



Nikolai and Simon Haas atop a brass hex stool, available at R Gallery in New York.

PAIR OF ACES

Exploring the boundaries of art and fashion, L.A.-based twins Nikolai and Simon Haas stun the design world at every turn **BY KELSEY MCKINNON**

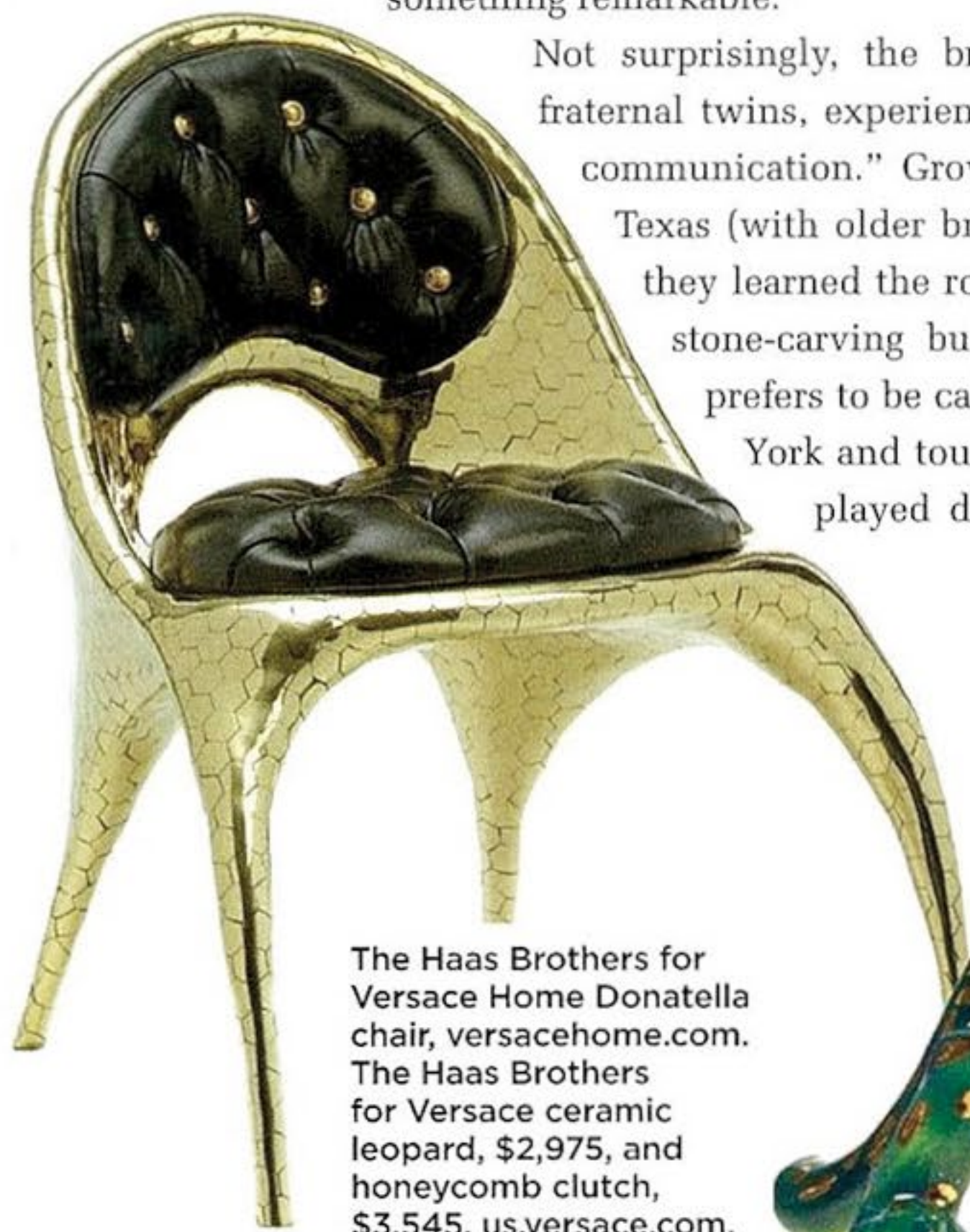
Take Nikolai and Simon Haas' latest output—a collection of handmade psychedelic ceramic leopards, gold Medusa chain necklaces, and honeycomb clutches and cigarette cases for Versace. It's their first go at fashion design, but Donatella Versace, like many top luxury brands, museums and architects, asked to collaborate without hesitation. "I didn't give them any advice about fashion. Why would I want to limit such brilliant minds to preconceived ideas?" she asks. "My only advice was that they should trust their instincts and show me something remarkable."

Not surprisingly, the brothers, 29-year-old fraternal twins, experience "extremely fluid communication." Growing up in Austin, Texas (with older brother, actor Lukas), they learned the ropes at their father's stone-carving business. Niki (as he prefers to be called) moved to New York and toured with a band (he played drums) while Simon

attended Rhode Island School of Design to study painting and architecture. The siblings decided to move to L.A. in 2007 (Simon is now in Silverlake; Niki is in Los Feliz) to be closer to Lukas and were quickly introduced to their brother's A-list circle of friends. Their first client was actor Toby Maguire, who approached the pair—knowing their were adept builders—to design and construct some furniture for his office. That was the catalyst. Simon and Niki rented out an industrial workshop downtown, and The Haas Brothers was born—their father, Berthold, has since moved to L.A. and helps run their business.

"Niki leans more toward the sculptural, sexual and humorous, while I have a more scientific approach toward material application, trend prediction and patterns," says Simon.

