

Design a card the easy way

Before



After



A photo and one block of type is all it takes to make a beautiful card.

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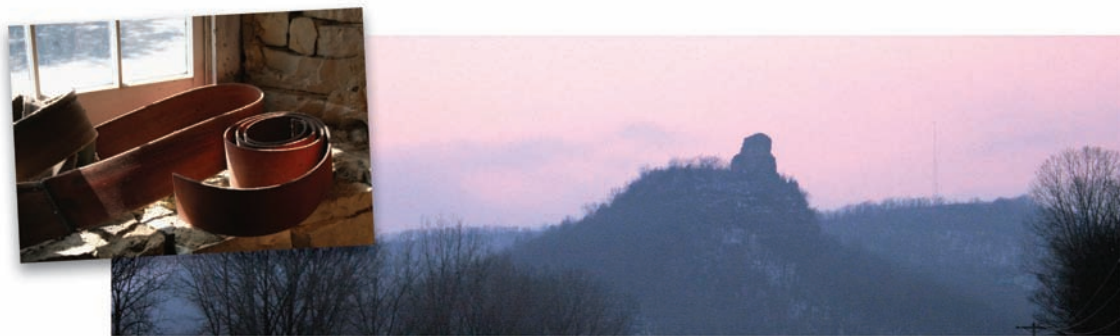
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When photographer Jayne Kettner sent us her photos and asked our help making a logo for her Web class, we had to wonder why she'd want one. Her photos were rich, well composed and pleasing, just what she'd want the world to see. A logo is an artificial device used to represent a product, service or group of people. It would add only a barrier; when you have the real thing—i.e., Jayne's photos—why do you need a representative?

Her request was followed the same week by two other photographers in the same situation. This, of course, gave us a batch of great photos to work with, so here, class, is how to design a card the (super-) easy way.



Sketches galore! Jayne started out the right way; when you're designing a logo, you can't make too many sketches. But her efforts were going nowhere. Said she, "I was striving for a professional image, but kind of ended up with more whimsical and fun looks. I like the color combinations of cyan, teal, and violet, but I also like something dramatic like red and black. I sort of mixed the two and didn't end up with anything pleasing." This is actually common; it happens whenever a design goal is unclear or even incorrect. In this case, Jayne doesn't need a logo at all; her photos (below) will speak for themselves.

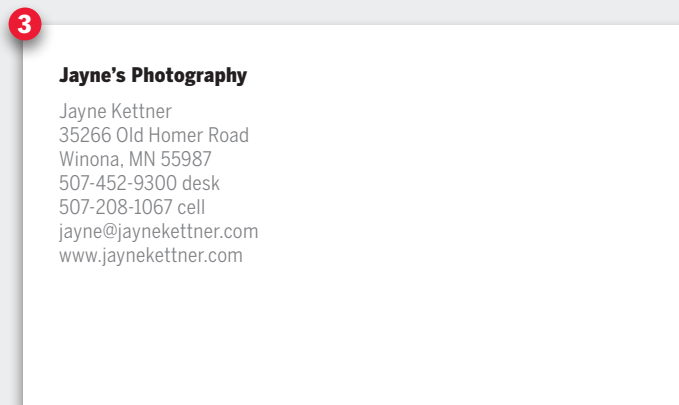
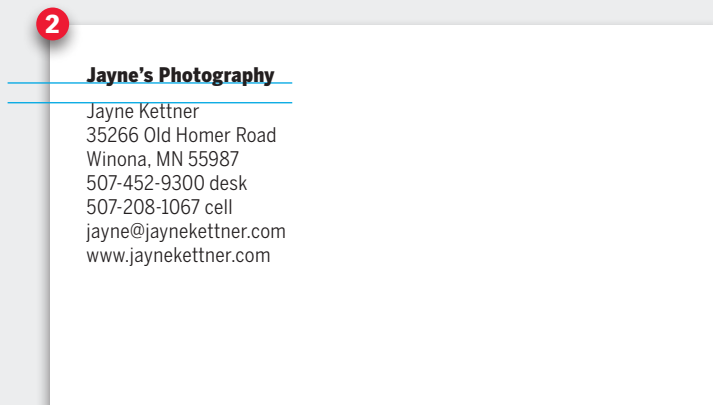
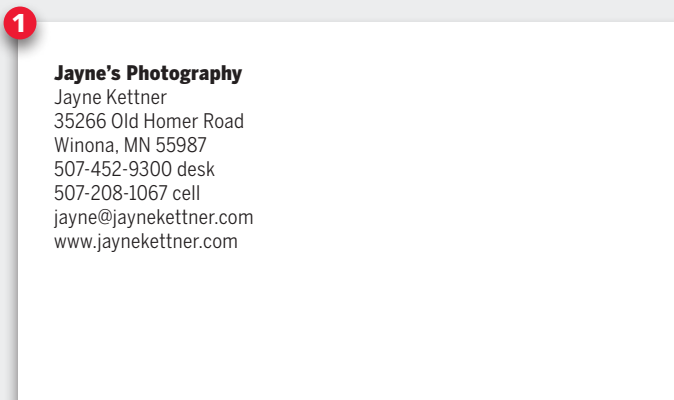


