

## Sculpting with scrap

*Ever wondered what would happen to the trash you throw out every day? Well, while most go on to destroy our planet, The Indo Project transforms them into creative structures and sculptures in window displays that is sure to grab anyone's attention.*



**T**urning scrap to sculptures, The Indo Project breathes life into recycled materials to create innovative and creative window display themes. Born in 2007, the Chicago-based firm was founded by Linsey Burritt and Crystal Grover to create unique, environmentally-conscious window treatments using recycled materials such as egg crates, to-go cups, cardboard, paper and much more. VM&RD speaks with Linsey Burritt to find out more on this emerging concept and its role in shop window displays.

Knowing the fact that a display would be up for not more than 1-3 months, by default, The Indo Project never bought new materials for their display, rather, used props from a local salvage store (a way of advertising). The props opted for were vintage doors, windows, mirrors and glass bowls. "If at all we buy something new, we only buy it knowing how it will be reused afterwards," adds Linsey.

Believe or not, the raw materials that Indo Project uses for their displays is either pulled out of the waste or recycling streams! They normally use one material depending on the audience and the product to be showcased. The material thus selected, takes on a sculptural, repetitive form. "With this, we first try drawing attention to the powerful form created, later turning attention to the merchandise," explains Linsey.

With retailing at its peak, brands/retailers



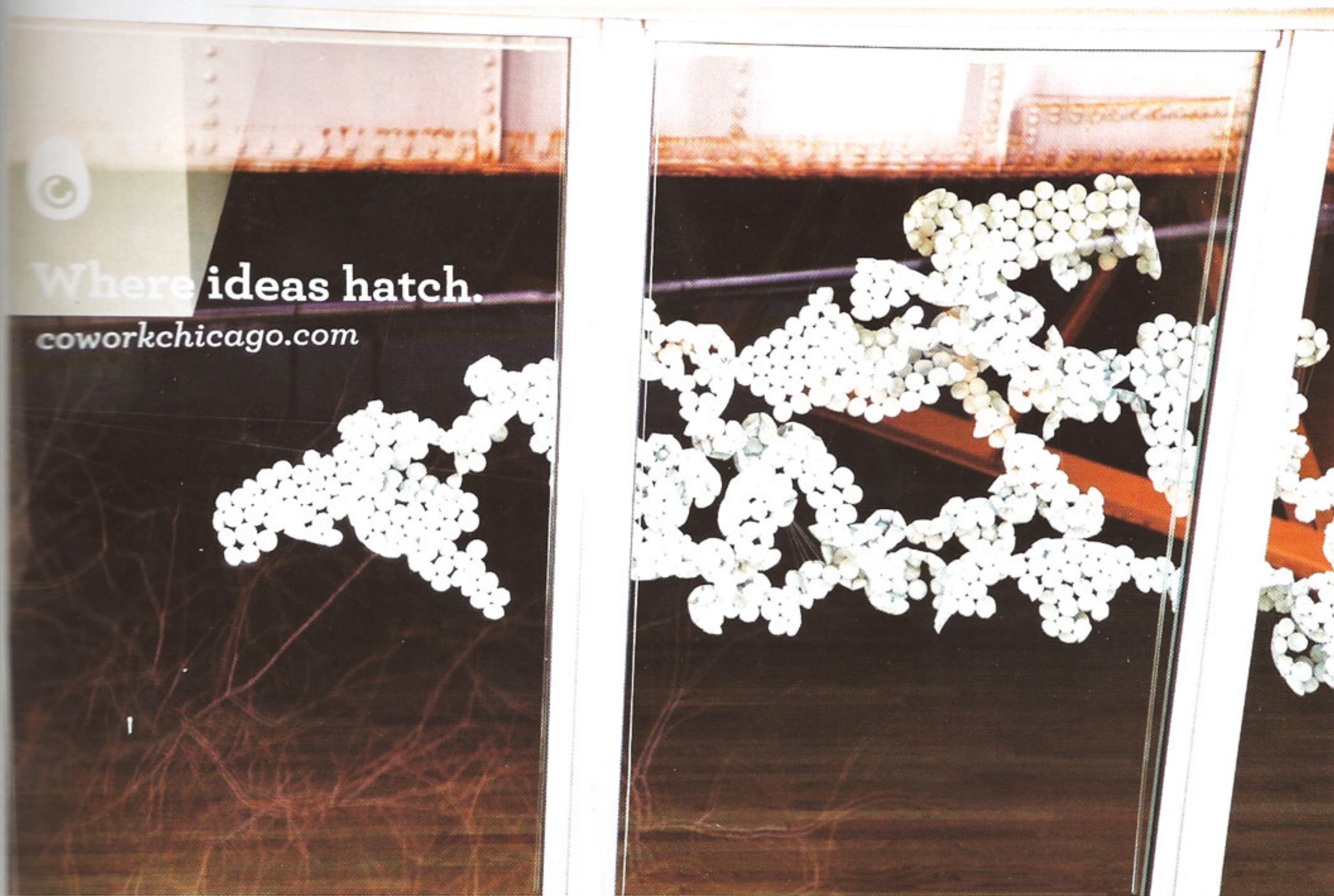
alike have become mindful of their displays, thus changing them regularly. According to Linsey, the materials being used in these windows have a very short life, and so, using recycled materials make much more sense; only that you need to be creative enough to know where to look for them. Talking about cutting costs, yes, you are saving on the big bucks here. But this sure does involve a lot of time. There are definitely tradeoffs.

Each material also has its own unique limitations. Linsey comments, "Typically,

it takes more effort to make a salvaged material not look like trash. Also, not every brand blends well with certain materials. At times we have to pay special attention to the material to give it a crisp feel. This may mean we have to paint it, sand it, or plaster the seams."

"Apart from that, looking at this from an environmental perspective, in a way we are minimising wasteful consumption. Our work can be defined as 'quietly political' and the sculptures we produce, in most cases,





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in awe. There is beauty in the unexpected," says Linsey. She adds, "It's not just us, there are other retailers like Anthropologie, who believe in including 'scrap' to beautify their displays. Window dressers and visual merchandisers are very budget conscious, always finding ways to get good deals and reuse materials."

Indo Project took up their first project in 2007 for Niche and City Soles, a shoe boutique in Wicker Park. Since then, they have had a number of favourites. When asked about their current favourite, Linsey says, "Our current favourite is 'The Script Wall' which we conceptualized and constructed for Steppenwolf Theatre. Here, we sorted through 10,000 pounds of used paper, hand-picked them and stacked these to a 40ft x7ft wall whose weight tipped at 5,800 pounds."

Currently, Indo Project is developing a window display for Brizo in the Merchandise Mart. This window will showcase a bathroom faucet that Jason Wu, a high-end fashion designer, designed for Brizo. "We are cutting sheer fabric and lace into baroque shapes to mimic the line's accessories and will be creating a soft, silhouetted back drop to showcase the beauty of the matte black faucet. The display will be up by the end of April," explains Linsey.

Going forward, Indo Project is exploring outside the realm of window display into



interiors and custom objects. Although window display will always be a focus, the organisation wishes to widen its horizon and explore all facets of design, especially projects that are more permanent or have a longer life ●

Chanda Kumar