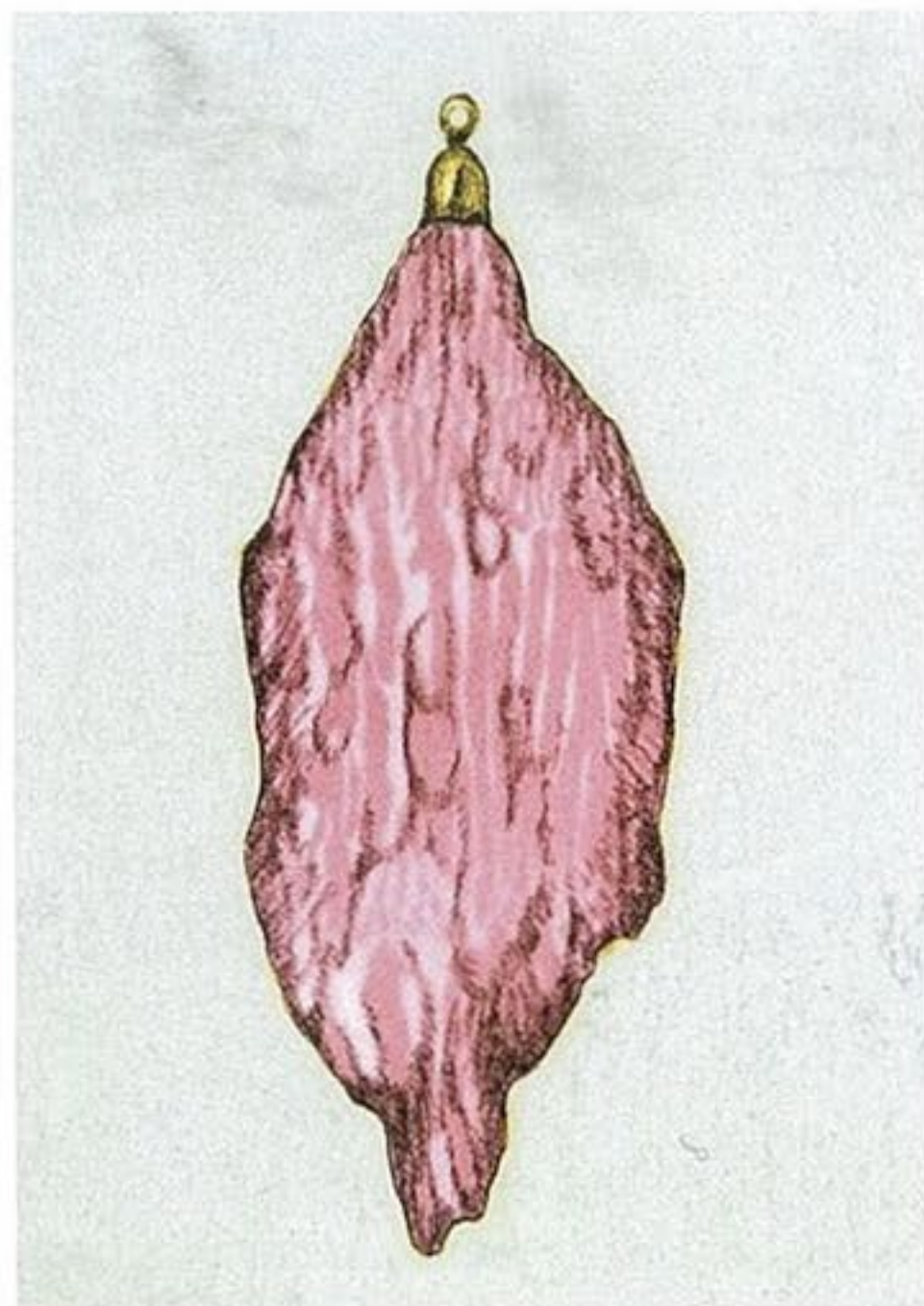
Versace notes, "They >>



The Haas Brothers for Versace Home Donatella chair, versacehome.com. The Haas Brothers for Versace ceramic leopard, \$2,975, and honeycomb clutch, \$3,545, us.versace.com.



PORTRAIT: LISA EISNER



FROM LEFT The LACMA ornament, \$50, was inspired by the works of André Breton, Yves Tanguy and Marcel Duhamel, lacmastore.org. Brass table, available at Stardust Brands. Beast settee in Finnish reindeer fur, available at R Gallery in New York. The L.A. workshop.

<< completely spark off each other; they think up the impossible, then make it happen." Even their style seems complementary: "Simon bounces between Brian Eno, a Klaus Nomi club girl and a closeted country club prep"... "Niki is a futuristic jock rapper with Japanese pants and an L.A. Kings cap."

As collaborators, they produce "exactly what gets us excited"—nothing more, nothing less. That business philosophy lends itself to total creative autonomy. Perhaps you recall "Beast Feast" at the 2013 Design Miami/Basel, where the duo (through their New York gallery, R 20th Century) debuted chairs and ottomans in the likeness of animals, complete with fur (responsibly sourced Icelandic sheepskin and American bison), bronze camel-toe

feet, tails and carved wooden horns. There was a furniture collection for Versace last spring (gold and black leather chairs, tables, sofas), an installation for MOCA, wings and masks for a Lady Gaga music video and a gold-leafed bar commissioned by architect Peter Marino for Louis Vuitton Maison Shanghai.

This holiday, the pair teams up with LACMA, having cast a semi-erotic, fully humorous Christmas ornament inspired by the museum's surrealist drawings—a "translation of decalomania in 3-D." For the brothers, the boundaries of fashion, art and design become inconsequential with the ability to fabricate everything from a T-shirt to a bronze table. Says Niki, "We express ourselves in an aesthetic arena. The entire collaboration with Versace [for example] was very much about filtering classical Italian aesthetics through our very California universe." *thehaasbrothers.com.* •



Hematite vase in bronze, available at R Gallery in New York.

