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Windows a Work of Art

By Elizabeth Pose

What attracts a person to a store? An ad from a newspaper, a sale? How about a window display that showcases the store's items in a

new light? Those "artsy" window displays are what catches people's attention as they stroll, or drive, by 2nd Street Optical in Belmont Shore.

Olivier Chupeau is the man behind the store's innovative and minimalist window displays. The optician did window displays for the optical shop where he worked in France. "This is a way to liberate myself. It just comes naturally."

Tony Canfora, owner of 2nd St. Optical, recalls when the two met. "Jacquie Clarke, my wife, had Chupeau's godfather as a customer and they both came in to visit. Chupeau asked if he could do our windows and he's been with us ever since.

Chupeau can take about four to five hours, over the course of maybe two days, to do a display. They usually stay up for about one to two months, and the displays vary from season to season. He also does windows for the Rubber Tree and an optical shop in Santa Monica.

Chupeau's ideas are always on his mind. "Ninety percent is done in my mind. Most of the time I just do the displays on the spot." To him

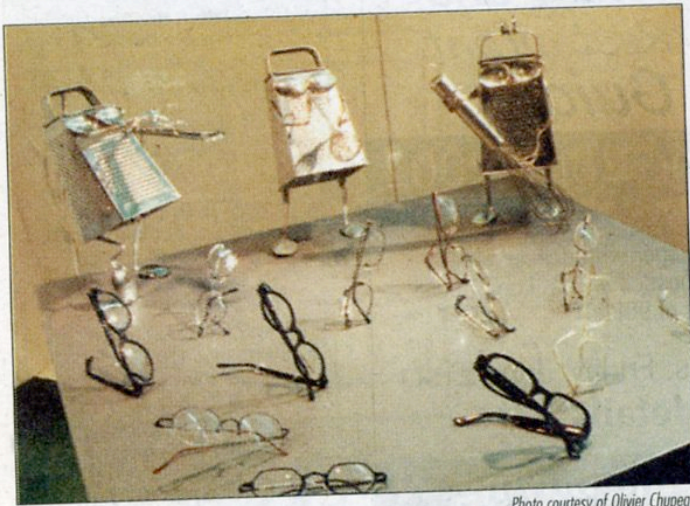


Photo courtesy of Olivier Chupeau

A CHEESE GRATER JAZZ BAND entertains eyewear as well as passers by at 2nd St. Optical in Belmont Shore.

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Displays of Art

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Styrofoam peanuts look like snow when crushed, which is what he did for Christmas. He's also taken cheese graters and made them into a jazz band with spoons and forks as feet and hands.

Although doing the windows is like a hobby, Chupeau wouldn't mind making a living at it as an artist. He's had one art show in Long Beach and has been commissioned

by USC to create a mobile for their computer library.

People often ask to purchase his work. "I had just finished my second window when a woman asked to purchase one of the props I used for the display, so I sold it. I later found out that the piece is hanging in the middle of a room in a home up in the Hollywood Hills, he recalls." He's also been approached by frame companies to do displays, but it would be under the direction of someone else and Chupeau

would rather work by himself because he is better able to express his ideas without rules.

Canfora believes that Chupeau is an investment. "He's the best source of advertising we have."

To honor the work he's done for the past nine years, the store will have a retrospective of Chupeau's work Sunday, June 9, from 3 to 7 p.m. The public will also get to meet the man behind 2nd St. Optical's unique window displays.