

C O L L E C T I B L E



OL.16

fall-winter  
2020  
UK £16.50  
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# NATURALIA

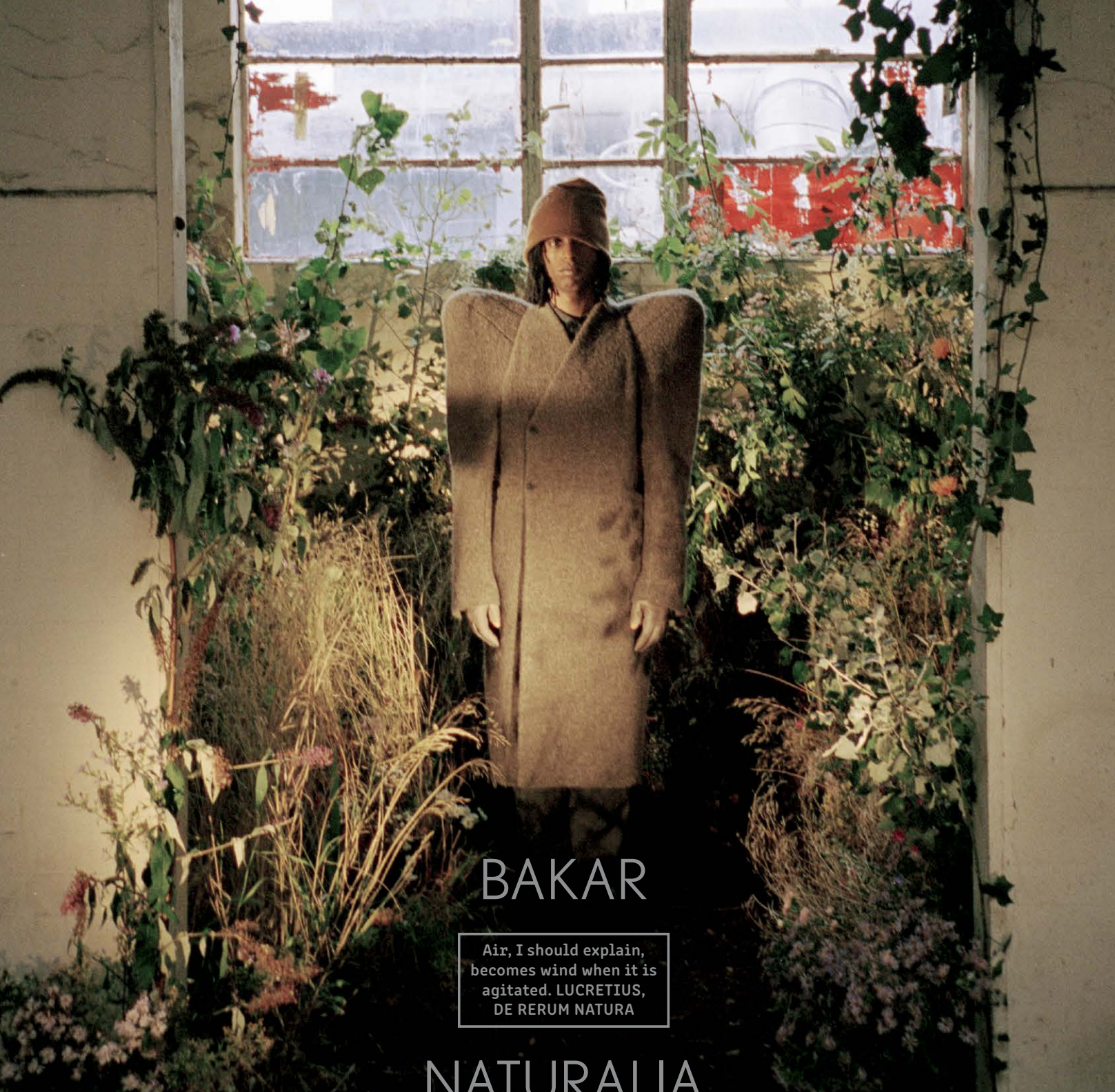
Air, I should explain,  
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DE RERUM NATURA