Start with the words

Set your words in a block of ordinary type—not fancy type—and place it in the upper-left corner.

(1) Set your type—business name, your name, address and contact information—in a single block, align left, and place it in the upper-left corner. Make the business name bold. **(2)** Add a half space—a whole space works as well—below the business name, then **(3)** tint the type 60% (or so) gray; leave the business name black.

This simple “block in the corner” has a minimal, intentionally designed look that leaves the white space as the dominant element. You’ll be tempted to fill the space, but don’t.

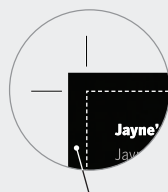


Add the photo

Place and crop your photo all the way to the edges. Color the type white, and you're done.



Place and crop Most business cards are horizontal. Select a photo with open space in the upper-left corner, place and crop. Don't be afraid to crop radically, which can yield unexpected and powerful results. Touch all the edges (full bleed).



1/16 inch bleed

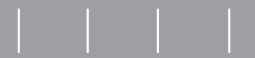


Extend the photo to create a bleed area, which is an extra 1/16 inch around your card. This prevents any white lines along the edges of the card when it's trimmed to final size.



Color the words Bring the words to the front. On a dark image like this one, finish by coloring the business name white and the body light gray.

That, class, is all there is to it. No artificial graphics, no distracting layouts. It quietly places your work, literally, into the client's hand, simply, clearly, beautifully.



Use both sides

If your favorite photo has no room for words, use the back.



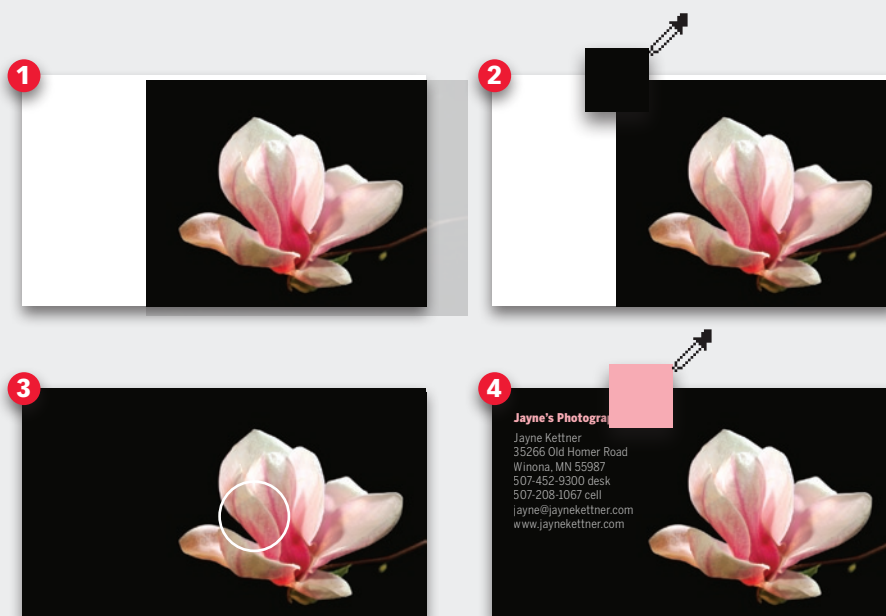
Jayne's Photography

Jayne Kettner
35266 Old Homer Road
Winona, MN 55987
507-452-9300 desk
507-208-1067 cell
jayne@jaynekettner.com
www.jaynekettner.com

Artist's canvas Without words, winter trees fill the card like a painting on canvas, quietly speaking volumes about your work. On the back, the minimal, gallery-style layout.

