



beth forester:

BY CHARMAINE BELEELE

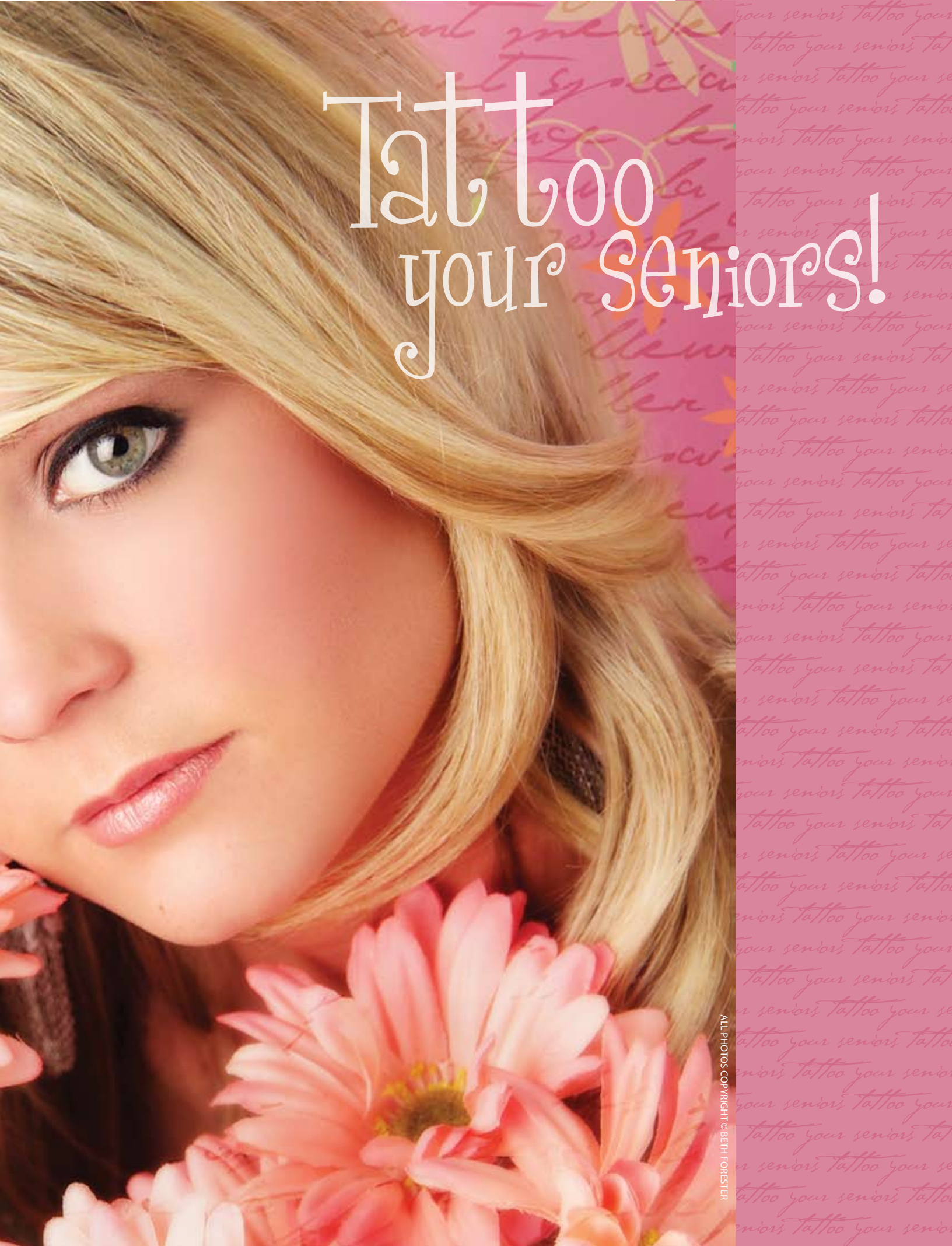
One day, Christie, a high school senior client of mine, breezed into my studio. She swept by my computer, stopped and squealed, “You’ve got tattoos! Wow, my girlfriend in LA got these on her senior pictures. Look at that; it’s soooooo cute! Can I get those on my pictures?” On the screen were some artistic accents created especially for professional photographers, trade-named PhotoDUDS (which stands for Digital Unique Designs). I did not think of the floral swirls in the software as tattoos, but as Christie leaned over my computer screen, revealing the butterfly motifs inked on her spine, I understood.

The designs that inspired Christie’s excitement were the work of photographer Beth Forester of West Virginia. I was experimenting with her PhotoDUDS software—one of the ingredients in the five recipes Beth Forester uses to cook up a hot market for her senior photography!

