

UP-CYCLED

OLD MATERIALS TAKE ON A NEW LIFE AT CHROME INDUSTRIES' MINNEAPOLIS HUB STORE.

By Lauren Mang, Contributing Writer



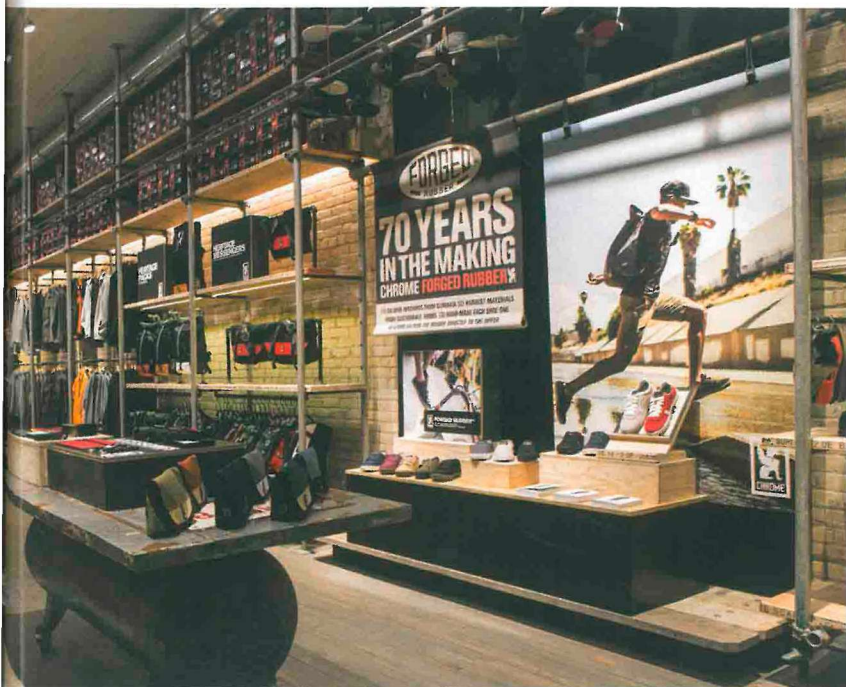
NEARLY 20 YEARS AFTER CHROME Industries embraced the creative reuse of materials in its first messenger bags – constructed from Cordura fabric, military-grade truck tarps, seatbelt webbing and buckles that had been cut out of cars at a salvage yard – the San Francisco-based purveyor of durable gear for skaters, cyclists, urban commuters and professional messengers is still scour-

ing junk sites – now for its Hub stores, the retailer’s flagships, where raw, salvaged items are turned into fixtures and design elements to convey the brand’s original utilitarian and handmade nature.

“Using salvaged material in our store design is really a continuation of the brand’s heritage and a further commitment to being resourceful and creative,” says Paul Wilson, store designer and visual merchandising senior manager for Chrome. Wilson is part of a small, in-house team that handles virtually every aspect of launching a new store – from conception and store design, to construction and merchandising.

