

# BRIDE'S



## LOFTY ASPIRATIONS

### How to Design a Wedding with Downtown Drama

**V**IVIAN HOLTZMAN CONNOLLY NEEDED some space. She found it in an antique warehouse just outside of New York City. With the Manhattan skyline as a backdrop, the 29-year-old television producer put together her own prime-time event: her wedding. "It was a hip place — guests rode up in a freight elevator," says Connolly, who married last April. "For someone like me who didn't want a traditional hotel-ballroom wedding, it was ideal."

A loft — be it an empty warehouse, art gallery, photo studio, or someone's home — offers a contemporary alternative to traditional country clubs, hotels, and reception halls. But because a loft is, by definition, an undecorated, open space, you will probably need to bring in everything from lighting to linens. It requires a lot of preparation, and expenses can sometimes be high, but it also offers an amazing opportunity to create your dream wedding, from scratch.

Flowers aren't always a must for a loft reception. Rather than a florist, Connolly had a food stylist design her centerpieces. "We had slices of lime floating in bowls of water and candles sitting in piles of colored lentils," she says.

If you do have flowers, give them personality, says Casey Cooper, owner of Botanicals, Inc., in Chicago. Nix the predictable bowls of mixed garden stems. "When you start with a blank space, the floral design plays a huge role in defining your event's style. Pick arrangements that are distinct," says Cooper, who recalls graphic centerpieces featuring yellow and amber orchids mixed with small burgundy hypericum berries in silver containers. When it comes to separating the space, foliage can be your best friend. "Use tall plants or trees, or archways, and don't ignore the existing architecture: Lofts often have ceiling beams that can suspend floral arrangements and columns that can be decorated." ■