

FINANCIAL TIMES

MAY 2 2015

How to spend it

22-PAGE
BEAUTY SPECIAL



RIISING TO THE OCCASION

From left: Maison Francis Kurkdjian A la Rose, £145 for 70ml EDP. Guerlain French Kiss, £160 for 75ml EDP. Jo Malone Tudor Rose & Amber, £42 for 30ml EDC. Ex Nihilo Rose Hubris, £150 for 50ml EDP. Roja Parfums A Goodnight Kiss, £1,250 for 100ml parfum. S-Perfume 100% Love, £98 for 50ml EDP. Dear Rose I Love My Man, £105 for 100ml EDP

Roses, from £4 per stem, from Wild at Heart

NO ROSE



ROSE WITHOUT A THORN

The queen of flowers is ripe for rediscovery as fragrance houses rewrite one of perfumery's most enduring ingredients.

Vicci Bentley reports. Photography by Pedro Aguilar

For millennia, the rose has held sway as the primary pillar of perfume. Yet the queen of flowers is also one of perfumery's most polarising ingredients.

Rose needs plenty of support, without which it lacks character, says perfumer Richard Ibanez, who instead chose iris – another of perfumery's "nobles" – to offset the creamy smoked woods in his sublime Living Laliq (€69 for 50ml EDP) because he believes "woods are more faceted, mysterious, challenging". Christine Nagel, whose first fragrance for Hermès is eagerly anticipated, begs to differ. Rose, she contends, is *un beau cadeau* – a generous gift to perfumers offering powdery, green or fruity facets. "It's feminine but never cheap – like a tailored dress."

Scent impresario Frédéric Malle once thought rose fragrances as old-fashioned, frowsy and coy as a Barbara Cartland caper. No one had done the noble old dame

justice, he believed. So for his Editions de Parfums, he commissioned master perfumer Edouard Fléchier to create Une Rose (£140 for 50ml parfum), a majestic Turkish bloom with a masterly touch of red wine and carnal truffle: a rose pulled from the earth by its roots to sit effortlessly on warm skin. When it launched in 2003, it was considered a benchmark of its type.

Another divisive issue over the years has been one of cost. Malle has always maintained a "no constraints" budget policy, which gives his perfumers an advantage, but for many, rose was, for a time, in danger of pricing itself out of the game. Grasse rose absolute, the finest and most costly (a year's production of this amounts to less than a day's yield of Bulgarian rose) averages around €24,000 per kg, leading many perfume houses to seek alternatives. Reigniting excitement are newly modified natural extractions. LMR Rose Essential, launched three years ago by scent lab International Flavors & Fragrances (and already used by perfumer Anne Flipo in Lancôme's Trésor de Nuit, \$62 for 30ml) captures the waft of fresh



roses in the field, but not the cabbagey aspect of rose essence or rose absolute's cloying candy quality.

The challenge now facing perfumers is to rewrite rose for a market ripe for rediscovering a classic such as this. In its favour, there are signs of a swing back to feminine florals, likely triggered by global unease, which invariably revives traditional values. "Rose is soothing and reassuring; we look for it when we're uncertain," says perfumer Roja Dove.

More over, since Mintel research reports that 25 per cent of UK scent consumers are bewildered by the volume of scents in circulation, something as distinct as rose should be an advantage.

Newly arrived in Harrods' Salon de Parfum from Rue Saint-Honoré is Ex Nihilo's collection of eight scents, each designed to be boosted by an extra dose of an additional raw ingredient. In the case of Rose Hubris (£150 for 50ml EDP) – a delicately spiced "excess" of May rose brightened by lychee – my customised take involved a hit of iris absolute, which introduced a serene elegance. "This rose is vibrant and modern, but iris settles it down," says consultant Marc Noble.

Elsewhere, a bunch of subversive roses determine to lead us into compelling, dark and thorny lands. Christine Nagel's Tudor Rose & Amber (£42 for 30ml EDC) from the Rock the Ages collection – her last for Jo Malone – is inspired by the Wars of the Roses. An clove brings tapestries and polished oak to mind, before a steeliness hints at blood on the blade. Thorns to the fore in Laurent Mazzone's Epine Mortelle (£195 for 100ml EDP) are sharpened by a piquant trio of peppers alongside nutmeg, before the plush violet-rose accord powers through. From Electimuss comes Rhodante (€145 for 50ml EDP), named after the nymph Diana morphed into a rose to elude suitors, who then became her thorns. It's dangerously teasing: the combination of Bulgarian rose, tuberose and juicy raspberry pulsate "come hither", while lingering spiced woods say "stick around".