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# DRY



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C O L L E C T I B L E

# DRY

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FLORIA  
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Air, I should explain,  
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# Naturalia

# VELASCA IS NOT A TREND

## IT'S SUPERNATURAL, IT'S SUPERSTITION, IT'S MYSTIC

### BETTER, HOW A FOOTBALL CLUB CAN BECOME A COLLECTOR'S NARRATIVE

Speaking about the difference with other popular projects in these divisions, there are some that immediately spur excitement, becoming instantly well known. Velasca, instead, is a gradually advancing project that holds its own meaning and narration. One of the differences that I notice and is pointed out to me is that, in comparison with these other realities, Velasca is not a trendy phenomenon and does nothing to be likeable. All Velasca's narrative is developed on the social networks: if you follow it, you can see that there is not a single post intended to help gain more likes or followers. Velasca has its own narrative and its progressively increasing radius, which people gradually follow alongside the project itself. Since the beginning and especially now – because the more you grow the more confident you are – Velasca has been quite cryptic, which leads either the collector or the fan or the spectator to ask questions. Every single detail of Velasca either predicts an arrival or is part of a story: a chapter of the narrative. Last year we presented this new season not as a new season, but as a new chapter. There are various types of projects; there's the project that must immediately cause a stir and then there's the project that interacts (and fades) with time. I wouldn't know which one to be the best...

WOLFFY

IN MY OPINION, A PROJECT OF THIS KIND IS MORE VALUABLE. AS IN THE CASE OF YOUR FANS, MANY ARE NOT FOOTBALL FANS, BUT THEY EMBRACE THE PROJECT, AND THEREFORE UNDERSTAND IT... That helps me a lot with the players, too. If a footballer comes on team even just for a year and says, "Velasca is so cool! For one, I have the whole kit of Le Coq Sportif and I am sponsored, and secondly I get to take an intercontinental or international trip yearly, and have a lot of press" it isn't working! All the players who have stayed for more than a year come to understand the project and become a fundamental part of it: they become its actors.

WOLFFY

SO YOUR PLAYERS DIDN'T KNOW WHAT VELASCA WAS WHEN THEY ARRIVED? No, almost nobody at the beginning. We have footballers coming in now because they might have seen fragments of some articles regarding us, but even then they don't actually understand us. The other day a player asked me, "How much do you pay for the equipment?", and I say to the player, "What do you mean 'how much do you pay for the items'? We don't pay for the items, anyway". The first year was different. We wrote to English fanzines that discussed football against modern football. They saw what Velasca was and wrote a few short articles, and from there the FIFA came to us for a report, from where more or less everything was born.

WOLFFY

HOW DID THE IDEA OF FORMING A FOOTBALL TEAM COME ABOUT? WHY THE NAME "VELASCA"? AND WHY ITALY/MILAN? I believe that creating a football team in Milan is very difficult, even more than in Paris. In Paris it would be a team of hipsters or something cool like that

