

Sharing the wedding with all, invited or not

BRANDED from C1 rations in progress, and even tweeted a few of those bittersweet and highly personal moments of reflection that precede any wedding, like: “Just realized I will only be a Johnson for 3 more days #atwed :(”

A hashtag may not yet be as critical a bridal accessory as, say, a bouquet or dress, but a growing number of young, social-media-savvy brides are making a point of sharing their big day online, through digital tools that go far beyond the standard-issue wedding website.

A recent survey by David's Bridal found that 68 percent of brides use social media or other technology during dress fittings, and 59 percent will broadcast their “just married” status on Facebook within a day of their wedding. In Philly, local couples are putting their own twist on social weddings: live-streaming ceremonies on the Internet, posting video save-the-dates on YouTube, or blogging the entire wedding-planning process — and enduring a constant stream of feedback in response.

For Johnson, 29, and Westnedge, 28, taking their wedding social was a natural choice. The two run a boutique branding agency, At Media, with an emphasis on the Web and social media.

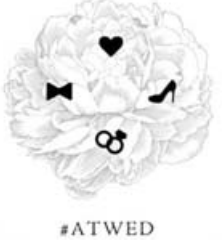
“We wanted the wedding to have a brand that was very concise,” Johnson said, “and part of that was adopting a hashtag for it. We definitely think it’s going to be a trend, and we wanted to be trendsetters in that space.”

They saw it as an opportunity to spread the message about their wedding, while educating their employees, helping clients understand

the power of social media, and — perhaps most gratifying — finally getting their parents to understand what exactly it is they do for a living.

“They were blown away by the invitation and the branding aspect,” Johnson said. “They got it, and they finally actually saw our talents.”

While the brand the cou-



A growing number of young, social-media-savvy brides are making a point of sharing their big day online, through digital tools.

ple created online extended to the invitations and even the ceremony program, the social media effort wasn't targeted to reach only those invited to the affair.

Johnson and Westnedge also wanted to share their enthusiasm with friends who couldn't make it to the wedding or weren't invited due to budget constraints. Their photographer, Kate Neal, posted tagged photos to Instagram throughout the wedding day. A guest used a Twitter app called Vine to share a video clip of the wedding party releasing glowing Chinese lan-

terns into the sky.

That idea of including virtual guests also made sense to Meghan Donnelly, 29, and Ricardo Lagomasino, 31. They weren't interested in a big wedding, so when they got married in August, it was at City Hall with only immediate family present.

But that didn't go over well with everyone, Donnelly said. “We got a little pushback from family and friends saying, ‘What do you mean, we can't be there?’”

Their friend Jamison Murphy offered a solution. The ceremony was streamed through a site called Ustream, where it could be viewed in real time by anyone: Lagomasino's grandmother in Puerto Rico; a friend who watched on her phone at the airport, tearing up while waiting for a flight; and the couple's local circle of friends, who held a viewing party of their own to celebrate.

“We had friends and family from all over the world watching,” Donnelly said. The result was a sense of connectedness that she hadn't expected: “I liked that everyone was tuned in at the same time.”

She was surprised to learn how poignant viewers found the streamed event. And later, she had a chance to review the video, along with the comments friends had entered in the accompanying chat area.

However, the couple did experience what is, after all, the characteristic pitfall of social media: It can go viral. Donnelly, who has hundreds of Facebook friends, intentionally didn't post the Ustream link on Facebook, preferring to send it to a smaller group of people she thought



Antoinette Marie Johnson and Tyler Westnedge run a boutique branding agency, At Media, with an emphasis on Web and social media. They used their knowledge to brand their wedding: Create a hashtag, develop a social media brand, and connect.

would be interested. Yet “it got forwarded, and later, people I had no idea were watching it said to me, ‘I saw you get married.’ You don't really have control over who watches.”

That lack of privacy was a consideration for Jessica Smith, who saw her wedding as the one time that she could share the details of her personal life online.

“Generally, I don't like to be so vain on social media,” she said. “But with my wedding, I felt the desire to share — and hopefully my family and friends would read it and get excited, too, and think, ‘She's doing something special, and taking care, and really including me in the process.’”

Smith and her husband Doug, both 28, created a Tumblr page in the run-up to their September 2011 Philadelphia wedding, syncing the Tumblr with their Facebook pages to reach more friends. Since Smith, a Gladwyne native, now lives in Los Angeles, she had guests traveling across the country to celebrate. She wanted to offer them a centralized resource for Philly tourism attractions

and logistical information, along with a side of prenuptial boosterism, like engagement pictures, venue photos, and the details of how she hand-assembled paper tassels for an elaborate place-card installation.

Smith began posting to the site regularly and scheduling Tumblr chats with guests who had questions or just wanted to say hello. It took some coaching for older guests to understand the technology, but they eventually embraced it.

While Tumblr was helpful for Smith's guests, she said another social media site, Pinterest, was “life-changing” for her, given its ability to consolidate and broadcast everything from ceremony decorations to bridesmaid hairstyles.

The David's Bridal survey found that 59 percent of brides consider such sites the best source of wedding inspiration; Johnson said she, too, found it to be valuable. She created one inspiration board, and a second Pinterest board with all of her final selections for the wedding. “When I made decisions with the florist, the wedding stylist could be

informed,” she explained.

She also used the site to share ideas with her friends, who could borrow inspiration for their own weddings or respond with their comments and opinions.

Of course, feedback might include hearing that your cousin thinks the 5-foot train is too ostentatious. “You're going to get those opinions, and that's the most difficult part for brides, to actually manage that feedback,” Johnson said.

