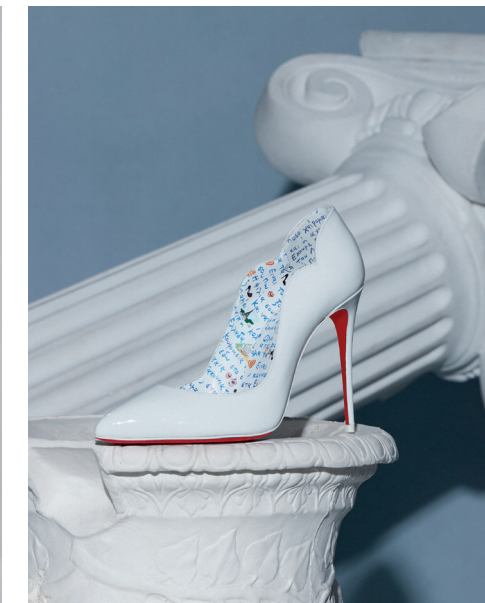
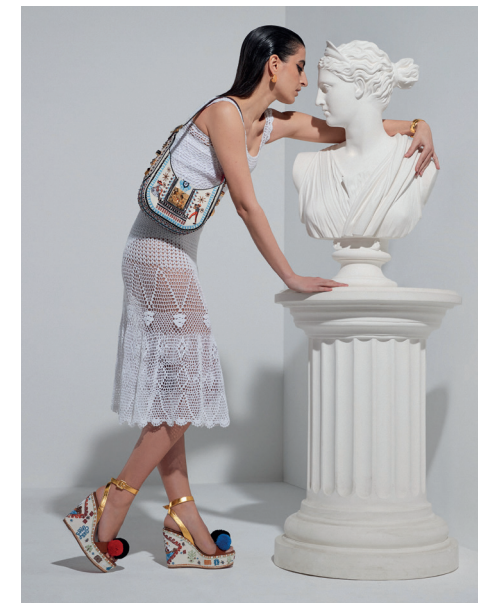


# An Odyssey of the Greek Islands

## An Interview with Konstantin Kakaniyas

by Maya Avram

**Multimedia artist Konstantin Kakaniyas and shoe designer Christian Louboutin have been close friends for 35 years. The prolific creatives have collaborated on numerous occasions in the past, always complementing each other's work and aesthetic sensitivities. The duo's newest collaboration, the GREEKABA capsule collection, combines their mutual love of travel with the rich cultural heritage and craftsmanship of Kakaniyas' native Greece and it also encapsulates the duo's playful sense of humor, which the artist regards as an important means of expression since it provides consumers of both art and fashion with perspective. Also featured in the collection is Kakaniyas' illustrated alter ego, the stylish Mrs. Tependris. In a series of scenes adorning the range she assumes the role of Christian Louboutin's personal tour guide of the Greek islands. He created an epic odyssey now depicted in Christian Louboutin's bag and shoe creations. As with all the previous cabas, a part of the proceeds will be donated and this year's contribution will go to Together For Children, a Greek non-profit providing help and support to children and young adults with disabilities and their families in need.**



**Maya Avram:** You are a multimedia artist whose work spans creative practices such as illustration, textile design and even film. Still, you manage to maintain your quintessential sense of humour across all mediums. How do you adapt that aspect of your work – and particularly in fashion?

**Konstantin Kakaniyas:** I take humour very seriously. Humour can make one's life more tolerable and richer, but it can also provide perspective. My motto is, "Laugh all the way through life, and laugh with yourself." Christian Louboutin himself is wonderfully funny and witty and his creations always have a touch of humour.

**MA:** Over the years you created various illustrated characters, yet the eccentric and effortlessly chic Mrs. Tependris stands out from the crowd. How does she retain her relevance today, 30 years after her New York debut?

**KK:** To me, Mrs. Tependris is an antidote to boredom, an escape from everyday banality and a mirror to culture. She has helped me numerous times in my life, since I was a young kid. I was often in very difficult situations and she was always appearing to help. She is real. More real than me!

**MA:** The Mrs. Tependris: The Quarantine Diaries exhibition from 2020 featured ironic quips by

the beloved character on the onset of globally enforced lockdowns. Have the past couple of years affected your – and consequently, Mrs. Tependris' – perspective on fashion and art? If so, how?

**KK:** We all saw everything through a different prism. Suddenly things got clearer in front of us. Culture moved on in a very positive way. It was about time!

**MA:** The Quarantine Diaries exhibition examines the contradiction between isolation and collaboration. With many collaborations under your belt, how has the pandemic affected your work? Are there any new habits you will carry with you moving forward?

**KK:** Suddenly we were locked up, literally, I was alone with my husband indoors. We had to learn everything in a different way. I learned to iron and became good at it! Mrs. Tependris appeared [she did not iron] as always to help me and capturing her diary with my drawings, made me feel connected with my friends around the world. It was so therapeutic.

**MA:** What was the inspiration for the Greekaba capsule collection?

**KK:** The inspiration for the Greekaba collection is the friendship I have with Christian for 35 years.

Within the designs I sent him, I included a love letter addressed to him – that it is printed and used in the collection. But the collection is also based on an imaginary summer trip of Mrs. Tependris together with Christian Louboutin in Greece. Together they admire ancient Greek pottery and 17<sup>th</sup> century Dodecanese embroideries, they swim in Paros and take the boat to Patmos. All the designs are inspired by Greek culture.

**MA:** This is not your first collaboration with Maison Christian Louboutin. You have previously created a dinnerware collection, of which you said you "like that [the] plates are both objects of art and objects of everyday use." Is that practicality the thing that draws you to fashion design?

**KK:** I have collaborated many times with Maison Christian Louboutin. We have created a very small collection of shoes and bags together in 2006. I also travelled with Maison Christian Louboutin to Japan and Cannes, as a Master of Ceremonies for his project *Le Carrosse Noir* in 2010, it was so much fun! Furthermore, Mrs. Tependris appeared as the ultra-client in his extravagant retrospective *L'exhibition[niste]* at the Palais de la Porte Dorée. And yes, the dinner service that was created for Christian. I do believe deeply in the power of art in an everyday object – to use and re-use.

**MA:** Can you tell us more about the creation process of this collection?

**KK:** It was during the pandemic, and I was stuck in Los Angeles in my studio. I love Ancient Greek pottery and wanted to use this as starting point for the collection. The inspiration came as always, while working. I replaced the Greek keys and patterns with Louboutin stilettos and boots. Voilà!

**MA:** Where is Mrs. Tependris off to next? How would you like to keep developing her story?

**KK:** She is always full of surprises. She is unpredictable. Call her.

The Greekaba capsule collection will be launched on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 in selected boutiques and online.

[www.christianlouboutin.com](http://www.christianlouboutin.com)

