

THE MEMENTO

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In Full Plume

A new Southern fashion accessory takes flight



An avid outdoorsman, Ben Ross grew up working with feathers when tying flies and fletching arrows. He was inspired to take the avian material indoors, however, when he noticed that the pattern of the feathers on a male turkey's chest looks like a bow tie. In 2007, he made feather bow ties as a gift for the groomsmen at his wedding, and for years after that, his friend Jeff Plotner hounded him to start a business. "You make them," Plotner would say, "and I'll figure out how to sell them."

In 2012, the pair launched Brackish, using the term for mixed fresh and salt water to evoke Ross's inland South Carolina background and Plotner's coastal Georgia roots. The Charleston-based company sources many of its feathers from farms around the country, where they're collected after the birds—which include spotted guinea fowl, blue-green peacocks, and speckled bobwhite quails—have molted. More than two dozen artisans assemble bow ties, pocket squares, cummerbunds, and lapel pins by hand, with the unique plumage of each bird ensuring that no two pieces are the same.

The company has hatched quite a following: Bill Murray wore a peacock bow tie to the 2014 Oscars, and the designs have been spotted on the likes of Ted Danson and Blake Lively. Stop by Brackish's Charleston showroom to see how these styles embody the gentility of the Holy City and the beauty of South Carolina. "At the core of everything we do is the combination of family and friends," Ross says, "and the love of the outdoors and Mother Nature's paintbrush."

From \$195, brackishbowties.com