

Jeweler Finds Creative Way to Expand Retail Operation

(April 9, 2009, Rochester, MI) Paul Haig's gallery is moving from national show venues to Main Street, thanks to a creative retail occupancy deal. Haig, owner of Haig's of Rochester in downtown Rochester, does a dozen shows throughout the United States annually, which feature his collection of antique Asian textiles, ivories, lacquers and prints. He also has a complement of South American and European objects.

This month, Haig's gallery is taking up temporary first floor residence in the Clarion Building at 313 Main Street, next door to Haig's of Rochester, with a grand opening set for 6 pm on April 17. Knowing that a long-term lease on his property may take several months, Don Seed, owner of the Clarion building, and Haig negotiated a deal that benefits both. Haig is paying the utilities and a commission on any sales made from his gallery annex. It keeps the building open, vibrant and visible for potential long-term tenants.

"It isn't the income that I would receive on a normal lease, but it provides me with some income and makes the building more attractive and available to potential tenants," says Seed. Plus, "Paul's collection is amazing!"

For his part, Haig says that nearly half of his annual sales come from his web sites and the shows he does across the country -- from New York to Miami to Las Vegas.

"Top clients from around the world come to these shows," says Haig, "and this gives us a creative way to showcase our collection locally. People can see what our booths look like at the shows." Haig has objects in all price ranges and hopes he can build a local retail market for them. While he is occupying the space next door, Haig is refurbishing the second floor at Haig's of Rochester to maintain a long-term retail presence for the gallery collection. In the past, the second floor has served primarily as gallery storage space.

Downtown Development Authority Director Kristi Trevarrow says this move is a great idea in the current business climate.

"Our vacancy rate is better than most in the region," says Trevarrow, "but leasing buildings does take longer in an uncertain economic climate, and this is a brilliant move for both Don and Paul."

Haig's of Rochester has been downtown since 1973, and moved to its present location at 311 Main Street fourteen years ago when Haig and his wife, Diane, bought and restored the historic building.

Haig's of Rochester carries both estate jewelry and a custom jewelry collection that is designed and made on location.

"This should be a boost to both the jewelry store and to the gallery," says Haig. "We hope to cross-market both sides of the business while we have adjacent Main Street frontage locations."