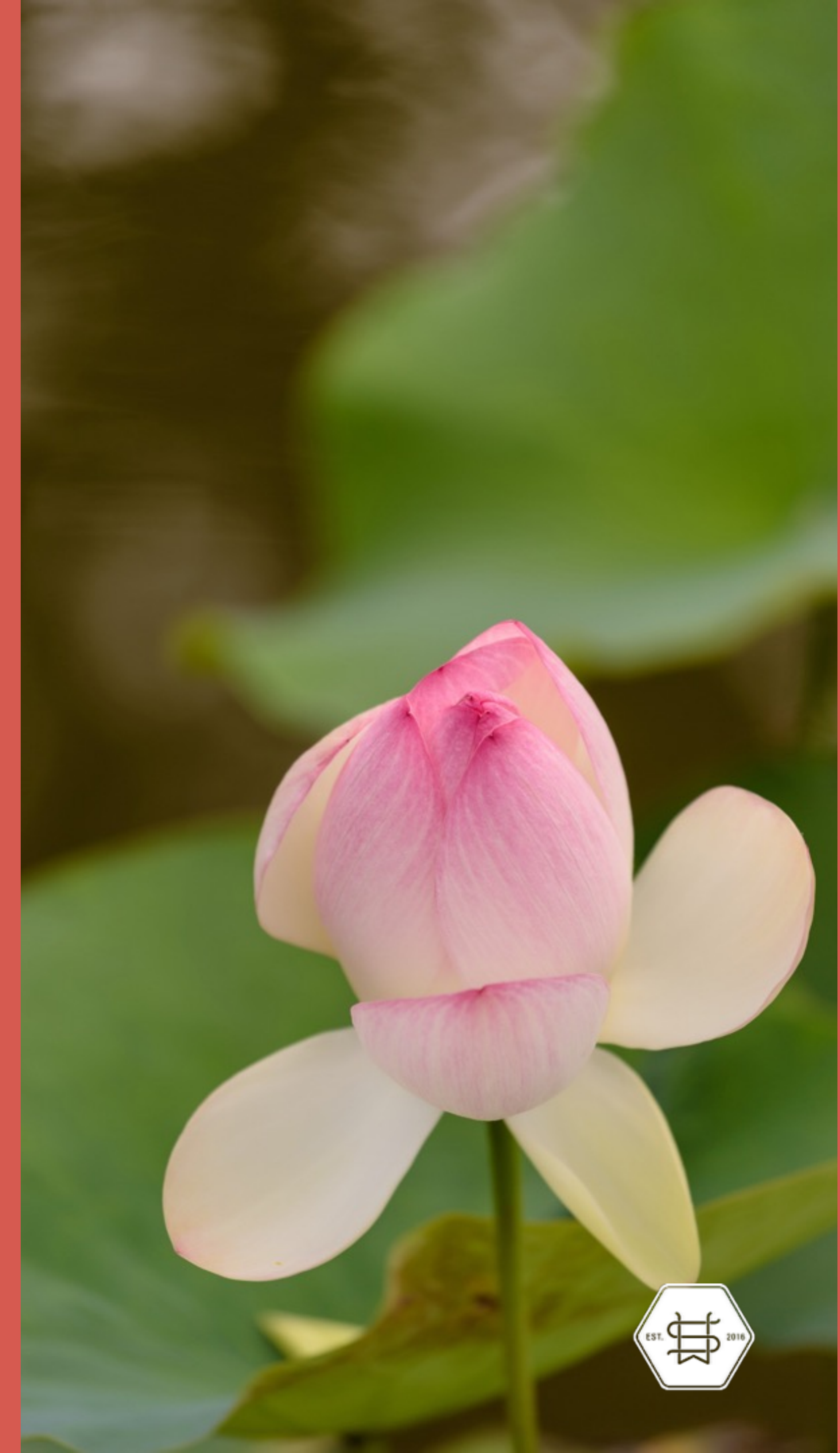
THE

WEDDING SCHOOL

THE MYTH OF PERSONAL PROJECTS

I'M A PHOTOGRAPHER

- ▶ That's my JOB
- ▶ I've built a business shooting for others
- ▶ Weddings support my life, my mortgage, my kids, and will support my eventual retirement
- ▶ I treat wedding photography as a job and a career, not a hobby or a great passion
- ▶ I've been doing this for fifteen years, and I'm good at both shooting and running a business



AM I AN ARTIST?

- ▶ I never thought so
- ▶ I figured I was a businessperson in photography, not a photographer in business
- ▶ I liked weddings, but never OMG LOVED LOVE
- ▶ I never got nervous or excited about weddings
- ▶ I always figured it was just a job
- ▶ ...and that's okay!



