

## IN GASTIS WE TRUST

*Momentum Grooming's Touch of Expertise*

ASK ANY MAN and he will have an opinion about the close shave. The literal close shave. Some love it, some loathe it. Trends in men's facial hair have been the subject of public debate through the ages, but today, there is no question that the more polished look is experiencing a resurgence. With that come the traditions and values: sartorialism, fine grooming, and business deals sealed with a handshake.

Thus it is not surprising that contemporary interpretations of the traditional men's barbershop are cropping up around the city. As Graham Bingham, founder and president of Vancouver's Momentum Grooming, says, "This is a time when people are looking to grab hold of security, nostalgia." Perhaps he is right; with economic and environmental factors at the forefront of our minds, there couldn't be a better time to reflect on past and simpler ways of life. "The barbershop is a place where informal business meetings have often taken place," he says. "Men are becoming sophisticated again, and realize they can get an edge on the market by looking good. Health is also a big part of that."

When Bingham and his business partner, Robert Graham, decided to expand their specialty men's grooming retail shop to include barber services, they sought the advice of an expert. Asking themselves who was the best, they looked to their products and landed on the Gentlemen's Refinery, a professional line developed by master barber Perry Gastis. The products are 100 per cent natural, organic in every possible ingredient, and top quality. Gastis is a fourth-generation barber originally from Toronto and now based in Las Vegas, whose highly sought-after 18-step shaving process is practised at barbershops in only three cities worldwide: Las Vegas, Dallas and now Vancouver. Gastis welcomed the opportunity to work with Momentum, and has consulted on all aspects of the barber suite, from concept development to product selection and barber training. Gastis says, "There is no reason for a man to go to a barbershop unless the experience is special. We've made it as special as possible."

The 18 steps entail more than a simple series of hot and cold towel compresses, pre-shave oils, lathering creams and moisturizers—anyone can walk in and memorize the process, buy the products, and run through the procedure at home.



But what they won't be able to relive is what Gastis calls "the touch, the feel, the emotion, the relationship with the barber". Gastis has trained hundreds of barbers, but the ones who have the most success under his tutelage, such as Adam Dreddy at Momentum, are predisposed to it. Gastis believes his own entry into the trade was a natural progression, even notwithstanding his family history. "I love talking to people. I love the artistic aspects," he says.

The barber's job is personal, insofar as there is much touching involved—of which Gastis warns his students, and his clients. It is something we are usually uncomfortable with in North America, but the touch is friendly and light. Gastis takes my arm, and with his weighty Japanese razor and .15-millimetre-thin blade, he demonstrates the same technique Dreddy will use on my face a bit later. I look at the new bald patch just below my wrist, and realize I had felt nothing. "You need an extremely light touch, which is hard to do with this tool," Gastis explains. "But it's the best one available, so I tell my students to practise shaving their entire arm, dry, just like that. And if they come back with razor burn, I know they haven't lost their heavy



hand." He continues, "Those skills of the process, though, they can be learned. The rest, the trust that is involved, the connection, cannot." Such as knowing when and how to put a hand on the shoulder; seemingly simple, but something we clients appreciate.

—Craig David Long