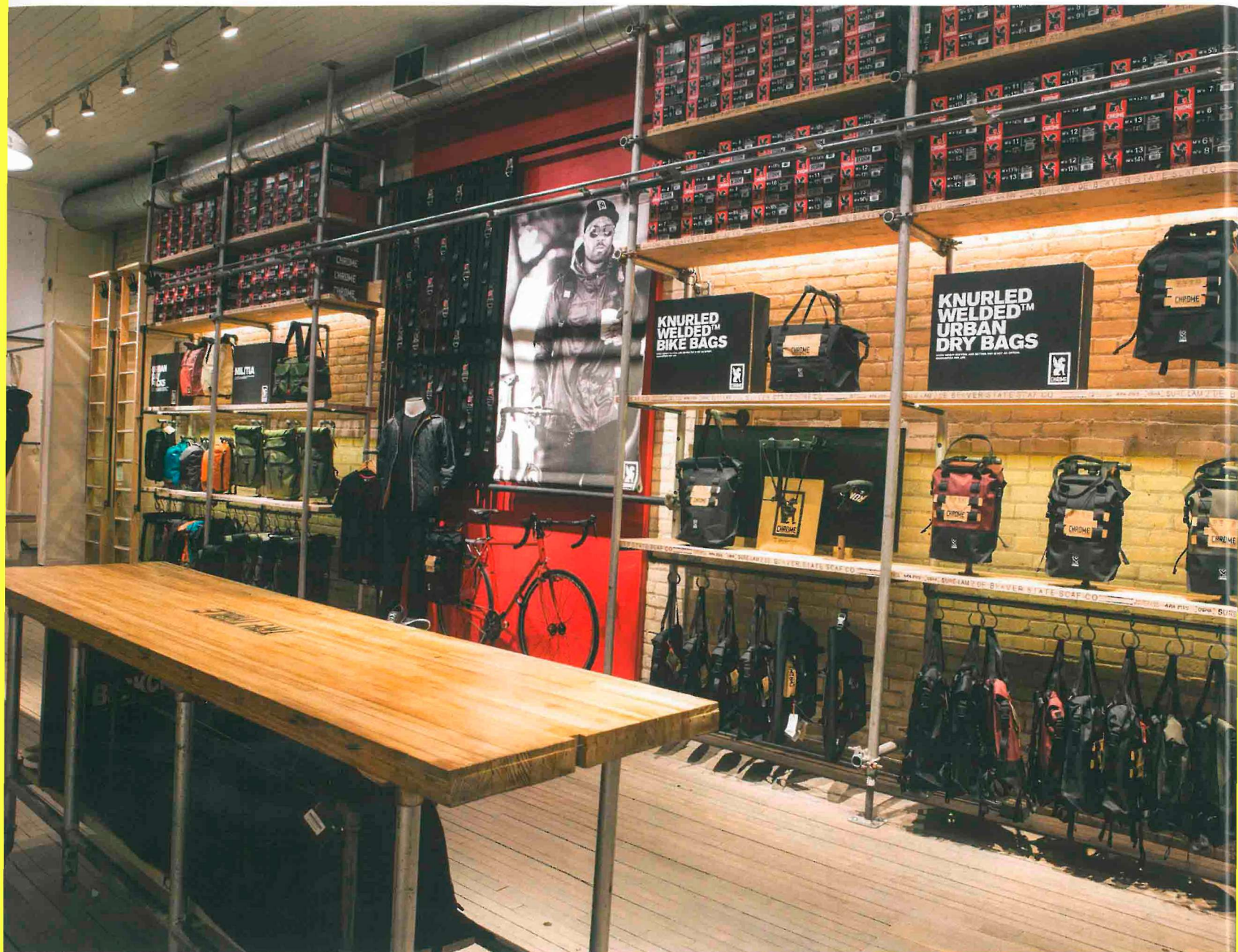
In the retailer’s latest shop, a 3100-square-foot store in Minneapolis’ North Loop, previously occupied by local bike store, Handsome Cycles, the design team’s up-cycled finds abound, including seating sourced from a University of Minnesota lounge, a back-wall collage of locally salvaged doors and vintage lighting extracted from a steel plant in upstate New York. A number of design elements, such as graphics and alu-

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LEFT Product-focused lifestyle graphics were repurposed from Chrome’s 2014 Interbike tradeshow booth and seamlessly adapted for use in its new Minneapolis Hub.

ABOVE The site was formerly occupied by a bike store that had a very recognizable design. “When the founders ... came in and couldn’t see any evidence of the [previous] shop, we knew we had succeeded,” Wilson says.