EVERYONE IS DOING IT

- ▶ Everyone talked about the personal projects they did to alleviate the stress of work
- ▶ Work didn't stress me out, because it was just my job
- ▶ I didn't feel like I needed the creative outlet. I'm not an artist, remember?
- ▶ The thought of doing a personal project just felt like more work
- ▶ ...That I wasn't getting paid for
- ▶ What was the point anyhow?



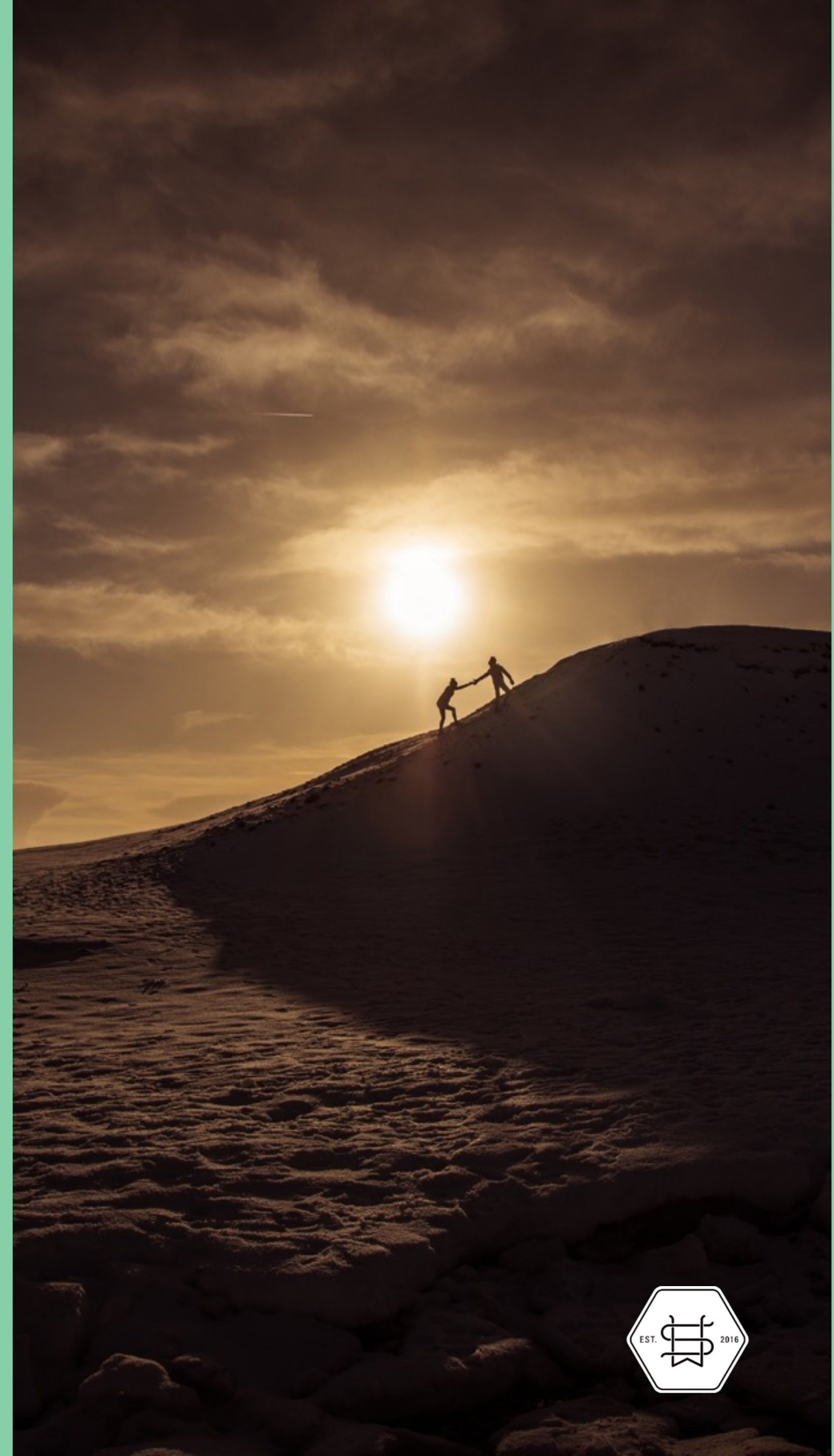
WHO HAS TIME FOR THIS?

- ▶ I was building my business
- ▶ I was making sure my business was stable
- ▶ I was moving my business across the country
- ▶ I was raising my kids
- ▶ I didn't have time to spend away from work
- ▶ I could have prioritized it, but it wasn't my priority. I didn't NEED it!



I TRIED ANYHOW

- ▶ Street photography
- ▶ Landscape photography
- ▶ Children's portraits began as a project, ended up being part of my business
- ▶ Theatre photography for community theaters sparked something, but not much
- ▶ Day in the life family photography felt like work
- ▶ I took cameras on vacations and didn't shoot



WORK BECAME TOO MUCH

- ▶ Weddings started weighing heavily on me in my thirteenth year of business
- ▶ I thought about branching into boudoir, going as far as getting a studio...and stopping
- ▶ The only joy I got outside of work was photographing my kids
- ▶ I kept wracking my brain to find a personal project
- ▶ Then I realized I was making it a JOB



**WHAT DO YOU
LIKE?**

WHAT ARE MY HOBBIES?

