

About Me: Gina Risso Photography

My first photo shoot was in the summer of 1976. I was 10 and my model—my sister, Annie—was 7. My camera: my dad's 110. That summer, the fashion magazines had begun calling my name. Sure, when I flipped through them I imagined images of myself splashed across those glossy pages, but more than that, I wanted to be behind the camera. I wanted to know what had gone on behind the scenes to create such beautiful pictures.

My sister and I collaborated well on that photo shoot. We picked out sassy outfits, chose the perfect location (the front yard) and backdrop (our favorite walnut tree), and even applied a little bit of makeup (watermelon-flavored lip gloss, as I remember it). Needless to say, when the prints finally came back from the lab, it wasn't exactly Vogue cover material. Still, that first photo shoot triggered an unquenchable appetite within me for capturing life with my lens.

After college, I spent my days traveling and catching every moment and impression with my camera. Hong Kong, Indonesia, Australia, South Africa, Russia—41 countries in all—each place presented new images and new opportunities for me to learn about film, composition, and light. When I wasn't traveling, I took photography classes and discovered the dark room. The dark room. I would spend hours in there, intrigued by the seemingly magical powers I had over the images that floated in the tray in front of me. Later, I returned to school full time for an intensive two-year program studying photography and graphic design at the Academy of Art, San Francisco.

All of my experiences and education prepared me well for work in the industry, and I've done it all. I've been a production assistant on commercials, a location manager for film and television, a manager for a commercial photo studio, a commercial photo producer, and a photo editor. I have worked in the art department on feature films and have delivered extensive photo production services, from assembling crews and booking talent to set design, location scouting, talent booking, and photo retouching.

In 2003, I started my own photography business. In the beginning, I paid the bills by taking any photography opportunity that came my way, while also moonlighting as a photography assistant and photo producer. I shot weddings, headshots, events, a few small commercial projects, and lots of kids.

After a while I realized that, of all my work, what I enjoyed most was the art of photographing children. They never followed directions; they're super silly, ridiculously cute, and have great smiles and laughs. I preferred shooting expressions, lighting, and scenarios that were natural, not too staged. That was to become my focus for the next decade and more.

Flash forward to 2015, and here I am with a small studio in Sausalito, 2 kids in elementary school, and a better sense of my own style. I still love working with kids—the unaffected naturalness they can bring to a project continues to inspire me. I've also come to appreciate the different pace and energy of shooting interiors and have expanded my focus. But, just as in my work with children, my aim with interiors is to bring the life and energy of my subject into the image I produce.

No matter what my subject is—an 8 year old with bowl of chocolate ice cream or a sleek modern living room—with every project and at every opportunity I turn my lens to the world seeking to capture a moment in time, to capture life as it happens...