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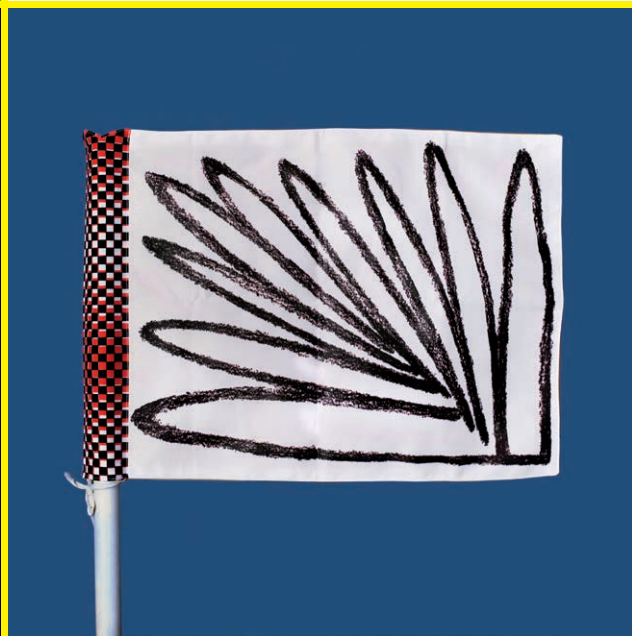
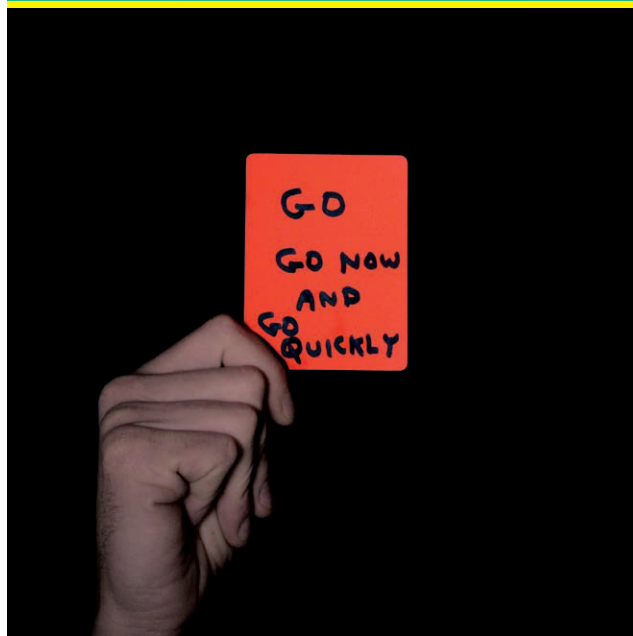
DRY

WOLFGANG NATLACEN IN CONVERSATION WITH LUDOVICA GUSTI\*

right away, but that is not the case here. We're not fashionable, we're not cool; our players are normal people, they haven't been chosen for the number of followers they have. As haven't, many of us, including the managers, and I don't mean to be offensive: for me it is indeed a compliment; our players are mostly asocial, and some very shy. We have created a project that is difficult to explain if you don't open up immediately or if you don't find the precise words right away; we have created a project next to Inter and Milan, but also tens if not hundreds of Milanese football teams that try to survive and bring up other realities. Every team is now trying to have its own distinctiveness: they create a team for popular football (even though football in itself is popular... but let it be), one for artistic football, one for football dressed in blue... The propensity for specificity stems from people being a bit fed up with football, like with art, because everything is in the hands of the market and the older something gets, the more people get tired of it. Milan brings forth complications because you are forced to explain (if not justify) the project in itself: that it is a real football team, but that it's also a true, complete work of art. It is a whole. Velasca was born from a desire that many have as children: becoming a footballer and building your own football team. The question is: what's stopping you from doing something? Everything is decided from there. The first step is always the most difficult (though everyone is the master of their first step), but the project becomes interesting as you develop your idea. Why make a football team into a complete work of art? It's all in how you tell the story. Velasca is a story, an organic story, and what happens is not hidden but told.

THE SYMBOLS YOU BRING ON CERTAINLY HAVE A SIGNIFICANT VALUE FOR THE PROJECT, STARTING FROM THE VERY JERSEY THAT BECOMES A COLLECTOR'S WORK OF ART TO ALL THE *OBJETS UTILES* IN THE FIELD. I REALLY LIKED THE SHOW YOU PUT ON FOR *EDICOLA RADETZKY*. ALL THESE WORKS BY DIFFERENT ARTISTS THAT "DONATE" A PART OF THEMSELVES PERHAPS GIVE HOPE TO THE FUTURE STORYTELLING OF THE PROJECT. I can't talk about hope... But Pascale Marthine Tayou (the artist who designed the 2017/18 jersey) said, "I won't give you up until you become the number one team". I didn't understand if he meant the number one team in Milan or in the world! Anyway, when you join Velasca as an artist or player, you become part of the narrative and an actor. You can be the protagonist or a bit player, but you are part of the project. You can be a machinist or an electrician, you are still part of the project. The most difficult thing for Velasca's managers to understand is that "you are also an artist!". I repeat it non-stop, without the slightest exaggeration. The Team Manager has a fundamental role; they don't understand it, but it is so, and if mistakes are >>





Zhuo Qi ▲ **water bottle** 2018. Courtesy of A.S. Velasca. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.  
Wolfgang Natlacen ▲ **"just do not wash it"** (banknotes on a Nike jersey) 2017. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.  
David Shrigley ▲ **go go now and go quickly** 2019. Courtesy of A.S. Velasca. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.  
Kevin Jackson ▲ **corner flag** 2017. Courtesy of A.S. Velasca. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.

