

Couturier designs elegant custom dresses

MEGAN THOMPSON
Special to Juice

Dornink officially opened its brick and mortar storefront in the East Village in 2004, and since then has beautified the bridal market with customized and trendy dresses.

Walking into the space at 518 E. Grand, it's hard not to feel as if you have stumbled into a hidden, trendy boutique in New York City. The clean lines and sleek, modern furniture are a perfect backdrop for beautiful jewelry of all sizes that dance across the tables. The white, matte walls allow ready-to-wear dresses to show off their beautiful colored fabrics.

Family ties

Sarah Dornink, 32, and her mother, Faythe, have worked together since the store opened. Before 2004, Faythe created custom-made luxury wear from her home. Sarah joined her after moving back to Iowa from New York, where she went to fashion school and worked for designers like Elizabeth Gillett, Nicholas Breslow and Charlotte Brody. Both Sarah and Faythe are designers — Sarah designs the Dornink line and Faythe handles the store's custom pieces.

The selection

Dornink will outfit entire wedding parties, "so it's not uncommon to dress a 2-

Dornink

Find it: 518 E. Grand Ave.

Info: 255-7528, dornink.com

Hours: 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday. (Walk-ins welcome, but if you want a private bridal consultation, call to make an appointment.)

90-year-old," Sarah said. Dornink's main source clientele is brides and bridal party, but the store also offers ready-to-wear dresses for special events, homecomings and even outfitted clients for the governor's inaugural ball. The ready-to-wear area is a new, slowly growing source of business, she said.

Bridal gowns range in price depending on style, complexity and fabric. All of the store's styles can be customized and made in many different fabrics, "so we can work with our brides to get dresses in their price range," Sarah said. "Customization is a part of every fitting. We want to make sure the dress we're creating looks amazing on that client."

Along with a line of custom-made dresses, "we have customers who come in just for our jewelry," Sarah said. "I go to market at least twice a year and so our selection is constantly updated."



Sarah Dornink, 32, inside Dornink, the East Village boutique she owns with her mother, Faythe. Eric Rowley/Juice photos

The goal

"Our mission is really what we stress on our website, which shares that we want to 'flatter all that is feminine,'" Sarah said. To even further reach customers and new clients, the website has launched a create-your-own dress studio, which allows clients to play around with different looks, fabrics, colors and accessories. This is a perfect tool for designing bridesmaid dresses, and special-event wear, and to get a sense of a price range for the desired look.



Silver lariat necklace, \$170.



An Imogene dress, \$550.



Necklace made from semi-precious stones, \$180.

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