

LUXE IN TRANSLATION



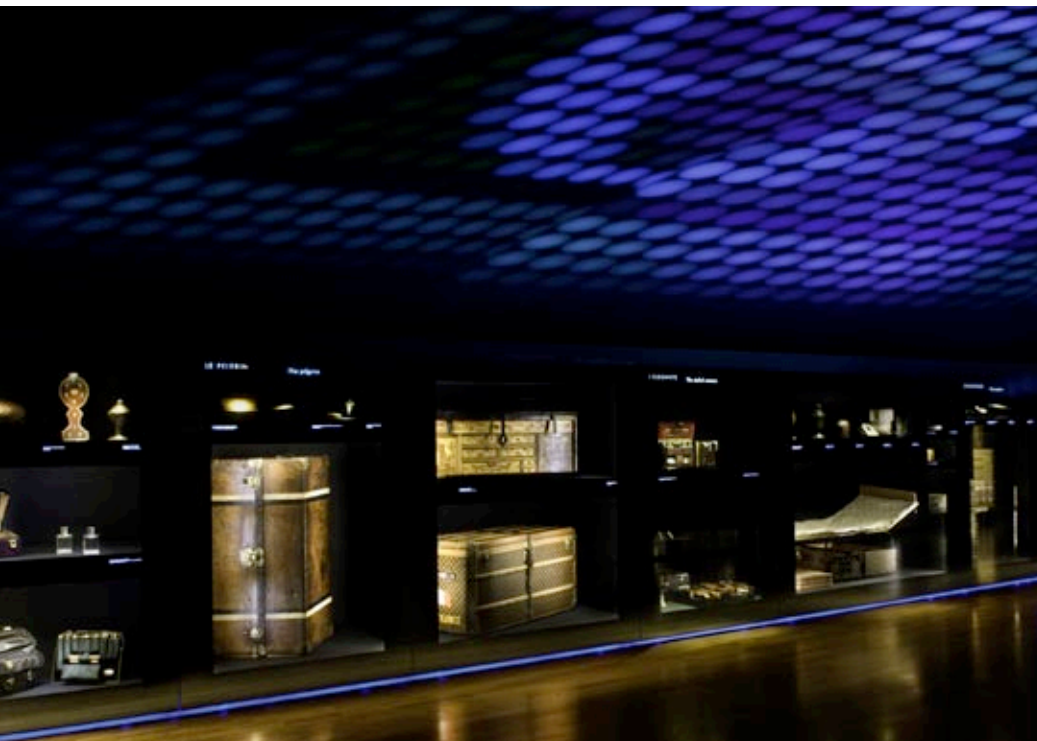
BRIGHT IDEAS: (Above) A tilted crystal vase for Baccarat; (below) an exhibition designed by Gady which presents the rare Louis Vuitton Patrimony collection, where trunks were lit behind tinted glass

A FRENCH DESIGNER MAKES A NAME FOR HIMSELF BY GIVING LUXURY A DOSE OF LYRICISM

WRITER: AMY SERAFIN

For 37-year-old designer and interior architect Jean-Marc Gady, design is about creating what he calls “a maximum of poetry.” The Frenchman is particularly well versed in the luxury market, and is known for injecting a clean, contemporary language into otherwise more formal projects. Gady sharpened his understanding of upscale brands during his four years at Louis Vuitton, where he styled store windows and produced other visual projects such as the scenography for store openings in Shanghai and Tokyo. In 2005, he opened his own firm, yet still counts Vuitton as a client, for whom he recently designed a temporary boutique inside, of all things, a Takashi Murakami exhibit at MOCA Los Angeles. Though tastefully done, the project raised eyebrows for peddling purses in a cultural context.

Gady’s approach has always included a certain amount of irreverence, no matter how imposing the client. He believes that in order to stay ahead of the curve, luxury brands must be willing to bend the rules. “Otherwise, it’s all about savoir-faire, quality and rarity,” he says. “These are important, but stirring up the hornet’s nest can be a good thing, too.” His latest projects include several contemporary objects that give sly nods to the traditions of their brands’ storied pasts. For Christofle, he took the leaf motif found on their signature Marly silverware collection and reworked it to create a streamlined version, which he then applied to a frame, a mirror and even a USB key. When Baccarat asked him to design a horizontal vase *couché*, he



PHOTOS: (BOTTOM) COURTESY OF LOUIS VUITTON



FRAMED PERCEPTIONS: (Above)

Gady frames the view of a sunset with a project called "Sunset Boulevard" at Club Med on Maurice Island; (clockwise from left) Challenging established museum practices, Gady designed a Louis Vuitton pop-up boutique in a Takashi Murakami retrospective at LA's MOCA; the gold "Up Yours" ashtray for Lateteaucube imitates a smoker holding a cigarette; a portrait of the designer

struggled with a number of ideas before deciding – almost in frustration – to take their time-honored Eurydice crystal urn and slice off a section so that it reclines like half-buried treasure. "I like vases," he says, "because you can breathe a lot of poetry into a few square inches."

For all of his emotional qualities, Gady isn't out of touch with more commercial considerations. Take Club Med, for example, which asked him last year to help them go upmarket by offering their resort clients a variety of magical yet inexpensive moments. Gady created a cocktail-hour event called "Sunset Boulevard," which features a large gold rectangle that frames the setting sun. "It's funny to see 80 people waiting for that instant when the sun passes through the frame," he notes, "when it's something they see every day." Club Med loved the concept, especially since it cost them next to nothing. And one can't help but appreciate the cheekiness of turning one of the world's oldest clichés into a happening. ▀