Forester’s Recipe Number 1

Image is everything. Presentation is the key. Beth’s inspiration for PhotoDUDS came in three parts. It all began when she was creating a senior album for a competition. She decided she wanted to design something that would really be fresh and original. Her adventures in graphic design began with a few backgrounds and original graphic elements for that album. Beth says, “I had been adding original and time-consuming graphic accents to composite gallery pieces for several years. However, this creation process was proving to be very tedious.”

Tattoo your Seniors!



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When Beth Forester added graphic elements to album pages like this one, she became inspired to create her own graphic arts software for professional photographers.

Beth eventually found similar digital elements available for artistic scrapbooking projects on the Internet. There is currently a scrapbooking phenomenon sweeping through households all over America. The scrapbookers are mostly mothers, and those same moms buy photography! "However, be aware that the majority of the digital brushes and elements available at scrapbooking sites are protected by copyright laws," Beth says. They are for moms, not for professional or commercial use.

Beth's third source of inspiration came from the new trends in graphic art happening all around her. She noticed delicate brushwork and curvilinear design in many marketing campaigns, including tattoo art,

magazine ads, television commercials and even on her own Diet Coke can. From these three sources of inspiration, she developed her idea for the PhotoDUDS product.

For artistic consultation, Beth teamed up with professional graphic artist Diane Miller (www.dinnysdesigns.com). Diane, or Dinny as she's better known, gave graphic expression to Beth's digital vision. "She cooks up the artistic technology to create effects based on the concepts we discuss," Beth says.

The pair started by creating backgrounds to be placed into Photoshop layers. They then followed with the creation of the elegant swirls and floral designs that would comprise the designs for brushes, embellishments and frames. Best of all, Beth says,

"These elements are licensed for commercial use and designed with professional photographers in mind."

Beth adds, "In addition to the backgrounds, brushes and embellishments, we also developed overlays that incorporate different types of textures or designs. Photographers can use them quickly on senior images in Photoshop with a layer mask to keep the designs or textured effects off areas like the face or the eyes. They can also be placed on a colored background to create original papers for marketing pieces."

With the exception of a few specialized templates, Beth's PhotoDUDS are designed in a user-friendly manner, to be used free-style. With the PhotoDUDS and some basic Photoshop skills, photographers can easily create customized designer galleries, composites, albums, announcements and artistic images. In the world of a successful studio, a photographer must balance creativity with ease and speed. That is the role of PhotoDUDS.

Forester's Recipe Number 2

"Offer unique photo products!" With both her products and seminars, Beth guides photographers to discover their inner designer. She also feeds the need for new products. For example, one of the DVDs includes a Gallery Mat that holds three 5x7 portraits in a simple floral design.

Far Left: Forester's recipe of digital effects: Sepia toning in Photoshop, plus a simple grunge overlay and easy brushwork created using PhotoDUDS software.

Left: Forester's Recipe: A simple PhotoDUDS background, Photoshop personalization and PhotoDUDS embellishments.





How to Tattoo a High School Senior!

No needles and no pain! This is graphic design, but the brush strokes are similar to the fantasy art popular on the spines, arms and ankles of many 21st-century young people. Your first step is to visit www.photoduds.com and download any one of four software packages, three of which are named Fresh, Sunshine and Modish. These sets include backgrounds, overlays and brushes, among other elements. The fourth one, PhotoDUDles, includes only brushes.

To begin, open the file of brushes, load them into Photoshop and select the brush of your choice. Now you are poised for tattooing, and it will be over before you know it! Open your document, and in the Layers palette, select a new layer. Now you can move your tattoo around to different places on the image. With the brush tool, adjust the size of the tattoo and click once to imprint. The design can be accentuated by choosing different Layer Effects from the Layer palette. Beth says, "Click on the drop shadow to enrich the edges and add bevel and emboss for a 3D effect." Voila! "Depending on your price structure, with two or three quick clicks of the mouse, you have added at least \$10 to \$50 for brushwork or design elements to the price of the print."

Photoshop Café: Quick Snacks for the Hungry Senior Market!

High-contrast black and white: Beth does not believe that you have to cook up complicated Photoshop dishes to gratify your seniors' taste and style. High-contrast black and white is as tasty as a chocolate sundae and almost as easy to create. Beth advises beginning with an already converted black-and-white image. "Click on Layer > Duplicate Layer and set the layer Blending Mode to Screen." (Do not worry if it looks very strange, the next steps will correct it.) Repeat, setting the new layer's Blending Mode to Soft Light. "I usually drop the opacity of the Screen layer until the desired effect is achieved," Beth says. The result will be cool, creamy white with nice, rich blacks.

Sweet, sweet soft focus: This little Photoshop snack is sure to cook up sweet softness for a gentle face. "Go to Filter > Blur, and click Gaussian Blur, setting the radius to about 8. Secondly, Go to Edit > Fade > Gaussian Blur; here you will set opacity to approximately 20–25%. Set the mode to Lighten. Notice how this simulates a soft-focus lens filter; meanwhile, if you set it to Darken, it simulates diffusion-type darkroom printing."

