

In this blog we chat to Dingle native, the incredibly stylish Elaine Sheehy , owner of La Boheme, the ultimate fashion discovery for women located on Green Street, Dingle.

Why do you do what you do ?

I have always loved the fashion industry and I absolutely adore what I do, and I really get a buzz from it. I love giving someone that feel good factor and being able to offer them advice that will result in them feeling really good about themselves having been in my store.

How did it all start ?

I went to the College of Marketing and Design in Mountjoy Square Dublin and from there I got my first job in fashion retail in Pamela Scott in Dublin working for Maura Leavy who gave me an invaluable start by having someone train me that really knew what they are doing. It was great start in middle of the road fashion. At that stage in my life I was really keen to travel so I went to London and began working in the House of Fraser in Regent Street, walking on to your floor there is like walking on to a stage. I really loved that job, the people watching, interaction with people from all over world. I also worked in Selfridges before finally coming home in 1995 when I took a position with Designer Room in Brown Thomas in Dublin. I couldn't believe the change in the vibe in Ireland and that all the London buzz was also in stores in Dublin albeit in a more local way, and when visiting actors, or celebrities came to Dublin they would come straight the Designer Room. I was in charge of the Armani Diffusion collection which was the slightly more affordable collection . I then returned home to Dingle and in 1998 I opened La Boheme on Main Street, right next door to Adams Pub. Then in 2003 I moved to Green Street where we have remained to this day. It is a lovely building with a lovely feel, customers even remark on the "cool" vibe in the shop with the original iron spiral stairs and the original oak floors adding to the atmosphere

What would be a typical day in your life ?

I open the store at 10 am each day and start with the little housekeeping details, getting the new stock out on the floor and making sure it is presented really nicely. Deliveries normally arrive in the mornings so you have to ensure that orders are correct before pricing it and placing it on the shop floor. The shop starts getting busy by 11 or 12 and I have a lot of loyal customers who will come in with a specific request and I like to be able to spend time with them and offer them a few options. I am pretty good at multitasking and I have the wonderful Eadaoin who helps me. In the afternoon I do my other job, being a Mom of two boys, before returning to the store for the last few hours before we close.

Tell us about the fabulous trips buying stock for the store,

As I buyer I could go to Paris, London or Berlin and I go to “ Pure” in Olympia or “ Scoop” in London in February and August as you buy 6 to 9 months ahead. The agents are there representing all the major fashion houses and you make appointments with the houses that you wanted to buy from. It is difficult to stop yourself overbuying at times but you really have to think who you are buying for and who is going to buy from you. I buy a combination of more affordable ranges and higher end for special occasions. You really have to have a little of everything and not concentrate on a specific target market. I really enjoy the fashion shows but you really have to force yourself to have your business hat on ! There is such a great buzz and they really are a “ full-on” three day experience - you have to have stamina to get through it. At home in Ireland I go to Fashion City in Dublin which carry a wide range of Irish and European labels in both occasional and everyday wear. I am always on the lookout for something new and edgy.

Who is your greatest inspiration ?

Shelly Corkery, Buying Director in Brown Thomas is a wonderful inspiration to me as is

Samantha Barry in Glamour Magazine in New York. She's an Irish girl who made it big in the US, I really admire her work ethic. When I worked in Brown Thomas, the wonderful Cecily McMenemy was a wonderful role model.

Designer wise I love Brandon Maxwell and Tom Ford. I admire designers who stick with what they know and who remain true to themselves. In Ireland I really admire Fiona Heaney of Fee G, Umit Kutluk, Helen Cody, Simone Rocha, Louise Kennedy and Aideen Bodkin. My own style I would describe as being classic and timeless

What is your favourite part of the Dingle Peninsula ?

I just love going out to Dunquin Pier or Coumeenole and taking in the amazing views of the Blasket Islands. If I had the day to myself my ideal day would be to do the Dingle Sea Safari and then on to the Blasket Islands. I just love being on the water and seeing the coastline from the water and then seeing Dingle coming into view as you head back in from your trip. My ideal day would be one of adventure and exploration where you are literally buzzing afterwards. Then off to one of our lovely restaurants for something to eat with a little glass of something cold.

And finally Elaine, what would you do if you won the Lottery ?

“You know when you go away on a trip and see a really beautiful place and you say to yourself - if I ever win the lottery we will come back and stay here “ - well that's exactly what I would do. I have visited the Amalfi Coast so I would just love to go back there and live it up. I love Positano or Ev in the South of France - the Hotel Dore, stunningly beautiful ! or possibly the Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo, or the Four Seasons in New York. Travel is wonderful and it really broadens your horizons but also make you really appreciate what you have at home - and that's why I would never leave Dingle, it's my home and I just love it .

Web: www.labohemedingle.com

Insta: labohemedingle

