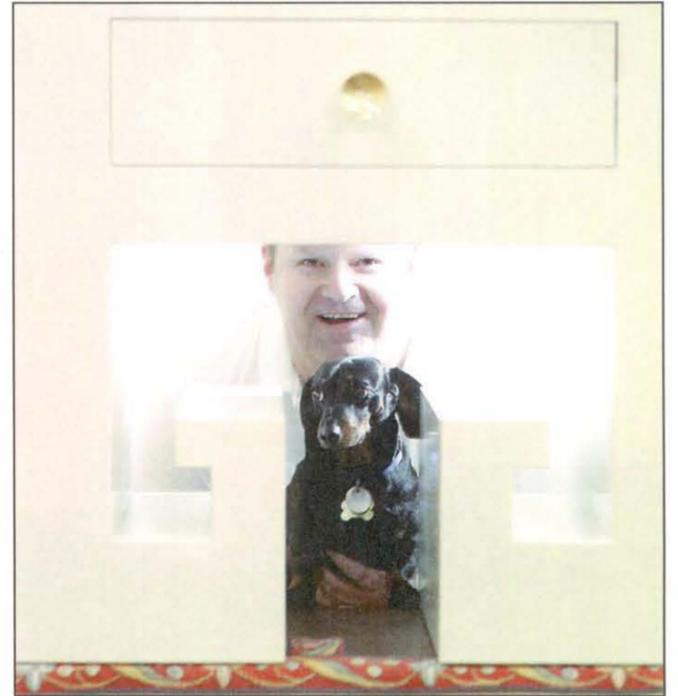


— LOCAL BUSINESS —



STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN CHAN

Things are looking up for Peter Levis, right, of Beyond Gorgeosity, and his design associate, Sheila MacKeigan, who are reflected in a pair of 1850 English Gothic mirrors which sandwiches an 1825 Biedermeier secretaire found at Peter's shop on North Street.



STAFF PHOTO/ROBIN CHAN

Peter Levis with his dog Bonsai, a mini dachshund, peek through a Bing Table designed by Susan Ortiz at his shop, Beyond Gorgeosity.

New antiques shop is 'beyond gorgeous'

By Carol Britton Meyer
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At Beyond Gorgeosity, Hingham's newest antiques and interior design emporium, customers can expect the unexpected.

"Don't be ordinary; be gorgeous," are words often spoken by owner Peter Levis. "At Beyond Gorgeosity, the unexpected has been well curated," he said.

The shop is located at 234-236 North St. at the corner of Thaxter Street, between the fire station and Tedeschi's.

Upon entering the emporium, one is confronted by a sensory overload — where to look next when surrounded by so much unique furniture and other interesting objects?

"My primary goal is to feature beautiful design," said Levis, who has a lively and engaging personality. "Whether it is my furniture, paintings, objets d'art, or accessories, I want people to know that at Beyond Gorgeosity they will be surprised by what they see and that they can come here to find that elusive perfect side table, important American Impressionist oil painting, or that special vintage Italian light fixture that no one else has and that they won't see anywhere else."

Every item in the shop is a singular piece that stands alone and was personally discovered and chosen by Levis. "Life is too short to postpone joy... I believe in living with and using gorgeous things," he said.

That's evident by the many beautiful items displayed in his shop and his great enthusiasm about them.

"People want a trusted and impeccable local source for beautiful design for their home and garden, a place with intriguing and functional decorating items that they otherwise could only find in high-end galleries in New York City, Los Angeles, or the antique markets of London or Paris," Levis said. "Hingham Square is becoming quite the center of design in its own right. Look at all the amazing resources available on North Street alone! BG is the latest contribution to the growing availability of style choices."

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original 600-square-foot showroom nearly doubled recently with the shop's expansion into the adjoining 500 square feet formerly occupied by a seafood market.

"I still have many items in storage I want to bring in, and I'm constantly acquiring new pieces, so I really need the additional floor space as well as the outdoor area for my stone garden urns and architectural ornaments and some amazing outdoor sculpture which will be arriving soon," Levis said.

In addition to on-street parking, there is now a designated parking space contiguous to the building for the exclusive use of BG's customers and clients.

"BG is really three businesses that are complementary: the retail shop itself, interior design services, and an estate sales business," Levis said. "I have some terrific vintage and contemporary furniture that I've cherry picked from the estate sales I conduct. Designers and decorators will have a field day choosing from all the new goods I'm constantly getting from high-end homes. It's the circle of life!"

Establishing Beyond Gorgeosity was Levis' homecoming. "Call it reinventing myself, returning to my roots, or a mid-life-crisis career change," said the Boston native. For the past 20 years he's been an executive in the insurance industry, the last 15 of which he was abroad — 11 years in London and then to Barcelona, Spain.

