



Every love story begins with an inciting incident – a moment the couple will hold in their hearts and minds for the duration of their relationship. “Like all fairy tales, I met Brittanie at a bar in Chicago during one-dollar beer night,” Alex Navarro laughs. From the moment she laid eyes on him, Brittanie Ahrens knew there was something special about this man. “I noticed him from across the room because his style was very different than every other guy there,” she remembers. “I asked him if I could buy him a drink – something I would never usually do.” The breaking of her own comfort level resulted in an evening of stimulating conversation, a shared cab ride home, and even a frightening experience on the road. “As Brittanie was about to exit the car at her stop, another cab sped by and hit her door!” Alex explains. “Luckily she was unharmed, but our cab driver was upset.” Though he was concerned for her well-being, Brittanie was simply flustered. “I have never been so embarrassed,” she admits. However, the thrill fanned the flames of attraction, and the two quickly became an item.

More than five years after that fateful night out, Alex planned a proposal for Brittanie’s 30th birthday fête. “He made a point to say that we wouldn’t really get to spend quality with one another once we were at the party, so we should have lunch together,” Brittanie recounts. “Afterward, he suggested we take a birthday photo in front of Chicago’s famous ‘Bean’ sculpture, and when we arrived, he got down on one knee. Our photographer was hiding amongst the tourists and captured the entire thing!” With a new ring on Brittanie’s finger, the duo had the pleasure of announcing their engagement at the birthday festivities later that day.



OFFBEAT OPULENCE

BRITTANIE AHRENS & ALEX NAVARRO

April 23, 2016 Chicago, Illinois | Photographed by Kent Drake Photography



RESOURCES

Beauty

Sonia Roselli Beauty

Bridal Gown

Amsale

Bridesmaid Gowns

Adrianna Papell; Sorella Vita

Cake

Elysia Root Cakes

Catering

Blue Plate

Consulting

LOLA Event Productions

Entertainment

Becca Kaufman Orchestra

Floral Design

HMR Designs

Formalwear

Emanuele Tuxedo; Topman

Headpiece

Boutique Juju for Etsy

Honeymoon

Airbnb, Bali; Four Seasons Resort
Bali at Jimbaran Bay
The Peninsula Bangkok

Invitations

Magnificent Milestones

Jewelry

Boundless Bands for Etsy
Hakimian Gem Co.

Lighting Design

FROST Chicago

Linens

BBJ – Table Fashions

Photography

Kent Drake Photography

Registries

Bloomingdale's; Crate and Barrel
Restoration Hardware
Williams-Sonoma

Rentals

Hall's Rental; HMR Designs

Transportation

Signature Transportation Group

Veil

Mignonne Handmade for Etsy

Venue

The Field Museum

Videography

I Do Films





As an event designer for HMR Designs, Brittanie had plenty of experience coordinating regal and sentimental celebrations. “I had been through the process many times and knew which vendors I wanted to use right off the bat,” she notes. Though they brought on a day-of coordinator to help their nuptials run smoothly, Brittanie and Alex organized everything themselves while keeping the opinions of family in mind. “Even though I am a planner and I’m used to being in control, I ‘let go’ for my wedding day and let our talented team do what they do best. It was the greatest decision I could have made!” the bride gushes.

Being part of the industry herself, Brittanie elected to get innovative with a few important elements of the evening. After planning several corporate events – though no weddings – at The Field Museum, she decided it was the perfect place to host their vows. Guests began to arrive at the historic site early in preparation for the couple’s twist on cocktail hour: a creative addition to the traditional timeline. “One thing that was very important to us was saying hello to all of our guests while not missing out on the entire reception,” Brittanie reveals. “We decided to have an hour before the ceremony where we could greet everyone and say hello!” The bride and groom acted as bartenders as they served each of their attendees a pre-wedding drink.





Following the warm welcome, Brittanie slipped away to change into her bridal gown – a white A-line dress featuring intricate gold beading throughout – and met her future husband at the altar. Alex stayed true to his unique style, sporting a deep plum suit jacket and a handsome bow tie. Originally, both had wanted to host an alfresco ceremony, but with the chill of mid-April in Chicago, they elected to hold their “I dos” inside the museum, filling the large room with simple wooden chairs, weathered planter boxes holding washed candles and wild maidenhair ferns, and a large boxwood wall featuring cascading blush and ivory blooms. The two were married by the best friend of the bride – an incredibly meaningful detail – and catered their music selection to fit their emotional state by including Adele’s rendition of the tune “Make You Feel My Love.”

Revelers filled the reception space – complete with the accoutrements of the museum, including a Tyrannosaurus rex specimen affectionately named Sue and a large elephant statue – and took their seats at long, mirrored tables surrounded by wooden chairs, all resting under low chandeliers. Each setting displayed a dining menu printed on a bold burgundy napkin underneath gold laser-cut place cards. “There was warm, flickering candlelight surrounding arrangements of wild greens, textured florals, and deep purple grapes,” the bride muses. “The head table had an oversized salal-and-eucalyptus garland that was punctuated with grapes, ranunculus blossoms, tulips, roses, and peonies that spilled onto the floor.” A warm amber glow washed over the dance floor and over the stage, which projected an intricate vine pattern to add depth.



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Though both enamored with music, Brittanie and Alex weren't known to get up and groove very often – that is, until they tied the knot. “We aren't big dancers, so I was not expecting to be busting a move, but our band was so awesome, we couldn't help it!” exclaims the bride. Adds Alex, “For our first dance, we had taken lessons for three months and I had learned quite a bit. We had something choreographed – nothing crazy – and to perform it in front of everyone was great!” To accompany the savory plated meal, friends and family were treated to a festive wedding cake designed with the décor in mind and featuring five tiers and four different flavors to offer variety. On the subject of confections, the groom has some sage advice for other couples: “For the tastings, make sure you go on an empty stomach – there will be a lot to try!”

MEGAN SIMPSON



