

## Exploding Luxury Handbags, Breast Implants, and Stilettos: A Q&A with Jordan Doner

BY SF WEEKLY STAFF

Jan 26, 2015



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A Revolution In Contemporary: Judd Untitled After & Before

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Jordan Doner seems to have a pretty level head in regards to the fashion industry. The artist and photographer has worked for some of the top magazines in the world, from *Vogue* to *Interview*, and skimming the commercial section of his website is like falling into one of these magazines; it's all leggy models with impossibly flawless hair, flawless garments, flawless make-up, all stacked on top of towering high heels.

The images are gorgeous, and it's not hard to imagine why Doner is so sought after in the industry. But take a peek at his personal work to get a sense of his of where he's coming from. His studio projects are blowing up — literally. As part of an ongoing series, Doner takes luxury handbags, fills them with explosives, and then, through photography, capturing the moment when the explosion occurs. And the results? Turns out the blown-up bags are just as beautiful as blown-out hair.

[jump] *SF Weekly* spoke with Doner about his upcoming show, “A Revolution in Luxury.”

**A Revolution in Luxury kind of piggybacks off of some of the work that you've done before. How did this whole concept come to be?**

Yes. In 2009, I started working with ideas of utopianism, in terms of utopia as a physical space and as a lifestyle.

That year I had been given an assignment to shoot editorial fashion inspired by Archigram, and at the same time a family friend Alistair Gordon released his “Spaced Out” look at the 1960s intersection between lifestyle and living space. The spaces of that era were political, in that they were deliberately transgressive, they were highly sexualized, and for me at least, universally visually compelling.

This was a big inspiration for the “Landscape” and “Lifestyle” images which visualize utopia and sexual abundance. Sets were built in New York, and at Miami Art Basel with infinity mirror rooms and backlit parachute landscapes.

The idea for the Luxury Explosions came about while researching mid-century utopianism. I screened Antonio's *Zabriskie Point* to view the scene with hippies copulating while rolling down sand dunes en masse. Then there's that tremendous explosion at the end of the film, where the home, with chic designer goods and space-age food, blow apart is slow motion.

I begin by borrowing something from the film's critique and technique, and took artist-edition Louis Vuitton handbags – Murakami, and Richard Prince – and detonating them in Upstate New York.

The photos and the harvested debris from these explosions, and the the staged utopias, were first exhibited the end of 2009.

This new series on display at Serge Sorokko Gallery, escalates the explosions. The bags are now packed with luxury shrapnel – watches, stiletto heels, rhinestone encrusted cuffs, silicone breast implants.

The Utopianism “Landscapes” have morphed as well. The landscape photos will be shown for the first time, enshrined in the white military parachutes used in the photos. The idea is to blur representation and physicality. To make tangible a piece of Utopia.

**You've done work for some of the the top fashion magazines in the world, yet your work takes seems to expose a darker side of the industry. What are you trying to say, if anything, about the materialism in the world of fashion and beauty?**

Yes. The international Vogues and Bazaar's, and some of the relevant indie-titles like V, Interview, and Visionaire. I think there's a lot of hyperbole around the fashion world. And a puritanism and demonization of human sexulaity and of human desire from the left that used to come from the right. The work isn't really about that narrative. If the work is about anything it's about being honest about the desires we all have and laying it out there. The work stages the destruction of wealth and beauty in graphic detail. It realizes that righteous fury. But the work also showcases archetypical beauty in rarified environments. Righteous fury and lifestyle ecstasy are all things we may feel we want, and sometimes we may feel entitled to.

It's more interesting how elusive desire is. When you want something and you get it, it loses it's impact after a while and then you want something else. This is a huge driving curiosity I'm trying to map. I'm working on a flow-chart of consumerism. When you buy something it gives you a buzz, and eventually nothing. But there are all these ancillary aspects. If you forget about something or get something used, it seems to have a really special aura as well when reclaimed. So consumer objects, and your relation to them, has a number of life cycles. The work is more about empathy and honesty around how and why we want, and about flaunting that want, then denying want.

**Similarly, your reproductions of pieces by artists like Donald Judd and and Jeff Koons seem to meet the same fate – being blown apart. To you, what's the connection between these artists of a certain prestige and the designers whose garments and accessories that you select?**

Now we're in the era of artist edition luxury goods. Of art fairs where art is commonly seen as merchandise outside of any artist-imagined or curatorial context. Of art as a grey currency for storing and exchanging wealth. This is an obvious target for righteous fury. "It's all social and actual currency for an elite, dressed up as genius for all mankind." But I like all of this work. I wouldn't blow apart an object that wasn't worth blowing apart. The Louis Vuitton bags they've done with artists are really stunning. These particular works of Koons and Judd both speak to me as an art consumer and resonates with the ideas of metaphysicality suggested in pedestrian consumer materials I explore in my own work.

Serge Sorokko Gallery presents Jordan Doner: A Revolution in Luxury on January 29th at 7 p.m. and continues through March 8 at Serge Sorokko Gallery (55 Geary). Admission is free; call 421-7770 or visit the Sorokko site for more information.