

PUBLICATION: The Business Times Weekend
COUNTRY: SINGAPORE
DATE: 30.03.12
PAGE: 12-13
FREQUENCY: DAILY/Weekend Edition



BY SPONSORING artists exhibitions at their stores, commissioning art work, or collaborating with artists to create merchandise, luxury brands have long leveraged on art as part of their branding. It's the rigour for a brand to extend itself to the art world and to extend its patrons – in a world where fashion, art, and culture are increasingly intertwined and not seen as separate entities with just the occasional overlap.

Italian menswear label Ermenegildo Zegna is the latest to enter the fray in a significant way – when it launched ZegnArt with a special project at the Maxxi National Museum of XXI Century Arts in Rome last week.



INSPIRED WORKS
 The Maxxi National Museum of XXI Century Arts in Rome, designed by the iconic architect Zaha Hadid and completed only in late 2010, was the perfect setting for the Lucy-Jorge Orta installation inspired by the city of Rome as well as teatles

Art of branding

Italian menswear label Ermenegildo Zegna is the latest brand to extend itself to the art world and become a patron. **By Cheah Ui-Hoon**

As close to a thousand of Rome's VIPs and media through the museum last Thursday when the installation was unveiled, as part of the Tridimensionale exhibition which runs from March 21 to Sept 23, it underscored the spirit of ZegnArt which is built on the model of "cultural intervention" rather than just contemporary art.

The brand, beyond commissioning works that primarily beautify the store space or give it artistic caché, intends to work with cultural institutions of various countries to support local art – with collaborations with India, Turkey, and Brazil planned in the next three years.

But given the brand's Italian roots, it chose to kick off the project on home ground. The Orta installation has been donated to the Maxxi to be part of its permanent collection.

"We wanted to create works that will stay on in the host countries afterwards to become a part of the cultural institutions' collections and to be part of the city's landscape," explains Anna Zegna, granddaughter of the label's founder and who acts as the brand's image director. She's also the president of Zegna's Foundation (Fondazione Zegna) set up in 2000.

Included in ZegnArt are also artists' residences in Italy – hence the term "cultural intervention". ZegnArt encompasses special commissions and projects like the Or-

ta installation and also ad hoc commissions for art in its global stores.

"We wanted to create a project that is absolutely consistent with Ermenegildo Zegna's values – and we see a need to sustain local art," explains Ms Zegna simply. The art it supports in developing countries echoes the wide-ranging philanthropy the Zegna Foundation already does – but always primarily with a social or environmental cause. For instance, in China, it is in the seventh year of supporting the World Wide Fund for Nature in the Panda Corridor in the Chiling mountains of China. In Africa, it supports the African Medical and Research Foundation's "Water and Health" project in Kenya.

And underscoring how charity begins at home, the Zegna Oasis launched 75 years ago on the Biella Alps in Trivero, where its factory is located, not only built homes for employees and a centre devoted to the health, training, sports, and leisure for the citizens of Trivero, but it also planted more than 500,000 fir trees, rhododendrons, and hydrangeas on the surround-

ing hills. The "Zegna Panoramic" road allows local inhabitants and tourists to enjoy this natural mountain habitat.

The Ermenegildo Zegna Group was founded in 1910 and is managed today by the fourth generation of the family. There are over 580 Zegna stores in 87 countries and the total group revenue in 2010 reached 983 million euros (\$1.6 billion).

But, how would it benefit a fashion brand to support art internationally, and in what way would Ermenegildo Zegna benefit from its art sponsorship? The result won't be directly tangible, says Ms Zegna. "It's about doing things when the time is right. It's about being contemporary and relevant to today's needs and what needs to be done today is just the same as 20 years ago," she underscores.

Just as the brand has carefully mapped its business growth, it has mapped out its ZegnArt programme comprehensively. Next up is India and perhaps, a travelling art collection as ZegnArt grows around the globe.

It's certainly interesting to note that instead of going to town with the opening of its flagship store in Rome which also happened last week, the news revolved around the launch of ZegnArt instead.

It's through art that Zegna conveys what the brand means and stands for, points out Ms Zegna, because brands these days aren't just products but a way of looking at the world through a larger vision. "We're living in interesting times... there is a shift in consumerism today," she adds.

As for ZegnArt's launch into global art sponsorship, this was the right moment for ZegnArt which is a more structured approach to Zegna's programmes, says Ms Zegna. "It's about doing things when the time is right. It's about being contemporary and relevant to today's needs and what needs to be done today is just the same as 20 years ago," she underscores.

Just as the brand has carefully mapped its business growth, it has mapped out its ZegnArt programme comprehensively. Next up is India and perhaps, a travelling art collection as ZegnArt grows around the globe.

uhoon@sph.com.sg



MULTI-TALENTED
 Jorge and Lucy Orta have long operated in an interdisciplinary space where art, fashion, design, architecture, and poetry co-exist

Roman inspiration

FOR two years, Lucy and Jorge Orta put a variety of materials that included textiles on their work table, photographs and sketches of their ideas, as they visited Rome occasionally – to create Fabulae Romanae.

In their celebration of The Eternal City, what resulted were installations, the storyboards of their concepts, and a short film.

Fabulae Romanae was commissioned by Ermenegildo Zegna and specifically conceived for the Maxxi Museum. The two artists – Jorge from Argentina and Lucy from England who founded Studio Orta Paris in 1991 – have long operated in an interdisciplinary space where art, fashion, design, architecture, and poetry co-exist.

