



AIRSHIP37 BLOG

OUTSIDE THE CAKE BOX @AIRSHIP37 INTERVIEW WITH PHOTOGRAPHER ADAM WOODHOUSE

By Joulie Wheler

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Outside the Cake Box Weddings is a series of articles blog entries at Airship37 about unique weddings. The title suggests that there is a trend right now for couples to seek an experience with their wedding that is a little more unique and customized. What is your experience with this?

First and foremost I find the elements that couples put the greatest amount of effort into is customizing their wedding reception. This is the time of day where they can express to their guests who they are and give their guests a more unique experience. This is accomplished through the venue selection and decorating. A couple having their wedding reception at a venue that isn't the 'run of the mill' location such as the local community centre is definitely the trend. Unique locations such as an old barn, a tent on a lake's edge or even in their parents' back yard have been my most common wedding reception venues. A location such as Airship 37 is perfect because they are within walking distance to great photo ops such as the

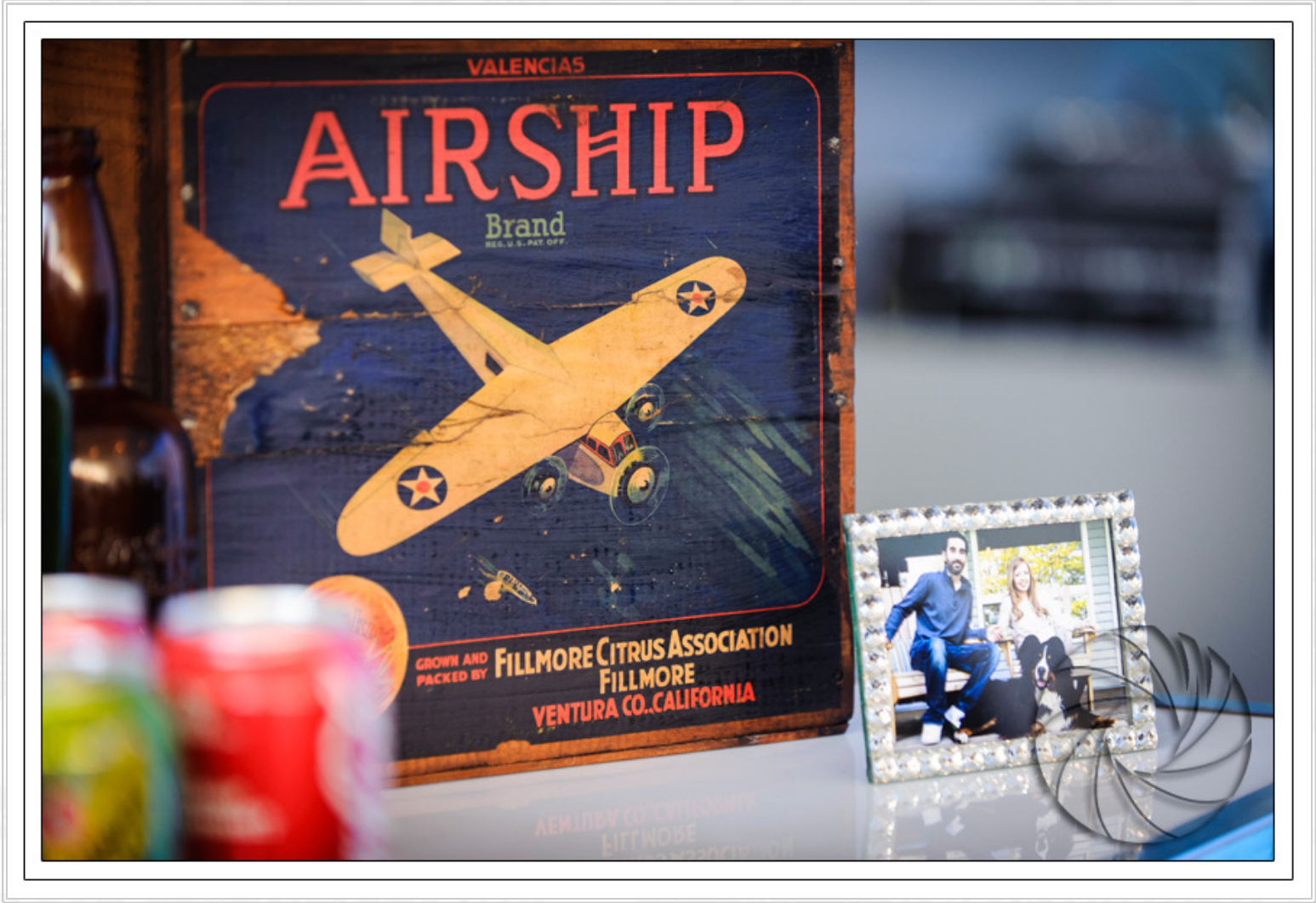
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Distillery District. Also Airship37 has indoor an outdoor areas for the wedding guests to mingle instead of just the common dining/dance area.



