

Ready, Set, Get Inspired: The Top 20 Image Makers Share Their Most Pinnable Projects

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From photographing past presidents to capturing the irreplaceable bond between a woman and her guide dog, the On The Rise winners in the image makers category are creating some of the most powerful visual content we see today. But what really amazes us? Each artists' story is just as inspiring as the images they create. We're excited to share what makes them tick, how they got to where they are today and their top 20 most pin-worthy projects.



“At the age of 30, I found myself face-up, on a hospital gurney, staring at the ceiling in an emergency room, as a swarm of concerned doctors and nurses called a stroke code on me. Paralyzed and helpless, it was the single most frightening experience of my life. The 80-hour work weeks and the stress of my corporate job as my agency’s youngest-ever Vice President had caught up with me. After I recovered, I knew I needed a change. When I saw that the women that had done the flowers for my wedding were doing the flowers for a fine art film photography workshop in France, I was inexplicably drawn to it. I had never even held a camera before, but I reached out to the lead photographer and asked if I could join. So, I rented my gear and off to France I went. It’s no exaggeration to say that the week-long retreat was life-changing for me. I came back so rejuvenated and inspired. But, my fate was sealed when I got my film scans back. I was completely blown away by the images I had created. Within 6 months, I left my corner office and the 6-figure salary that went with it behind and started my own business.”

Christina Piombetti, Christina Piombetti Photography

Founder & CEO

“I have a passion for providing images to companies looking to be more inclusive in their marketing who previously didn’t have much to choose from. Eye for Ebony is only 11 months old, but it’s been viewed over 20 million times since I posted the first image. Major Fortune 500 companies using my images proved to me there’s a demand for images that capture all shades of life. I’m just thrilled I get to be a part of making that happen.”

LaShonda Brown Delivuk, Eye for Ebony

Photographer & Creative Director

“I’ve been privileged enough to have been to so many amazing places and countries in this world, but the most special place I’ve worked is this tiny little room in Glenn Memorial Hall on the Emory University campus. It was in this room where I sat with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, making small talk before he spoke to the bigger crowd. It was also in this room where Assoc. Justice Sotomayor and I talked about the devastation on her home island of Puerto Rico, and where she invited me to ignore all of the ‘rules’ from her office and follow her throughout her speech to photograph as many people with her as possible. Those little moments were pinch-me moments I’ll never forget.”

Annalise Kaylor, Annalise Kaylor Photography – Two Ears Creative

Photographer and Producer

“Love Not Lost is a nonprofit with a mission to celebrate life, preserve memories, and support people in grief. We provide free portrait sessions to people facing a terminal diagnosis along with a beautiful photo album to allow their loved ones to be supported in grief and share memories with the generations to come. In the 21 months she was here, [my daughter] Skylar taught me how to love in the midst of pain, how to value the present moment, how to be grateful with every breath, and how to be a healthy person who can help others. Being her mom has been the greatest accomplishment of my life. Launching Love Not Lost is an extension of Skylar’s impact on my life, and watching it grow to serve so many people is another accomplishment I am very proud of.”

Ashley Jones, Love Not Lost

Founder, Executive Director

“From a work perspective, I’m best known for my debut feature documentary, ‘Adele and Everything After’, the story of Marty, a woman with an untreatable heart condition that made her faint every day, and her transformational relationship with Adele, one of the world’s first cardiac alert service dogs. I documented Marty and Adele’s story for more than 2 years, and spent 2017 sharing the film at festivals all across the country, where it played to sold-out audiences and picked up a number of awards. Early in 2018, the movie was released by Gravitas Ventures and it’s available to watch on VOD platforms like iTunes and Amazon, on cable TV and on DVD and Blu-ray.”

