

PROFILE

Talking calligraphy with Joi Hunt

Pointed pen calligrapher Joi from Bien Fait Calligraphy mixes historical styles with her own unique modern flourishes

Joi Hunt was born in Chicago and now lives in Lake Forest, Illinois. After a career in design and fashion, Joi set up Bien Fait Calligraphy eight years ago and offers a range of services, from wedding and event stationery to live calligraphy for brands such as Jo Malone, Jimmy Choo and Hermès.

You come from a design and fashion background. How did you make the jump to calligraphy?

In my previous career in interior design, I hand drafted design and presentation boards, and my lettering was that all caps architectural style you see on blueprints. After some years away from the workforce while

raising my two children, my handwriting became an unattractive mishmash of cursive and block lettering, so I set out to improve it by learning a style of calligraphy called Copperplate. My only goal was to make my family's holiday cards look nice, so I kinda surpassed that goal, you might say!

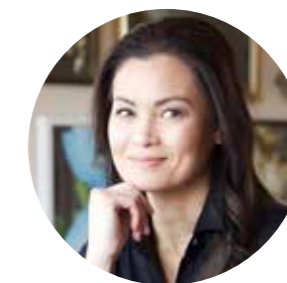
What initially attracted you to calligraphy?

Putting pen to paper, hearing the scratch of a nib on paper, the glisten of wet ink... it was all mesmerising.

"Hearing the scratch of a nib on paper is mesmerising."



Right: Joi's calligraphy is influenced by traditional styles



"I would call my style modern elegance."

JOI HUNT

How would you describe your calligraphy style?

At this point it is definitely a jumble of all the classic styles I've learned with a lot of personal style added in. I don't like to bounce along the baseline too much and legibility is paramount to me. I would call my style modern elegance. I always use restraint when flourishing – just a little to enhance a design but not too much to overwhelm it.

Why the name Bien Fait?

'Bien fait' means 'made well', and my ethos is to create beautiful, inspiring and meaningful work for people.

How are you influenced by traditional and international styles?

I am very influenced by traditional calligraphy. All the books that I study from and take inspiration from are

Above: As well as paper goods, Joi offers a mirror writing service for events



Right: Joi loves being a part of special events such as weddings

historical books. I especially enjoy French and Italian styles of historical broad pen and pointed pen writing, as well as vintage French letters. I admire the everyday handwriting of real people. I just glanced up at my inspiration board in my studio to catch a glimpse of a letter written in French in 1886 – it's gorgeous!

What are your favourite calligraphy products for creating your designs?

You don't need much more than paper, a pencil, an eraser, a ruler, sumi ink, and a nib and holder.

What are the delights and challenges of running your business?

Delights: happy clients. Seeing

images of an event and noticing just a sprinkle of my work – it makes me feel so honoured to be among so many other talented vendors in the creation of someone’s memorable day. Challenges: bookkeeping – always bookkeeping!

Have you ever had any disasters or made any mistakes? If so, have these informed your work?

I would not be where I am without making mistakes! That is the best way to learn, because you will never make that mistake again. I can’t think of any major disasters, but definitely mistakes... and the good thing there is that everything is fixable!

What’s been your biggest highlight as a professional calligrapher?

The biggest highlight is being able to meet so many wonderful families and be involved in their special moments. I’ve worked for one family and been a part of three daughter’s weddings. I worked for a bride on her bridal shower thank yous, her wedding invitation suite, married name stationery and their first child’s personal stationery... it’s humbling to be involved in the story of a life.

What would be your dream calligraphy commission?

I’ve been lucky enough to have done so many different types of work, but one thing I would love to work on is to see my script on wine bottle labels. I have engraved on plenty of wine



“Seeing images of an event and noticing just a sprinkle of my work makes me feel so honoured.”

bottles, but the label itself is still on my bucket list.

Where do you most like to work on your designs?

At my home studio, sitting at my vintage marble desk.

Do you have any exciting projects coming up this year?

I have two international weddings for 2020, one in Paris and one in Italy. I can’t wait to see it all come together for these special days.

Above: A classic colour combination of gold metallic ink on navy paper

Below: Joi has created calligraphy for weddings all over the world

Why do you feel modern calligraphy has grown so popular?

I think because it is so expressive and unique to the artist. It’s one thing to practise copying a historical exemplar, but then you have to take it further – you have to let your hand dance and express yourself, and let the script become you.

Which calligraphers do you admire?

