



GAZETTE Lifestyle

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Window Decorator Master Of His Craft

In this day and age, so many people fit the description "jack of all trades and master of none" that Olivier Chupeau is a refreshing contradiction. He is a man of many artistic talents and master of them all.

Chupeau is as French as his name. A small, dapper man, he embodies the style of European vogue and the effervescence of champagne as he sits and sips coffee on Second Street.

In his hands, anything from a huge ball of string to a cheese grater can be transformed into a humorous piece of art. And his works are permanently on view in Belmont Shore in the form of the wonderful window displays at 2nd Street Optical.

By profession, Chupeau is an optician. (He still practices at a



STREET PRO-FILE

by Sandy Robins

store on Bellflower.) He also has a degree in micro mechanics.

When he came to America nearly 10 years ago, English was a foreign language. So he enrolled at Cal State to learn. Because he had trouble mastering the technical vocabulary of his trade, he asked owner Tony Canfora of Second Street Optical if he could 'shadow' him in order to learn what he needed to know.

He mentioned that he used to

help with the windows at the optical shop in Paris where he'd worked. Canfora gave him carte blanche and as a result he unleashed a whole range of hidden talents.

The secret to a successful window, Chupeau said, is using the decor to emphasize a product. Chupeau's work has brought so many comments and compliments that other businesses from Los Angeles to Orange Country also are signing

(Continued on Page 16B)

Windows

(Continued from Page 15B)

him up to create for them. People in Belmont Shore are still talking about the Christmas display at Blue Windows when Chupeau set a school of fish ornaments in front of a blackboard against a wave of water in Ziploc bags.

His most memorable window to date, a combination of his many talents, won him a prize in a national window display com-

petition. Chupeau sculpted a jazz band out of kitchen graters, egg beaters and cutlery and had a variety of different eyewear "dancing" to the beat.

To assist with the creative forms needed for his window displays, he started sculpting out of the most unlikely materials like broken guitar strings and copper wire.

Next he found himself designing packaging. Some people were so enthralled with the wrapping they never opened the

packages to see what was actually inside. When he puts paint on canvas, the portraits have a Van Gogh feel and his floral arrangements leave one wishing the flowers would stay fresh forever.

"Actually the ideas strike me in the most unlikely places," confesses this unassuming creator. "Most often in the shower or when I'm driving in heavy traffic."

Sometimes he'll go to Home Depot and wander up and down the aisles looking at different materials until an idea takes shape.

As a tribute to his talent and his art, 2nd Street Optical will be converting the store into a gallery on June 9 exhibiting displays of all the wonderful work he has done over the last nine years. Olivier will be there too, with his jazz band of kitchen art musicians.

"I've still got 75 pieces from the original display," he says.

Mark the date and go and meet him. But don't wait. Buy a piece of his original kitchen art now — before he gets really famous.



SURROUNDED BY ART. Olivier Chupeau sits in the window of 2nd Street Optical surrounded by some of his found art creations, this time in an Eastern theme. —Photo courtesy J.F. Chapter