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SPRING PREVIEW

A NEW YEAR IN DESIGN

*From Alice Aycock to Z Zegna,
Creative Talents Signal a Season of Change*

Daring Departures

TEXT: STEPHEN TREFFINGER PORTRAITS: FRANCK JUERY

Louis Vuitton plants a flag in the world of industrial design by exploring a new universe of talent for the brand, staying true to its roots as the *ne plus ultra* of luxury in lifestyle.

To travel is not to simply move from one point to the next, but to experience the unique identity of a particular place and leave marked by its culture and aesthetics. Louis Vuitton's Objets Nomades collection similarly collages several stylistic influences into a singular collection, designed by an international team: a fitting statement for a label devoted to travel.

The French design house recently opened its workshops to outsiders for experimentation and development, resulting in 16 limited-edition, made-to-order, stock, and prototype pieces incorporating foldable furniture, lighting, and travel

accessories. Some pay homage to special orders of the past—such as the iconic bed trunk or Stokowski trunk—but are updated with advanced technology or innovative manufacturing techniques. New designs will be added in the future, though not on a strict seasonal schedule.

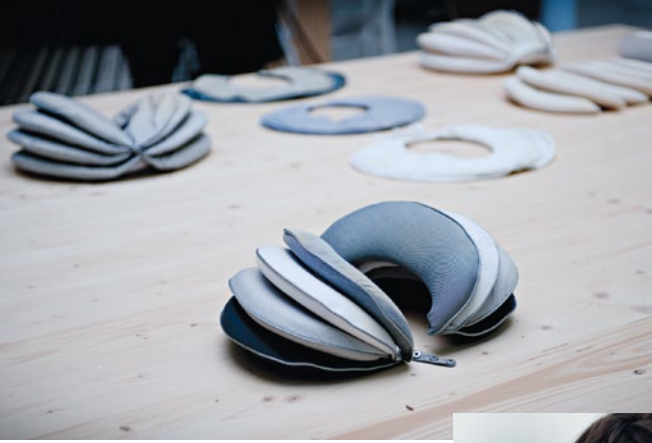
Companies such as Kartell, Moroso, and Nymphenburg, among others, have similarly utilized an international roster on a single season or collection. This is a first for the venerated luggage brand, however, and an opportunity for Vuitton to celebrate its own core value, supporting the art of travel, while updating its image by working with established and emerging designers. The collection debuted at Art Basel Miami Beach last December, and is now available in a Miami Design District retail location, the Travel Room of its SoHo store in Manhattan, and in its London, Paris, Tokyo, Singapore, and Taipei shops.

For their limited-edition Maracatu fold-away portable travel cabinets, Fernando and Humberto Campana—the Brazilian brothers known for employing everything from wood scraps to teddy bears in their designs—recycled bits from Louis Vuitton's leather workshop in Asnières, near Paris. "This is part of our work, to reinvent, to give a second life to the material," Fernando says. For the shape, "we first thought about the Namib desert, the baobab tree. And we imagined fruits hanging on this baobab to create a contrast to the aesthetic scenery, with something very vibrant, very kinetic," Humberto adds. The Maracatu takes its name and appearance from "a kind of ritual dance for Carnival in the northern part of Brazil [in which] people use wigs and clothes made out of strips of fabrics in different colors," Fernando says. The strips of leather that make up each cabinet are slightly



(LEFT TO RIGHT) Constance Guisset's Col de Voyage, made of eight petal-shaped cushions. A mood board in Guisset's studio in Paris. Guisset (left) and an assistant assemble the Col de Voyage in her studio.





different shades that, when viewed together, achieve a unifying effect. Each one is handmade. “Our work has to have hands,” Humberto says. “It’s not industrialized.”

Among the furniture designs are prototypes by Maarten Baas and Patricia Urquiola. A beach chair by Baas puts a Vuitton spin on one of his Clay pieces, a series of furniture featuring synthetic clay applied over a metal armature. Here, the Dutch designer covers the skeleton in resin, and the seat is woven from cotton straps typically used for protection inside Vuitton trunks and suitcases. “Normally I make things that are only about form, because I don’t like most forms if they come directly from a function,” Baas says. “In this product, both form and function are combined in an extraordinary way.” Spanish architect and designer Urquiola also developed a folding stool and hanging swing chair.

For Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby’s cordless, Murano glass Bell lamp, the British duo took inspiration from LED lighting technology and their intention to create an efficient lamp that was easily portable. The light can be charged by solar cells or wall outlet

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) The Col de Voyage being assembled at Guisset’s studio. Lunettes de Sommeil molded leather eye cover. Guisset’s Cape de Voyage. Constance Guisset. (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) Sketch by Thierry Gaugain. Thierry Gaugain. Gaugain’s O Handbag lamp. The Ducati GT 1000, designed by Philippe Starck with Gaugain in 2008. Gaugain’s studio in Paris. Yacht A, designed by Starck and Gaugain for the Russian billionaire Andrey Melnichenko.

and has four brightness settings. The attached strap is composed of Vuitton’s classic Nomade leather.

