

## Telling Your Love Story: Slick, Sexy, Stylish Choices for Remembering Forever

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ARTICLE BY ANNE STEWART / PHOTOS BY ZRWEDDINGS

Who was it that decided the best way to photograph large groups was in a big, awkward, fake-smiling lump? Or that newly married couples should be stiffly posed side by side like a grinning version of American Gothic? Wedding pictures in this dated style are of that unfortunate breed of images that always seem to fail to grasp what it was about the day — or the moment or the vibe in the air — that made it so photo-worthy in the first place.

To this end, marrying couples today are searching for innovative ways of capturing their high-priced, once-in-a-lifetime shindig. Stuffy, formal photography and Uncle Bill in the back with his camcorder are things of the past. Right now, the most exciting work in wedding documentation is being done by professional artists whose goal is to tell the story of your wedding so that it can be told again — and again and again — to your kids and grandkids in what's sure to be engrossing detail.

### Beyond Photography

Wedding photography isn't what it used to be. Hiring wedding photographers that take a photojournalistic approach to documenting your wedding is new and still very, very hot. Working unobtrusively behind the scenes with state-of-the-art digital equipment, wedding photojournalists endeavor to record the story of your wedding in images — not just capturing the standard shots, but searching for those moving moments that only showed up at *your* wedding.

“We're professional story tellers. We know how to capture the details, the moments and emotions that make up the day,” says Anne Ryan of [zrWeddings](#) in Chicago. “We've had so many couples see the pictures afterward — and realize there were so many things happening that they didn't even notice that day.”

Anne, along with her husband and business partner, John Zich, are both professional photojournalists who have worked for USA Today, Newsweek, and Sports Illustrated over the course of their twenty-year careers. Rather than photographing the stiff, awkward smiles that are often the product of traditional photo-shoots, the Ryan-Zich team use their experience to capture the natural smiles, laughter, and tears that appear all throughout the harrowing / joyful process of the wedding day.

Photojournalists are still happy to take more traditional group and family photos, but many use their artistic insights to direct the shoots in such a way that your photos come out looking like a professional magazine spread.

Dave and Quin Cheung, of [DQ Studios](#) in Calgary, Alberta, use a stirring combination of behind-the-scenes photojournalism and inspired direction during a photo-shoot to capture the personal, sexy style of a marrying couple. As Quin says, “No matter how little or much direction we give, our goal is to always make images that are “of” the couple; emotive and moving on a heart level, not just an eye level.”

An increasingly popular trend in wedding photojournalism is to hire a husband-and-wife team, like Anne and John, or Dave and Quin, to work a wedding. Two cameras are a must for truly thorough coverage of the ceremony and the reception, and the added insights of a couple that works together to tell your unique love story can make for some pretty amazing images.

“There's a synergy that results when we work together that cannot be achieved from say, a main shooter working with an assistant, or even 2 equal shooters working together,” Quin reveals. “I think it comes not only from the technical and artistic talent, but also from the relationship we build as a couple with our couples.”

Good wedding photojournalists will always take the time to get to know the couples they are working with so that they understand what parts of a love story must be told. They also understand the value of intimacy during a wedding, and strive to make their presence pleasant and low-key while documenting the events.

Most quality photojournalists today have long since gone all-digital. This means little or no annoying extra [lighting](#) or bulky equipment intruding on the wedding's carefully put-together style. It also means that the latest photo editing techniques are used to bring out the true magic in every picture. As you can see, this involves an artistry quite a bit beyond goofy balloon borders or pseudo-dreamy mist effects.

The result of this style of wedding photography is a happy one: images that encapsulate the essence of your wedding day and your personal brand of romance, instead of making you and your party slaves to whatever happens to come out after you say “cheese.”

### Videography: Big Budget Blockbusters and Art-House Elegance

Having a talented videographer at your wedding — or to note another rising trend, even a professional filmmaker — produces results a world away from those you'd get from a well-meaning family member armed with a video camera (sorry, Uncle Bob!).