Levis and his miniature Dachshund, Bonsai, moved to Weymouth from Barcelona last spring. Neighborhood children who come into the shop daily to visit him and his beloved pet often sing the "Bonsai Song."

Grew up with antiques

"I have always wanted to be in the antiques business. I grew up with them, studied them, and collected them obsessively," Levis said. "When it came time for me to return from my international postings, I decided to make my repatriation a complete life change. In a way, I'm returning to my roots."

Levis' first "job" was working for his father doing summer antique shows when he was 11 and 12. "He taught me a lot," Levis said.

Shortly after resettling here, Levis was hired to do a large residential interior design project in the Back Bay for a client who wanted the simplicity and clean modern lines of vintage mid-century furniture. "Mid-Century Modern was a new vocabulary for me at the time as I'd always leaned toward the splendor and gilded opulence of Regency and Empire, but I immersed myself in the project and became completely hooked," Levis said. "It was my conversion from the Baroque to the Modern — well, maybe not a complete conversion, but it certainly opened my eyes to how sleek and magnificent and original is the design from the middle of the 20th century."

His Back Bay client, Denise Faustman, found Levis help to be invaluable. "Peter loves to shop. I don't have that gene," she said. "Besides, I don't just want to go to a store and buy something new — I would rather find the gems — the old stuff that you might find in your mother's basement."

Faustman admires Levis' patience. "Peter was willing to shop. You don't just find things of this kind. He loves shopping for those bargains — those treasures — that you'd love to find but

don't the time to search for."

Levis fell in love with the furniture creations of the iconic designers from the 1920s through 1960s — "James Mont, who designed opulent gilded speak-easys for gangsters during Prohibition; Tommi Parzinger, T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbins, Gio Ponti, the Scandinavians; and so many other luminaries and those they inspired," he said.

Eclectic tastes

Levis' tastes, like his inventory, are eclectic, and it shows in the shop. "I like pieces that have 'impact' for all periods; pieces that pop and make you say 'Wow!'" Levis said. "In my shop and interior design projects, I love juxtaposing pieces from different periods that are complementary — a mid-20th century Dunbar Gondola sofa with an 18th century painted Venetian bombe commode, for instance. In addition to my vintage and antique pieces, BG represents a growing selection of boutique vendors specializing in high-quality furniture, fixtures, and accessories."

BG features the furniture designs of Susan Ortiz, who Levis called a "creative genius," from her company, Shine. "She's very hot, straight off the pages of Elle Decor and Metropolitan Home — very chic and funky," Levis said.

BG also represents studio furniture maker and master craftsman Paul Carlino. "I just received two of his desks, 'Arches' and 'Summit' — they are sure to make your jaw drop," Levis said. "I'm also in discussions with several talented and innovative individual makers of studio furniture and will be adding to BG's portfolio of represented artisans."

The name "Beyond Gorgeosity" and even the oval BG logo derive from Levis' decade of living in England. "The 1990s were an extravagant time in London — the champagne flowed, the Waleses were feuding, consumption was conspicuous, and people and parties were preposterously goooooorgeous (pronounced with a posh British accent!)," Levis said. "If something was superlatively marvelous it was 'beyond goooooorgeous.' 'Gorgeosity' is an invented word representing the state of being gorgeous. The 'BG' logo pays homage to the vintage GB (Great Britain) automobile decal."

Levis says he was an "obsessive-compulsive collector" and brought back so many pieces that he considers staggeringly gorgeous, such as a Biedermeier 18th-century Venetian cassone (coffer) direct from a palazzo on the Grand Canal; and a pair of 9-foot, 4-inch tall giltwood Gothic mirrors circa 1840 from an English house designed by Pugin, the architect of the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben.

The pair of mirrors was recently sold and shipped to a grand apartment on New York's Central Park West overlooking the Museum of Natural History. "I'm sad to see them go. I first came upon them in 1994 on London's Pimlico Road, just below Sloane Square, where some of the most prominent antique galleries are based," Levis said. "I couldn't afford them at the time. Six years later in 2000 I happened to be in another gallery on the New King's Road as they were being delivered. I snapped them up immediately because at that time I was decorating my Mayfair flat in English Regency and Ecclesiastical Chic."

Levis said he has always loved Hingham for its gracious homes and historic architecture. "It is a dream come true for me that I have this business of my own in such a charming town. People have been so welcoming and complimentary," he said. "Customers genuinely appreciate the extra effort to help them locate what they're looking for. I love it when people ask me to find something for them — it brings out the hunter-gatherer in me!"