Kendell Geers, Velasca, Le Coq Sportif ▲ **kits release** 2020/21 - 2020. Courtesy of A.S. Velasca. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.

WOLFY LUDO << made, alright – they can be part of the narrative – but if mistakes are made in the final part of the process, I lose my team. For example, if they had to prepare and give the kits to the players, and the players wouldn't be dressed as they should be dressed – given that the players wear a work of art, as they are art within art – the project itself wouldn't make any sense.

WOLFY LUDO DO PLAYERS DRESS WITH THE ARTWORKS EVEN DURING TRAINING SESSIONS? Not at the moment, no. Little by little the project is becoming more and more tailored (even if I don't like the word) by the artists. Tomorrow it could be the socks... But you can't do everything right away. It's like fashion: if you want to do a project that stays for a month or a year, do everything in advance (the business plan, etc.) and pull out a football team that has everything thought out, from whistle to jersey, and make a full-on attempt at marketing. But that's not us – Velasca was born as a container, containing nothing but that little that it's given: each month, each week, each day it needs something new. Everything is thought out in advance, but needs come with their own necessities.

WOLFY LUDO I THINK THE PRESENTATION OF LAST YEAR'S JERSEYS (2019/2020) WAS VERY EXCITING. GOING UP THE DUOMO AND SIGHTING THE VELASCA TOWER... CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT IT? This is another spot where you can see that Velasca doesn't have to be liked. No one saw the jerseys. The morning we went to the brutalist building *Istituto Marchiondi* there was only one journalist and the guys were upset. But since they were brought by the project, you saw their uncommunicative faces as they tried to take pictures, zooming on their mobile phones; they were disappointed, but wouldn't say anything because they thought "this is the usual madness of Velasca where you don't understand anything". It was in the afternoon that we saw the first smiles from the people who went up the Duomo; there were some laughs; it was fun. Because even then, it's not like we organised the event for fun, or to show how cool the new jersey is. As for the jersey: last year's the fifth, and it's never been designed for the purpose of saying "now people can say how nice the jersey is!". For us, the jersey should not be nice. If it is, good, because then I can wear it, but what counts most is that every element of Velasca tells a story. The jersey tells a story.

WOLFY LUDO AND WHAT DOES THIS NEW CHAPTER SPEAK OF? This chapter is the closing of a circle. Velasca was born five years ago, and its first artist sponsor, French Régis Sèneque, only works with perforated bricks; does everything with perforated bricks, or rather resembles a perforated brick and made a perforated brick on the jersey. This has now

