

Angel Rivera's Flagship Store Delivers Elegance and Sophistication to the Modern Bride

by Clifford W. Evan

To the casual pedestrian, or driver scouting for a convenient parking spot, Angel Rivera Bridal Atelier may seem like a sleek and sophisticated bridal shop at 82 Park Avenue in downtown Rutherford. What most passersby probably don't realize is that Angel Rivera Bridal is the flagship salon for a growing designer brand that proudly calls the corner of Park and Franklin home.

As a bridal designer for over fifteen years with over 60 unique gowns on display, Angel's creative vision caters to the elegant, modern bride looking for that perfect garment on her special day. Using the finest imported fabrics in the industry, Angel considers his work with each bride-to-be a collaboration that expresses both the woman as an individual and his vision as a designer. This may include adding hand-sewn beading, a silk strap or a sash, a bolero or sleeves, in order to tailor a dress perfectly to each woman's style, taste, or shape. Even so, Angel says, "Eighty to eighty-five percent of clients take the design as is."

He also understands his role in helping women with an emotional purchase that is uniquely central to one of their most cherished memories. "For each woman who walks through our doors, we offer a luxury, one-on-one experience," Angel says. "We want our brides to feel amazing on their wedding day."

"It's their white carpet moment," he adds.

At the same time, he never pushes a dress on anyone, and doesn't feel insulted if a bride-to-be doesn't choose one of his gowns. "Finding a wedding dress is such a personal experience," the designer is quick to add. "If a dress isn't right for you, it's not right for you."

When talking with Angel Rivera about his career as a designer of wedding dresses, you cannot help but feel that he has been called to this work. In fact, ever since Angel was five years old, he knew he wanted to be a bridal designer. "When I was a boy growing up in Ohio," he says, "I used to go to Mill Creek Park, a botanical garden near my home that held a lot of weddings, and just watch them." It didn't take long for Angel to begin sketching his own gown designs. His passion eventually brought him to New York City, where he learned the bridal business at such world-renown salons as Amsale's flagship store on Madison Avenue, and the famous Kleinfeld Bridal, the boutique featured on television's *Say Yes to the Dress*.

As a designer and an artist, what is essential to Angel is keeping the integrity of his designs, that certain "look" that marks each Angel Rivera creation. For one client this means adding a delicate touch of silk organza to the flow of the dress. For another, the defining accent may be a subtle array of Swarovski crystal along a waistline or

bodice. In fact, all of his dresses have names, such as “Wendy,” “Tori,” and “Cianna,” many of which are inspired by friends and family members. “Something of their essence inspires me,” Angel says of the people whose names he chooses for his designs.

In the end what’s most important to Angel Rivera is to delight a uniquely discriminating group of clients. Beyond the typical stresses that often accompany the planning of a wedding, many a happy bride-to-be can find a place of sanctuary once they walk through the doors of Angel’s warm and inviting salon. “So many of the brides love the opportunity to work one-on-one with the designer,” he says. “For us it’s all about creating the experience. We’re here to help them find something they’re going to love and remember.”

As a finishing touch to all the work that goes into each client’s dress, Angel often presents brides-to-be with a gift that commemorates the experience: An original sketch of their dress, which can be framed and hung somewhere in their home. “So many women keep their wedding dresses for the rest of their lives,” Angel notes. “As a bride, they want to relive their wedding day.”

For Angel Rivera, it is a joy for him to know that his designs are bringing that same joy to others on a life-defining day. As one of his happy brides once told a friend: “You have to go to that boutique in Rutherford. You’ll love it!”