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Jacqueline and Mat’s wedding at Airship37 was stunning. There is one picture in particular that you took of them during their wedding ceremony that is such a striking moment in time. It is taken from an interesting angle that creates a dynamic structure to the picture. Can you speak about this picture and how you achieved it?

The image you are referring to is when I was taking one of my ‘token images’. I have a mental list of images I feel I must get on a client’s wedding day. For the ceremony I always want to get at least one wide angle shot from at least one perspective to capture the essence of the ceremony. I feel the essence is captured if the elements of the venue, the guest’s placement, the wedding party placement and decorations can all be incorporated into a single frame. This particular image was one of the shots from the ceremony that I felt did that quite well. The image showed how Jacqueline and Mat positioned their guests’ chairs so that they encircled them during their ceremony- a very thoughtful and intimate choice. This layout conveyed that they truly appreciated their family and friends and wanted to have their physical and spiritual energy completely surround them as they took their vows. The image was to also capture the scope of the venue and some of the custom decorating.



The pictures of Jacqueline and Matt dancing at Airship37 are so filmic and elegant. Was this something that was planned out or was it a spontaneous moment?

The images from their dance were planned on my part. I’ve been shooting weddings long enough to know how the first dance between a couple usually plays out. I always position myself in such a way that when their dance is beginning I want to have a relatively uncluttered background so that I can keep attention on my subject (my clients). Once I have captured that, I float around to capture their dance from different perspectives (such as with their guests in the background). Something that I have found interesting over the years is that the greater the intimacy my clients show towards each other during their first dance, the better I can capture what I have in mind before the dance begins. It is a bit hard to explain. But if I see potential for a great intimate image I just hope that when my clients enter the scene they feel the same way for their own reasons. For a very brief moment there is a kind of ‘sync’ that happens between me and the scene. That is when I capture images like the one you are referring to. Once I’ve captured that frame, I then move about and add more lighting, add some of the guests in the background and mix close-ups and wide angle views.



**You most likely would have a “script” for yourself of the shots that are “must
haves” from the wedding. What percentage of the shots you take are unscripted?**

Anyone that takes their work seriously puts forethought into how they are going to approach a job. It is no different when it comes to professional wedding photography. I have a two page questionnaire for my clients that they complete and I review it with them a week or two before the wedding. My questionnaire has a list of important names, locations, times and any ‘must have’ shots the clients would like. I give direction to my clients on the ‘must have’ shots because without direction, they would list everything as if I have never shot a wedding before and are worried something might get missed. My ‘must have’ list is usually quite small because it only lists two things. First are the family formals because every family has different dynamics and I need some help with that.



The second is a small list of items unique to their wedding that are important to them that they should make me aware of. Maybe my bride has a small piece of jewelery attached to her bouquet that no one can see but she would like me to take a moment and capture it. I may have missed it unless she told me about it. This small list of unique ‘must haves’ has been quite helpful over the years. In regards to my own list of shots that I want to accomplish, it is a mental list that I have built from experience. However, the majority of my work is unscripted. That is the nature of wedding photography. Even my own personal check list has images that are spontaneous, they are simply moments that will happen that I want to ensure I capture. One example would be the part of the day where people are helping the bride with her wedding dress. If the back of the dress needs to be tied, there are going to be a couple of shots I have planned in my mind that I want to capture. If for some reason I don’t capture a certain image when I feel I should have, I will step in and ask for some help from my client and/or her family and friends. In a case like that, we aren’t creating something that didn’t happen, we are simply taking a minute to recreate what just did happen because I wanted to photograph it to add to my client’s collection. Everyone always understands and is happy to oblige. If I were to give an actual percentage of images that I shoot that are not scripted, it has to be approximately 70%. Most of a wedding day with my photography is unscripted. That is what couples today want. They want a photographer they can trust to capture the natural happenings of the day but will step up and take charge if necessary to get the job done, and get it done well. The time of the day that has the heaviest amount of scripting on my part are the family formals and the time I spend with the wedding party and my bride and groom as these are the times of the day where I would consider it to be a true ‘photo shoot’.



