

Thomas-ology:

By: Gina Fore

The un-science theory of the man behind THE One



Having recently completed our Living Spaces and Design guide, the bazaar team has seen more than our fair share of furniture stores. We have been all over the city taking note of funky sofas and amusing variations on the standard table lamp. We ran the tread off our shoes in search of nesting materials so that you don't have to. It would sound a bit hypocritical at this point to turn our tired backs on all that research and effort and tell you to just shop at THE One. So, I won't say it. I'll just tell you what I have learned about this store's conscious, world-vision, and brass-balls attitude and allow you to make your own choices. That's what Thomas Lundgren, creator of THE One, would want you to do anyway.

After the noise and excitement from the celebration of opening THE One's new boutique in The Avenues subsided, we sat down with Thomas to talk about the store and the man who created it. I came prepared with a list of clever questions, hoping to uncover some little known fact or juicy personal detail of the décor guru's life. Breaking the ice with an easy subject, although there is little ice around a guy like Thomas, I asked about the emphasis on music and entertainment which pervades THE One's marketing theme. For example, there is The Gourmet Theatre restaurant, THE One sponsored mega concert with Robbie Williams, the reference to employees as cast, and the rock-star grunge looks of their ads and promotional materials. He answered my question with the question first posed to him by a reporter, and is now the gate question of THE One website: "Does the world need another furniture retailer?" And so it began; the most un-furniture discussion ever had inside a furniture store.

Using a Power Point presentation full of hero-movie quotes and inspirational images as visual aide, Thomas described to us THE One's philosophy and vision for the future. Anyone can sell furniture, and there are lots of people in it doing well and not so well. However, for THE One, furniture and home designs are just the chosen medium in a much bigger scheme to save the world. You have probably seen their daringly irreverent ads asking us to "save the world from clones"; "save the world from conformity"; "save the world from boredom" and so on. Notice the predominant theme? Save the world. The rescue begins one employee, or rather, cast member at a time or one customer/fan at a time when individuals realize their potential for being, well, an individual. Uniqueness leads to inspiration which leads to change and, right on cue, inspires others to change. This potential energy exerted on a business plan creates stores that are different from each other, cast members who invest their love and ideas, and a store/theatre that is more than a furniture retailer. As Thomas says, "We sell feelings."

Something else to consider when you purchase your faux deer antler or disco ball shaped feelings is that your currency is going farther than the pockets of THE One cast members and investors. THE One supports local charities in each of



the cities where their stores are located. Thomas blends his passion for success with compassion for folks who simply need a chance to succeed. Demonstrated by the company's objective to have 5% of their company staffed by individuals that the world has labeled "learning impaired," Thomas continues to find new ways to save the world from conformity. As passionate about education as he is about surpassing competitors, THE One has set another interesting goal. That is to establish a public education school in each city or town where they have a store or manufacturer.

Nearly one hour into this interview, which so far has felt more like a motivational seminar, I realize that I haven't written a single word. I have just been listening, riveted to every word from a guy who has not only created a rebel image for a home décor retailer, but declared all out war on conformist consumerism. In fact, the only notes on my useless paper were applied by Thomas when he grabbed the pen I was ignoring and jotted a website and blog* that I should check out. Blinking at my empty interview page brought me back to my purpose and I fervently attempted to obtain a copy of the presentation so that I could share with you some of Thomas' quotes and quips of wisdom. Alas, this intellectualism is the protected property of Thomas Lundgren and THE One. I wish that I had another couple of pages in which to explain their revolution, but if anything you have read here has caused your eyebrows to rise, please take a moment away from your email the next time you are online to read more about their crusades and victories on THE One's website: www.theoneplanet.com.

*Read for yourself the website and blog that Thomas recommended: www.freethechildren.com and www.facesphases.blogspot.com (look at May 16th).