

LOCAL news

FRENCH COLLECTION

How much is that duvet in the window? Tim O'Hearn offers much in the way of refined taste and elegance by Suzanne Sigmund

A waist-high stone replica of Michelangelo's *David* greets you nonchalantly at the door of the French Quarter at 1444 N.E. Broadway in Portland—the young Adonis, old-world Italian machismo smoldering from antiquity into the present tense. You can't help but give him the once over, admiring those solid, perfectly-proportioned calf and thigh muscles. Hey, David, nice pecs. So, full frontal nudity anyone?

You enter the shop and, if you harbor a yen for a luscious sensual experience, this is bound to be a satisfying shopping experience.

French Quarter. Just saying the name puts you into that romantic mood. Luxurious linens to caress, maybe buy a set to bring home for that let's-stay-in-bed-till-noon tête-à-tête with your main squeeze. The kinesthetic extravagance of soft and oh-so-thick towels from Germany, France, England and Italy beckons you

Tim O'Hearn



Recently he went on a jaunt to San Francisco. "It was a couple of days of hard business in terms of actually shopping for the store," he says. "And a few days of what I call 'research and development'—that is, looking at a store, looking at the way people do things. And that helps inspire me to look at things differently, to 'get out of my square box,' which is important to do. So, the things that sound like fun, and which are fun—like dining in restaurants—do a lot to refuel my creativity and do a lot to recharge my batteries."

O'Hearn adds: "I have to be inspired by what other people have done—that's critical. If I had my nose up here in this office every single day 12 months a year, it would show in the shops."

All this French savvy and marketing know-how didn't just fall miraculously like manna from heaven into O'Hearn's willing brain. He graduated from Lewis & Clark College in 1984 with dual degrees: one in business and the other in foreign languages.

Though O'Hearn at first envisioned having a job in international affairs, trade or import-export, retail is where the young entrepreneur learned to take a licking and keep on ticking. First a rookie manager with Meier & Frank, he was quickly promoted to a high-profile buying position.

"It was a perfect job to have in my 20s," he says. "I was in New York 12 weeks a year, every month. I got to keep all my miles so I could take great vacations in Europe and I got to know New York really well."

These days, when the cat's away in Tokyo, Paris or New York, what about French Quarter? Mayhem and commotion? Not on your life. Fortunately, O'Hearn's got himself a store manager who keeps the place running like a well-oiled Citroën. Meet Jared Austin, 22, O'Hearn's right-hand man.

Originally from Roseburg, Ore., Austin owned a vintage clothing shop there for two years, moved to Eugene, then heard about an opening at the French Quarter. Bingo. (Oh yeah, first there was that soul-quenching three-month journey to Europe, where Austin checked out the gay clubs in Frankfurt and Paris, then made his way through Munich, Vienna and Florence.)

Back on home turf, Austin heard about the opening at French Quarter and, *voilà*, he's been a very important cog in the sleek French Quarter machine since the summer of 1997.

Back to the boss. Since O'Hearn is into the business of critiquing other merchandisers, who gets his seal of approval? Rather than specific individuals, O'Hearn says, he admires different things about different businesses. He gives an A-plus to Camera World for looking into the future to generate sales volume via the Internet. He puts both Powell's City of Books and Restoration Hardware into the doing-something-right category, and when he's satisfying the sartorial whims of No. 1, O'Hearn simply loves shopping at Saks Fifth Avenue.

What about Abercrombie and Fitch? He assesses: "It's a bit too early to tell if they'll be successful with the new Gap-type approach, but from an advertising standpoint, their ads are great. Their ads are certainly, from a gay standpoint, very homoerotic."

to...what the hell, go ahead, pull one of the sheets to your skin and cop a feel.

Saunter back to the European-style bar in the rear, curved in a half-circle of sleek shiny black, where you can imbibe a sparkling mineral water or a savory cup of the Italian coffee.

Now that you've got a sense of the place in all its splendor, what about the shop owner? At 35, French Quarter entrepreneur Tim O'Hearn has three similarly-themed shops (two in Portland and one in Eugene). Combining the museum curator's eye for intriguing juxtaposition of objects with a razor-sharp sense of marketing, O'Hearn's skills are evident upon first glance. His sexy French shop with towels, bathrobes and linens to drool for has become as popular as well, french fries at the Rose Festival.

O'Hearn says he has in the past been an active member of the Portland Area Business Association, a membership group that promotes lesbian- and gay-owned businesses.

"I think that really helped when I was starting the stores," he tells *Just Out*. "But I haven't had the time to be an active member recently."

In order to keep his shop stocked, O'Hearn plays the voyager often, traveling to find fresh ideas and creative inspiration.

3 Friends coffeehouse

Moonstruck Desserts

Open Late Hours

Corner of SE 12th & Ash
2 Blocks South Of Burnside
503/236.6411

SUMMER SALE

Up to \$100 Off!

WINDOW COVERINGS

\$50 off any purchase over \$600
\$100 off any purchase over \$900

Now, you can afford some real window coverings. Budget Blinds makes it easy to dress up your home and get dressed in your home with a \$100 discount on any purchase of \$900 or more. This offer is good on every style of window covering and every brand we carry.

Offer good at time of purchase only.
Not valid with any other coupons.

HunterDouglas
WINDOW FASHIONS

WE SPECIALIZE IN

Budget blinds Call Now!

Free Estimates • Free Installation • 90 days same as cash on approved credit

Serving Oregon & SW Washington

East Port. 503-590-4333
West Port. 503-968-7575
Salem 503-362-1643

Luxury Defined:
S A T E E N

Weaving is such an ancient process that no one knows exactly where it originated, though some venture a guess that the spider's web or the bird's nest provided the first inspiration. Even as the evolving technology of the loom continues to bring us new fabrics, there are some simple weaving concepts that will always endure, such as sateen. This cotton fabric is created on the loom by running the top thread (the "weft") over three bottom threads (the "warp") instead of just one. Because this weaving process exposes more yarn to the touch, sateen has a buttery soft texture and a gentle sheen. When made from top grade cotton in high thread counts, sateen sheets, shams and pillowcases epitomize luxury bedding.

luxury for the bed, bath and body

NORTHEAST PORTLAND 1444 NE BROADWAY 282-8200
PEARL DISTRICT 536 NW 14TH AT HOYT 223-3879
EUGENE FIFTH STREET PUBLIC MARKET 541-343-8904

{ please explore our catalog at www.eurolinens.com }