Top Left: Forester's recipe: Photoshop digital effects of image frosting, selective colorization. Blue eyes inspired the PhotoDUDS brushwork on this soft black-and-white photograph.

Top: Forester's recipe: A combination of high-contrast black and white, selective colorization and Photoshop mat.

Another DVD includes a template method for creating stylish graduation announcements. Unlike many new framing and album products, this software allows a photographer to create products that can be added to a price list without investing a large amount of time or expense. Discover more about Beth's PhotoDUDS at www.photoduds.com, and take a look at the brand new product, PhotoDUDles.

Not all of the specialized products have to be produced in-house like the images with PhotoDUDS. Beth showcases special photo-jewelry, frames, GP Albums and designer folios in her studio and on her website.

Forester's Recipe Number 3

"Be sure the price is right!" Beth's senior program differs greatly from many others in the way that she has connected her creative digital effects with her pricing structure. Many studios offer a menu of sessions that include in-studio and on-location shooting with various additions à la carte, such as car shots and a black-and-white add-on session. Beth exclaims, "At Forester Photography, that's just the beginning! Seniors not only choose the type of sessions, clothing changes and add-ons,

but they also select and prepay their digital effects at booking time.”

Before booking, seniors can peruse a menu with examples of Beth’s design effects and appropriate prices. (PhotoDUDS can be applied separately or in combination with other effects.) Today, four years after organizing her unique options, many students who visit the studio know exactly what effects they desire. Friends have shown them decorated images, and they want similar work done. Some of the digital effects Beth’s seniors can choose from include simple personalization with a name or date, edge effects, and color toning such as sepia. The pricing is \$5 per effect.

The fad for touches of color on black-and-white images continues in popularity. At Forester Photography, seniors can order eyes and lips tinted within a high-contrast black-and-white print for \$5, while the tinted effect on larger or detailed objects like clothing costs \$15.

Perhaps the most popular effect among teens today is multi-image digital blending. To create these art pieces, the photographer fuses several images with one another through different opacities and the use of layer masks. It is extremely popular with Beth’s clientele, simply because each image is unique. Beth explains to her seniors that their digital blend will look somewhat like the images in her menu, but each is created in a freestyle manner so that no two images are ever exactly alike. A customized fine art piece is what every senior desires. Thus, 85% of her clients opt for this effect, which ranges from \$35 to \$75—a fee added to the cost of their session, add-ons and clothes changes.

Another popular choice is Beth’s digital composite. This art piece collects several individual images in squares or rectangles and digitally mounts them on a custom colored background.

Beth says, “Let them have it all!” Real magic is created when more than one digital effect is chosen for an image. The bonus is that the senior feels like they are taking part in the artistic creation of their portrait.

Look at www.foresterphoto.com to see more images that showcase different combinations of digital effects Beth has cooked up for her high school seniors.

Forester’s Recipe Number 4

“Proofing: Everything old is new again!” Many studios have abandoned paper proofs in favor of projection or slideshows.

However, at Forester Photography, quality paper proofs have set the standard for excellence. Depending on the size of their session package, clients might take home as many as 100 premium “first edition” previews clearly marked with the large and identifiable Forester logo. “My previews are selling tools,” Beth says.” A certain number are included in each package. Although her packages also include the usual 8x10s, 5x7s and wallets, the previews are the moneymakers. Once these mini-masterpieces make their way home, they cast an irresistible spell on teens. The seniors have invested them with their own imagination and creativity by choosing the effects at the booking. At a certain spending level, the senior automatically gets to keep all of the previews, and Beth becomes a hero. Beth’s eyes sparkle as she reveals her best kept chef’s secret. “With the first editions, I’m selling work that is already done!”

Forester’s Recipe Number 5

“Think like a teenager!” Beth has immersed herself in today’s youth culture.

“It is important to know what the seniors are seeing in movies, on MTV and in fashion magazines,” Beth says. On the day of the session, she often commits two to three hours to making her client feel special: “I work with the senior. I always assure them that they will look good in their pictures. My big goal is to make the teen feel comfortable.”

In the eyes of her clients, the beauty of Beth’s art is that no two of her pieces are identical. “Unique flavor is what every 21st-century high school senior craves! We, as 21st-century photographers, must be artists.” She adds with a wise wink, “Whether it is a photo or an entrée, when the flavor tastes right, then the dish is done!”



CharMaine Beleele, with an MA in communication, owns Angel Kissed Photography Studio in Arkansas. She teaches communication at the University of Arkansas in Fort Smith. She is also a regular correspondent for the Arkansas Catholic newspaper. Email her at photoangels@sbcglobal.com or visit her website at www.angelkissedphotography.com.

Is it real or is it PhotoDUDS?

This senior is certainly proud of his tattoo! You guessed it— it’s one of Beth’s Forester’s PhotoDUDS! No pain and not nearly as expensive as the real thing!