How do you work to bring out the qualities of each unique wedding as a photographer?

Since I have shot many weddings over the years, I see elements of weddings that are the same as all others, and I see elements that are unique. I put forward a special effort to shoot and focus on the elements that I see as unique. It can be a particular decoration or element of their ceremony, or it can be unique kissing games played during the reception. By recognizing what it is about my client's wedding that is unique I am able to produce the supporting images that show just how unique it was.





What was your process in preparation for taking the pictures at Airship37? How did you acquaint yourself with the possibilities for capturing such incredible pictures?

Whenever I go to a location that I have never been to before, I arrive early so I may walk around and learn my surroundings. In the case of this wedding it was my first time at Airship37 so I arrived over an hour early so that I could walk around both the Distillery District and the entire grounds of Airship37. This gave me time to create a mental list of where I wanted to go for photos as well as how I would approach the ceremony and reception since both were held at Airship37.





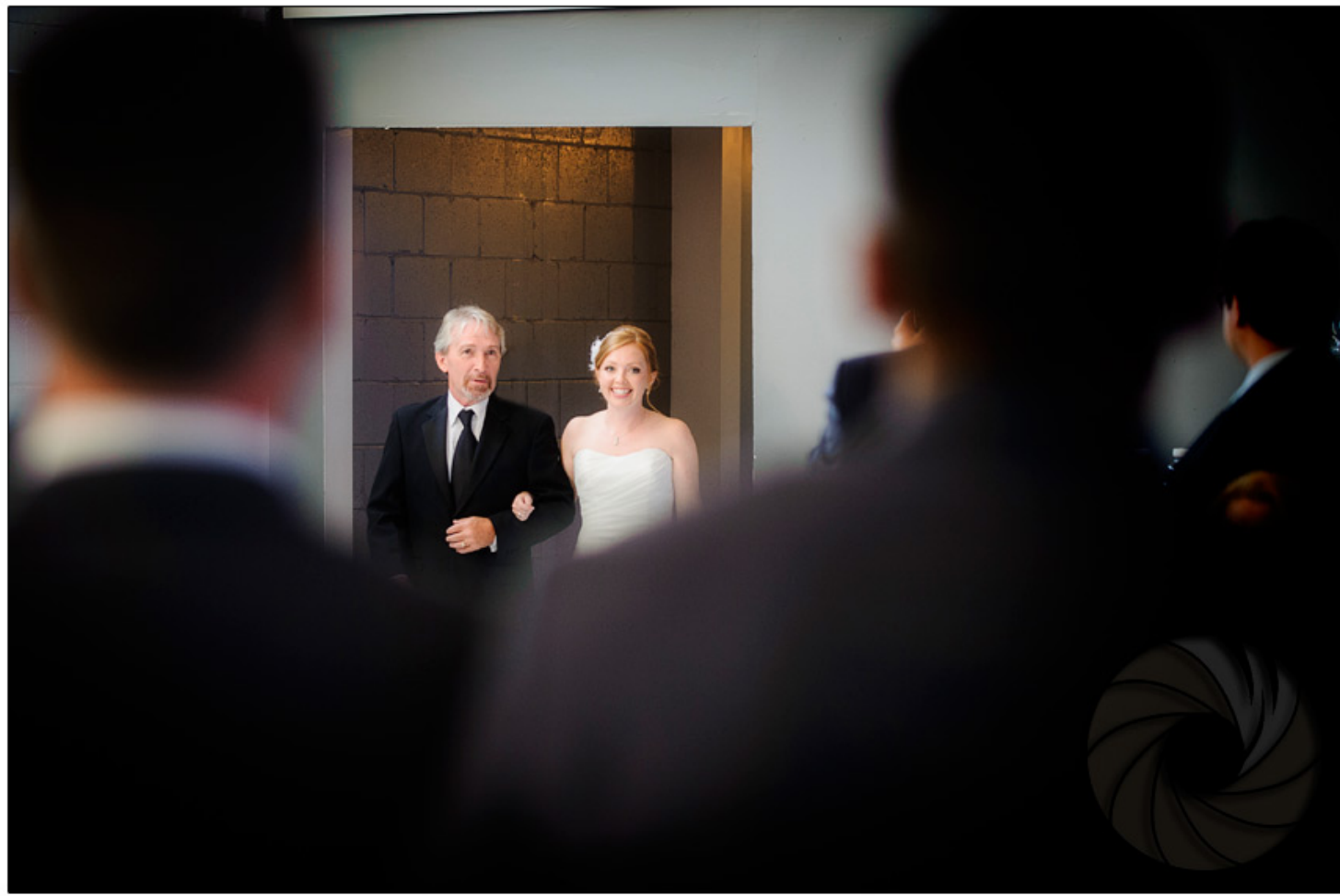
What time of day was the ceremony? What kind of lighting did you have to work with?

