

Having it

All

ELIZABETH TAYLOR FRANDSEN
LEVELS WITH HER CLIENTS,
HER PEERS, AND HERSELF

By Stephante Boozer

Elizabeth Taylor Frandsen wants you to know she takes her jobs seriously. All of them. A mother of four young children in Salt Lake City, Utah, Frandsen has over the past seven years built a brand that embraces her robust persona of wife, mother, photographer, and artist. She's one of many women in the field working hard to correct the misconception that motherhood somehow diminishes a woman's credibility as a photographer. Frandsen, who won her first Grand Imaging Award at PPA's Imaging USA this year, says her life is not about choosing between family and career. It's about choosing how she spends her time.



"I don't consider myself a mom with a camera," she says. "I take my work seriously, and I charge appropriately. I don't want to be full time because I already have a full-time job as a mom. I know that one day my kids will be grown, and I'll do things differently. But for now, I'm living in this moment and making my business work for that."

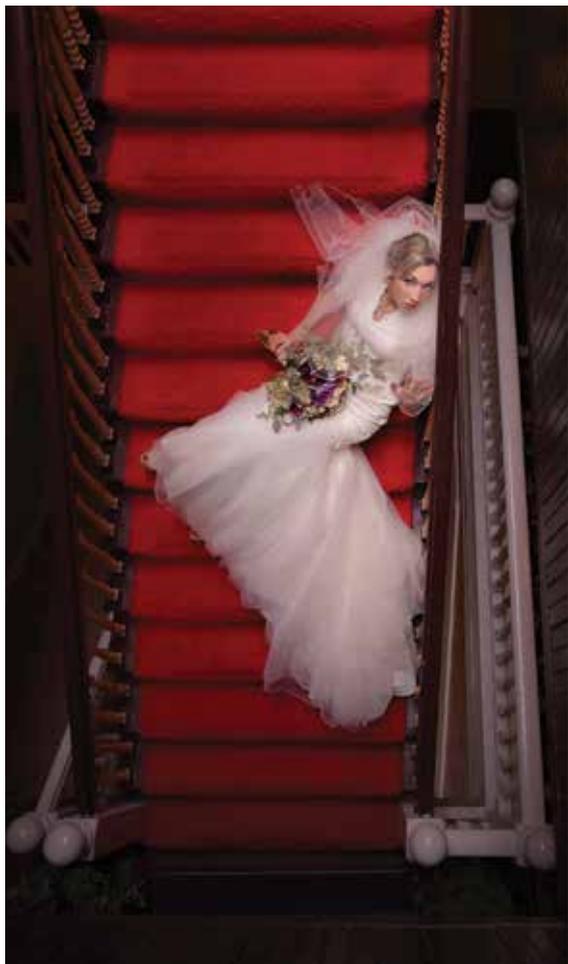
Frandsen shoots weddings exclusively and books 12 to 15 per year, pricing herself in the higher tier of the market to attract clients who truly value photography.

"I want my business to work for me, not the other way around," she says. "I've always been able to keep a good balance between working and being a mom and a wife. And I've been grateful to have clients who appreciate that about me and view me as an artist."

Transparency

The Frandsen you meet online is exactly the Frandsen you meet in person. She doesn't

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have the time or inclination to craft an elaborate online brand that only vaguely resembles her best qualities. Instead, Frandsen takes a straightforward, honest approach that resonates well with younger brides, many of whom view Frandsen as a future version of themselves—balancing family, work, and creativity. Her website even features an advice section on life, marriage, and photography—a frank collection of things she wished she’d learned a little sooner.

“I needed my clients to meet me with the expectation that I wasn’t going to be in a fancy house or greet them with champagne at the door,” she says. “I need them to know I’m a real person, that I’m in the middle of having kids, and I’ve always tried to convey that on my site. My clients are OK with there being a stroller on the front porch. I don’t have to put on a show, pretend that I’m someone I’m not. I can be real with them, and they can be real with me.”

Not to imply that Frandsen takes a casual approach to anything. She’s serious about her craft and her business. Even before she joined PPA three years ago and found the Square One tool, she had her own system to meticulously map out expenses and pricing, which kept her nimble and responsive as her business grew. She’s also been steadfast about her continuing education, always working to improve her lighting and exposure techniques so she can create beautiful light in any situation.

“My clients know that I know my stuff, and I can take pictures in any environment,” she says.

Print first

Selling digital files is almost inescapable in the wedding market, Frandsen says, but she’s doing her part to steer clients toward printed images.

“The digital file craze is really just a lack of education,” she says. “It’s not that digital





files are somehow superior; it's just that they became popular and what everyone thinks they want."

She makes it a business and artistic imperative to show clients the beauty of professionally created albums and prints. In her studio she displays a set of images she had printed at a local discount warehouse next to the same set of images she had printed and mounted by her lab. She also shares sample albums with clients because she understands their tactile power. "I want my clients to hold these albums, feel the weight of the paper and the quality, and realize this isn't something you can get just anywhere."

Preparation for the products discussion begins early when couples fill out a pre-wedding questionnaire that not only asks about their lives and interests but also what they expect to do with their images after the wedding.

"I'm starting that conversation with them before we meet, making them think about what happens after the wedding," she says. It's not that people don't want wedding albums, she says, but that photographers too often aren't initiating the idea and discussing the benefits of printed products. "It's a matter of education, which is why my website is about informing clients about what they want and why they should hire me."



What limitations?

Being based in Salt Lake City means a large percentage of Frandsen's weddings are Mormon, with ceremonies held at a temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. No photography is allowed in the temples, nor are any guests who aren't active church members with a "temple recommend," meaning they fit a certain criteria of eligibility. Additionally, brides wear a more modest temple gown at the ceremony rather than their wedding dress, and the reception is often held hours later. All of this can add up to a creative challenge for a wedding photographer.

But instead of seeing obstacles, Frandsen sees opportunity. Knowing that Mormon brides and grooms would want beautiful portraits in their wedding clothes, Frandsen created Black Tie Sessions. Before or after their wedding, the bride and groom dress in their formal wedding attire, visit a stunning

location, and spend a couple of hours posing for dramatic portraits. The sessions are not only client-pleasers, but they help Frandsen to sell albums and she finds them creatively inspiring.

"My underlying goal in this business is to do what fulfills me as an artist and therefore fulfills my clients," says Frandsen. "I've heard people say they shoot 90 percent of a session for the client and 10 percent for themselves. I feel like I shoot 100 percent for myself. If I'm going to work and take time away from my kids, I'm doing it for me as an artist and to be fulfilled. I want to provide my clients with variety and creativity; that's why they come to me." •

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