

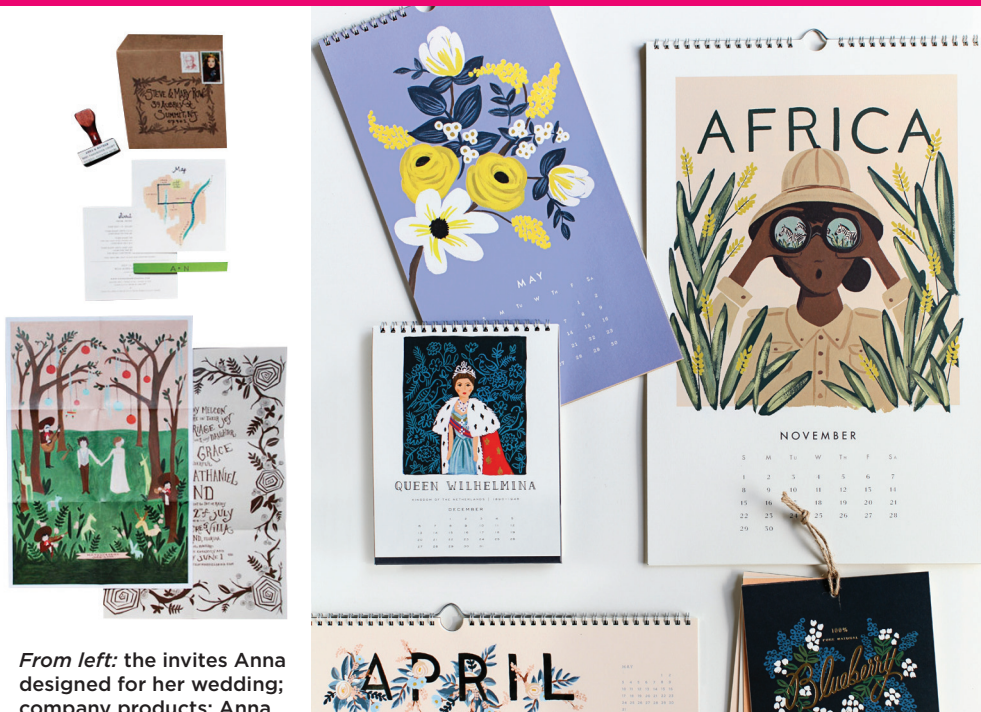
real **LIFE**

INSPIRING STORIES. GREAT READS. EVERYDAY ADVICE.

HOW SHE DOES IT

CASHING IN ON CARDS

Rifle Paper Co.'s Anna Bond is building a booming stationery business, one pretty brushstroke at a time



From left: the invites Anna designed for her wedding; company products; Anna



WHEN HER MUSICIAN BOYFRIEND, Nathan, popped the question in 2008, freelance illustrator Anna Bond couldn't wait to create their wedding invites. "A few friends had asked me to do theirs for their weddings. I loved designing something that fit their personalities," Anna says. "Our reception was going to be full of color. I wanted the invites to reflect that." She painted a vibrant portrait of Nathan and herself. "Guests loved them!"

Within days of posting pics of the invitations on Flickr, Anna received dozens of e-mail requests from brides-to-be. With her inbox bursting, she began thinking about making more products. By 2009, she had 30 clients and decided to go for it, teaming with Nathan to launch their paper goods brand, Rifle Paper Co. "I wanted a quick, short word for our company name," she says. "You can 'rifle' through paper, so it was a nod to that!" Today Anna and Nathan manage 150 employees, and sales of their products (which range from cards to calendars to gift wrap) have topped the million-dollar mark. Anna told *GH* about what inspires her — and the perks of working with her main squeeze. — *Rachel Bowie*

STARTING OUT "We were staying in Nathan's parents' garage apartment rent-free and living off cash we'd received as wedding gifts, the money I'd earned making invites for friends and my freelance work creating posters for music venues. That money helped us pay to print our first set of products. I sketched the first collection at my desk in our bedroom, and Nathan cut paper and packaged things. We scraped by."

FIRST UH-OH "Etsy is a great tool for artists, but I decided to have my own website built to give us more credibility; we wanted to come out strong as a brand. But the day the site went live, everything went wrong: We picked up our card inventory and it was unusable [because of a printer error]. Orders were flooding in, but we couldn't fill them quickly. Nathan had a meltdown, and I broke out in hives! But we got through it. We persevered."

DAY IN THE LIFE "My day begins at noon and usually ends after midnight, sometimes as late as 3 A.M.; I do my creative work after everyone leaves. I hand-paint all our products using watercolor paper and gouache, which is like watercolors, but more opaque. Then I scan the paintings and tweak colors in Adobe Photoshop. If I'm really pushing, I can do three cards a day. My inspiration comes from my travels and fashion — plus, I *love* florals."

CELEB LOVE "This month we're launching our first fashion collaboration, with Lauren Conrad's clothing brand Paper Crown. There are three patterns. I'm excited to see how people react to our stuff on clothes. We're also trying to do more home and gift products."

GO, TEAM! "Nathan has always overseen the business side — pricing, things like that. His dad owned a small insurance company, so he leaned on him for general business advice. For everything else, Google was our best friend! The best part of working with him is that I trust him completely. We observe one rule, though: No work talk when we wake up. Coffee first!"

ANNA BOND

Age: 30

Current home: Winter Park, FL

Family: Husband Nathan, 29

Guilty pleasure: "The Vampire Diaries. I'm not ashamed!"

Favorite way to unwind: "Sitting in my living room, drinking wine or watching a movie with Nathan."

Go-to gadget: "I'm a Mac girl, but I just got a Surface Pro 3, which has a pen and Photoshop. It's always by my side."

Wishes she had more time to: Cook. "Right now it's, 'Here's pasta; there's sauce in the fridge.' Not a meal for Instagram!"