

Planners We Love

Take inspiration from these creative forces as we spotlight the best in the business. by Carol Straley

GINA JOKILEHTO,
owner, creative director, Shi Shi
Events, Cleveland, OH

As written in the stars, those born under the sign of Leo are said to be gifted with a natural exuberance, outsized confidence, flair for the dramatic and strong leadership skills. So it's not surprising that owner and creative director **Gina Jokilehto** credits the ongoing success of her wedding planning business, **Shi Shi Events**, to what she calls her own "BLE (Big Leo Energy)." Says Gina, "If anyone can make something happen, it's likely to be me, and I'm going to have the most fun while I do it." Moving from the music industry to experiential advertising, honing her talent for creating deeply immersive guest experiences along the way, Gina made an organic transition into the wedding planning space, launching Shi Shi Events online from her hotel room in Maui in 2005, basing the business in her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio.



PHOTOGRAPHY: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT EMILY MILLAY PHOTOGRAPHY: KRISTIN PITEO, STEVE STEINHARDT (2)

From this day forward.

OUR CALLING CARD

- "Hospitality is a fine art, and client and guest experience are at the forefront of everything we do.
- Making a deeply crafted day feel carefree is how we weave our magic."

MY SIGNATURE STYLE

- "Maximalism! Abundance, visual richness, color, texture! People sometimes hear 'maximalism' and think it's a style of everything, everywhere, all at once. But I've found maximalism to mean thoughtful and intentional layering and curation, joyful expression, and a feeling of wow."

WHAT INSPIRES ME

- "Design in all forms, travel, and the arts. Romanticizing your life sounds like such a cliché, but I do it daily, and it's deeply inspiring. There is joy and magic to be found everywhere, if only you're looking for it."

WHY I LOVE WEDDINGS

- "There are so many moments that make weddings meaningful—the bride just before she walks down the aisle; the sound of the guests as they rise for her; the first time the couple sees their space fully decorated and ready for guests,



A chic suite.



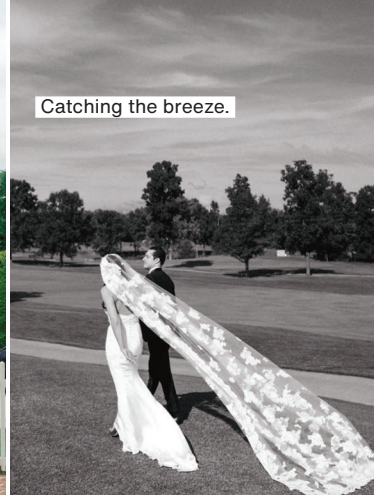
A cool, classic palette.



Here comes the bouquet.



A poolside affair.



Catching the breeze.



Birds-eye view.



A merry mix of blooms.

PHOTOGRAPHY: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GAYLE BROOKER; ELEGES; TEVE STEINHARDT; GAYLE BROOKER (2); ELIZABETH AUSTIN

the joy of it all, the hope of it all. Impossible to quantify.”

MY TEAM'S SUPERPOWER

• “Respect. Respect for everyone we work with on the client side and on the vendor side. You can never go wrong with respect.”

MY FAVORITE WEDDING TRADITION

• “I love the tossing of something—petals, dried flowers, confetti, rice, etc.—at the end of a wedding ceremony. It's so celebratory.”

WEDDING WEEKEND FUN

- “Friday is for spa days including mani/pedi appointments and relaxing lunches with close family, friends, or bridal party. Friday evening is the ceremony rehearsal and an intimate rehearsal dinner.”
- “Cap the BIG DAY with an after-party. Super low-key is the very best kind—think dive bar, dance hall. Everyone just continues to chill and let loose.”
- “Sunday morning, host an open house brunch that doesn't start too early but also accommodates those guests flying out, and offers an array of sweet and savory stay-and-enjoy or grab-and-go noshes to round out the weekend.”
- “Of course, give your guests a QR code to upload all their pics from the weekend so everyone can start reliving the magic.”

A WORD TO OUR COUPLES

• “There is always a solution. We may not always be thrilled with what we have to do, like cut guests from the list or rethink a concept to make it fit the budget, but there is always a solution.”

MOVING FORWARD

- “Shi Shi is always going to Shi Shi, and 2025 is an exciting year! We have so many wedding designs coming up. I cannot wait to see them come to life.”
- “Personally, I'm looking forward to starting a creative side project with a beloved vendor friend, and then completing some long-overdue projects on my house. There's a lot of momentum in my life right now, and that always feels good.” →



It's a toss-up.