

whitewall

CONTEMPORARY ART AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

FALL 2021

The INSPIRATION ISSUE

GEORGE CONDO - AI WEIWEI - YOSHITOMO NARA
EMILY MAE SMITH - DONNA HUANCA

THE LETTER

Inside George Condo's studio, photo by Steve Benisty

FROM THE EDITOR

Heading into this fall, there is a cloud of uncertainty in the air. We're feeling grateful that we found ways to reconnect with loved ones and enjoy this summer, while trying to remind ourselves we can get through what's next. In many ways it feels like we've been here before. And as always, we're looking to artists to lead the way, naming this our first-ever Inspiration Issue.

As is typical for the season, we've got a major focus on fashion, having conversations around sustainability with emerging designers like Zero Waste Daniel and Mia Vesper. They are carving a new model and space for themselves in the industry. We also look to houses like Hermès and Stella McCartney as they embrace materials such as mycelium to replace the waste and cruelty associated with leather.

Looking to the art market, we talk with gallerists including Ebony L. Haynes (of the new David Zwirner space 52 Walker) and Destinee Ross-Sutton, who are changing expectations of how to show and represent artists. We also deep-dive with the team behind Designing Motherhood, who through an Instagram account, book, exhibitions, and programming have created a reckoning for our understanding of reproductive objects and the experience of birth through the lens of design.

This issue is also full of examples of inspiring collaborations, like Lady Gaga creating a new queendom in Champagne with Dom Pérignon designers Zanellato/Bortotto adding their latest vision to the Louis Vuitton "Objets Nomades" collection, as well as artist Jamie Nares lending her dynamic brushstrokes to the haute couture of Pierpaolo Piccioli with Valentino Des Ateliers.

Finally, we take some time to revisit old friends, speaking with artists like George Condo, Ai Weiwei, and Yoshitomo Nara for the first time in close to a decade. The experience of the past year and a half, in response to the roller coaster of the ongoing pandemic, impacted each in a different way. And we see that in their artistic practice, creative output, and reflections.

We don't know what the next few months will look like, but we are feeling inspired by the renewed sense of purpose and resilience from so many creatives. And we're holding tight to that little bit of light.

Katy Donoghue
EDITOR IN CHIEF

ATELIER VISIT

ZANELLATO/BORTOTTO

Crafting lanterns that light up the Louis Vuitton's "Objets Nomades" line.

By Eliza Jordan

Just months after Giorgia Zanellato and Daniele Bortotto founded Zanellato/Bortotto in 2013, the design duo presented their first collection. Made for Rubelli, it was entitled "Acqua Alta" and shown at Salone Satellite in Milan as an homage to Venice. Driven by a love of place and the passing of time, they've continued to create artisanal goods, limited-edition objects, interior design projects, and more.

In 2019, Zanellato/Bortotto first collaborated with Louis Vuitton for its "Objets Nomades" collection with a woven leather mandala screen. Recently, Zanellato/Bortotto returned to the luxury house to make a new leather object, inspired by magical lights found around the world. The result is a sophisticated leather lantern with a blown-glass bulb and design cues borrowed from iconic Louis Vuitton accessories that enchant the eye and soothe the senses.

Bortotto spoke with *Whitewall* from their atelier in Treviso about sharing memories around a leather lantern's glow, and how anyone can find a story within "Objets Nomades" pieces.

WHITEWALL: *Why did you choose to create a lantern for this line of "Objets Nomades"?*

DANIELE BORTOTTO: It reminds us of sharing moments. There's something magical about these lanterns—the shape and pattern, but also the light and shadow it creates. We didn't have something clear in mind, but it was an idea of travel; these lanterns we saw in journeys throughout the world in places like Colombia and Vietnam.

In many of these countries they don't have electricity, but candle lanterns. There's something really cool about that, so we wanted to interpret those objects. Especially in Colombia, there's such a strong idea of color, and that's really important for our projects—for our mandalas, and these lanterns. There's a combination of strong colors with soft tones. It's a sort of diary, a journey that we put into the projects.

