



STYLE

Inside Tabor in Charlotte, NC

Maverick retailer Laura Vinroot Poole
lightens up the gents' shopping scene

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PHOTO: STACEY VAN BERKEL





Laura Vinroot Poole has always done things differently. When she opened her Charlotte, North Carolina, women's boutique, Capitol, in 1997, she combined hip high fashion—including many labels that had never come near the state before—with a shopping experience so warm and personal, women felt like they were visiting an old friend. But when her customers started asking her to offer clothing for their male companions, Vinroot Poole hesitated. "I was afraid of opening a store for men," she says, "because I didn't think I could understand them." After she tried out the concept with a couple of pop-up shops, however, her fears subsided. "In the South, women tend to shop for their husbands," she says. "So



Having gained the confidence to move forward, Vinroot Poole opened Tabor (so-called after her maiden middle name) in May and set about molding it into a new kind of Southern gentlemen's shop, where both men and women would feel at home and where guys who were not used to more individualized shopping would start to feel comfortable with it. And she enlisted some knowledgeable male help. Her husband, Perry Poole, an accomplished architect who is also "the best-dressed guy in the room," according to his wife, took on the project as its creative director.



PHOTO: STACEY VAN BERKEL

A view of the shop's curated mix of casual and tailored menswear and accessories.

Besides her spouse, Vinroot Poole cites North Carolina's state motto, *Esse quam videri* ("to be rather than to seem"), as an inspiration for



American sportswear. Updated classics from brands like Thom Browne and Jack Spade share racks with a range of Southern designers: hand-sewn jeans from Raleigh Denim, cutting-edge clothes and shoes by North Carolina native Mark McNairy, and Virginia-made leather belts by Wiley Brothers, to name a few.



PHOTO: STACEY VAN BERKEL

Leather belts from Virginia's Wiley Brothers.

Other Southern touches include customized Billykirk leather goods by the Tennessee-born brothers Chris and Kirk Bray, and stationery consultation from Arzberger Stationers, a local stalwart that has engraved personal letterheads for Charlotte's social circuit for the past ninety-two years. And, in a contemporary update on the traditional tailoring experience, Tabor offers on-the-spot alterations for simple fixes, such as taking an inch off a cuff. If being in Tabor feels like you're shopping in someone's very chic living room, it's because in a way, you are. Housed in a 1920s bungalow, the space was once home to four bachelors whose lifestyle Perry refers to as "rambunctious." But this is no glorified man cave. It's light, clean, and modern—masculine, but not intimidating or clubby. "Most men's stores are so dark and heavy," he says. "We wanted a place that felt like a beach shack."

The multidimensional shop also houses a book café, where customers can sip complimentary coffee from the Raleigh-based roaster Cup a Joe while browsing the assortment of rare publications and records. There's an art gallery, dubbed SOCO and headed by local collector Chandra Johnson, that



It's all part of the plan to make customers feel at home while also introducing them to new and inspiring ideas—whether through clothing or culture—they might not otherwise experience in Charlotte. After all, Vinroot Poole says, “we have to take care of our own.”



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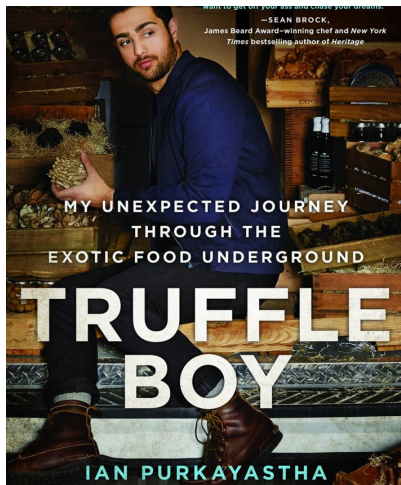


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