

TEMPO Central Jersey

One Perfect Day

Mother-and-daughter photography team Jane and Pam Grecsek capture iconic wedding images

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By Vanessa S. Holt



Jane and Pam Grecsek

As wedding photographers, Jane and Pam Grecsek document a couple's perfect day through candid images of preparation and celebration, capturing the moment when a bride steps into a gown or smiles at her husband for the first time. As artists, they create enduring, iconic images of the human experience and its most powerful emotion — love.

Some images by the mother-and-daughter photography team will be on display at the Umbrella gallery at the Tomato Factory in Hopewell Borough through Feb. 21 in the show *One Perfect Day*.

Although her career had previously been in marketing, Jane Grecsek, 66, says she found a new calling in art simply taking pictures of her family.

As a practitioner of reportage photography, she captures candid, rather than posed, shots and often uses natural light. "I've always been attracted to light," she says. On a wedding shoot, this means going to the venue ahead of time to examine how light falls throughout the day and taking notes. "You have to understand the environment," Ms. Grecsek says.

Pam Grecsek, 37, who had previously worked in healthcare consulting, was inspired by her mother's work and took up a camera herself. "I quit my job and decided to jump in," she says.

"We have, without a doubt, a magical mother and daughter relationship," Jane says. Professionally, however, they shut down the personal relationship on the job. "That's when we start calling each other Jane and Pam."

Originally from Staten Island but a resident of Princeton Junction for the past 40 years, Jane lives on Dunbar Drive, and Pam lives nearby on Conover Road.

The family also has an interesting history rooted in Paris. Jane learned from her mother at a family dinner one night "years ago" that her great-great-grandfather had been the original owner of the building where the Moulin Rouge was located. Before it was the Moulin Rouge, it was a *café des artistes*, in a section of Paris where artists still live today. "I suspect artists came through that café," Jane says. "That's what we like to think."

The Grecseks now work as a team on wedding and other photography jobs but each presents her own perspective on the event. Jane shoots in black and white on traditional film, while Pam shoots in color on digital cameras. In addition to weddings they do some commercial work as a team. Each describes the other as a "master" of her medium.

"When Pam does the presentation, there isn't anybody that doesn't cry," Jane says. "We're lucky; our clients become our friends. We don't advertise. We are just very fortunate in that the people who come across our path lead to other people. It's a very emotional thing that we do."

The two photographers each bring a slightly different method and materials to the shoot.

"With the digital, I like to check and see what I'm shooting to see if what I think I'm getting is actually there," Pam says of her work.

Jane offers a different perspective. "I just have a love of black and white," she says. "It's timeless. You'll go to photography shows... from the '40s, and it is like it's today. You can take what I take into the next 50 years."

Her daughter says the different media each uses suits their personalities. "I'm not sure Jane will ever convert to digital because she's more interested in capturing the moment and feeling and joy and sorrow rather than switching her camera around checking what she took," Pam

says.

For the *One Perfect Day* exhibit, the focus is on the idea of preparation for a wedding day.

"All of the brides and grooms want the perfect day," Pam says. "There's a lot of preparation that happens and on that day we get to see and capture all of... what they feel is going to make their perfect day."

Gallery owner Fay Sciarra shares the upstairs Umbrella space for her own artwork with unique home furnishing and décor offerings from her business partner, sister-in-law Linda Sciarra. The idea, when she launched the gallery last year, was to eventually have a quarterly special event showcasing artists. "There is a lot about (their) work and imagery that appeals to me," Ms. Sciarra says. "It is strong, feminine, edgy, artsy and different in terms of medium and subject matter."

"This invitation from Umbrella was like a gift for us," Jane says. "It's a one-of-a-kind place."

The show includes large silver gelatin prints of six images, adorned with three-dimensional flourishes such as Swarovski crystals or a veil. Smaller variations on these images and a few others round out the show to provide a wide range of prices for people attending.

The Nassau Street florist Viburnum in Princeton provided a floral arrangement Ms. Sciarra incorporated into a piece of mixed media art she prepared for the exhibit, using an antique bridal gown as the canvas.

"This has been a wonderful confluence of creativity," says Ms. Sciarra. "She's inspired us and my dealers and we've inspired her. That's how movies and theater works — why not a gallery?"

Another facet of the show is a bridal registry the Tomato Factory is beginning this month. With Valentine's Day occurring in the middle of the show's run, it seemed like an excellent time to launch, Ms. Sciarra says. The Tomato Factory houses a number of antiques and home furnishing dealers from the area, including Russell Hutsko, Richard Hoffman, Maria Gage, Nancy Furey, Melissa Plummer and Doris Dixon.

As for the artwork, Ms. Sciarra, says, they are suitable for display as works of art in any home.

"These are iconic images, these are not wedding album images," says Ms. Sciarra. Tasteful images, such as one of a bride — her face not visible in the picture — stepping into her wedding gown, attended by her mother and sisters, are universal.

One Perfect Day is on view at Umbrella (located on the 2nd floor of the Tomato Factory), 2 Somerset St., Hopewell, through Feb. 21. Gallery hours: Tues.- Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. 609-466-2800; umbrella-home.com