WOLFY become the symbol, the foundation stone for the construction of this Velasca Tower. Even the tower itself is interesting because sometimes it becomes fashionable, and other times it is almost thrown away, forgotten. So, four years later – years of hard work, experiences and problems and joy – this is finally the year of the construction: the construction of the Tower. I absolutely wanted an artist who was closely linked to the Velasca Tower, and I was introduced to Francesca Belgiojoso, granddaughter of Belgiojoso, one of the architects of Torre Velasca. For our narrative, having Francesca Belgiojoso as our fifth artistic sponsor was perfect, as each cycle of the Velasca lasts five years (for associative matters). We were born with perforated bricks and today we arrived at the construction of the tower. In these 5 years many have rediscovered, also thanks to Velasca, the Tower. Many have tried to 'steal it' away from us, including Inter and Milan. Amongst other things, it was even more fun to tell them "You can put as many football teams as you want in Milan, with more or less important notice boards, if any, but the tower is the symbol of Velasca, and above all we have always worked with it in mind". And so, it was important to show that the Velasca Tower is ours and Belgiojoso accepted the challenge and made a collage with a thousand Velasca Towers. The shirt has two different collages made of Velasca Towers everywhere that come from posters, polaroids, magazines, newspapers... And this also leads to a narrative. I didn't know anything about collage. I wanted Belgiojoso. On the other hand, the jersey from two years ago was made by a Chinese artist called Jiang Li: purely conceptual, but wonderful. Milan and Inter were Chinese, and I was envious; I said, "We are the third-best team in Milan, self-considered third-best, and I also want a Chinese as a sponsor. Why can they have one and I can't?". So I went to China to look for a Chinese artist, and the most amused, the most 'human' one (because in Velasca there is always an important human and relational component) agreed to make this jersey, which was very funny because instead of putting a Chinese sponsor, he put his own sponsor-tag, which he made himself, and wrote Velasca in Chinese. From there came a fake sweater that was counterfeit in China. People say "There are five seasons, so five jerseys" (excluding the one at home and the one away from home), instead there are six, and the sixth is a fake jersey, which instead of having *Le Coq Sportif* as a sponsor has the *Can Sportif*, because the first year Le Coq Sportif's sponsoring was the year of the rooster and in February we needed another jersey. This is an unobtainable jersey, and the most expensive; if you give a value to things, we are certainly out of the market because all of Velasca drifts against the mainstream. Tayou is a very famous artist, and when you see that his shirt is sold for 44 euros with VAT, people believe it is false because they know it should cost tens of thousands of euros (all of which is great amusement to him).

WOLFY LUDO WHAT IS THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF JERSEYS PRODUCED? Two-hundred at home, two-hundred for visiting, and there are also some limited and numbered editions. And there you add yet another value to them, and understand even better how players become small collectors: each year they can keep one of the two jerseys. The others are sold or go to the Club's archives or to the artist who made them. And the players are collectors. They have jerseys that exceed the value of the fans', whose have a numbered sticker, so they buy 019 out of 200. Instead, the player, if he has jersey n16, he also has a sticker with the same number 16 written in the jersey's font. An almost unique jersey.

WOLFY LUDO HAS THE VELASCA FONT BEEN MADE ESPECIALLY FOR YOU AND HAVE YOU REGISTERED IT? Yes. It's been 4 years, and every year it changes. It's always been created for us, except for the first year, when we had nothing. We launched a crowdfunding campaign to get started and looked for a technical sponsor in the second year. This is because I only accept two types of sponsors: one is technical and the other artistic. If you are a brand wishing to help Velasca, we may speak of you as a patron, but there will be no brand displayed anywhere.

WOLFY LUDO ARE YOU THE ONE PICKING THE ARTISTS? WOULD YOU BE THE CONDUCTOR? I choose all the artists, but they all respond to a narrative. Everything works like a movie, so there is also a producer. If you compare it to the film industry, the producer is Le Coq Sportif, except we have a super cool producer who lets us do everything. I don't tell Le Coq Sportif anything about my plans.

WOLFY LUDO DO OTHER AMATEUR TEAMS HAVE SUCH AN IMPORTANT TECHNICAL SPONSOR? No. They exist elsewhere in the world but with a contract, which I won't delve into, but we are the only ones with a *carte blanche* such as this one. When I made the mourning band – aggressive only in appearance, for there has a justified story behind it and is part of the narrative without being the provocation it may seem to be – Le Coq Sportif was shocked once they saw it! But they tried to understand and succeeded, "Brilliant!" they said. They didn't run away, crying "This is blasphemy! That's a problem!" because they understood that it was not an inane provocation, indeed not at all. And it's much deeper than what's written on the website. The whole world of sports is very superstitious. Superstition is something that I discovered especially with football, but even as a child I had a fan-like superstition that I usually don't have. The superstition and taboos in the teams are injuries, death. Death is something that scares the athlete, but almost all of the well-organised sports teams already have mourning bands ready! Do

WOLFY LUDO you realise that? Incredible bad luck! If you have to mourn, you must have mourning bands, and we are the only team in the world that can't wear them, because if you wear these mourning bands with blasphemies written all over them in a semi-secular country, you'll surely be fined. The reason behind this design was that it drives away death, preventing death. All of this is to tell you that the artist that designed the mourning band is a fan of John Fante, the writer, and his father always used to say "Dio cane" (Italian blasphemy literally meaning "God's a dog") in the U.S.A., as the artist found out by reading Fante's books. Though if you said it in France, nobody would understand you.

