

THE BOLD & THE *Beautiful*

Paris Fashion Week is one of the busiest periods for fashion houses and the media, so imagine the surprise when French couture house Dior unveiled a top-secret collaboration in the midst of the raging madness – to a roaring success.
By ALICIA TAN



***“IT IS THE HUMAN HAND THAT
MAKES AN OBJET D’ART UNIQUE.”***

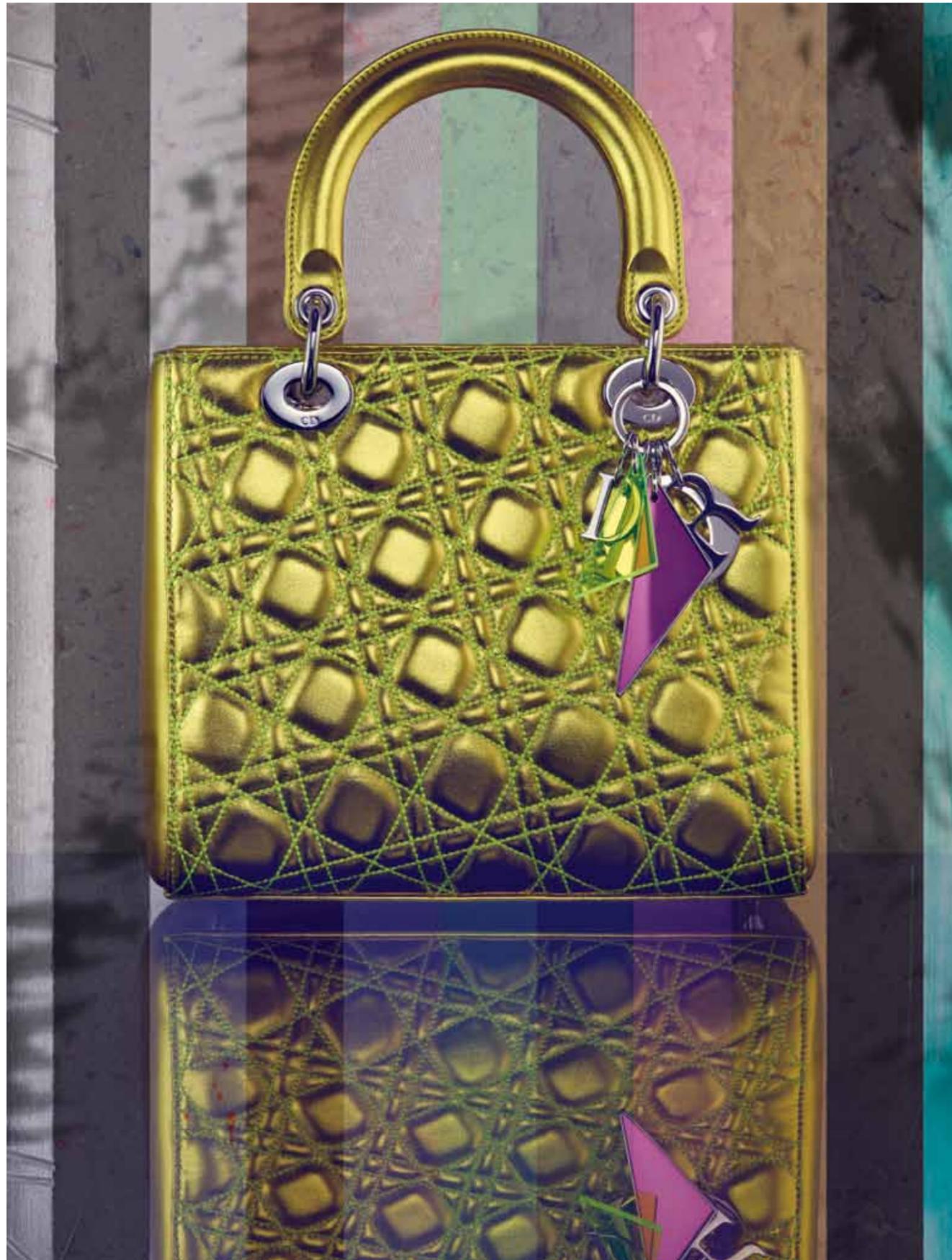
– CHRISTIAN DIOR

After the year that the House of Dior had, 2012 can only mark the year that the legendary couture label rises from the ashes to bask in its former glory. What better way to make headlines across the world than with a top-secret exhibition in the middle of Fashion Week with one of the biggest names in the art world? Yes, Dior has done it again – this time with a unique collaboration with Berlin-based artist Anselm Reyle.

