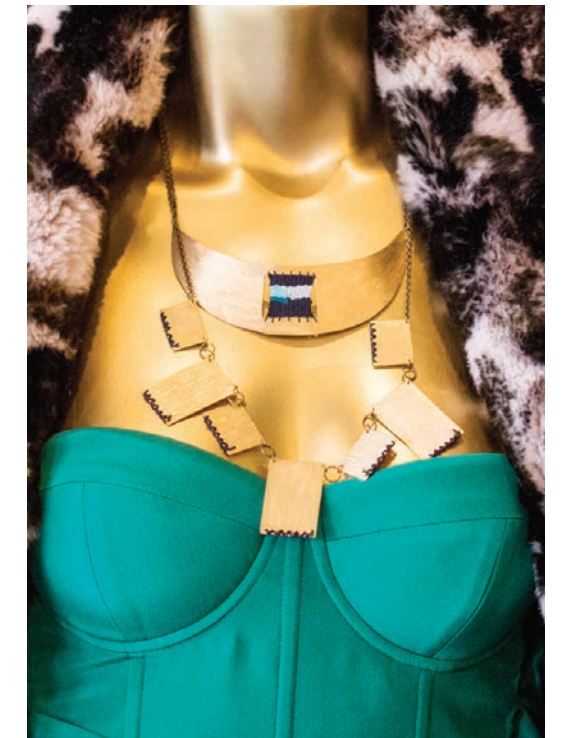


Hero

2306 12th Ave. S.
Nashville, Tenn.

Like many second children, Hero was unplanned. In 2006, Claudia Robertson Fowler opened Haven: Sanctuary of Style in Franklin, Tenn.; it quickly became one of the town's go-to spots for posh runway fashion. But she never had concrete plans for a second store—until she was dining with her husband in Nashville's trendy 12 South district and saw an open space in a new mixed-use development. Fowler nabbed the spot and opened Hero in April 2014. "I could just tell that everyone had a similar aesthetic," she says of her neighbors in 12 South Flats. "High-end but edgy and creative." —Kristin Luna



STAR POWER

The Louisiana-born Fowler owned a pair of boutiques in her hometown of Lafayette before moving to Nashville in the '80s and finding her niche: first, styling Christian artists for music videos and, later, country music stars. She worked with everyone from Amy Grant to Garth Brooks to Tim McGraw and Faith Hill and brings that music industry style—and clientele—to Hero. Many clients from her stylist days, such as Martina McBride, are frequent shoppers, and other well-known visitors to Nashville find time to drop in. "My favorite credit card swipe was when Rudy Giuliani's wife and daughter came in the store!" Fowler laughs.



MAKING A STATEMENT

Hero's philosophy is built on providing bold statement pieces that make an outfit, aka the "hero"—"that one piece that really makes the look," Fowler explains. The store is stocked with such clothes and accessories—



often only one of any style, like a buttery Road to Awe leather cape. "I keep it very edited so everything feels special," she says. "You won't see someone else around town wearing the same thing that you buy from Hero."

CROWN JEWELS

Like the clothing, which is adorned with beading, sequins, feathers, and other embellishments, the jewelry is big and bold, and entirely handmade. Chunky pieces like a fringe leather Fiona Paxton collar complement the unconventional garments hanging from the racks. "I typically buy 10 to 15 pieces per collection, because I like for it all to be displayed together," Fowler says. "Nothing's repetitive." Fowler doesn't carry the same designers regularly, though there are a few she keeps coming back to. "I don't buy Erickson Beamon every season. It's so special I feel like I have to take breaks," she says of designer Karen Erickson's high-fashion jewels. "But her artistry, her knowledge

of color combinations, mixing metals with stone, and her rock 'n' roll vibe is perfect for my customer. She nails it every time, and it blows out of our store."

PIECE BY PIECE

From Free People to Rachel Zoe, the lines Hero stocks all tend to blend seamlessly; everything "looks like it's related," Fowler agrees. And with social media, Fowler can reach out to her customers as soon as new merchandise hits the floor. Often, the shop posts an item on Instagram in the morning, and it's spoken for by afternoon. "People know our store and that there's not six of them sitting there, so they'll come in right away or call and buy it over the phone," she says. "Instagram definitely has changed the way we do business." ■

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