WOLFY LUDO CAN YOU FIND TIME FOR YOUR PERSONAL PROJECTS OUTSIDE VELASCA? Velasca is a personal project. It is collective, but personal; not an artistic collection, but just a project. Today it can be me, but tomorrow a player could take my place. It all depends on what Velasca represents for you – on what you want from Velasca.

WOLFY LUDO THE NARRATIVE IS ALREADY THERE; IT IS THOUGHT OF LONG BEFORE THINGS HAPPEN. BUT HOW DOES ALL THIS WORK? Everything is already announced. I suffer during the games because it is not me playing. The game is independent of me, while all the rest is controlled by me. So, if I announce that "it will rain tomorrow" and it will rain tomorrow. I am the unluckiest member of the Velasca team because I am perennially unsurprised by almost everything. I'm only startled by the games. The games are a pleasure for me to watch because I never manage the sporting part, except in serious cases, while in the narrative I already know nearly everything. Instagram today is our means of communication, the common thread; it is an open book and if one is focused enough, they can find right there what will happen in a year. There was already this year's jersey and artist in a story that came out last year. The narrative and the direction to follow was familiar to me over a year ago, and I know how to manage them because I know the point of arrival. With artists, on the other hand, the situation fluctuates since you have to create a human relationship with them, because if you don't get to know them on a personal level it never works out. This is a contradiction, but two years ago also Belgiojoso knew what kind of jersey we had to make, and even if we had announced it on the social networks, everything was decided maybe in May. Tayou is another case: I absolutely wanted him and I waited, and waited, until July, when he answered me after three days saying yes. I got madly worried passing through his gallery, the *Galleria Continua*. I like the Continua, but what I don't want with Velasca is having to go through the agents or the galleries – I don't really care about them. If I have to make a deal >>



WOLFFY with a gallery or an agency, everything loses its meaning. This was done at the last moment. With Velasca – as with all projects – you must always hold on and survive. I see it that way.

LUDO YOUR FIGURE IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THIS: IT TAKES SOMEONE WHO MAKES DECISIONS TO MOVE FORWARD. You can see it, especially in this society where you want to have everything and to have it now: Velasca drifts against the mainstream. It's weird, because I run it this way – I'm quick, responsive – but Velasca fights particularly against it, and I'm hoping to find more time. Time is a luxury. But to have this luxury, Velasca must get through this social networks frenzy.

LUDO ARE YOU A FOOTBALL FAN? Football is too much suffering. I was a huge fan of Milan until 2006/07 and now I don't care for them – today I'm a huge fan of Velasca. I am saddened when they lose and joyful when they win. I have already cried for Velasca, but I no longer cry for victories or defeats. There are some defeats that are, indeed, crucial. In football, like anywhere else, you aren't told there would be more losses than victories. You don't have to get used to losing, but must acknowledge how important it can be to lose. Velasca is not a team of losers, though – this year we are playing to win. All Velasca players play to win. One thing they don't understand is that they aren't only followed in Milan or Paris, but throughout the whole world. And you will say, "but you only have a few thousand followers," that's the way it is, nonetheless, because when you have an article coming out, especially a paper article, you don't immediately go and click Follow Velasca. People follow you, get to know you and send you emails. Every day we receive emails from the whole world proposing to come and play with us. We have fans from all over the world who buy jerseys – since you can customise the jersey at a certain time of the year – and they buy jerseys from our players. This is another thing that happens in this society: people don't believe it; people don't accept the gift. The gift is scary. If you accept one thing the first thought you have is "here is the rip-off".

