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A Work of Art

*A Charleston bride marries her beau at her childhood home
amid family, friends, and 4,000 floating roses*

CATE MORSE & HUGH LEATHERMAN

May 2, 2015 • Private Charleston Residence

Photographs by CORBIN GURKIN

Wedding Design by KRISTIN NEWMAN DESIGNS





By the time she turned 10, Charleston native Cate Morse had decided where she would one day wed: at her parents' 19th century South of Broad manse. "My mother was raised in Nashville, Tennessee, with the notion that you always have your wedding reception at home," says Cate, "so that was instilled in me." When her brother's nuptials were held at the house in 2009, visions of her own future fête there took shape—vividly so.

The only thing missing from those Big Day daydreams? A groom. All fell into place in 2013, however, after mutual pals introduced her to Hugh Leatherman. "We had plans to go out to dinner," says Cate of the Raleigh, North Carolina, native, whose family has strong South Carolina ties. "But he came over and we ended up talking on the couch all night instead. It turns out we share an affinity for spending time at home, and that was one of the traits that drew us together—realizing we would both rather stay in, eat dinner, and watch a movie than go out."

Sparks flew quickly—"We 'knew' after that first date," Cate says—and six months later, the duo set sail on a post-work boat cruise through Charleston Harbor, leading to what Cate calls "the best and scariest moment of my life." As the wind kicked up, storms brewed, and a small-craft advisory was issued, she begged Hugh to return to shore. Instead he stopped the boat, dropped to one knee ("or as best as he could with the waves crashing!" Cate laughs), and proposed. Her answer: an ecstatic—and brisk—"Yes!"

Once back on land, the couple dove into planning and enlisted Kristin Newman of Kristin Newman Designs, who had previously orchestrated Cate's debutante soiree and her mother's 60th birthday celebration. The bride-to-be told Kristin the venue was a given and that she wanted "a fancy black-tie wedding with a casual, laid-back, easy vibe." To understand what laid-back looked like to Cate, Kristin visited her home, where she found an extensive, colorful art collection. "My father infused in me a deep love for art at a very young age," explains Cate.

With a painterly aesthetic as their guide, Kristin and the gals at Gathering Floral + Event Design set out to make the Morse home function—and flourish—as a ceremony and reception site for just shy of 300 guests. When the day came, the home's driveway became an elegant ceremony aisle; the garage was transformed into a luxe bar; garden beds morphed into dining nooks; a pergola-covered parking space became a cake room; and the property's pool served as a jaw-dropping vessel for 4,000 floating, fragrant roses in a range of pink hues. "It defied all my expectations," says Cate, who now lives with Hugh just two doors down from where they exchanged vows.

After the wedding, she says people would ask her if she wanted to do it all over again. "Not at all," Cate says, "because I wouldn't want to change a thing. It was absolutely perfect." —*Molly Ramsey*

(top) "I wanted to get married with guests sitting on the lawn and looking down from the first, second, and third floor piazzas," says Cate. "The anticipation of having the wrought-iron gates open, walking down to Hugh and looking up and around at our friends and family was the most exciting moment I could possibly imagine. In reality, it was even more special." (near left) "We wanted the flowers to look like they could have been freshly gathered from a garden," says Heather Barrie of Gathering Floral + Event Design of the loose bouquets the wedding party carried. (far left) Cate's blush-hued gown paired with her bridesmaids' ivory dresses (the bride and her attendants all wore Monique Lhuillier) and their mix-and-match blooms made for a pink and white ombré effect.



(top left) "Cate's love of art was a focus in all design decisions—from the use of ombré, to the artist-drawn save-the-dates, to the hand-painted dance floor," says Kristin. (top right) Among other goodies, welcome boxes held ingredients for the wedding's signature cocktail: La Croix and Tito's Handmade Vodka. (bottom right) Escort cards were pinned to a canvas painted by Charleston's Natalie Taylor Humphrey. (bottom left) Artist Sally King Benedict (whose work is pictured here with Cate's Jimmy Choo heels) is a family friend of the Morse's and one of the bride's favorite talents. Cate commissioned Sally to craft portraits of each of her attendants and gifted them the abstract pieces.







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(this page, top left) The newlyweds dined at a sweetheart table on the second-floor piazza. "We could see everyone but had an intimate moment to soak it all in," says Cate. (this page, below) Ghost chairs ensured the immaculate gardens were front and center. (this page, bottom right) Watercolored pillows dressed lounge chairs. (this page, bottom left) Prints by Atlanta artist Britt Bass Turner purchased as décor now hang in the couple's home. (opposite page) At first, the plan was to cap the pool with a dance floor. In the end, Gathering Events made the pool a focal point by filling it with blooms. "It was one of my favorite aspects of the wedding," says Cate.



vendors

Event planning and design: Kristin Newman Designs

Photography: Corbin Gurkin

Florals, lounge, decorative lighting: Gathering Floral + Event Design

Rentals: Snyder Event Rentals (tent, dinnerware, glassware, flatware); Taylor Creative Inc. (ghost chairs); Blossoms Events (tent décor, custom bars); Suite One Studio (sweetheart table plates); La Tavola (linens); Technical Event Company (lighting, AV)

Stationery, calligraphy: Ceci New York

Watercolored napkins, escort card display: Natalie Taylor Humphrey

Bride's attire: Monique Lhuillier (gown, available in Charleston through Maddison Row); Jimmy Choo (shoes); Lindsey Nowak (stylist); Cacky's Bride + Aid (day-of dresser)

Bridesmaids' attire: Monique Lhuillier from Bella Bridesmaids

Beauty: ABPMakeup

Groom's attire: Ermenegildo Zegna from Gwynn's of Mount Pleasant (tux); Brioni (bow tie)