



ALISON CONKLIN PHOTOGRAPHY

# Artistic Elegance

## Banana Factory Becoming Destination for Weddings and Special Events

BY KRISTA BLEW

ArtsQuest's Banana Factory is well known for its mix of beautiful artwork, stunning gallery spaces and fun art classes. The hidden wonder, however, is that it also plays host to many family, social and business events, including weddings, family functions, corporate conferences and dinners.

"People consider the Banana Factory for many reasons, but mainly for its ambiance," says ArtsQuest Director of Hospitality Susan Drexinger. "Conversations are lively at events when surrounded by beautiful art. The building has a lot of creative energy."

When clients opt to hold their event at the Banana Factory, they are guaranteed a unique atmosphere with all the amenities. ArtsQuest's knowledgeable, friendly hospitality staff is available to help them with every step of the planning process and present them with a variety of catering options and packages. Each year, more than 25-30 weddings and social events are held at the arts center, with many of them taking place in the 2,400-square-foot Crayola Gallery, the building's centerpiece when it comes to special events.

"It's a unique space that you can really make your own," says Alyssa Andrew-Swift of Northampton, who held her wedding reception in the Crayola Gallery in April. "Anything looks nice because it's a blank canvas."

While the Banana Factory's galleries and spaces are perfect for larger events, they also lend themselves to more intimate functions. The Banko Family Gallery is often booked for children's birthday parties - ArtsQuest offers a variety of themed art project parties for up to 15 kids - and the Risbon Conference Room and Banko Room can be paired for board meetings and corporate retreats. For those who really want to take advantage of the arts center's

creative opportunities, the Banana Factory also offers hands-on art programs for corporate and private groups called the Art of Business and the Art of Friendship.

"The uniqueness of the environment is definitely the ambiance. It's fun and it's different," says Maison Blanc catering's sales director Mildred Shehab, who regularly works at the Banana Factory. "I love designing rooms when the artwork is there to tie it all in and complement it." Shehab, in fact, was so impressed by the Banana Factory's atmosphere and events that she picked the location for her own wedding.

For many clients, one of the most appealing aspects of holding their event at the arts center is that the galleries can be transformed into any look or feel they desire. Artwork, culture and education surround the guests, immersing them in an atmosphere that's both stimulating and stunning. The Crayola Gallery's large, open space is accentuated by its centrally-located skylight, and parties have the option of expanding their events onto the adjacent brick-paved East Terrace if they desire an open-air atmosphere.

Tracy Wursta, an Allentown resident who held her wedding in the Crayola Gallery in May, says that ArtsQuest's staff was willing to help with anything that she needed to prepare for her special day. The venue had added attraction because of its nontraditional setting and proximity to hotels.

"The experience was wonderful," Wursta says. "All the guests raved about the event and the venue. I would absolutely recommend the Banana Factory for any type of event."

To plan your event or obtain more information on ArtsQuest's hospitality options, please contact Susan Drexinger at 610-332-1304 or [sdrexinger@fest.org](mailto:sdrexinger@fest.org).



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