Just as when they are choosing a photojournalist, marrying couples can choose from several different styles when deciding on a videographer. No matter what the choice is, however, the resulting wedding video should be of similar quality to a slick Hollywood movie. Any videographer out there right now charging top-of-the-line prices (anywhere between \$1000.00 - \$10,000.00), should be providing this level of filmmaking.

The most basic offering for weddings is a team of several videographers that come in and shoot using one or two different cameras. On the other hand, to avoid having camera-people running around at the ceremony and reception, many companies offer a service in which several small cameras are set up around the filming areas at strategic locations to record the day's events.

All the best in the business today use digital sound recorders to avoid cluttering up the filming areas with cords and bulky equipment. Tiny recording devices are placed in discreet locations such as the groom's pocket, the MCs lapel, and near the musicians. The sound is then edited into the film after the fact.

The true artistry of the videographer comes into play during editing, when hours of footage must be cut together into just an hour or two of the best moments that go into telling the love story. This process is what really makes or breaks the professionalism of the resulting video. Some videographers are simply willing to put in more time than others. Couples are usually invited to choose a soundtrack to their film, as well as any special effects they'd like to see used. Many couples request a classic [black-and-white](#) film style, or even a style honoring their favorite big-budget film director.

Conversely, for couples that want all the class with none of the flash, a professional documentary filmmaker is a slick, stylish option. Critically acclaimed filmmaker Melissa Hammel of [Becoming Pictures](#) in New York, takes a unique, artistic approach to wedding videography.

Armed with little more than a hand-held camera and a sharp eye for what's uniquely human, hilarious, beautiful, and touching in each of us, Melissa films and assembles wedding documentaries that unobtrusively capture the true spirit of the event.

Melissa is from the other end of the wedding videography spectrum, where cheesy gimmicks and special effects are tossed aside in the interest of pure, elegant filmmaking. “There's already so much happening in the footage,” Melissa says. “Two people are uniting, families are coming together; there are so many complex layers in that alone. At Becoming Pictures, we have the confidence to keep what we do looking simple.”

Whether you choose the poignant realism of documentary filmmaking, or the slick flash of major production

videographers, the golden key is to select a talented editor who is tapped into telling your story the way you imagine it. These services aren't cheap, so be sure to use a company that you're comfortable with, and that's willing to put in the time and effort required to make your video sharp and unique.

## Wedding Artists

An elegant, unique addition to any wedding and wedding album is the presence of a wedding artist. Whether in oils, watercolors, or pen and ink, talented visual artists are making themselves available in increasing numbers to document wedding and provide some fascinating entertainment for guests.

[Joan Zylkin](#), based out of Wilmington, Delaware, sets her easel up at weddings. Using her fine arts training, Joan quickly and evocatively chronicles the moments and events that make up the wedding reception and ceremony.

Joan produces one or two paintings an hour, and displays them as they dry for guests to admire. She captures images as they happen, but is also happy to do portraits, or large pastiches of the entire scene spread out before her.

This unique form of wedding documentation represents a revival of a classic style, when a painting of a marrying couple would be produced to stand as a precious family memory for generations. As Joan says, “weddings are a wonderful opportunity for the family to be archived in original oil paints, which can be wonderful gifts for special occasions, and which can be passed on as heirlooms.”

While photographs don't always show off your best side, original art is effective in capturing the inner and outer gorgeousness of a moment, so that your wedding images match and confirm the beauty of your memories.

Just to add a little fun and flair to the reception, sketch artists are also often found at fun modern weddings, doing quick drawings of guests and the wedding party that make for great mementos, and can also be incorporated into thank-you notes.

There are almost limitless options out there for a marrying couple to choose from. All you have to do is decide which ones are right for telling the story of your love. A professional, insightful artist – whether a photographer, a filmmaker, a painter, or a sketcher – can bring a depth, warmth, and intimacy to the event that may otherwise be lost in all the hustle and bustle.

Changes in the way weddings are being documented today are a part of a movement in [wedding planning](#) away from stiff formality and impersonal choreography. Modern couples are creating their own traditions that emphasize fun, romance, and the coming together of community. As weddings evolve, they will continue to demand the most elegant, innovative means possible of capturing the spirit of these increasingly unique moments.