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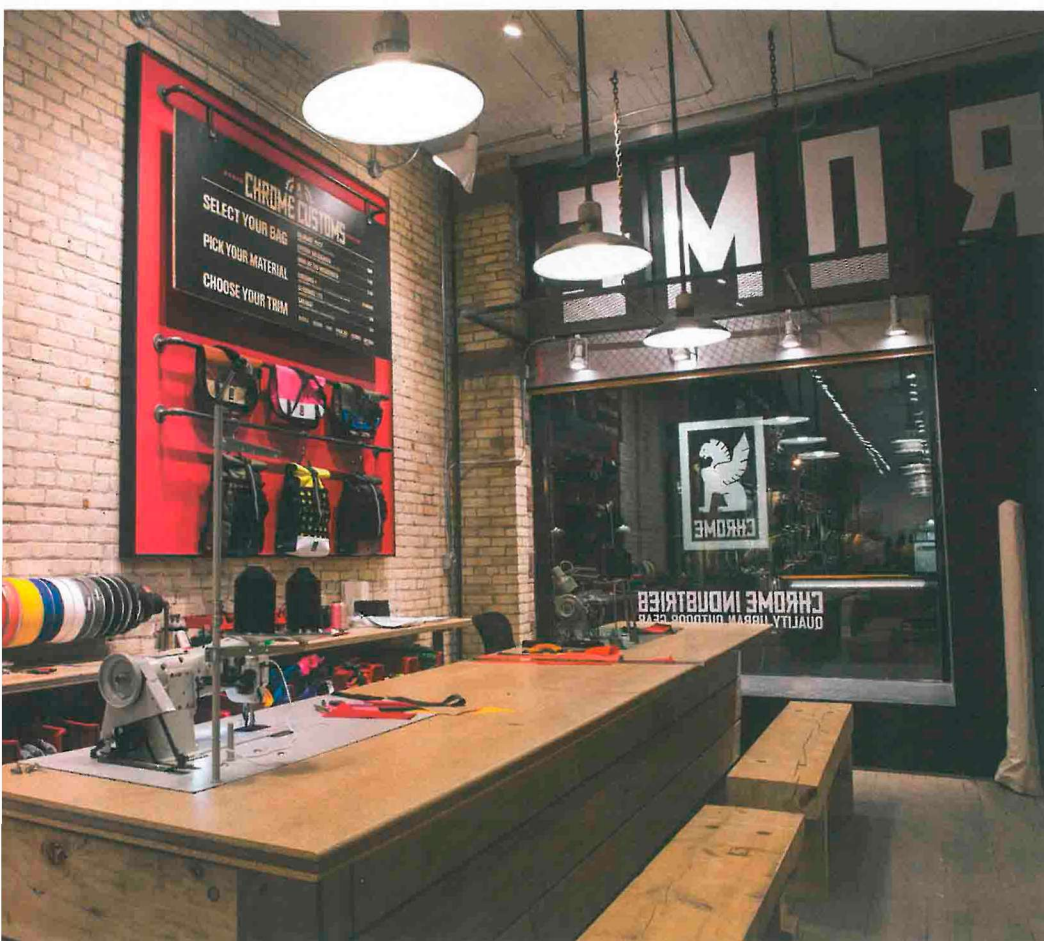
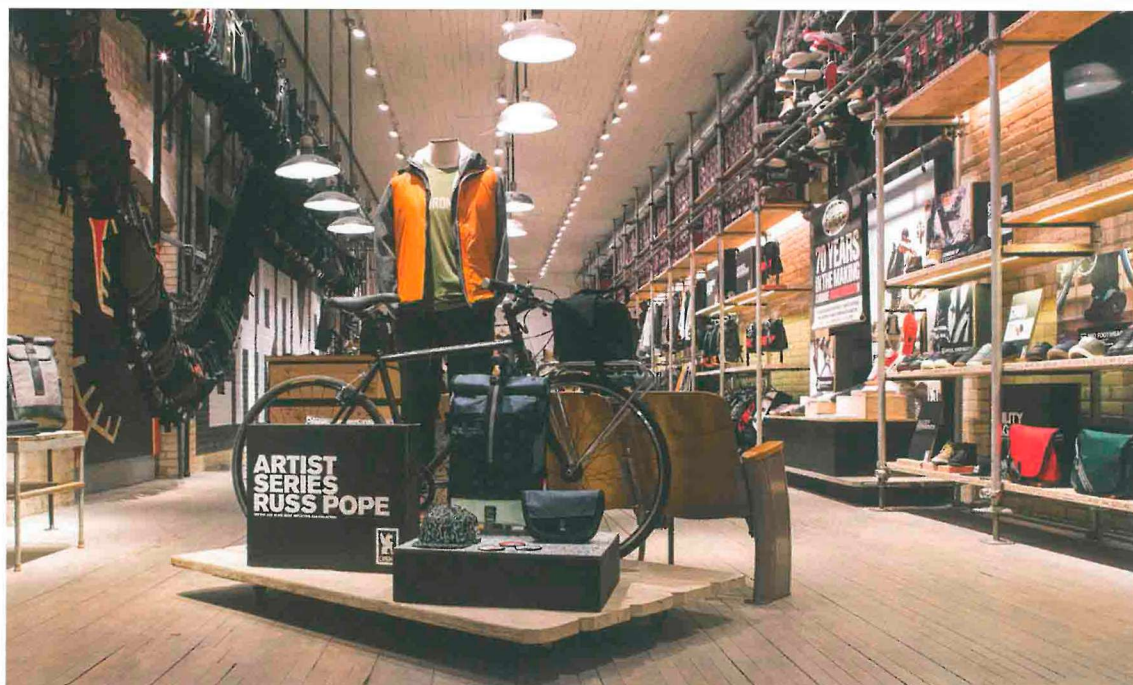
—Paul Wilson, store designer and
visual merchandising senior manager, Chrome