Johnson said that, ultimately, social media enabled the couple to stretch their budget far beyond their 128 invited wedding guests, to include their entire online community. “At least they can get excited, get a feel for the event,” she said. “I've been told many times, ‘Please upload the pictures afterward. I want to see.’”

There was, however, one moment of pause. “We kind of joked, with all of this traffic and everything being so public, I worry: Is it like an open invitation? Are 30,000 people going to show up?”

Mirror, Mirror

Continued from C1

nearly giddy. “But this is copper,” and that makes it avant-garde for its time, she explained.

With last month's opening of the university's \$80 million industrial warehouse-style URBN Center came the unofficial debut of the costume collection's new digs.

Walking into the 3,000-square-foot space is like entering a chilly (the clothes need to be kept at 65 degrees), sterile science lab. Curators are required to wear gloves. Absolutely no pens allowed. The 10-foot-tall, compact-storage units look more like bank vaults than closets.

Yet the moment Sauro opens one of the massive units filled with 256 years of dresses, cloaks, undergarments, hats, gloves, shoes, and purses, the space comes alive. It's a tweed, glitter-filled dream come true for vintage shoppers.

The oldest piece, a man's waistcoat, dates to 1757; the most recent acquisition is a pair of Giuseppe Zanotti booties.

In between are a bevy of high-style artifacts: romantic day dresses from the 1850s, candy-colored wool coats from the 1960s courtesy of Norman Norell.

There are Pucci skirts, Chanel suits, and cocktail dresses à la Hubert de Givenchy. Bohemian looks from the 1970s give way to 1980s glitz. And a mint green Chanel miniskirt and jacket is very Heather Locklear 1990s.

Drawers are filled with accessories: satin scarves, T-strap shoes, little bags — it's endless.

“It's really nice when you can see the pieces chronologically,” Sauro said. “You can see the important color palettes of the time and the evolution of the silhouettes.”

My favorite of the group: a scarlet cocktail dress with oversize psychedelic flow-



This bootie by Giuseppe Zanotti is the collection's most recent acquisition.

A men's waistcoat from 1757 is the oldest piece in the Drexel collection.

ELIZABETH ROBERTSON / Staff Photographer

ers, circa 1960.

Far out.

The university spent about \$850,000 on the high-tech storage space, according to Allen Sabinson, dean of the university's Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts and Design. The idea, he said, is to pull from the grouping for fashion exhibitions and to be a go-to research facility for couture, ready-to-wear, and costume designers.

The collection was started in the 1890s by Drexel's founder, A.J. Drexel. Among the early inclusions are the teeny-waisted flapper dresses that belonged to his granddaughter, Amanda Drexel Fell Cassatt.

Over the years, Sauro said, graduates

and friends of the university — typically with enough room to store spare wardrobes in country houses — donated their pieces.

While there is a wealth of items from the turn of the 20th century to the 1930s, there is a dearth in the 1930 and 1940s, when the Great Depression and World War II forced even the rich to wear their clothing until it was close to threadbare.

The collection is pretty flush with clothes from the 1960s to now, which gives a great fashion chronology of women's climb up the corporate ladder.

“These pieces are valuable parts of American history,” said Amy Finkel, an antiques collector and friend of the university, whose donations include several pieces from the 1980s.

Sauro — the keeper of the collection — came to Drexel in 2008 from New York's Fashion Institute of Technology, where she worked as an associate curator for its historic collection.

Her father was a regional sales manager with a passion for aviation history, and her mother was a facilities manager for IBM.

“I think that's why I'm not afraid to manage big spaces,” Sauro said.

Or big thoughts. When it comes to style history, Sauro is a walking encyclopedia, an expert in everything from the history of pockets to the origins of lace. Certainly, it's a good time to be in the vintage costume business, what with the pop-culture love affair with all things '20s and midcentury. But what does Sauro think of all that?

“I stopped watching *Downton Abbey* because the clothing was just wrong,” Sauro said. Although the time period was correct, hemlines and waistlines were off; she may have even seen some Spandex gloves. “It's too early to comment on *The Great Gatsby* movie, but *Mad Men* got it right.”

And with a collection spanning two centuries under her care, I'm pretty sure I believe her.

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Children's Film Festival wins Arts Alive grant

It is one of 21 projects funded through the initiative, which is ending after five years.

By Stephan Salisbury
INQUIRER CULTURE WRITER

The city's first film festival aimed at children and a family art-making festival run in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts are among the 21 projects funded through the PNC Arts Alive initiative, which is

concluding the \$5 million program's five-year life with this round of grants.

Over the course of the five years, Arts Alive has awarded 122 grants to 55 arts organizations in the Philadelphia and South Jersey region.

“The creativity of Philadelphia's arts sector is

clearly evident in the innovative programs by PNC Arts Alive grantees,” Bill Mills, PNC regional president for Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey, said in a statement.

“We set out to make the arts more accessible and challenged arts groups to help people experience art in new ways — to engage them now and in the future. The region's performing arts community has de-

livered.”

Results from the first- and second-year grantees suggest the effectiveness of Arts Alive funding, officials said.

In the first year, 2009-10, 73 percent of the projects increased attendance, while also attracting a new and more diverse audience to arts and cultural programs and events. In the second year, all funded organizations reported that

their grants were effective in broadening audiences, Arts Alive officials said.

In the case of this year's \$36,000 grant to the Philadelphia Film Society to mount November's Philadelphia Children's Film Festival, for instance, the funds will help subsidize ticket prices, officials said. Thirty percent of the tickets to the three-day fest will be complimentary and distributed through vari-

ous organizations.

The festival will be devoted solely to presentation of animated, live-action, and experimental shorts and features for children ages three to 18.

For a full list of grants, visit the Arts Alive website at www.pncartsalive.com.

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