

# REBEL RISING IN ROSEMARY

BY MARY CATHERINE COOLIDGE PHOTOS BY WAYNE EASTEP

At everything but the girl, a “unique boutique and gallery” located in the newly hot Rosemary District of Sarasota, everything’s for sale. Everything that is, except for one very important thing...

The girl, of course.

That girl being imaginer, founder, owner and manager – Laura Daniel Gale.

In today’s world, it’s a fine line between selling one’s business, one’s wares, one’s ideas, one’s passion – and just plain selling out. Gale, so far, is walking that line, and staying on the right side of it, with wit, integrity, and not just a little success.

Everything but the girl, which is essentially a consignment boutique showcasing the work of a variety of talented local artists and artisans, has enjoyed great success for a store that’s only been open a year and a half. Gale’s been featured on local radio shows, such as “Sarasota After Dark,” and she has seen her shop written up and lauded in all the local pubs – the Sarasota Herald Tribune, Weekly Planet, SRQ magazine, Sarasota Magazine, and in the pages of this publication several times.

At first glance, Gale doesn’t seem much like a rebel. She’s blonde, with a big smile and an open physicality that puts visitors to her shop immediately at ease.

There’s no sneering upper lip, no heavy-lidded glare, no Billy Idol rebel’s yell. But then you start to notice little things, like the cotton-candy pink streaks running through her hair, an unqualified directness of gaze, and a mischievous tone to her voice.

You find yourself thinking, “Hey, wait a second...this woman is different.”

And in Sarasota – where conformity is often the order of the day and the pursuit of dollars sometimes seems to be the only acceptable *raison d’être* – being, looking, acting, and thinking “different” amounts to almost rebel status.

If Gale is a rebel, she’s certainly made an appropriate choice in selecting the Rosemary District as a place to put down the roots of her new store, which she opened in April 2005.

The neighborhood is old, dating back to the 1880s. After a reasonably happy childhood as a thriving business and residential community, its adolescence was troubled and plagued by a less-than-stellar reputation.

In recent years, though, the neighborhood has been on the cusp of what used to be called middle-age. But thanks in large part to the brave iconoclasm that American women, especially those of a certain age (late thirties, forties and fifties, in particular), are showing, the middle years – whether of a woman or a neighborhood – are no longer

a time for fading into the background. Instead, these years are increasingly a time of renaissance.

And, Gale, 44, has created an artistic center and business which feeds not just the Rosemary District renaissance, but her own personal renaissance as well.

She and her husband, Jeremy, a Brit, moved to Sarasota from Washington, D.C., 13 years ago. Within a couple of years, their son, Oliver, joined the picture, and Gale found herself doing “the ‘mom thing’ – which I loved,” she says.

But by the time the early years of the new millennium were revving up, so was Gale. She was ready, she says, “for that next creative outlet.” Only this time, instead of bringing a little boy into the world, Gale opted to bring a little “girl” power to Sarasota, in the form of everything but the girl, aka EBTG.

The boutique sells an eclectic mix of funky and fine – everything from way-cool bags, purses and tee shirts to fine art, pottery and sculpture, hand-crafted jewelry, candles, and décor items for hipster homes.

Though the store is small, all the goods are accessible and whimsically displayed. Frequent shopping excursions to EBTG are necessary, since the items and artists change on a regular basis, and there’s always some new delightful discovery.

If the work of an artist is “cool,” “interesting,” or “different,” Gale says she wants it in her shop. “If they [artists] have the gumption to come in here and show me their pieces,” she adds, then “they’ve got something to say and something to sell.”

EBTG has a decidedly feminine and feminist touch, but it’s not just for women. From the very beginning, Gale says she knew she wanted “a diverse, ethnic, gay and lesbian, male and female” representation of artists and shoppers in her store.

