

G. Gilbert

BY JEWEL HAZELTON

Ten Years ago Ginna Gilbert opened a chic and sophisticated boutique in the upcoming neighborhood of West Midtown Atlanta. An Atlanta native, Gilbert graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in education. After college she worked several years in the education system until she decided to make a career change into the fashion retail industry. She then moved to New York and entered school at the Fashion Institute of Technology where she launched her career in the industry. After living in New York for several years, Gilbert decided to move back down South to work for several high-end retailers. In August of 2000, she opened G. Gilbert, a place where she would educate women on creating their own personal style that looked sophisticated and that could be worn in different settings.

"It's important to educate customers, not just push the product," says Gilbert.

Many people come to the boutique for personal styling so that they can be educated about what looks work for them. "We provide them with something interesting that's not silly and that will give them confidence," Gilbert says.

At G. Gilbert they like to provide current trend looks made from quality fabrics that can be worn forever. Their typical clientele ranges from women ages 25 and up who have stable careers. G. Gilbert tries to stray away from trends and provide tailored looks that can be worn for every occasion. "Clothing is more about proportion not trend," she says.

When shopping for the store's merchandise, Gilbert looks at mostly European designers such as Pier Antonico, Polci, Guner,

Charles Chang Lima and Bettye Muller. The store carries lines that you won't find in your local department store. She thinks European clothing is made of strong fabrics and textures that will create a three-dimensional look for the body. When looking at vendors, she looks at the quality of the product and makes sure they have a realistic price point. "Fashion is like creating a painting—you start with a blank canvas; as we build a wardrobe the painting grows."

When asked what makes her store stand out from others, she replies: "Not only the collections we have but the involvement we have with each client. We try to educate them rather than just selling to sell." Gilbert wants customers to feel like family members, so the store offers a personalized environment for all customers. When walking in the store you immediately feel welcome; they offer complimentary wine, soft drinks and water to all customers. Gilbert wants her clients to be able to relax and feel pampered while in her store.

All of the employees at G. Gilbert are very well trained and have years of experience in the fashion industry. The store's business philosophy is modeled after the business model of White Provisions shopping center developer Tucker Mott. All of the stores surrounding G. Gilbert are owned by individual entrepreneurs who have very strong spirits. Furthermore, Gilbert has no plans to open any other locations in the Atlanta area because she believes in making the most of what you have in one spot.

At the moment you can only purchase clothing at the store, but eventually merchandise will be available for purchase on a Web-based group called Taigan. Taigan is an online subscription-

based community that showcases some of the world's most remarkable retailers and boutiques. Taigan is a very exclusive Web site that only selects community like-minded retailers that will provide a unique shopping experience.

"We feel honored to be chosen to have our store on this Web site," says Gilbert. Currently Taigan only has 30 stores on their site, and they are planning to expand in the future. When G. Gilbert launches their boutique on the Web site, you will be able to have a virtual tour of the store and see up-to-date videos of new collections that are being offered in the store. "Using this Web site will allow us to expand our customer base and allow new customers to feel as if they are in the store with this online shopping experience," says Gilbert.

Each season, the store hosts a trunk show to showcase different designers. And, G. Gilbert stays involved in the local community by giving donations to school and charities when they can.

In her free time Gilbert spends her time with her husband and three stepchildren at their home in Atlanta. Gilbert also loves working in the yard and spending time away at Cape San Blas located on the gulf coast of Florida.

G. Gilbert is located at 1198 Howell Mill Rd NW # 109 in Atlanta, Contact 404-355-3713 for more information.

