

Style

On the scent of a good story

Kathleen Baird Murray
Beauty



Of all the challenges facing the glossy magazine beauty editor, there is none so noble, nor so brave, nor – on occasions – so dreaded as the “November issue” perfume feature. In case you’ve ever wondered why almost every magazine devotes page after page at this time of year to perfume, the answer is simple: without editorial support, the hundreds and thousands of new fragrances about to hit the shelves won’t stand a chance in the crucial six-week sales period before Christmas.

This is make-or-break time for a new fragrance and getting coverage in the form of a wordy and very (repeat: *very*) long feature is a question of life and death for perfume. It’s the equivalent of a rainy weekend when your movie premieres or having the Carrie Bradshaw character wear your shoes when *Sex and the City* first screened.

There is even an awards ceremony, known as the Jasmine Awards, designed to encourage beauty editors to wax lyrical in print. I will say only this about it: give me your bitter notes, your geranium, your blood orange, your anise, yes, even your oakmoss, and I will match you with the smell of sour grapes (mine) as, sadly, I have never won a Jasmine Award. And despite endless hours spent striving for clever and inventive ways in which to excite the reader’s imagination, unless I can invent the literary equivalent of scratch’n’sniff for glamorous grown-ups, I don’t think I ever will.

It’s comforting, therefore, to know that it’s not only journalists who struggle to think about perfume in a new way. Perfumers have always known the value of a good story in helping them to create the next big hit – just look at Guerlain, a favourite among purists, and with good reason. How can you possibly compare 1919’s Mitsouko, (from £78.50 for the eau de parfum, pictured) based on the Claude Farrère novel *La Bataille*, in which the wife of a Japanese admiral falls in love with a British naval officer, with modern-day celebrity offerings, like Miley Cyrus’s Twerk.

(And yes, before you rush out to buy it, I did make that up, but I bet someone’s already working on the concept.)

And yet there are some good modern storytellers out there. For example, Kilian Hennessy, whose new fragrances are packaged in quite the most incredible looking snake-embellished ivory-coloured clutch bags (from €195). “Perfume is very technical,” says Hennessy, “but unless you have that emotional connection, the perfumer is faced with a blank page”.



Then there’s Francis Kurkdjian, whose Aqua Universalis for men and women (from £154.99), with its notes of bergamot, lily of the valley, and underlying musky blond wood, is a modern classic.

Recently I caught up with Kurkdjian at a Carven fragrance event at Selfridges. He’s just about the most in-demand perfumer at the moment, and as such created Carven’s Le Parfum (from £38) a must for lovers of the scent of sweet pea. He is also involved with Burberry.

Kurkdjian is known for his brilliant mind and is more likely to explode myths than indulge in any fairy-tale marketing nonsense. For example, remember that trend for layering fragrance? “Why would you do that?” he says. “It’s like spreading Nuttella over a hamburger.” (And by the way, never buy a fragrance in China, unless you don’t mind it being tested on animals – he tells me that even European and US brands have to allow their perfumes to be animal-tested there if they are to pass Chinese import restrictions).

Nonetheless, when it comes to creating his fragrances, he starts with an evocative, some might say romantic, tale. “I imagine walking down the street and seeing a woman, and then I think, ‘What will she smell like?’ ‘What will the emotion be?’” He writes down the first ingredients, carrying the smell he’s trying to make in his head, so in tune with what each note will smell like that he will send formulas to and from the lab in little glass jars until the one in the jar matches the one in the head and, hey presto, the world has a new fragrance. For Carven, the little glass jars took 183 trips.

Few, however, have gone to such lengths to match the story with the fragrance as author and perfume expert Denyse Beaulieu, whose obsession with scents inspired her to write *The Perfume Lover* (Collins, £14.99), a sort of memoir about creating a fragrance that was inspired after a night of passion. Sorry for the Mills & Boon romance description, but this story reads a bit like *Fifty Shades of Grey* for perfume groupies.

