

Photographer & Stylist, Juj Winn

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"I believe color is contextual and I love different colors for different things."

[Beth LaFrenier]: When did you fall in love with color?

[Juj Winn]: I have always loved color. A new box of crayons was one of my favorite things as a kid. At one point, I even wanted to work in the Ink and Paint Department at Disney when I grew up.

[BL]: Describe your work in three words?

[JW]: Whimsical. Colorful. Considered.

[BL]: Where are you currently drawing inspiration from?

[JW]: I just got back from a trip west with my partner, so right now my brain is full of palm trees and cacti, but spring is also starting to make an appearance here, so I've been thinking a lot about florals. And of course, every time we take a road trip I try to add a couple more vintage signs to my collection. Someday I'd like to put together a whole series of them isolated on solid backgrounds in a screen printed or faux painted modernist style.

[BL]: Tell us about your set design and approach.

[JW]: I spend a lot of time thinking about how I want to shoot something and what I want it to look like, making and sourcing props to fit the idea, and then getting behind the camera and throwing most of that out the window. But seriously, usually I'll start with a rough sketch on a Post-It note and after I get that "on film" I'll start moving things around asking, "What if? What if?" until I can't think of a new answer anymore.

[BL]: What are your favorite subjects to shoot?

[JW]: I would have to say flowers are probably my favorite. They all seem to have their own unique personality, and yet, they don't intimidate me the way people do. Georgia O'Keefe said she preferred flowers over models because flowers were cheaper and couldn't move. Me too.

[BL]: What is your least favorite subject to shoot?

[JW]: Let me refer you back to the previous question! Seriously though, my least favorite would have to be myself. I'm not a fan of being on the other side of the lens.

[BL]: What are your favorite tools in your toolkit aside from your camera?

[JW]: Spray paint. And blue tac, rolls of seamless paper, and my buckets full of googly eyes and confetti.

[BL]: What would you say to people coming up through art school?

[JW]: Learn everything you can and try every technique that even vaguely interests you. Take advantage of all the tools and equipment available to you; you probably won't have access to that again. Relish this time with your peers and make lasting connections. Doctors and lawyers come out of school and go into jobs with a built-in support group of like minds. Artists don't always get so lucky. Also, really pay attention in art history, don't just memorize the flash cards. Trust me, it will come in handy someday.

[BL]: What's your favorite color?

[JW]: I believe color is contextual and I love different colors for different things. Looking at the things I've shot in the last year or so, most people assume I have a lot of pink in my home or my wardrobe, but in actuality, my living room is a mix of warm earth tones and my closet is full of a lot of black, gray and navy. I like having a shot of yellow in the office –it wakes you up and makes you smile. There are also certain shades of blue that just make me sing.

[BL]: What are you listening to?

[JW]: I know a lot of people like music to motivate them while they're in the studio, but I actually like quiet while I work. In my downtime I listen to a lot of podcasts. *This American Life* is one of my favorites, and even though some might think I'm biased, I think my partner's *Iconoclast of Things* is brilliant.

[BL]: Are you an early bird or late riser?

[JW]: I really love mornings and getting up before everyone else when the world is quiet and watching the sun come up. There is so much potential in a new day. But I tend to stay up too late to take advantage of that. I guess that means I'm an early bird in a late riser's body.

[BL]: What app can you not live without?

[JW]: Photoshop. And the native camera app on my phone. I could do without a lot of things but having an instant camera in my pocket is not one of them.

[BL]: What are your biggest challenges when shooting still life?

[JW]: For me the biggest challenge is always space and “hands.” I have a pretty small space that I shoot in, and it’s full of all my props as well, so I’m constantly tripping over stuff. I would love a huge empty room where I could back up and look at what I’m doing from a bit of distance, or where I could just set up something crazy and not have to worry about whether it would fit. The other thing that I struggle with is that I literally don’t have enough hands to do some of the things I want to do. When you have to be the one drizzling the chocolate sauce from out of frame, the hand model for the sundae spoon in frame, looking through the viewfinder, scooching the bowl a millimeter to the right, and pressing the shutter all at the same time it can get a bit tricky.

[BL]: Do you find social media a benefit or a hindrance?

[JW]: Social media is definitely a double-edged sword. I love the connections I’ve made through social media, and I’ve had a lot of opportunities come my way from people seeing my work on [Instagram](#), but it takes a lot of time and attention— sometimes to the detriment of the work — and I’ve definitely been guilty of allowing it to influence what I post on occasion. It’s easy to get sucked into “likes” and followers and engagement rates and to let those define the worth of the work you are doing. My goal right now is to try and remember to just trust myself, and to create things that I like and feel authentic to me. It’s hard to shut out the noise, but I think it’s important to at least try.