



OUTSIDE
THE *Vines*

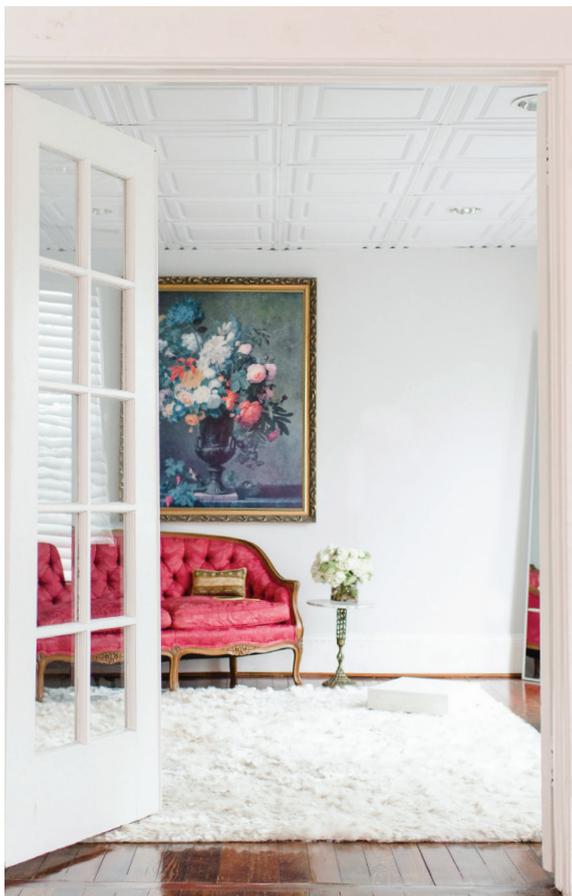
INSPIRATION FROM BEYOND THE POTTING BENCH

A Vision Come True

By Ana Olvera

Whether a landscape or a wedding, every project starts with a vision. The Sentimentalist in Atlanta, Georgia, has built its name on helping brides make their dreams and visions a reality.

Brides near and far visit The Sentimentalist to find the dress that will complete their wedding day vision. The shop's niche clientele includes fashion-forward brides who opt for a casual, vintage-inspired or nontraditional wedding, says Gabi Lee, who co-owns the bridal shop with her mother Krista McMichen.



"Our broader goal is to provide our visitors and brides a beautiful and comfortable space to shop, a thoughtful and well-curated collection of gowns and an unmatched experience," Lee says.

Asking the Right Questions

Complimentary consultations are a key element to the customer experience at The Sentimentalist.

"During our in-depth consultations, we strive to fully understand and help realize our clients' wedding day visions and limitations, both stylistic and practical," Lee says. "Our driving force in any appointment is to point our girl in the direction of what she already loves and then making her feel comfortable in her purchase."

In addition to information gathered on the brides prior to the consultation appointment, consultants spend a minimum of an hour and a half getting to know their client, according to Lee.

Consultants at The Sentimentalist ask their clients to explain their wedding in broad terms and style specifics to further understand their vision. Time of year, location and formality are also discussed during the consultation.

"We also have to work within the parameters of (the bride's) budget and timeline, while connecting with an ambiguous style 'vibe' she might be attempting to project," Lee says.

"We have accumulated a lot of great personalizing techniques that we use quite often to make a sale ... and make a girl's dress dreams come true."

Consultants are trained to guide clients through the bridal shop's collections, price point and special order process for personalized looks.

From Start to Finish

Brides who reach out to The Sentimentalist via email automatically receive information about the consultation process, store culture and what brides can expect during their visits.

"We also just love pretty dresses and playing dress up, and it has only ever helped our business to let girls know they can be themselves when they visit," she says.

Consultants help ensure the chosen wedding dress matches the bride's vision by assisting in wedding party styling and referring brides to hair and makeup services, wedding planning and photography.

"We tend to work with some of these vendor pals on a number of editorials and often share clients, so they are well versed in working to complement our gowns," Lee says.

Follow-up communications and work facilitate purchases, shipping, alterations and styling.

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"We work pretty hard for our clients from beginning to end, and it makes all the difference in our referrals and reviews," Lee says.

That familiar communication helps in further personalizing each bride's experience and helps her get to know the consultants as well.

Lee and her mother both provide information about themselves on the bridal shop's website for clients to learn more about the women behind The Sentimentalist, like Lee's passion for helping brides find their "dress mate."

"We are our business," Lee says. "We are service-forward and the nature of our business is personal, so we want our clients to know what kind of people they are working with." **LGR**