

perfectly staged

The wedding of Jessica and Tom Heltzel channeled their love of design, down to the last detail.

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PHOTOS BY STACY NEWBORN



38 CINCINNATI WEDDING MAGAZINE.COM // WEDDING 2012



WHEN JESSICA KARLE and Tom Heltzel married last June, it wasn't just a wedding. It was also the ultimate expression of their personal design aesthetic. What else would you expect when a graphic designer and an architect tie the knot?

CREATIVE BEGINNINGS

Jess and Tom, both graduates of Miami University's Department of Architecture & Interior Design, met and started dating when they were freshmen and ended up in all the same classes. Currently, they are graduate students in the design field. Jess is a candidate for a Master of Fine Arts at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore, and Tom is working toward his master's degree in architecture at Columbia University in New York. Yes, the newbies are living apart, driven by the same love of design that is so apparent in the details of their wedding.

"We have always sort of been able to pursue our own interests as well as our interests together," says Jess. "We can understand the crazy hours and the stress that comes with the job description."

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

After graduating from college, Tom and Jess moved to Los Angeles to pursue their careers, and that's where they got engaged in 2004 while preparing Thanksgiving dinner for a crowd of friends. "We were in our pajamas roasting and slow dicing in this wing, and all of a sudden he was down on one knee proposing to me," Jess remembers.

Tom proposed with a house stone that had belonged to his great-grandmother, and the couple found a boutique jeweler to make a custom ring. "We ended up with a set of three stacking rings," says Jess. "It's pretty unique because the top one has his great-grandmother's



diamond. The middle one, the wedding band, is champagne-colored diamonds, and the third had to be white diamonds. It's called it the bonus ring," she laughs.

Jess also found her wedding dress in L.A., although she didn't buy the Monique Lhuillier gown until later at Bridal and formal in Cincinnati. "I loved the dress from the very first time I saw it in a magazine," Jess says. "I had the opportunity to work a little bit on Monique Lhuillier's Beverly Hills flagship store, and I got to actually try on the dress there. It's not a staid person, so I loved that it had a shoulder element but wasn't too covered up."

WEDDING BLUEPRINT

Because the couple had lived for several years in L.A., and because they loved the chic, modern style of L.A.-based vendors, they at first considered having their wedding there. However, with grad school on the opposite coast and both their families in the Midwest—Jess's family in Cincinnati and Tom's in Japan, Indiana—they decided to bring a bit of California to Cincinnati's Ash Park instead.

"I knew I wanted Ash Park because it really is a beautiful and clean architectural environment with natural light and classic stonework, and I could bring in all the other elements myself," Jess says.

HAND-CRAFTED

For Tom and Jess, every little detail counts, and their wedding was all about gorgeous details. "Almost nothing was store bought," Jess says. In fact, some of the most striking



WEDDING 2012 / CINCINNATI WEDDING MAGAZINE.COM 39

elements were made by Jess and her dad, John Karle.

"My dad has a wood shop because he owns a window and door store and was carpenter, and he's pretty handy," Jess says. "We made the table runners, place card holders, and the photo booth." Jess's friend helped knit-out the wood for the table numbers and some of the photo booth props, including large letters and easels.

Jess's dad remembers the wedding project as quite a bit of work, especially the ambitious photo booth. But it was well worth the trouble. "As a father, anytime you can do something that's special for your daughter, it means so much," Karle says. "I was happy to do it for her, and it turned out beautifully."

The couple enlisted Dana Mansel and Sara Ransom of Viva Bella Events to help coordinate the wedding, and Jess's mom, Karen Neffler-Karle, and Tom's parents, Thomas and Jeanne Heltzel, also took part in the planning process.

Jess collaborated with Marli Thompson of Marli's Floral Designs for her flowers, which added pops of color and a feminine touch to the event. "We had the most amazing floral preserver I have ever seen," Thompson says, "along with beautiful David Austin Garden roses, manzanita, dahlias, Lamb's ears, and berries. Succulents were a large part as well. We had them in bouquets, on the waist planks, and in vases. The flowers were the feminine touch, and the evergreens brought in the modern California vibe."

MAKING MEMORIES

In keeping with the minimalist theme, Jess chose simple graphic-style dresses from J.Crew for her bridesmaids, four of whom were her younger sisters. "It was really great having my sisters in the wedding," Jess says. "They're all a bit younger than me, and it was really nice for us to bond and for them to be a part of everything."

Indianapolis-based photographer Stacy Newborn truly captured the spirit of the day. "I've been searching for this more artsy, styled style that I'd seen in L.A.," Jess says. "She knew the kind of style I wanted, and she's also a food photographer and does a great job photographing details."



SWEET ENDINGS

Perhaps the only thing that wasn't "minimal" was the dessert buffet. "My dad had no idea I didn't want to go the traditional cake route, so we did plan, which was really fun," Jess says. There was also a small cake from The BonBonerie. "It was really simple, the Lemon Romance Cake, and they accommodated a design I showed them," she says.

The grand finale? A stack bar stocked with late-night favorites. "Michelle Volman from La Petite Piree helped us create a really great dinner, which everyone loved about, and a midnight snack bar with mini chili-cheese cones and other snacks," Jess says. "It was amazing. I didn't even get any dessert, but I didn't care. I just wanted a cheese cone!"

All in all, the wedding was a California dream come true—right here in Cincinnati. "It was a big collaboration between myself and Tom and all the vendors," says Jess. "It may not have looked overly designed, but it really was. It turned out exactly the way I planned." ■



A THOUSAND of wedding A-players helped facilitate a one-of-a-kind romance cake and personalized menu. In fact, Newborn Design provides a full range of color and personality.



VENDOR

- Ceremony and Reception: Vivabella Events
- Wedding Planner: Dana Mansel and Sara Ransom of Vivabella Events
- Flowers: Marli's Floral Designs
- Wedding Dress: Monique Lhuillier
- Bride and Groom: J.Crew
- Catering: La Petite Piree
- Cake: The BonBonerie
- Photo: Stacy Newborn
- Ceremony Music: Carl Larson of Songbirds
- Reception Music: Phil Pflaum of Good Productions