LUDO WHAT HAS BEEN THE MOST LOVELY AND IMPORTANT EXPERIENCE OF VELASCA TILL TODAY? The trip to Soweto was total madness. There was a team in Soweto that followed us: they've been partially sponsored by Le Coq Sportif, so they were observing the projects sponsored by the same Le Coq Sportif, and saw Velasca going up and about. Perhaps to make Italians understand that while being Italian, I am also an immigrant, as is the rest of my team. The racism of Italians towards those immigrating into the country was extensive then as it is now, although

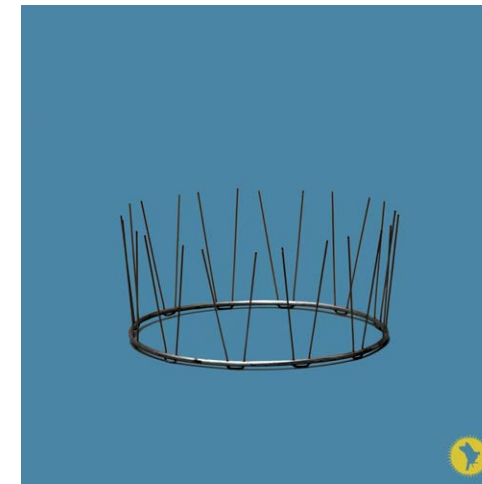
perhaps it is less widespread abroad, although in France it really was astonishing. So, this team sees us and writes to me on Instagram saying, "It would be nice to play a game one day". We eventually said, "So what does it take, apart from the actual money, to go to Soweto?", and so we decided to go! A lot has changed for the players and, although we have lost, it was the best defeat we had seen in four years, and we even got to create a twinning with this other team! I brought people who had hardly ever travelled and who had a lot of prejudice, and they returned with a whole other vision. In truth, all of us have changed thanks to this experience. This isn't part of the narrative, because that's one thing and discovery is another, but I must say it is the most beautiful. The best moments are usually those you weren't expecting.

LUDO LAST YEAR'S CHAMPIONSHIP WAS INTERRUPTED DUE TO THE PANDEMIC CRISIS. THIS MEANT NO MORE FOOTBALL GAMES AND TRAINING SESSIONS FOR THE ATHLETES, AND ALSO A STOP TO THE ARTISTIC INVOLVEMENT. IS THIS TRUE? HOW DID VELASCA REACT TO THE CRISIS? What really happened to the artists and players during the lockdown, due to the limited freedom, was to give a central role to the imagination. I think this was the most important thing that happened, how to develop this element. Velasca went on playing football without the ball. There were other considerations but I think that this matter is essential and will be present in the future, because if the world is subject to change and new limits will arise we will need to learn different ways to create and communicate, to be together. Art is vital, art is life and we have seen it during lockdown, it would have been harsh to stay without music, movies and books, to stay without art.

This interview was done before the presentation of Kendell Geers' 2020/2021 jersey, this is a quote from "LOVE, By Any Means Necessary" to open our mind to the future of A.S. Velasca and ourselves alike:

"ART is a MAGICAL space set aside from reality in which the true artist is called upon in dark times like the present, to channel spirit into form and cast a word into flesh, manifest a dream so that the formless uncanny silence might be given a voice to sing. Your future is beautiful – if you are ready to take time and give space to HEAL."

\*Ludovica Gusti is an Italian designer, artist and art therapist based in Milan, Italy. She graduated in Jewellery Design, from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in 2009 and took a Master Degree in Art Therapy at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera. She is an enthusiast of art that is unpredictable and spontaneous, created out of necessity and urge of exploration. All forms of nature and the natural world is what makes her really happy.







Wolfgang Natlacen ▲ "misirizzi" weeble Urn (acacia) 2018. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.

Wolfgang Natlacen ▲ "misirizzi" weeble Urn (acacia) 2015. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Jürgen Becker

Wolfgang Natlacen ▲ "just do not wash it" (banknotes on a Nike jersey) 2017. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.

Wolfgang Natlacen ▲ "misirizzi" weeble urn (acacia) 2017. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.

Wolfgang Natlacen ▲ "just do not wash it" (banknotes on a Nike jersey) 2017. Courtesy of the artist. Photo Wolfgang Natlacen.