

# Galérie

*Live Artfully*

**From London  
to Los Angeles,  
Bold Collectors  
Open Their Doors**

**Why Americans  
Are Flocking  
to Portugal Now**

## CREATIVE MINDS

**Celebrating Our Fifth Anniversary of  
Honoring Visionaries in Art and Design**

SPRING 2023  
ISSUE N° 29



# Divine Intervention

Nancy Lorenz animates a celebrated Rome basilica with an ethereal installation reinterpreting heaven and earth

Nancy Lorenz at Rome's Basilica di Santa Maria in Montesanto with mock-ups for her art installation.



Like so many memorable creative projects, this one began with an unexpected introduction. A few years ago, New York City artist Nancy Lorenz got an invitation from her friend Karen Duffy, the actress and onetime MTV VJ Duff, to come for dinner in Connecticut. She wanted Lorenz to meet Monsignor Walter Insero, who, in addition to overseeing social media for Pope Francis and the Vatican, is the rector of Rome's Basilica di Santa Maria in Montesanto, also known as the Church of the Artists. For the better part of a century, the basilica has invited artists to create installations beneath a magnificent dome completed by the Baroque master Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the 1670s. "Duff, being Duff, said, 'Well, Father Walter, you have the Church of the Artists. Nancy's an artist. You need to do something with her,'" recounts Lorenz. "She just makes things happen that way."

On April 17, Lorenz will become the first American and one of very few women to exhibit at the Church of the Artists when she unveils a quartet of painted and gilded jute banners that will cascade down from four balconies overlooking the basilica's elliptical nave. Her concept is for the pieces hanging



Lorenz with Monsignor Walter Insero at the basilica in Rome known as the Church of the Artists.

“I’m creating these joyful, light-activated surfaces that will be celebratory” NANCY LORENZ

on either side of the entry to reflect an earthly theme, while the two flanking the altar evoke the heavenly and celestial. “My work is not religious, though I feel there is a spiritual element and I do think about transcendence, but transcendence through materials,” says Lorenz, who grew up Catholic and attended parochial schools, including one in Japan, where she spent her teenage years. “We went to a church that embraced all kinds of religions. We had Shintoism. I was very attracted to Taoism.”

The influence of Asian culture on Lorenz can be seen in her use of techniques and materials such as lacquer, mother-of-pearl, and gold leaf in her personal artworks and in the commissions she does for designers like William Sofield and Peter Marino. But Lorenz is also inspired by early Renaissance art, and her creations have a kinship with the drips and swirls of Jackson Pollock, the lyrical scrawls of Cy Twombly, and the artists of Italy’s postwar Arte Povera movement.

Prominent Arte Povera figures, including Jannis Kounellis, exhibited at the Church of the Artists, whose location on the Piazza del Popolo happens to be a short walk from where Lorenz spent a year while getting her MFA in the late ’80s. “Our idea is to host contemporary works that contrast with the extraordinary pieces in the Baroque temple—the tension between them is what’s interesting,” says Insero, who was attracted to Lorenz’s use of high and low materials. “Art is an open door toward infinity. It elevates us and protects us from indifference.”

Lorenz, who will exhibit works related to her Rome project in two gallery shows this spring—at Gavlak in Palm Beach and at a pop-up organized by Lucien Terras in Paris—prefers not to get too specific about meaning in the installation. “I’m creating these joyful, light-activated surfaces that will be celebratory,” she says. “What anybody else wants to bring to it, there will be opportunities for that.” —STEPHEN WALLIS