- ▶ Reading
- ▶ Facebook
- ▶ Hanging out with my kids
- ▶ My dog
- ▶ Really good TV and movies, especially horror
- ▶ Hanging out with my husband
- ▶ Seeing as much live theatre as I possibly can



**WHAT DO YOU
LOVE?**



WHAT REALLY MOVES ME?

- ▶ My kids...but I want to respect their privacy
- ▶ My husband...but again with the privacy thing
- ▶ I love TV and movies, but I don't want to make them. I like looking at the light, which is also what I like about photography
- ▶ I like to read, but mostly because I love seeing other worlds come to life in my imagination
- ▶ Live theatre, which brings together emotion and light and all the great parts of weddings



STEP ONE : DANCERS

A woman in a black lace dress is shown in profile, holding up a sheer, lace-like fabric against a blue background. The scene is dimly lit, with the woman's face and the fabric catching some light. The background is a solid blue color with a subtle, repeating pattern of circular, ripple-like motifs.

STEP TWO : BIG FISH



STEP THREE : SPRING AWAKENING





WHAT'S HAPPENING?

- ▶ I'm creating just for myself
- ▶ No one is paying me, so there are no expectations
- ▶ I can come up with concepts and pitch them
- ▶ I'm starting to see a direction
- ▶ I'm still not sure what it means, but I'm happy
- ▶ For once, I'm not thinking "How can this be a career move?"



HAMILTON

WHY THIS?

- ▶ I had to be moved to action
- ▶ If I'm working for free, it needs to do something for me
- ▶ If you're not moved to do a project, you just haven't found what moves you
- ▶ Don't force it or it won't work.
- ▶ ...but at some point, quit making excuses and do it
- ▶ Only listen to yourself. No one else.



WHY NOW?

- ▶ My business was established
- ▶ I had money to get me through the year
- ▶ I had advertising money that I chose to allocate into funding this project
- ▶ It's like starting a new business - it's not free, and the money had to come from somewhere
- ▶ You also have to find the time and be willing to dedicate that time to the project

WHERE DO YOU START?

- ▶ Are you working with people? You're going to need to reach out
- ▶ A model call via social media...unless you want specific people
- ▶ How do you ask? Just ask!
- ▶ Be prepared for rejection
- ▶ Be honest about what you're shooting
- ▶ What's in it for them?



WHAT TO EXPECT

- ▶ Cancellations....lots of cancellations
- ▶ A lot of people saying “Why are you doing that, anyhow?”
- ▶ A lot of people saying “How will this be profitable?”
- ▶ The endeavor might COST you money
- ▶ It also might turn into something you don't expect

















WHAT IS HAPPENING?

- ▶ Suddenly I love studio lights
- ▶ Suddenly I am turning to the studio and away from natural light
- ▶ Suddenly I have a newly voracious appetite for theatre, which makes me a happier person
- ▶ Suddenly I want to take pictures all the time
- ▶ Suddenly I'm making contacts I'd never have made before
- ▶ Where is this going? Who cares?



UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECT...

- ▶ I met great people
- ▶ Don't underestimate how meeting great people can change you and improve your mood
- ▶ I was out in the world interacting, not sitting behind the computer
- ▶ I was a collaborator, not a worker for hire. This was huge, and an enormous morale booster
- ▶ I was creating with people, not trying to force creation
- ▶ I looked forward to work





UNEXPECTED SIDE EFFECT...

- ▶ I learned new ways to engage with my subjects while collaborating
- ▶ Those skills spilled over into my wedding work
- ▶ My wedding work started to get better
- ▶ I started seeing joy in people, instead of seeing people as jobs
- ▶ I valued my work more. Sometimes I am a photographer for hire. Sometimes that's okay!
- ▶ I valued myself more





**WHAT IF NOTHING
CALLS TO ME?**

DON'T FORCE IT

- ▶ This isn't a job. This isn't going to the gym. You don't have to force yourself to do it because it's good for you. It's not kale!
- ▶ Go out and live your life. Love people. Have hobbies. Stop caring about whether you are or aren't an artist
- ▶ Learn everything about everything. Read books. Listen to other people speak. Watch the news. Turn off the news. Go to the movies. Learn because you love learning.
- ▶ When a little spark touches you, grab it and follow it



**YOU CAN SPEND YOUR
CAREER WORKING FOR
OTHER PEOPLE**

**...BUT YOU HAVE TO FIND
AN OUTLET FOR YOURSELF
THAT'S ALL YOURS.**



THE
WEDDING SCHOOL