

Assignment #10

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MMC 6936

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April 13th, 2025

Assignment #10: Print Version:

This is the condensed print version of my community based story

Kept Secret brings bouquets, brews and blooming conversation to Houston

The owners of Sanman have brought Kept Secret, a coffee and flower bar aiming to build community through local art, coffee and flowers, to Houston. Located in North Downtown, next door to Sanman Studios, the coffee shop has a variety of flavored lattes, and outsourced pastries from other local businesses.

Kept Secret first opened in early November 2024. Sanman co-founder and Kept Secret founder Seth Roger's initially had a desire to create a "coffee community," which then became a mission to serve Houston as a third space during the day through art, bouquets and lattes.

"[We're] being a third space, a safe space for people to feel welcomed, feel like it's home, and just, you know, a breath of fresh air," Rogers said.

The desire to create a welcoming space is evident in the physical structure of Kept Secret, an open gallery concept meant to encourage conversation between other patrons, Rogers said.

Timothy Kent, the syrup maker (and self-named "executive chef") of Kept Secret says there's always an opportunity to connect with others at the shop thanks to this set-up.

"There's always potential for it to be intimate between guests...there's always opportunity for conversation to happen," Kent said. "Nobody feels rushed to do anything. This isn't one of those cafes that are super packed."

The prime location of Kept Secret also encourages patrons to have multiple experiences in the area, according to Rogers. One of Rogers' favorite memories so far at Kept Secret involves a couple coming into the bar together.

"He grabbed some flowers for her, and she was so happy," Rogers recalled. "Then they walked through the gallery, came back, and ordered. I was like, 'If I wasn't [working] today, this would be my ... perfect day.'"

Rogers also noted the universality of coffee memories. In his case, his love for combining floral design and coffee goes back to his childhood.

"My grandma, for me, had me on coffee a little too early, about five years old," he said. "She used to read her paper, and I used to watch Blue's Clues."

The floral design aspect of Kept Secret is actually a tribute to both Roger's mother and late grandmother.

"[My grandmother] would always have flowers. My mom would buy her flowers and have flowers around home," he reminisced.

The most significant tribute to the Rogers matriarchs, however, is the special painting hanging behind the floral bouquet rack. It depicts an older woman sitting in a chair in her home next to a grand piano, with a single flower in a glass on top of it.

"The flower is ... an homage to my grandmother," Rogers said. "She had that grand piano, she always had a flower on top of her grand piano. She used to be in her big chair with her moving on and just relaxing, sitting on the couch."

"That piece brought me to tears," he continued. "I thought 'Man, I think this is a good homage to have as soon as you walk in.' So people feel that when they walk in, they get to enjoy the flowers."

Rogers' creative company SANMAN, an acronym for 'See A Need Meet A Need' is an organization that strives to strengthen Houston's creative ecosystem through art, community programming and space making. Kept Secret's orientation towards community can even be found in the origins of its name.

"That's where the name comes from." Rogers said. "I think of community. I think of things you want to keep close to us. So what are things that are kept secret, kept close to you?"

