


MEREDITH JENKS

Interview by Tina Essmaker

Photo by Jen Dessinger

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Meredith Jenks is a New York-based commercial photographer whose photos range from quiet fashion portraits to energy-filled action shots. Her clients include Converse, Nike, The New Yorker, and Bloomberg Business Week, among others. When she is not shooting for work, she is probably taking iPhone photos of her dog, Mouse.

Tell me about your path to becoming a photographer.

My dad is an oil landscape painter, so I was exposed to art while growing up. My dad took us to museums often and I did my first oil painting when I was seven years old.

Growing up, I wanted to be a fashion designer. My grandparents both thought that was cute, so when I was 10, they got me a subscription to Vogue. So, from a young age, I was exposed to fashion and fashion photographers. I noticed Helmut Newton's photos early on. Those were the ones that really stuck out to me in the magazine. That's when I realized that there were people who made that imagery.

Where did you grow up?

We moved around. We lived in England for a year before we moved to Sedona, Arizona, for seven years, and then ended up in Northern California. I went to middle school in Mendocino and then went to Cate School, a boarding school near Santa Barbara, which was an interesting little twist.

While at boarding school, I took a photo class on a whim. For most people, it was a slacker class, but I was into it. When the class started, I thought, "Well, maybe I won't actually become a fashion designer. Maybe I'll become involved by shooting it." I still really loved fashion, and thought it was magical to be able to create those scenarios on the pages.



And you're not riding the wave all of the time. It can be a roller coaster.

Right now I'm definitely financially stable and I've paid off most of my credit cards and I just bought an apartment. I did well enough over the past two years that I accomplished all of those things. In the back of my mind, I still think, "Any minute the phone could stop ringing." It's scary. Because of past struggles, I work harder and don't rest on my laurels.

Moving to New York has been good for me. I'm a social person and I've met so many people here. It's been helpful to talk to people in person—I'm no longer an anonymous person who lives across the country. I also got a great agent when I moved here. On top of that, I have been shooting for ten years now, so I am more confident and don't freak out about jobs.