WW: *The light is portable and intended to be used inside and outside, featuring details inspired by handbags like the strap and brass "feet." How did you get to this point?*

DB: We wanted to add details that we'd need to use the lantern inside and outside. We thought not to do it in a normal way, but in a Louis Vuitton way, so we took some elements from the handbags. At the beginning of the collaboration, we received an amazing book that showed us all of these traditional elements they've been using for a long time, so we tried to put it into the lantern. We didn't want it to look too much like a bag, though, so for the handle we tested many different straps, like women's. The final result is nice because it reminds you of a bag, and some elements of a Louis Vuitton accessory, but it's a portable lantern.

WW: *Why do all of Zanellato/Bortotto's projects tend to center around place in relation to the passing of time?*

DB: We started studying here at IUAV University—the historical Venetian architecture school that Carlos Via Scarpa and other masters studied at—and wanted to try something abroad, so we started our product design master's at ECAL de Lausanne in Switzerland, which was a great experience. When we got back, we wanted to search for our roots and what was special about the craftsmanship that is so strong here.

Our background in school was industrial and product design, so we were focused on this world, interested in Swiss design, and the idea that you should do this and in this way. After "Acqua Alta," we realized with craftsmanship and our surroundings, we can do many different things, not just product design. You can work with craftsmanship, work on a limited edition, and put many ideas into your products and projects.

We see and experience many places, and we find really fascinating the way time changes these places. We are keen on translating these ideas, these images of places. We don't just do traditional industrial or product design. It's more than that. We like the combination. We like craftsmanship. That's why this project was exciting because there's so much about craftsmanship and fashion design that it was the perfect collaboration.

WW: *What details do we see in the LV lanterns that represent place and time?*

DB: It's more about memories. It's also about bringing something from our travels into an object, which seems hard to do when designing a product. Every object has a story, a link to a personal journey. For us, it's related to our experiences in places like Asia and South America. It was really a matter of the passage of time, more about finding a connection with people. Everyone has a story with this object, a connection.

WW: *When you look at these lanterns, does it bring you back to a time or a place?*

DB: Many different moments. For sure it is summer in Italy by the seaside, where you cannot switch on too many lights because of mosquitoes, so you have many lanterns. It's magical the way people sit around these little lights. And one amazing summer night in the Cocora Valley in Colombia. It was dark and we were at this place in the middle of the hills, full of people outside, and there were all these lights all around. And in Venice, there's this big celebration in the Giudecca Canal with all these summer light lanterns along the canal where you can pass through this artificial bridge. It's only up for a few days.

WW: *How does being based in Veneto, arguably the center of the world's leather production, impact your craft?*

DB: Living here in Treviso, and even just in Italy, we take so many things for granted. We don't realize how lucky we are and how many magical places there are—and all of the amazing things they do in their workshops. We had an amazing experience before "Objets Nomades" with a leather producer in Vicenza so we could see how everything starts and becomes those pieces of leather in our objects and bags. We saw the production behind creating colors and different kinds of leather, and some of these producers are the suppliers to Louis Vuitton.

We were intrigued and then realized our potential with leather when we then went to Paris. We saw these huge pieces of leather in crazy colors, and a lot said "Made in Italy" and "Made in Vicenza." It all came back to our country, but everything really started in Paris when we were watching the Louis Vuitton craftsman at work. We realized just how much you could do with that material.

WW: *How will you be using your LV lanterns?*

DB: Giorgia had a baby in January and we couldn't see each other much because of the pandemic. But now, finally, I think we can use the lantern to have a nice dinner outside with friends and her baby.



Louis Vuitton savoir faire event in Hong Kong, photo by Harold de Puymorin, courtesy of Louis Vuitton.



Portrait of Giorgia Zanellato and Daniele Bortotto by Mattia Balsamini.



Watercolor sketch of lanterns for Louis Vuitton's "Objets Nomades" collection, courtesy of Zanellato/Bortotto.