Add some background

Photo doesn't fill the space? Add an artificial background.



(1) It's a beautiful magnolia, but it doesn't fill the space. When you have a solid background like this, **(2)** eyedropper the color nearest the edge and **(3)** fill the card behind the image. In this case, we then eyedropper some pink from the flower and **(4)** add it to the business name, creating a beautifully soft connection.

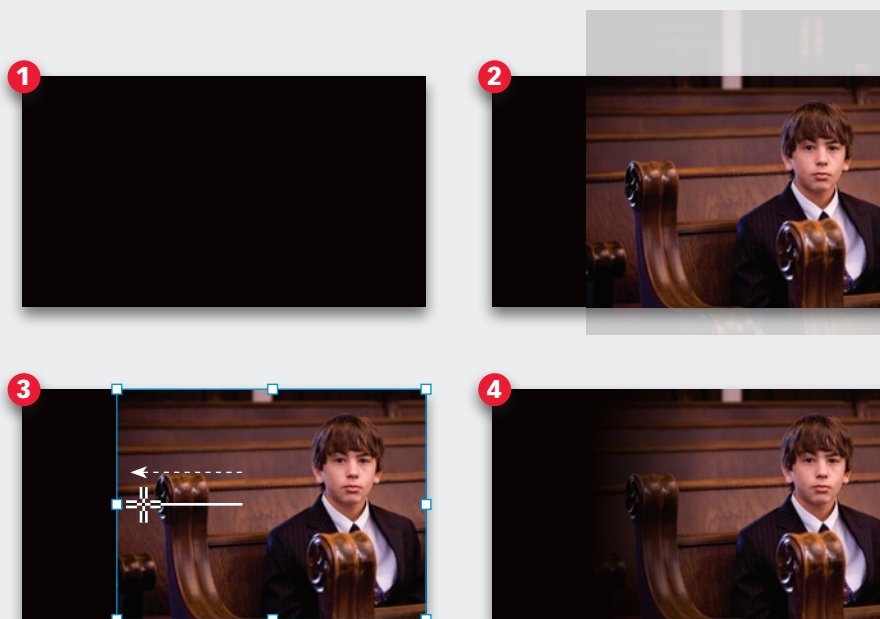
Fade to black

A too-narrow image with a multicolor background requires fading.



A change of type Bob Schnell is a people photographer. Small change of typeface from Benton Sans to Didot—*on only the business name*—softens the name suitably while retaining the look. Classy.

Bob Schnell Photography



Fade your photo in InDesign. (1) Fill the card black (in this case, to complement his suit), then (2) place and crop the photo; note the resulting hard edge. (3) Click to select the photo. Select the Gradient Feather Tool (left), drag from right to left, stopping just short of the edge, and you're done (4). Not quite right? Drag again.

Get vertical

Vertical-format cards are less common but can be dramatic.

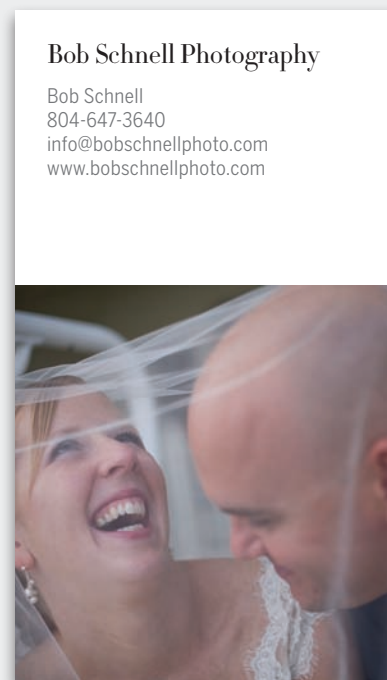


It's tempting to move the words around, but don't do it. The upper-left corner makes a clear, designed statement—especially if it's consistent on all pieces. If an image won't work with that position, use a different image.

