



Paper Perfect

Cheree Berry innovates in the world of artful correspondence.

BY SARAH STALLMANN + PHOTOS BY CARMEN TROESSER

One step into the Cheree Berry Paper studio and you are transported into a world filled with creative correspondence. Vibrant color splashes across the walls; carefully chosen design tools and paper—lots and lots of paper—fill the crisp white workspaces. CBP is one of the most buzzed-about design firms in the industry, thanks in part to a stellar client list that includes celebrities like Tina Fey and a few former presidential daughters, collaborations with Lilly Pulitzer and Jonathan Adler, and a staff of industry experts who specialize in the art of creating paper that's a cut above the rest—with unexpected details, surprises and interactive features.

CBP's owner, namesake and self-proclaimed "paper guru" Cheree Berry is the creative mastermind behind the St. Louis-based company. A native of Bonne Terre, Missouri, Berry broke into the industry fresh

out of her final year at Washington University in St. Louis. After earning her degree, she warmed up professionally with a few New York-based design firms. Her savvy landed her a role that would amplify her love of paper and design: lead designer of Kate Spade's stationery line.

But it was another love—one shared with her now-husband, Jeff York—that brought her back to the Midwest to try her hand at entrepreneurship. Nearly 10 years—and three children—later, CBP has been featured in dozens of print and digital publications, from Martha Stewart Weddings to Southern Living, created the invitation sets for big names (like Chelsea Clinton) and is about to go retail—an original CBP line of stationery will launch at Target this fall. We sat down with Berry to learn about her daily inspiration and passion for design.



How would you describe your design style and approach to design? The team and I love surprises and will include them in a design wherever we can. We know snail mail is not as commonplace as it once was and we are also aware that you can get a nice, printed piece from large, online retailers. At CBP, we offer interactive pieces that gift the receiver an experience, whether it's a fun format, a pop-up element, clever copywriting, or just a miniature insert card tucked inside. There is nothing templated about our work and we thrive on that.

What have been some of the main challenges and highlights of starting your own design company? In the early days of CBP, I was loving design, but dreading all the "other stuff." Things were starting to slip through the cracks—I wasn't able to get back to people fast enough, space was tight, invoices were late, deadlines weren't being met, etc. So, I brought on a business partner, Kristen Armstrong, who became the CBP CFO and COO. C'est la vie, invoices!

As far as highlights, we've had so many great ones! It's not just the high-profile jobs that we consider highlights, but since we can all relate to celebrities, I'd say it was pretty great working on Chelsea Clinton's wedding paper. We have

also done some really memorable projects for Lucy and Matt Damon as well as Ellie Kemper. And designing the birth announcements for my own little clan has been a highlight.

How do you manage your work/life balance? I am a mother of three children ages five and under. My time at the office is limited, which forces me to make quicker decisions and become a better delegator.

What's the best piece of advice you have heard and repeat to others? Darcy Miller, the editorial director at Martha Stewart Weddings, has always given great advice. She says, "Don't stress about needing to have it all as your guests will never know what you could have had. For instance, if that orange bevel edge will throw off your budget, don't do it! You can be assured that no one will ever say, 'Gosh, you really should have gone for that orange bevel edge.'"

What gives you a rush in your design field? When new concepts come into my head while listening to a great playlist (curated by my husband) or while lying in bed (sketchbook bedside). Or when one of my designers shows me an awesome sketch or design—I work with the best designers in the industry! They inspire me daily.

