



JULIA GARTLAND



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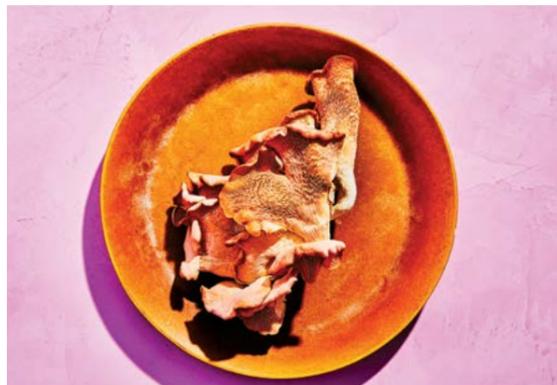
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CLIENTS: Food52, H&M, Macallan, Martha Stewart, Mercedes Benz, siggi's, Vogue

BEST ADVICE: "One of my first photo teachers I ever had used to say, 'Make the work until you find the work.' It takes into consideration the grit and unpleasantness of getting the work you've been trying to make or find. It doesn't happen easily a lot of the time, and requires returning to the same concepts and continuing to experiment, even when you're not sure where it's going."

JULIA GARTLAND WAS STUDYING fine-art photography when health issues changed the course of her career. Illness forced her to cook nearly all of the food she ate herself. She "fell in love with food and cooking," and decided to create a food blog, Sassy Kitchen, to document her experience. She was "not naturally good" at photographing food, but she enjoyed the challenge. "I was all in," she recalls. Gartland didn't completely abandon her fine-art training, however. As a student, she had been drawn to films by Godard, Fellini, Antonioni and Hitchcock, and the work of Cindy Sherman. She shows her interest in bold, graphic imagery as she creates dramatic food and still-life images.

Lacking technical training, Gartland initially found it hard to break into food photography as an assistant. Stylist Michelle Gatton "gave me a chance" and became a mentor, Gartland says. Working as Gatton's first assistant for two years, she was able to connect with stylists looking to make test images. Then she began "reaching out specifically to women photographers," and got assisting work. Clients have found her through her blog and Instagram, and in-person meetings have been important, she says.

She's also pushed herself to combine "my fine-art background and my editorial life" as she continues to develop her work, using food in a more sculptural way and building more narrative into her images. "Straight still life and straight food photography [are] beautiful and lovely and I like doing them, but I feel like there's room to kind of mess it up a little and deepen it." —CONOR RISCH



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ALL PHOTOS © AN RONG XU

AN RONG XU

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BIGGEST CHALLENGE: "In today's atmosphere, you have to be able to sometimes go 70 percent of the way [in terms of expenses] and the client's going to go 30 percent of the way to make [assignments] happen. It's not like the good old days where you could call someone and say, 'I have this great idea of this place,' [and they say], 'OK, great, we'll fly you up.'"

PHOTOGRAPHER AND DIRECTOR AN RONG XU says emotion is essential to a good photo, but 90 percent of the process is gaining access: "Access to subjects, access to resources." The intimacy and emotion in his portraits and fly-on-the-wall documentary images come from his ability to build rapport with his subjects. That trust shines through in "My Americans," his ongoing series that documents the lives of Chinese Americans.

After graduating from School of Visual Arts, Xu assisted photographer/director Bon Duke. They met at SVA when Xu was a freshman and Duke was a senior. "Bon is like a big brother who has really elevated my understanding of photography, [of] making work, and [of] work ethic," he says. "I saw how tirelessly he worked and how much thought and effort goes into what he does."

Through Duke, Xu met Eve Lyons, who was then at *Real Simple*. After she moved to *The New York Times*, she gave him his first assignment in 2014. He's continued shooting a range of stories for the *Times*, and pitched them a series on street style in Hong Kong and Taipei that was published in the paper's Style section. In-person meetings and Instagram have helped get his work in front of magazine editors and, recently, land some ad assignments.

Xu also directs short films and music videos, which in turn have helped his often-cinematic photography, he says. "While making films, you learn to build a character for the person you're working with, you learn to build narratives, and you learn that to create powerful images, you need to have a culmination of visuals and narrative built into it."

—MINDY CHARSKI