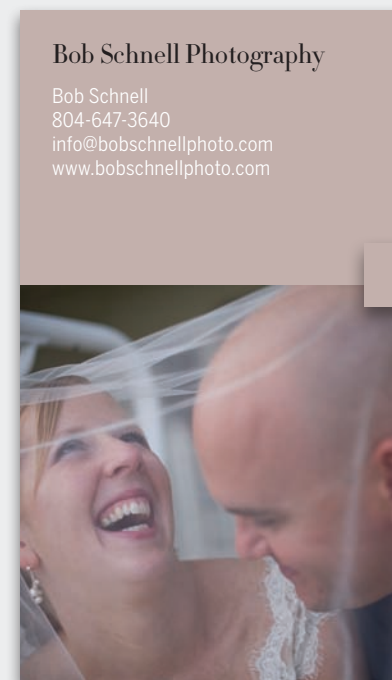
(Right) You don't want to lose a great shot because it doesn't fit the space. If you crop, we recommend making the image square, which looks intentional, not ambiguous.

Her asymmetrical position activates the page.

Classic, but too stark? . . .



Soften with color.





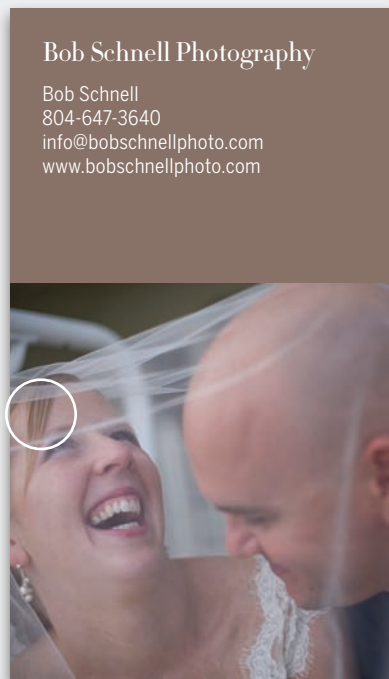
Find color

Eyedropper colors right from the image for a perfect complement every time.

Her lips . . .



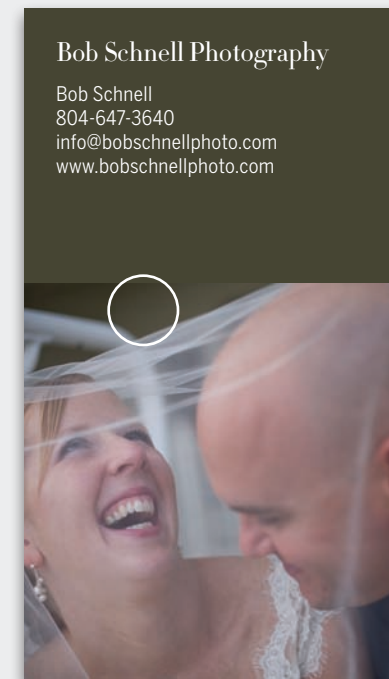
Her hair . . .



Her dress . . .