Other pieces are even smaller and require no army of porters for transport. Perrine Desmons’ small bag hanger—designed to keep one’s luggage off the floor—is a reinterpretation of the company’s classic padlock. She calls it an item for “urban nomads.”

To battle the inhumanity of air travel, Paris-based Constance Guisset developed a series of travel accessories that includes chic updates to the neck pillow and sleep mask. Her work, including the pieces for Vuitton, tends to be centered on round shapes crafted with grace and elegance. She is deeply interested in fashion, and her pieces often show that influence. For instance, her Cape lamp is like a veil, a hat, and a flower all at once. “People also say it’s like a small phantom. My main idea was to embody the idea of a presence,” she says. “I wanted to make it like a person—to give a shape to the idea of the presence of light.” In many ways, her Vuitton commissions fulfill the needs Guisset identified in her own travels. “I always found it quite difficult to be comfortable and elegant at the same time,” she says. “And real comfort is difficult to attain because of the materials, textures, and constraints.”

Guisset’s Col de Voyage (travel collar) thoughtfully resolves that problem, through the form of an Elizabethan ruff, eight petals creating a flower-like cushion around the neck. When the cabin lights dim, reflective piping on the trim delineates the shapes. The inner layers are made of memory foam, for comfort; the outer layers are more dense, to give support. For the Lunettes de Sommeil (sleep mask), she spent an extensive period of time with the Vuitton team



PHOTOS: O HANDBAG LAMP: COURTESY LOUIS VUITTON; MALETTE: MOTORCYCLE; DEIS: YAQHT; GUILLAUME PILISSON.





getting the thermoformed leather to feel correct. Behind the glasses themselves, foam donuts are removable so they, too, can be washed. Development of the pieces took over a year and a half, due mostly to the complexities of maximizing ergonomics and usage.

Designer Thierry Gaugain's approach is more grounded in a sense of place—in this case, coastal Toulon, France, where he was born. "When you grow up on the seaside," he says, "that is something that follows you all of your life. You always have a taste for freedom." At 20, he left the south of France and headed to Paris to study with Marc Berthier at the design school ENSCI-Les Ateliers. Directly after graduation, he began working with

Philippe Starck at his firm, where he was head of design for 20 years. "I did mostly industrial design, but always things that facilitated the idea of mobility and freedom—planes and motorcycles, for example." Projects in this arena included Starck designs for a Ducati motorcycle and a fancifully high-end yacht. Gaugain opened his own studio in 2010, and although the types of projects he works on—sailboats and hotels, among others—retain a similar sensibility, there is one major difference. "In contrast to Starck, I now have a long research period for my own work. As a result, I have a lot in development and not much to show," he says, laughing.

Gaugain's piece for Louis Vuitton incorporates OLED technology, an innovation he describes as nothing short of revolutionary. "From the beginning of time, light has always seemed like a danger—it's blurring, it's hot, it's punctual," he says. "Now there can

be a soft, flat light—something that's cold and doesn't dazzle you." Gaugain's O Handbag lamp is an aluminum disc attached to a braided leather handle that fastens to a bag's strap. The mirror surface is also an OLED for navigating the innards of one's purse in the dark. When switched off, it becomes a hand mirror. Gaugain enjoyed the conceptual dissonance of incorporating cutting-edge technology into a project for a label known for its tradition, and he may yet gain inspiration for potential Vuitton collaborations from upcoming projects: a motor yacht named Venus, designed in collaboration with Starck, and a hotel in Los Angeles.

Ironically, neither Gaugain nor Guisset currently travels much for pleasure, each preferring the joys of a nice siesta. "I travel so much for work that taking a plane for holidays is a pain," Gaugain says. "I try to stay as close as possible to my home base. Traveling for me now is having a good nap and dreaming a little." Guisset, who lived at boarding school from age 10 and then studied abroad, emerged into adulthood with a feeling of uprootedness. "Now that I have my own design agency and a family, this literal nomadism has transformed into a kind of mental nomadism," she says. "I dream a lot, and dreams are a real component of my work." Louis Vuitton asked her to do another piece, and she dreamt up a travel cape, in soft yak wool, that doubles as a blanket. All she needs with that is a hammock—as it happens, a leather one, designed by Atelier Oi, is already in the collection. ☞

(ABOVE) Stool by Atelier Oi. Bell lamp by Barber Osgerby. (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) First two, carrying case and freestanding lamp prototype by Nendo. Second two, interchangeable bag/stool prototype by Patricia Urquiola. The Maracatu portable travel cabinet by Fernando and Humberto Campana.