minum pipe scaffolding repurposed as fixturing, were taken from Chrome’s 2014 Interbike tradeshow booth and shipped post-show to the Minneapolis store.

As the DIY-spirited retailer has included in its other Hubs, the design team suspended a 48-foot-long, functioning dry cleaner garment conveyor – claimed from a California junkyard – as a fully functional display rack for its messenger bags. To avoid segmenting the space with vertical supports, the contraption was cantilevered 13 feet in the air, supported by columns along the structure’s 100-year-old brick wall. It’s both an eye-catching and practical component; the old-school machine showcases much of the retailer’s stock, so it’s easily accessible to sales associates on the floor. “The idea of up-cycling and transforming a known system

RIGHT Aluminum pipe scaffolding – also reused from the retailer’s Interbike booth – serves as the store’s perimeter fixturing and adds a rugged, industrial feel.

BELOW The in-house seamstress helps Chrome’s custom bag-making bar, where shoppers can choose from a variety of messenger bag styles, fabrics and embellishments.



into a flexible and dependable merchandising system is very rewarding,” Wilson says.

The store is designed to encourage community engagement and interaction with the products. Floor fixtures are mounted on casters, so they can be moved to make room for local arts and music events hosted throughout the year. Most recently, the store plans to host a community event that will showcase stories and photographs about bike touring, based on the publications of local online outlet, *Bunyan Velo*. “The turnout and response to the events has been great,” says Ashley Bruha, store manager of the Chrome Hub. “I believe it’s important to contribute and play a role in the community as more than just a retail store.”

Chrome elevates the customer-engagement factor with its custom-bag-making bar – crafted, naturally, from a reclaimed Douglas fir shipping crate – where shoppers can choose a bag type and personalize it to the nines with an endless mix of fabric, trimmings and other specialty options like patches and buttons. The in-house seamstress then hand-sews the creation using a Juki sewing machine – the same brand Chrome’s founders used to piece together their inaugural messenger bags. And, customers are encouraged to test their footwear selections on a bike prior to purchasing. “We want everyone to feel welcome and included,” Wilson says. “The experience someone has when they visit any of our Hubs is one of discovery and participation.” ▀

PROJECT SUPPLIERS

RETAILER
Chrome Industries,
San Francisco

DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE,
GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Chrome Industries,
San Francisco

SIGNAGE/GRAPHICS
Pictura Graphics,
Minneapolis
PVS In-Store Graphics,
Portland, Ore.

LIGHTING
Villa Lighting, St. Louis

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