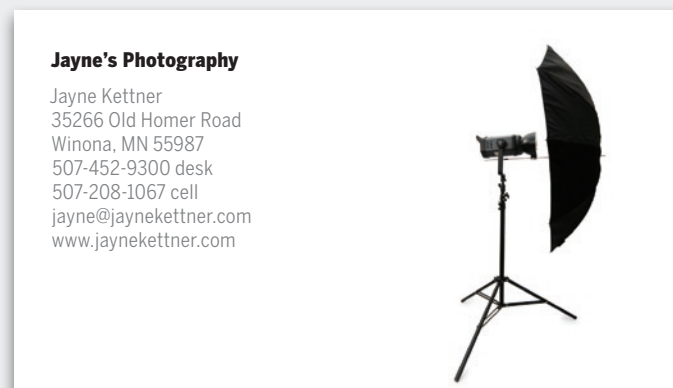
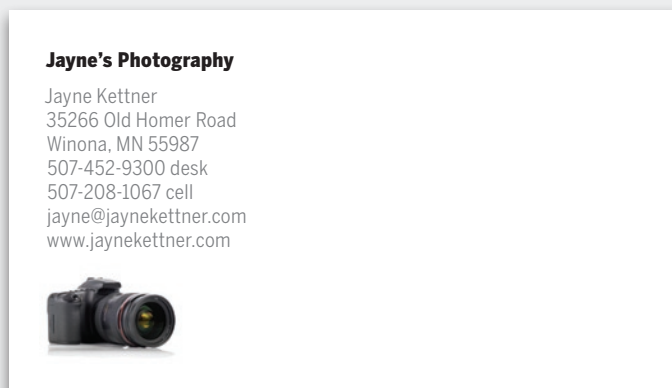


The background . . .

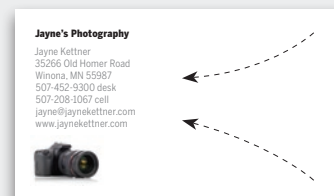


Use an object

An alternative to a portfolio photo is to picture an object from your studio. Just knock out its background and place it on the page. Include its shadow.



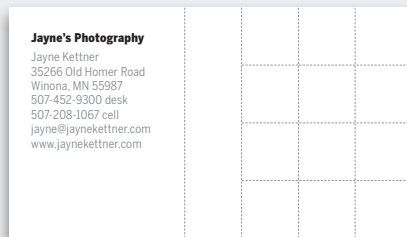
Small is big White space is the controlling element on these cards—note how your eye immediately registers the images, despite their small sizes. *Small* is important; if you make them big, the objects become the story, not you. Note, too, that although they're predominantly black, the objects are in color, just like you'd see them in real life.



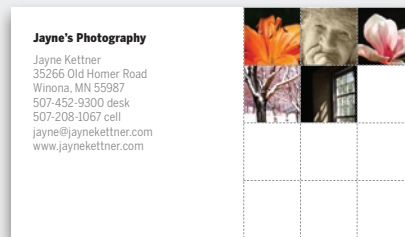
White space is not empty but has real force. Note above how it pushes your eye to the left and creates a strong sense of depth behind the studio umbrella.

Create a gallery

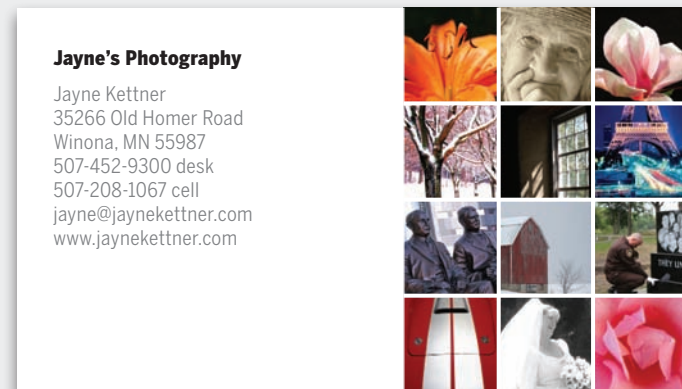
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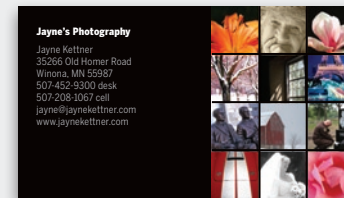
Make a grid . . .



. . . add your photos.



Square images are harder to crop but look designed, and they correspond to Web thumbnails and avatars, too. Background can be white or black (below).