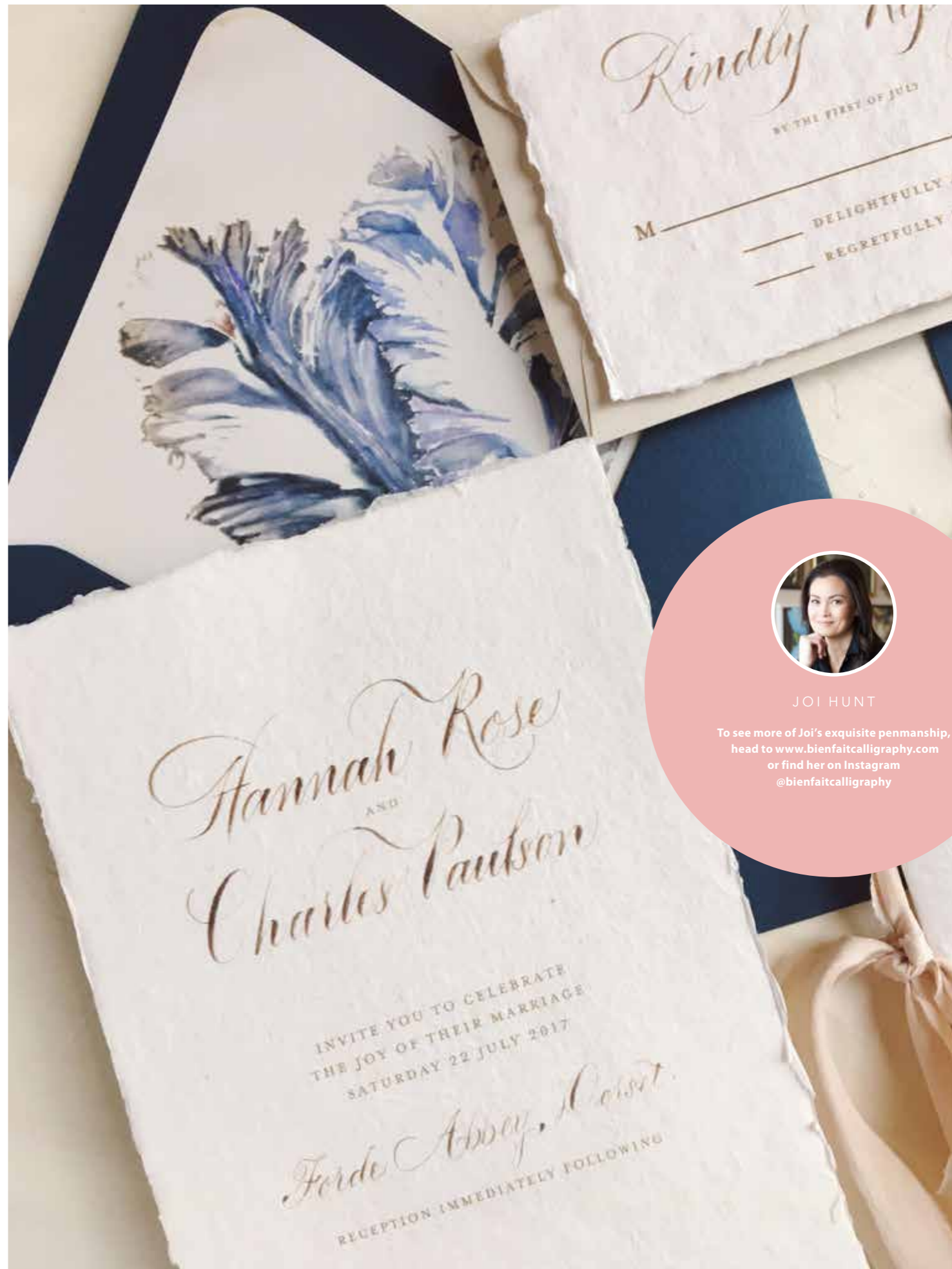
At the moment, Stefanie Weigele in Germany, Joy Fairclough in France and Sybille van Zuylen in Belgium.

What do you like to do when you’re not in the studio?

I’m a mom to a 10- and 7-year-old. Last year I took up archery and I love it so much – it’s this invigorating combination of calm focus and feeling like a warrior!

And finally, what are your top three tips for aspiring calligraphers?

Firstly, practise practise practise! Then learn from as many artists that you admire as you can. Finally, don’t just copy styles, but make them your own. Clients will hire you for your style, not someone else’s.



JOI HUNT

To see more of Joi’s exquisite penmanship, head to www.bienfaitcalligraphy.com or find her on Instagram @bienfaitcalligraphy