Melissa Dowler, Long Haul Films

Co-founder and Director

“My images have gone viral all around the world with 2 photo series. One was a series with my rescue dog and baby called ‘Zoey and Jasper,’ and the second was a series about dogs before and after their wildly unique haircuts called ‘HAIRY.’ I’ve had photoshoots with celebrities like Chris Pratt and even dog celebrities like Boo. But the thing I’m most proud of is that I have this unusual career at all. I was on track to become a doctor and have my undergrad degree in biology. I’m so thankful to have followed my inner compass and allowed it to lead me to where I am today.”

Grace Chon, Grace Chon Inc.

Photographer, Author

“My latest project is called ‘My Father’s Hands.’ I conceptualized this shoot from the perspective of a son. To these sons, their father is their hero and these fathers carry the responsibility of showing them how to grow into a man. I also wanted to combat the ‘absent black father’ narrative, as there are millions of black dads working hard to be great examples for their sons.”

Mark Clennon, Mark Clennon Creative

Photographer

“I was the first person to start floral milk bath photography for maternity. I had never seen anything like that done before and was desperate to create something different than what I shoot all the time. I remember shooting it and saying to my client, “This could be the ugliest shoot ever, I have no idea, but I’m going to try anyway.” I had no idea the photo would be beautiful, and no idea that anyone else in the industry would want to do sessions like this, too. I enjoy seeing other’s work and their take on milk baths. Some of the milk bath photos out there are so jaw-dropping and inspiring, I could learn from them!”

Tiffany Burke, Tiffany Burke Photography

Business Owner, Photographer, Consultant

“I would describe my work as approachable and relatable. I strive to capture the human condition through my own experiences and share my story with others who can relate.”

Samir Chaudry, Colin and Samir

Online Video Creator

“I am best known for The Queen Photographers—a national community of women of color photographers aiming to equip each other in business and foster a supportive sisterhood. The Queen Photographers is a result of that saying, ‘create what you wish you had.’ We started as a Facebook group of about 30 women only in South Carolina. As we grew and invited more members, held more meet-ups and workshops, people started to notice what we were doing in South Carolina. We were then being asked to come to Atlanta, Charlotte, and beyond. Because of this, we decided to legally form as The Queen Photographers and now have over 10 chapters across the country. Today, The Queen Photographers offers coaching services in addition to the community-building activities.”

Latoya Dixon Smith, Latoya Dixon Photography

Owner + Lead Photographer

“Given that it was 14 years ago, and I was 20 years old when I first started, I just wanted to take ‘cool’ photos of cars. Through the years, it took growing as a person and repeating the act of photography over and over again to learn what was most important to me in the creative process. In time, it wasn’t making a ‘cool’ photo that mattered, but learning what photography could mean for me and my subjects and how it could help them remember a moment in their life or document a feeling for years to come. I’ve become obsessed with the idea and the practice of communicating everything about a person in one photo. The psychology of the creative process and how I connect with people has become more important to me than the technique of physically using the camera.”

Justin Haugen, Justin Haugen Photography

Owner

“I recently did a shoot in the Black Rock Desert (known for Burning Man) with an amazing couple. The desert landscape is truly awe inspiring— shimmering mirages across the vast lakebed, windstorms full of dust hundreds of feet high, sparse vegetation, only to be dotted with natural hot springs and some of nature’s best formations. It was one of the most beautiful and surreal places I’ve ever done a shoot, and I will be returning again and again in the future.”

Carly Jurach, Someplace Images

Owner/Photographer

After planning my own queer wedding in 2012, it became clear to me that I was meant to focus on the LGBTQ+ community. The exhaustion and anxiety around outing myself to every vendor, the worry of how they’d respond, and the fear of rejection are things I wouldn’t wish on anyone. I knew I wanted to make a difference, and as a photographer, I could. And so, the following year I overhauled my business and have gone on to photograph countless LGBTQ+ couples and individuals. The most unique place I’ve photographed is Treehouse Point in Washington. This private retreat center was gorgeous, intimate, and my couple married in the river there. It was so lovely.