Article resources

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jayne@jaynekettner.com
www.jaynekettner.com

2



3 — **Bob Schnell Photography**

Bob Schnell
804-647-3640
info@bobschnellphoto.com
www.bobschnellphoto.com

2



4

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6

7

5

Typefaces

- 1** [Benton Sans Cond Black](#) | 7.5 pt
- 2** [Benton Sans Cond Book](#) | 7.5/9 pt
- 3** [HTF Didot 11 Light](#) | 10 pt

Images

Images: iStockphoto

- 4** ([6750578](#))
- 5** ([3458269](#))

Colors

- 6** C0 M0 Y0 K100
- 7** C0 M0 Y0 K60

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Before & After has been sharing its practical approach to graphic design since 1990. Because our modern world has made designers of us all (ready or not), Before & After is dedicated to making graphic design understandable, useful and even fun for everyone.

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Before & After magazine

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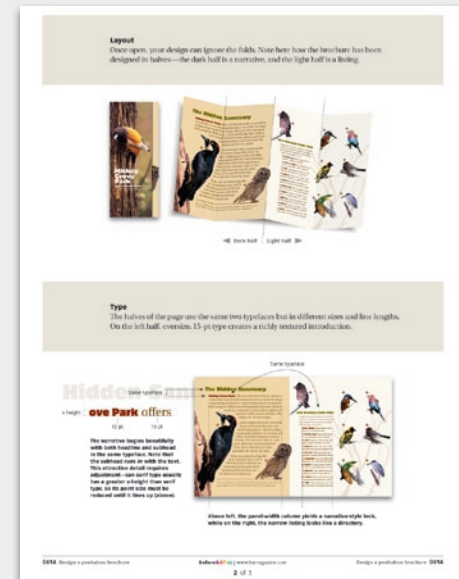


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Paper-saver format

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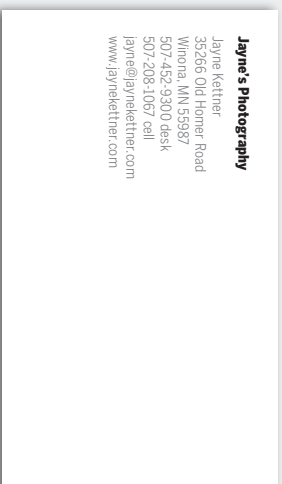
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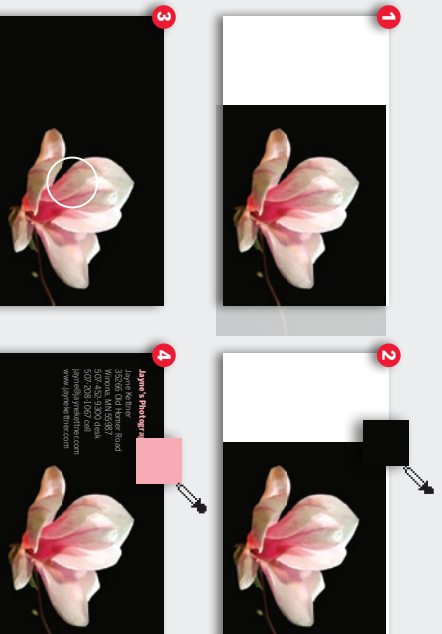
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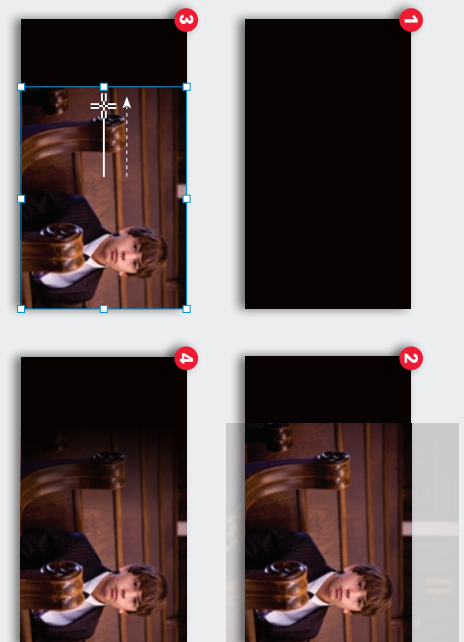
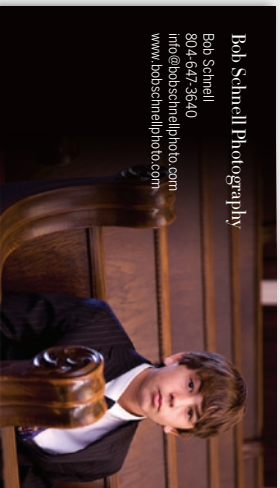
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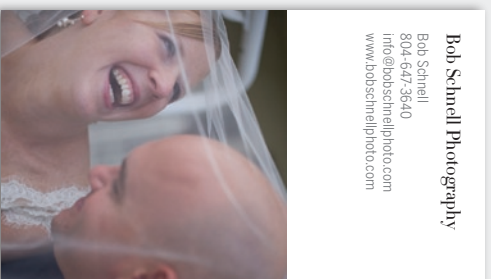