The result? A collection of high-octane accessories designed around the camouflage print, neon brights and high contrasts, accompanied by Reyle’s signature acrylic triangles. Given free reign to explore the wildest of his imagination, Reyle played with colours and simply couldn’t resist shaking up the codes of the couture house. Renowned for his various stripe paintings, glossy foil paintings and ‘African Sculptures’, Reyle’s work is collected by art and fashion heavyweights and serves as evidence that his irreverent approach is just what Dior needs to add an edge and relevance back to the brand.

So there you have it – classic Dior products with a Reyle touch. For starters, the legendary cannage on the Lady Dior and Miss Dior handbags were reinterpreted into bold and sublime styles – each twisted, tilted and bolder than the next. Aside from the handbags, there’re also clutches, shoes, scarves, sunglasses and jewellery, all designed to be show-stopping conversation pieces.





Artist Anselm Reyle discusses his collaboration with Dior.

How did you and Dior first come together?

Delphine Arnault came to see some of my work at the Galerie Almine Rech in Paris and liked it very much. A little later, Delphine contacted the gallery to ask if I could envisage a collaboration with Dior. It was a new experience for me; I had never worked with the fashion world before, or with a business either. Stepping out of the art world, the actual art system, and getting closer to everyday life struck me as an interesting adventure. I said yes straight away.

What did you know about Dior at the time?

For me, Dior was a famous luxury house, traditional and very exclusive. That aside, I didn't know much about fashion, apart from the fact that a number of people in the fashion world collect my art.

How did the collaboration start?

The Dior team came to visit my studio in Berlin. They wanted to see my work and the wide variety of my art. Not long after, they came back to me with some proposals. They wanted me to create items for Dior that would be characteristic of my work. Personally, I didn't want to do any more stripes, which are probably the most famous aspect of my work, along with my aluminium pieces. I wanted to try something that was different to what I'd been doing so far; something that would still be part of my world, but totally new for me.

I liked the camouflage motif. I've been painting on camouflage canvas for a long time, but I completely cover it in paint, so you don't see that the motif is there underneath, except on the edge of the canvas. I suggested working with this camouflage canvas by putting it inside handbags. And then I wanted to put it outside. As for the metallic effect, it's an echo of the pieces I have been creating with aluminium sheets and coloured Plexiglas. That's when I had the idea of mixing that metallic effect

"I LOVED WORKING ON THE LADY DIOR HANDBAG. MOST OF MY WORK BUILDS ON OBJECTS THAT ALREADY EXIST, WHICH I THEN TRANSFORM. I APPLIED THE SAME PHILOSOPHY." –ANSELM REYLE



with coloured fluorescent threads. And then I thought of giving the cannage motif an unexpected tilt.

What did you enjoy most?

I loved working on the Lady Dior handbag. Most of my work builds on objects that already exist, which I then transform. I applied the same philosophy. My 'roots' are in painting but I've been getting very interested in textures and materials for some years now. I'm used to considering different materials for my work, they've become my language, along with colours. I wanted to change the Lady Dior into something else. I wanted to use different materials, different colours.

What do the triangular charms on the Lady Dior represent?

The triangular charms are echoes of some of my works. When I work on yellow paint, I love to add triangles of broken mirror in the same colour. And I use Plexiglas to cover my aluminium works.

We can see that you love yellow. Why yellow?

I think it's my favourite colour. Some time ago, I created a yellow artwork; it's a space, like a box, that's completely yellow. I love neon yellow. Neon yellow is to yellow what the electric guitar is to the acoustic guitar. But more generally speaking, I love contrasts that aren't harmonious. I assemble colours and I look for the ones that go least well together, the ones that in principle I would never match up, and then I put them together.

How did you choose your camouflage?

I wanted black. In my view, camouflage should always have black in it. And white too. I like the strength, I like the fluorescent colours and the metallic colours, but I also like this effect of slightly faded, sprawling colours.

“ART IS CERTAINLY NOT ABSOLUTE FREEDOM, YOU KNOW, AND IT SEEMS TO ME THE SAME GOES FOR FASHION. I WAS VERY INTERESTED IN THE DIFFERENCE IN CONTEXT. I KNEW FROM THE OUTSET THAT I WASN'T WORKING ON A PAINTING, BUT ON HANDBAGS.” –ANSELM REYLE



How did you go about choosing which pieces you would work on?

I was shown all the pieces and I chose the ones with the simplest shapes. I like simple shapes.

As an artist, how did you feel when working in this Dior setting? Did you feel more freedom or less?

Art is certainly not absolute freedom, you know, and it seems to me the same goes for fashion. I was very interested in the difference in context. I knew from the outset that I wasn't working on a painting, but on handbags. When you work with constraints, you can find a lot of freedom. And I felt very free, all the way through, and am very happy with this collaboration, this dialogue, this exchange. 1