Diversity, Gale says, is a bit tough to find in Sarasota. “You have to seek it out,” but it’s here, she explains. Opening EBTG was a deliberate act, according to Gale, to create a world for herself and the local community that would attract, embrace and celebrate the rich diversity of people, thought, art, and expression that exists in Sarasota.

And, it’s worked. Since opening her shop, Gale has forged new alliances and “made some amazing new friends,” she says. And not just with the artists who sell through her shop.

She describes the surrounding neighborhood of business owners, artists, and residents as a “family,” saying, “That’s what this district is to me.” She says that she and other members of the Rosemary District Association (RDA) are “creating an enclave, a new community” that the entire

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Gale has devoted tremendous time and energy to bolstering the image and resurgence of the Rosemary District. She's helped found and coordinate marketing events in conjunction with other RDA members to promote the area as a destination in and of itself, for everything from dining to specialty stores to art galleries. One neighborhood event now in its second year is the increasingly popular and well-attended Rosemary Rising Street Festival.

Gale also hosts a monthly "open house" at her shop on the second Friday of each month, which has evolved, she says, into "a great social gathering" for EBTG customers and artists alike.

The events are usually "themed," she says, and feature one or more artists. For example, one Second Friday event was deemed the "Dance of the Fireflies," replete with twinkling outdoor lights, beverages and nibbles, as well as a pottery-making demonstration with local artists Anita Blackwell, Abigail Akers and Sandy Light. Once every three months, an EBTG artist also hosts an art workshop on the premises.

Gale named her store after an unconventional, two-member British band that goes by the name everything but the girl. The band is not exactly mainstream, but it has a broad and loyal following, kind of like EBTG itself.

Gale sees part of her store's role in the area as creating a bridge that connects Sarasota's vibrant and longstanding artist community with the residents of the community as a whole.

It's not always easy, Gale says. Every business owner in the area has to contend with what Gale calls the "invisible wall at Fruitville Road." A lot of people "still don't know where we [the District shops and restaurants] are."

"We're downtown," but people don't necessarily perceive it that way, Gale says. As a consequence, she says, a lot of the emphasis in the RDA's marketing and PR has focused on educating the general public "to the location."

According to Gale, the people who shop at EBTG come from all over; ranging from the well-manicured "ladies who lunch" of Sarasota proper to the "creatives" – those in creative fields who live and work figuratively and often literally just outside the confines of the city.

Whatever demographic her clientele represents, Gale says they all have one thing in common: "They're all people who want to support 'local,' whether it's a local business or a local artist."

Everything but the girl hums with an intelligence and energy not often found in the more conservative and upscale shops that are ubiquitous in Sarasota. The artistry in the items for sale, and in Gale herself, imbues the store with a sexy, serendipitous and slightly subversive vibe.

Businesses like Gale's, sprouting up in the wake of the Rosemary District renaissance, just may herald a sea change coming in Sarasota. A change from its image as a community where rich and poor, money-makers and artists, and ethnicities and lifestyles have traditionally been well segregated.

Gale's already created that world inside EBTG, and she's done it on her own terms. She may be a bit of a rebel, but she's a respectful one – respectful of diversity, art, good business sense and ethics, and the power of change.

And the same could be said for the shoppers who flock to her shop. Shopping at everything but the girl is a little like shopping with your conscience. Of course, there's the primo buyer's buzz that comes with finding those one-of-a-kind perfect gifts for the fabulous people in your life. But more than that, each purchase at everything but the girl registers as a vote of support for diversity, creativity, local artistry, and a renewing community.

Artists tend to be a slightly rebellious bunch, and while you can't buy or sell the rebel spirit, everything else at EBTG is available for sale.

Everything but the girl, that is.

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**EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL  
430 CENTRAL AVE., SARASOTA  
IN THE ROSEMARY DISTRICT  
WWW.SHOPEBTG.COM**

*The 2nd Annual Rosemary Rising Street Festival is scheduled for December 16. For more information, visit [www.therosemarydistrict.com](http://www.therosemarydistrict.com).*