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FALL 2008  
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# House of CARDS

Can't tell your thermography from your lithography? We sat down with a top executive of CRANE & CO. to talk TYPESTYLES, INKS, and why your wedding stationery speaks volumes about your style and personality.

TEXT BY *Jennifer Miranda* PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Johnny Miller*



## Megan Kuntze

business  
Crane & Co.

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Timeless personalized stationery, from invitations to thank-you notes, printed on the finest quality papers; elegant custom engraving; 200-plus years of experience.

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Creating your invitation is “almost like creating your own brand,” says Kuntze, who is the brand director at Crane & Co. **LEMON FRAME LETTERPRESS SUITE**, by *Kate Spade for Crane & Co.*, \$1,560 FOR 100, CRANE.COM.

### Why is printed stationery so important when it comes to weddings?

Your wedding is a monumental celebration, and its announcement should convey all the excitement you feel; the tactile sensation of paper in hand is a big part of it. Putting words on fine paper makes a personal connection, and it shows how much you value that person. I have to say, I didn't know how to respond the day I received my first wedding e-vite. Thankfully, most invitations today are still printed on paper despite the immense popularity of electronic communications.

### What should you look for in a reputable stationer?

Visit as many stationers as you can to determine where you're going to get the best service and the most personal attention. They should carry several different styles of wedding stationery to give you the greatest range

of design options. They should also be able to walk you through the entire process, balancing the desire to impart the wisdom of their experience with your needs.

### When should you book someone?

You want enough time to plan everything from the save-the-dates to the menu cards. To make it a fun, stress-free experience, sit down with your stationer 8 to 12 months before and describe your wedding—location, time, number of guests, small details about yourself and the groom, and what you want design-wise.

### When should you mail invitations?

Remember, the bride and groom aren't the only ones making plans. You can mail save-the-dates up to a year before your wedding, especially if you're having a destination wedding; invitations themselves should go out six to eight weeks before the date.



Clockwise from top left: Typestyles will help dictate your design; your stationer should have a variety to choose from. A custom monogram is a classic motif and can be repeated on invitations, menu cards, and thank-you notes. Crane & Co. offers custom hand-lined envelopes in colors and patterns to coordinate with your invitation suite.

### *Where should you begin?*

Choose a theme that's iconic or special to you and your husband-to-be, and consistently express it through the quality of the paper, print style [see page 168], color of the ink, a unique graphic element, or even a certain typestyle. Cut out things you like from magazines and flip through sample invitations provided by your stationer. You should be able to experiment and see what your invitations will look like in many different styles. Many brides start the process on the Web, using tools like the ones in our online Design Center.

### *What trends are you seeing now?*

About 80 percent of Crane's brides choose classic white or ecru paper, but there's been an explosion in color being used to reflect the tone of the wedding. Black, navy, and espresso are popular; in fact, black paper has emerged as very formal. As far as ink, copper ink is stunning on espresso paper, as are white ink on flame-red paper and ecru ink on aqua paper. But the important thing to remember is that you've got to use color tastefully.

### *Is there a trend you don't like?*

If a bride wants to print her registry information on her invitation, we'll pull her back and tell her it's not the place for it.

### *What's a popular design element?*

Many couples are creating duograms, unique graphic elements that combine the initials of the bride's and groom's first names. But sometimes it's the most subtle design elements that are the most beautiful. Hand-beveled or -gilded edges and hand-painting all add beauty. Another option is adding calligraphy on the invitation itself.

### *What are your paper options?*

Definitely pay attention to the quality of the paper. Most paper is made from wood pulp, but we use 100-percent cotton paper, which has a creamier, more luxurious feel. Of course, the heavier the paper, the more substantial the statement you're making, and, increasingly, we're seeing a lot of brides go for the thicker stocks. Most of our stationery is made from a heavyweight 96-pound stock, but you can play around with thickness to fit your needs.

### *What if a bride wants to go green?*

As far as paper types, there are two options: recycled and tree-free. If you choose recycled,

## EXPERT ADVICE

use paper that's made up of no less than 30 percent post-consumer content. Tree-free papers like our 100-percent cotton papers are a good option because they're made from recovered cotton fibers discarded from the textile industry. Brides can also choose soy-based inks that have been made with a greener footprint than that of regular inks. Finally, she can minimize the amount of paper used by losing the inner envelope entirely. Or adopt a practical design: a postcard reply card eliminates the need for an envelope.

### *What are some other pieces to include in the stationery suite?*

Weddings are becoming weekend-long events. Maybe you need a map of the area, a list of weekend activities for guests, or wedding

pockets to hold all these pieces. It's not essential to have them match, but it does make a nice statement when they do. We're also seeing the return of an old tradition: within-the-ribbon cards. They're sent to select guests the bride and groom would like to have seated in the first few pews, usually cordoned off with a ribbon, during the ceremony.

### *How many extras should I order?*

It seems excessive, but ordering 25 extra invitations is very practical: Guest lists change over the course of an engagement, invitations get lost in the mail, calligraphers tend to need extras, and you may want to keep some as mementos. Brides are creating scrapbooks for themselves, their families, or bridesmaids; the invitation is often the first piece in that.



A typical suite includes an invitation and reply card, both with envelopes, and an outer envelope, but other pieces can be added. Weigh everything together to ensure the proper postage. Above: GOLD-BEVELED SUITE, "Royalty" by Crane & Co., \$2,400 FOR 100. Top right: HAND-BORDERED SUITE, "Yellow Poppy" by Kate Spade for Crane & Co., \$1,920 FOR 100.



### FIT TO PRINT

Except for the save-the-date card, the invitation is your guests' first glimpse of the kind of wedding you're throwing. So be sure to choose a printing method that's as formal—or as casual—as your affair.

#### *Engraving*

It's the crème de la crème of printing types. Each invitation is hand-fed and pressed out from the back, creating raised type on the front of the paper. It's also the only process that retains its crispness on dark paper.

#### *Letterpress*

A plate is pressed into the invitation, leaving a deep impression in the paper. It is the opposite of engraving.

#### *Thermography*

A resinous powder raises flat ink and gives type a shiny appearance. It's a great option for brides who want the elegant look of engraving without the hefty price tag.

#### *Lithography*

The most common and affordable printing method, lithography is simply flat, or offset, printing that is neither raised nor imprinted.