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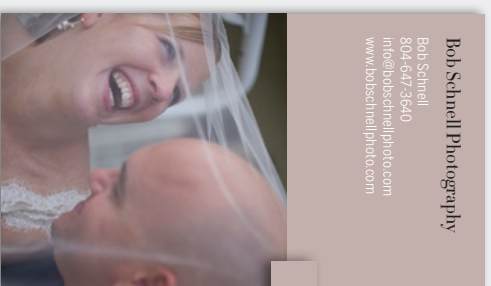
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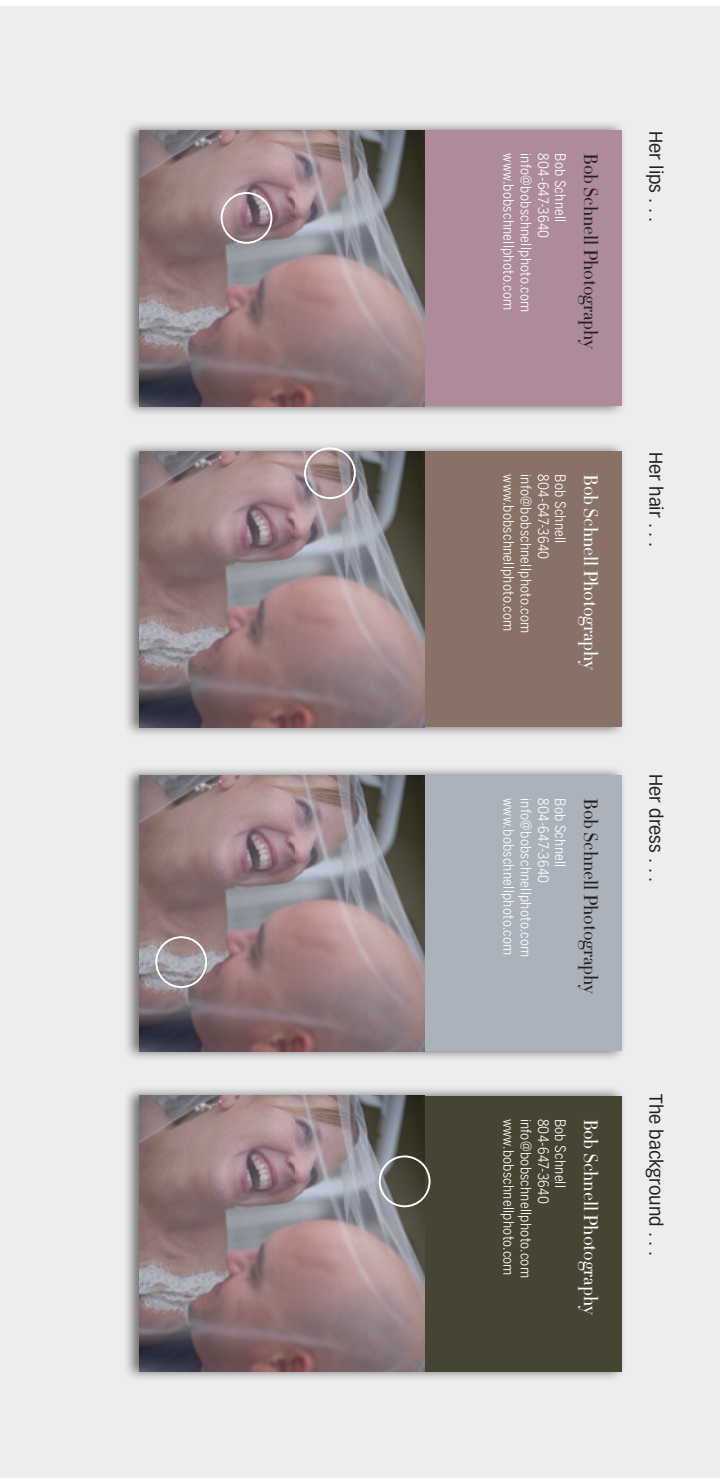


Soften with color.