Cassandra Niehaus, Cassandra Zetta

Owner/Photographer

“I think what I’m best known for, or the one thing that people tell me most often, is my ability to make my subjects relax and feel comfortable and confident in front of the camera. I try to foster a super casual environment with my clients by building a sincere friendship with them, asking them tons of questions and getting to know what makes them unique and special. That really helps diffuse how awkward and even scary it can be to have a giant camera pointed at your face and actually transform the experience into a fun and memorable one.”

Jess Onesto, Cheers Babe Photo

Owner/Photographer

“My style of boudoir is a little different from most I’ve seen. It’s soft and comfortable instead of sexy and for a man. My boudoir sessions are for her. During these sessions I’ve had women crying after I’ve shown them an image. We talk about our insecurities and our fears. We hug and share our dreams. I’ve had women come to me after years in an abusive relationship and to see the change in them after we have talked just makes my heart so full. Not only have I been able to help them, but they have helped me overcome so much of my own insecurities and fears.”

Kim Lyn Chauvin, Kim Lyn Photography

Girlboss/CEO/Mama/Owner/Photographer

“I am so passionate about serving my clients that I actually make them sign a line on their contract that says we’ll be friends. I believe that you don’t invite strangers into yours most intimate moments in life and as such I devote countless hours getting to know both my photography and mentoring clients. In the end we are family.”

Amber Robinson, Images by Amber Robinson

Owner/Photographer/Memory Maker

“I specialize in branded videos for wellness and spiritual entrepreneurs that create meaningful impact: videos that are beautiful, create connection through an emotional narrative, but anchored in strategic objectives. I’m writing this from my hotel in Ulaanbataar, Mongolia, where I’m about to shoot a documentary for a client, Liv Wheeler, who’s an international ritual facilitator. We’ll travel by jeep and horseback to meet with shamans along the way, then finally meeting the Dukha people of the White Reindeer: the last nomadic peoples on earth. The documentary will follow a 1500-mile pilgrimage where we’ll explore the impact of modernity, and

learn how ancestral traditions may still serve us in our modern day. The film will also discuss the fine balance between the masculine and feminine, and how we can bring balance in a world seemingly so driven by capitalism and commerce.”

Emmy Wu, Emmy Wu Media LLC

Chief Storyteller | Videographer | Video Marketing Strategist

“While I was in college I was shooting weddings on the weekends and had my social/school life on weekdays. I always felt confined to being JUST a photographer on social media because every other photographer was only posting behind-the-scenes of what they were working on, before & afters of their editing, etc. But that wasn’t my whole life. I was a college kid and a business owner, and I felt so stuck only showing my “professional” side, when I had this whole other (super fun) side to my life! So I started posting on Snapchat of the nights I went out with my friends, being in the library till 2 a.m., and happy hours on Thursdays. I was so SO scared that people would judge me and think I’m not professional, but so many people loved watching my crazy life and it inspired them to share more of their lives! If you ever think you are oversharing on social media, just know that I literally documented over a month of a rat infestation in my apartment and thousands of people watched it like it was a reality TV show, HA!”

Madison Short, Madison Short Photography

Owner

“You can’t compare your beginning to someone else’s middle. Instagram is a great way for new photographers to learn and to jump start their businesses. However, it is also a dangerous place for self-doubt. Stop comparing yourself to others. Instead, observe and learn from others to see what you can do to improve yourself.”

Henry Tieu, Henry Tieu Photography

Wedding Photographer

“I work during the day at Hurley as a Digital Marketing Director, and on nights and weekends I photograph couples and weddings. Since I launched my photography business two years ago, I’ve been committed to helping people along the way through Instagram live interviews, articles on my site, mentor sessions and giving back 25% of my profits to the charity of my client’s choice. I used to be confused why people teach when there’s not much money in teaching. I always looked at my teachers a bit perplexed. Like why not go out and make money pursuing your passion? It wasn’t until I started mentoring people that I have seen the reward and joy you get in helping others and watching them succeed. Don’t worry about your own success as much, there are no goals you’ll reach that will ever feel as satisfying as helping others does.”

Tony Woodarck, Tony Woodarck LLC

Photographer

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