



You must have been a beautiful baby: Whimsical displays and ample sunlight bring cheer to Seed Factory, housed in a former meatpacking plant. A rear terrace overlooks Westside Urban Market and sister store Sprout.



HOT SHOP

Seed Factory

A westside baby boutique gets a cool big sis.

By ELIZABETH WESTBY

SEED FACTORY, A NEW CHILDREN'S STORE on the westside, is a parent's fantasy of what a child's playroom could look like—sun-filled, many-colored, with everything in its place. Toys, trucks, and Dr. Seuss mingle with papier-mâché dolls and fabric bird-houses. T-shirts and cargo shorts hang next to gauzy tutus and jeweled babouches. Tree branches with tissue-paper cherry blossoms provide an earthy centerpiece.

The 4,000-square-foot space in the White Provision development backs up to a view of Westside Urban Market, where sister store Sprout—catering to infants and toddlers—resides. Owner Rachel Baba opened Sprout in 2002, and its steady success prompted her to extend the concept to older children. "Every year as our families [at Sprout] grew up, there would be a wave that would say, 'When are you going to do a store for older kids?' I think they came to trust our sensibility," she says. At Seed Factory, that sensibility encompasses safe, simple toys (wooden checkerboards, old-fashioned bike bells), classic books (*Harold and the Purple Crayon*, *The Secret Garden*), and high-quality fabrics (popular clothing lines include Petit Bateau and Kit + Lili). Baba gravitates toward designs that feature flowers or cars rather than cheeky slogans or Nike swooshes. "We try and approach everything from the kid's point of view," she says.

Where Baba really shines is her ability to arrange kid-friendly merchandise in an adult-friendly package. Meaning, quite simply, the store is gorgeous. Baba received her MFA in painting from New York's Pratt Institute, but a thriving side job designing window displays diverted her career plans. When she returned to her native Atlanta in 2000, she landed a job arranging tabletop displays at Anne Quatrano's Star Provisions, and Quatrano eventually backed her when she opened Sprout. Now, with her second enterprise, Baba has room to incorporate a pet project: a 1,000-square-foot activity room where she hosts arts and crafts classes, story time, and even yoga sessions. The classes are for kids; parents are welcome to stick around. Says Baba, "One of the things that's so strong about Sprout is that we have a real community, we get to know the families. We want the same thing here." ■

↳ **VITAL STATISTICS** ADDRESS/PHONE 1170 Howell Mill Road, 404-355-2043 HOURS Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. TAG LINE Children's apparel, books, and toys with a classic bent, for kids ages two through twelve. Clothing ranges from \$30 to \$80.