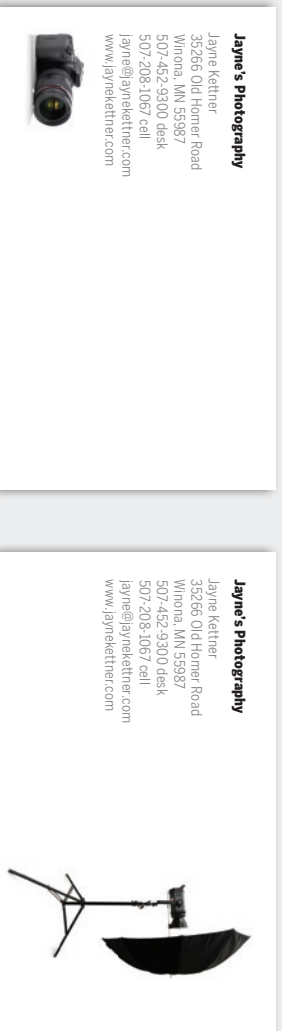
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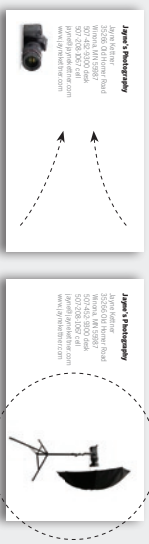


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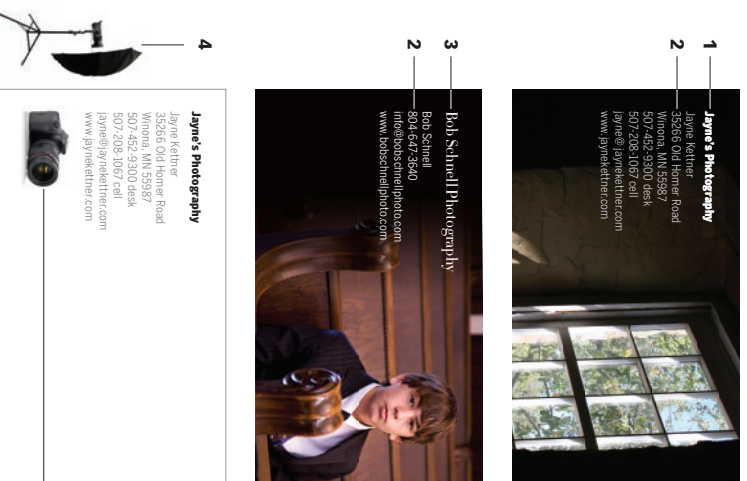
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Article resources

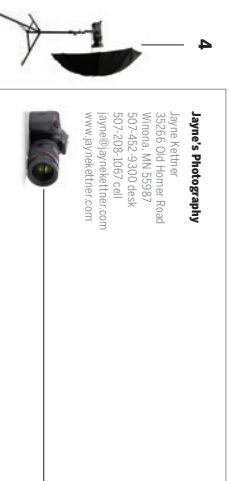


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- 3 — **Bob Schnell II Photography**
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- ### Typefaces
- 1 **Benton Sans Cond Black** | 7.5 pt
 - 2 **Benton Sans Cond Book** | 7.5/9 pt
 - 3 **HTF Didot 11 Light** | 10 pt

- ### Images
- Images: iStockphoto
- 4 ([6750578](#))
 - 5 ([3458269](#))

- ### Colors
- 6 **C0 M0 Y0 K100**
 - 7 **C0 M0 Y0 K60**

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