




Brienne and her father ©Catherine Just, 2011



“I’m thinking about buying a new camera. Which one do you think I should buy?”


This is the Number 1 question people ask me.

They rattle off all the different cameras they are considering and want me to tell them which one I think is best. Canon? Nikon? Mark II? D300?

Honestly - I don’t have an official opinion about camera types or brands. If you are a professional photographer your choices are going to be made based on what people use in your particular area of concentration. People who hire you will expect you to use similar gear that everyone else is using in that field. If you aren’t getting paid as a photographer - then your choices are much more wide open.

The photograph above of Brienne walking down the aisle with her father was taken this past weekend in Santa Rosa, California. The professional photographer that they hired was there right in front of me – using her digital 35mm camera. I pulled out my iPhone and snapped this one. I used an app called **Camera+** to change the color image to something that looks more like black and white film and then added a pinhole effect. It took me all of 3 minutes to create this look and then I immediately e-mailed it to the bride. The simplicity of my iPhone, along with how little space it takes to carry it with me, and how lightweight it is, make it one of my favorite cameras these days. I need to consider who I am and what works best for me in each moment. Sometimes I yearn to use my **4x5 Pinhole camera**. Nothing else will do. Other days I must use my **Panoramic**, and others my iPhone. I have an army of cameras. They range from old antique ones, plastic toy cameras, 4x5, 35mm, medium format, pinhole, film, digital and everything in between. I love them all for different reasons.

So my answer is - it doesn’t matter which camera you buy as long as you feel comfortable using it.




It's a personal decision based on what feels right to you, what your financial budget is, what your interests are, whether you are getting paid as a professional photographer, or you are specifically interested in macro photography of flowers for your own artistic expression. Any camera you use will be the right one if you feel comfortable using it! It's REALLY not about the camera. It's your unique point of view that counts. A lot of people have asked recently if they need a **35mm digital SLR** to take my **Soul\*Full eCourse**. The answer is no. You need to have a camera that you enjoy using and have a basic understanding of how it works. That's it. You can create gorgeous images with your iPhone if that's what you have, or any other camera that suits you. For the eCourse you just need to be able to upload your images to the flickr group, so digital comes in handy for that purpose.

Of course - if you are taking **macro photography** of flowers – you will do much better if you have a **macro lens – or close up filters**, in order to really get the shots you want. So you do need to take into consideration all of your specific interests, and base your purchase on that.

A friend once said they could take amazing images with a disposable camera in a tiny closet of a space with no natural lighting. I agree with this, as it's not the camera, the lighting or the environment that makes or breaks the image. It's the unique point of view of the photographer that is essential in creating a beautiful image. Yes, having great lighting, a beautiful environment, and a gazillion megapixel camera with **Zeiss lenses** can help. But if you don't pay attention to what's around you – and you don't really connect with your subject matter – it doesn't really matter what gear you have.

The right equipment is on the inside. It's in the slowing down, being present, getting closer to your subject, and looking at how the light is affecting the subject, and having a connection that will make the photograph have heart, spirit, and lasting meaning. And that's really what we want right? Gazillions of mega pixels are great – but if the image lacks heart and soul – it just lays flat and doesn't sing. It might be technically amazing, but that's really it.



Make sure you feel confident and comfortable with your camera, and your images will naturally become more rich and meaningful as you practice, learn, and grow as a seer. That is the real gift and talent...To See. Practice seeing on a regular basis and you will begin to experience your camera as just an extension of your eyes and your heart. Your camera will become one piece of the bigger picture. Just as the brush holds the paint – but the painter moves the paint as he feels directed, from the inside out – your camera holds the potential to capture what your soul is connecting with. Don't get too caught up in which brand or model. Focus on whether it feels right and it will be the right choice. Trust yourself and go with what makes the most sense for you. Spend time seeing with your heart and your images will have a richness that viewers will connect with. To practice this – you need to take more photos and listen to your instincts, your gut reaction, and your inner voice that is coming from your heart. It's habitual with a digital camera to just snap away and take a lot of photos knowing that one of them will turn out the way you want it to. But this lacks attention and presence. Decide to slow down and really look. Don't take a photograph until it really feels right in your being. Practice. Trust. Lead with your heart. Your images will start to sing and so will you!

xo

\*Catherine Just



When I was 18 years old I was a senior in high school with a raging drug and alcohol addiction. I was deeply depressed and lost, and had no understanding that I had anything of value to offer the world. I didn't relate to others around me and had a deep painful void in my soul that I was desperate to fill.




A required art class changed all of that for me. The art teacher, Mrs. Burke, told me that I was talented and needed to keep going and not give up. It was the first time I loved what I was doing. It was uniquely mine and fed my soul. It was life changing.

After I graduated high school, I checked myself into drug treatment. I completed the program and moved from San Diego to Minneapolis to enroll in a **4 year art college**. I studied photography and it became a way for me to dive into my inner world. I was able to say visually what was so painful for me to say verbally. I received a BFA in photography. More importantly, I figured out that life was worth living, sober, and that I could express myself fully through my art.

Today I have 24 years of sobriety. I have a **photography business** that focuses on eCourses, Retreats and mentoring for women. We explore ways to live a more **Soul\*Full** and deeply connected life.

I am grateful for the opportunities I've had to publish my work. A photograph of mine has been published on the cover of National Geographic Magazine. A portrait I created of **don Miguel Ruiz** was published on **Oprah.com**. I was voted one of the best wedding photographers in the



country by earning a spot in “Top Knots” photo competition with Photo District News two consecutive years. You can view those photos [here](#) and [here](#). I’ve shown my personal work in galleries around the country. I’ve also had the privilege of working with [donMiguel Ruiz](#), Toltec Teacher and author of the Four Agreements, as my Spiritual Teacher. My work with him continues to enrich my life.

The shift that took place years ago has given me a world of unlimited possibilities. My intention is to pay it forward to those who are seeking to live life in a more meaningful way. I encourage women to trust themselves, to create photographs that are infused with personal vision and to live life passionately. I believe that we are all valuable beings and that our stories matter.

I’d love for you to join the tribe.

Sign up for the [Inner Circle] Newsletter at <http://www.catherinejust.com>

I’ll send you news of upcoming events, Photography tips, and ways to connect with other like minded people.

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*Love how the light hits your soul.*