With Jacqueline and Mat's wedding their ceremony was indoors so the time of day didn't matter; but their ceremony was held in late afternoon. The plan was to walk to the Distillery District for the family formals, wedding party pic's and lastly the bride and groom pic's. Jacqueline and Mat had purchased a photography permit so that we could use the Distillery District without any concern. The family images started around 5pm and there was not a cloud in the sky so the sun was very bright. Luckily I had previously scoped out a location for the family pictures that would work if there were no clouds to diffuse the bright sun. The large buildings in the area of Airship37 give plenty of protection from the sun when it was a bit to harsh for some of the shoot (like the family formals).



In choosing an open concept urban industrial space what kind of opportunities does this open up for the look and feel of the wedding from a photographers perspective?

I enjoy shooting weddings in an urban industrial scene as I find the juxtaposition of young and beautiful couples against old (and in some cases decrepit) backdrops works great. It's not traditional. Parents and grandparents think the wedding photos should be very formal and in gardens and other stereotypical environments. To do something different than what was captured during their parents' day appeals to a lot of modern wedding couples.



What do you teach? How do your experiences teaching affect your photography practice?

It's no secret that the wedding industry is very seasonal for the area we live in. Even though I have shot weddings in the winter, they are few and far between. My winters primarily consist of teaching at Sir Sandford Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario. To produce the quality of images in my photography that I expect, I have become very proficient in Photoshop and this is the subject that I started teaching at Fleming. I have also taught the school's Digital Imaging course to both college and high school students which combines the art to photography with the digital editing element of Photoshop. Since I also have an undergraduate degree in Computer Science and Mathematics a door also opened for me in the Math Department. Being able to teach Math in the off season as well as photography related subjects has been a nice fit with working full time in the profession.

Where would you likely be found taking pictures when you are not doing a wedding?

I enjoy shooting my kid's sporting events. At some of my kid's events I also photograph other kids who are friends (when I know their parents) and then provide those families with the images of their kids. Those families are always very appreciative of having some quality photographs of their kids as many either don't have an interest or an understanding of how to shoot in challenging conditions such as the poor lighting in indoor arenas or school gymnasiums. When I'm not shooting my kid's sports I enjoy landscape photography. For the past few years I have had a personal project to capture the many beautiful elements of the Kawartha region that I live in. One perk of my personal project is I have had images purchased that have been used by different tourism groups in their marketing material (both print and web based).

Thank you so much for the great interview [Adam Woodhouse](#)

Distillery District urban wedding wedding photography

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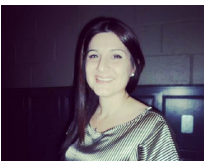
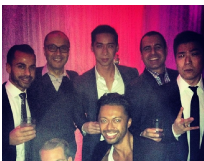
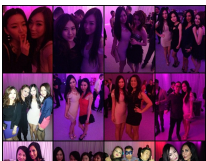
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