With tents made out of fabric, a mannequin dragging several "boxes" made from shirts stitched together, patchwork parachutes and so on, Fabulae Romanae looks at topics like mobility, journey, nomadism but also shelter, survival, and sustainable development.

"Our work starts from the idea of trying to find a solution for the issues in our society," explains Jorge. "So we put our ideas and materials on the table, and day by day, improve the concept as we add to our research and find out what we want to say."

Concepts of innovation and the new, or the old, were represented in the use of certain fabrics and colours, he adds. Using a storyboard as an example, where square samples of fabric are placed along pencil sketches, he explains how grey was selected for its connotation as a technological material and juxtaposed with green – which speaks of something older and softer. Symbols from Rome were picked up – like the horse and the classical Roman architecture of columns and arches.

The parachutes came out of their Antarctic Project while the flowers are related to an Amazonian project the artists were involved in two years ago. "That is related to the work on biodiversity and environmental preservation that Ermenegildo Zegna is doing as well," she points out.

Not all the fabric used in the installation is from the brand, she quickly clarifies, but include some of the brand's more technologically innovative materials like coolwool.

Transformability – between architecture and clothing, sculpture and performance, static and mobile, and even between the museum and the city – is also another key concept, not just in Fabulae Romanae or the Orta's work, but also in Ermenegildo Zegna's push behind art as a cultural transformer.

Tridimensionale which includes Lucy-Jorge Orta's Fabulae Romanae will be on exhibit from March 21 to Sept 23 at Maxxi Arte Museum, Rome. Works are also presented by Maurizio Michetti, Juan Munoz, Remo Salvadori, Thomas Schutte, and Franz West.

Tridimensionale looks at how contemporary artists relate to the third dimension, creating real and virtual spaces which either continue with or break away from the Western tradition of plastic arts.

By Cheah Ui-Hoon
 uhoon@sph.com.sg

wine&dine
 with BTWeekend

Bar on 5
 Level 5
 Marina Orchard Singapore
 333 Orchard Road # 6831 6288

Bar on 5 is the ideal place to chill out and unwind after a hard day's work. Located five floors above Orchard Road, it provides a fabulous view of the shopping belt. The beverage menu features an array of spirited cocktails, acclaimed wines, premium whiskies, and specialty coffees. In particular, look out for a wide selection of single malt whiskies from brands such as The Macallan, Highland Park, and Laphroaig, and specialty coffees including Amaretto, Seattle, and Mestizos. Complementing the beverage menu is a variety of light bites. Assorted sashimi, fresh oysters, and mandarin fried chicken wings are sure to go down well with all.

Golden Peony
 Two Temasek Boulevard # 6432 7482

Conrad Centennial Singapore's award-winning Chinese restaurant, Golden Peony offers an array of impressive contemporary Cantonese dishes and innovative dim sum creations prepared by top Hong Kong chefs. Set menus and customised creations are also available upon request. For exclusive dining, the restaurant features an intimate private dining room for 10 persons. For more details or reservations, please call 6432 7482. Opening hours: Lunch (Dim Sum and A la carte) Monday to Saturday, 11.30 am-2.30 pm, Sunday, 10.30 am-2.30 pm. Dinner (A la carte only) Monday to Sunday, 6.30 pm-10.30 pm.

Checkers Brasserie
 Hilltop Singapore, 501 Orchard Road # 6737 2233

Sunday Champagne Brunch
 Include in a sumptuous spread of international cuisine at Checkers Brasserie's Sunday Brunch. Savour fresh seafood, succulent meats, and foie gras and toast the weekend with premium Louis Roederer Brut Champagne. Kids will enjoy the dedicated play area filled with fun entertainment. From 12pm to 3pm, prices at \$95++ per person, \$105++ (3 glasses of wine), \$110++ (3 glasses of champagne or free-flow of wine), \$160++ (free-flow of champagne), and \$25++ for children aged 6-12 years. For reservations, please call 6730 3390.

Grand Palak
 #03-02, The Regent Singapore 1 Cassia Road # 6735 0203

Celebrate India's unique culture and its ambience by enjoying a flavourful array of authentic North Indian dishes. Recently opened in The Regent Hotel Singapore, Grand Palak is offering delightful dishes inspired by traditional fine Indian dining with exquisite curries and mixed spices in stylish, wonderful flavours. This festive season, Grand Palak is introducing its signature andouros turkey stuffed with a unique crab & prawn stuffing. The restaurant is open daily between 12.30 pm-2.30pm and 6.30 pm-10.30 pm. For reservations or more information, please contact 6735 0203.

10 at Claymore
 Lobby Level, Pan Pacific Orchard # 6831 6666

Plates of Treasures – The Greatest Hits Available until April 30, 2012

Savour the best that 10 at Claymore has to offer with "Plates of Pleasure – The Greatest Hits". Our culinary brigade has cherry-picked six sensational star dishes from our "Plates of Pleasure" series over the past 12 months to create a sumptuous showcase of the most well-loved dishes. The dazzling line-up includes stone-fried US premium Angus beef tenderloin, oven-roasted Tasmanian free-range rack of lamb, and Prong-style favourites such as wok-fried char kway teow and rich aromatic asam laksa. Dinner – \$52++ | Sunday Brunch – \$55++. For reservations, please call 6831 6666 or e-mail eat.10@panpacific.com.

Reach out to more than 100,000 readers daily in the **Wine & Dine** Scheme. Contact Adeline Goh at 6319-6127 / 9681-8289