Not that this is necessarily a bad thing, especially as the fragrance to accompany it was developed by world-renowned perfumer Bertrand Duchaufour. The resulting L’Artisan Parfumeur’s Séville à l’Aube (from £95), which has orange blossom, jasmine and incense, is delightful. Although here’s a scary thought: story plus matching fragrance? Maybe they did invent literary scratch’n’sniff after all? The Jasmine Awards will elude me once again.

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Rethink the ink

Tattoo removal is on the rise. *Beatrice Aidin* looks at the new treatments available

Could it be a coincidence that just as Caroline Kennedy becomes more visibly political – in October she was confirmed by the US Senate as ambassador to Japan – the butterfly tattoo below her elbow appears to be fading and is increasingly hidden beneath long-sleeved Chanel jackets?

Kennedy, the daughter of assassinated president John F Kennedy, will no doubt make an exemplary ambassador but she is well advised to cover up her tattoo – or even have laser treatment to remove it – if her ambitions in politics continue in earnest.

Indeed President Obama’s promotion of Kennedy is at odds with the 61 per cent of HR managers who believe a visible tattoo damages a job applicant’s chances of employment. “The influence of appearance goes beyond the hiring process. It has an impact on the perception of one’s



competence,” say the authors of an annual study on professionalism in the workplace from the Centre for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania.

The US Army’s proposed ban on visible tattoos (those below the knee or elbow or above the neckline) also implies that they are becoming less acceptable at work.

“No one is going to take you seriously if you’re up for partnership and you have a tattoo of a dolphin on your hand,” says Bryan Mayou, a plastic surgeon at the Cadogan Clinic in London. In the past two years, Mayou says, he has seen a 50 per cent increase in patients for tattoo removal at his Chelsea practice.

“Sailors were the original tattoo addicts but now they go across the socioeconomic spectrum. It’s an epidemic, and we now see bankers and lawyers in their late thirties and forties of both sexes coming in because they are genuinely embarrassed by them,” says Dr Nick Lowe, consultant dermatologist and spokesman for the British Academy of Dermatology.

“People associate tattoos with drunken behaviour,” explains Dr Amy Forman Taub, a dermatologist in Illinois where interest in removal is up 30 per cent. “In a creative environment like advertising or in Silicon Valley, a tattoo is OK or even expected. But on Wall Street a tattoo would not be advantageous to your career.”



Clockwise from main picture: a 19th-century Japanese illustration by Yoshitoshi; David Beckham; Samantha Cameron’s ankle tattoo; Caroline Kennedy

Corbis, Getty, Reuters

“I see tattoos more as an outlet for compulsive behaviour,” says Dr Ben Saunders, a tattoo removal specialist at UK chain Trueskin MediSpa. “Celebrities such as Cara Delevingne and David Beckham are constantly adding tattoos; it has become a habit to mark every momentous occasion with ink.”

Last year the British Academy of Dermatology reported a third of people regretted their tattoo, which has led to new laser technology to remove them.

“Lasers put out an ultra-fast pulsed width of light that you can actually hear hitting the skin,” says Frank D’Amelio, chief executive of Ellman International, a company that makes lasers for tattoo removal. “The shock breaks up the ink into small particles and these fine particles are removed

through the lymph system.” Anything from three to 15 sessions are required, costing from £150 a treatment, depending on the size and colour of the ink.

“The toughest pigments to remove are yellow, blue and green,” says Dr Roy Geronemus, director of the Laser and Skin Surgery Centre in New York. “But I am seeing a lot more successes with PicoSure treatment.”

The PicoSure laser, launched in April, may be paving the way for quicker tattoo removal but such advances in technology are also having an adverse effect.

“Generation Y have a much more transient view of tattoos because they think they can easily get them removed,” says Catherine Cotney, senior trend analyst at Mintel. “They don’t realise how expensive and painful it is.”

“Basically we are burning the skin so I inject liquid anaesthetic into each area,” says Forman Taub.

Now that Kennedy has been made ambassador, she will need to think hard about whether the butterfly stays; in Japan a small tattoo can even prohibit entry to some restaurants and shops. And in an increasingly crowded jobs market, it is not just in Tokyo that tattoos are becoming taboo.

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