

From Rubbish to Radiance: The Birth of High-End Handcrafted Collectible Art



TIME magazine caught up with the tranSglass™ collection of glassware in its Winter 2005 Style supplement.

MoMA, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, has the tranSglass™ in their prestigious permanent collection and retails the collectible art in its gift stores.

The tranSglass™ collection exemplifies the beauty of an alliance that is made to be and built to last. USAID is proud to highlight the alliance in the line-up of successful partnerships that the USAID Supply Chain Alliance and Export Promotion

Program developed in Guatemala. USAID's implementing partner in this program is AGEXPRONT, the Guatemalan Trade Association for Non-Traditional Exports.

The story of tranSglass™ shows that in slightly over a year's time, when the right people: designers, marketers, product development experts, exporters, and artisans come together that a new line of handcrafted high-end products can be born and on the shelves in the United States, Europe and Asia.



The protagonist of tranSglass™ is the Guatemalan artisan group, La Casa Cotzal. Led by founder Ian González, the group collected donated recycled bottles and learned to transform them into collectible art pieces for client, Artecnic. La Casa Cotzal is literally turning "garbage" into a work of superior craftsmanship and design.



The La Casa Cotzal artisans are 22 Guatemalan women and men who, prior to their work producing tranSglass™, were either unemployed or performing as laborers. Now they have learned a craft and take great pride in their ability to work as a team to cut, shape and polish the recycled bottles into art pieces.

The USAID Supply Chain Alliance and Export Promotion Program supported this concept-to-market process with several studies on work space organization and warehousing, inventory management, and effective production techniques to produce perfect final products.

An ongoing environmental impact study will determine the best use of the waste—the unused glass—and the impact of the dust generated during production and ways to mitigate its harmful effects.

The Program provided training to the artisans in industrial safety, time-use and movement of product through the work space.

The studies and training allow La Casa Cotzal to meet its client’s specifications for the product and to maximize production of this high-end collection now and in the future.

The product is an assorted collection of glassware designs in green, clear, or brown polished or satin glass that begin as recycled wine, champagne and beer bottles. The collection was designed by European designers, Tord Boontje and Emma Woffenden. It was sponsored this year by Artecnic and is one of its first Design with Conscience campaign projects to go from concept to market. The Design with Conscience campaign aims to use design to foster humanitarian and environmental causes.



Angela Moore, Artecnic

Due to their handcrafted nature, each tranSglass™ piece is unique—they vary slightly in size, color and appearance. They do not, however, vary in their quality as each is perfect with nary a visible scratch. Each is packed in a special box, also produced by Guatemalan hands.