Liquides Imaginaires' Dom Rosa (£140 for 100ml EDP), a rose-tinted juice with a champagne accord, is one of three perfumes in the Les Eaux Sanguines collection, inspired by holy wines. Yet dark and corporeal decadence, achieved by incense-suffused leathers, cedarwood and vetiver, skulks behind the initial fruity aldehydic fizz. "We wanted to recreate champagne olfactively, but each attempt was too sweet and uninteresting. Then we remembered the sacrificial roses of the vineyards," says creative director David Frossard, referencing the roses planted at the end of each row of vines as an early barometer of disease, much like the canary in the coalmine. The result is both harmonising and curiously divisive, uplifting and unsettling – and utterly compulsive. Alexandra De Montfort, creative director of Rouge Bunny Rouge, also subverts expectation – from the curious juxtapositions of the brand's name to the enchanted themes of its fragrances. Incantation (£90 for 50ml EDP), a gothic vision, uses dark fruits, cardamom and beeswax to entice an "otherworldly" rose out of the borders to where it should never be – a shadowy pine forest redolent of an Angela Carter fable, where Red Riding Hood might stalk the wold.

Rose, it seems, is not always to be trusted. Still, the flower is by no means slipping its loved-up leash. Love in all its guises is passionately exploited in optimistically named 100% Love (£98 for 50ml EDP) by S-Perfume. It was originally made for artist Nobu Shioya's 2003 New York art installation, where it was sprayed on shocking-pink beads corralled into a giant heart shape on the floor. The scent – a compulsive chocolate cream rose – was created by Sophia Grojsman, well known for her "hug in a bottle" knack. Equally amorous but rather more gourmand and moreish is French Kiss (£160 for 75ml EDP), the latest of Guerlain's Les Elixirs Charniels. Thierry Wasser's recipe of vanilla and heliotrope's

almond notes conjures a violet-rose macaroon wickedly laced with framboise liqueur.

I Love My Man (£105 for 100ml EDP), from mother and daughter duo Chantal and Alexandra Roos's quasi-eponymous Dear Rose collection, cocoons heights and depths of Bulgarian and May roses in cinnamon and sandalwood and evokes the nuzzling scent of the silk-lingerie drawer. But this is more love than lust: not a mistress's scent, but that of a wife. A more pure and poignant sentiment still is Roja Dove's A

Goodnight Kiss (£1,250 for 100ml parfum). Dove created this effervescent powdery rose in memory of his mother, who, as she bent to kiss her six-year-old son, wafted L'Aimant, François Coty's aldehydic classic of 1927, and launched his lifetime love of perfume. Dove chose playful, honeyed May rose to evoke a woman in an evening gown about to go to a party. "I also wanted to capture the sensation of a cheek brushed lightly by lips," he says. Rather than conventional powder notes, which he felt to be too heavy, his exquisitely downy rice powder note expresses a fragile yet lingering tenderness that feels utterly unique.

It's the combination of *centifolia* absolute and steam-distilled Bulgarian *damascena* oil in Francis Kurkdjian's A la Rose (£145 for 70ml EDP) that creates the "wet, fruity, superfresh then spicy accord, like the beginning of love," the perfumer says. Indeed, such hybridised sensuality is the theme of a growing number of scents that reconcile fresh, lemony *Rosa centifolia* – May rose of Grasse – with voluptuously fruity and spicy *Rosa damascena* so beloved throughout the Middle East. "Rose is a fragrance that works across all markets," observes Kurkdjian, ever the pragmatist. "But it must be recognisable." Short, uncluttered formulae leave no doubt as to their protagonists and A la Rose (each bottle represents no fewer than 250 petals) is Kurkdjian's idea of what a rose should be. A trace of violet and a blur of cedarwood heighten the emotion. "The effect is like a silk scarf you forget you are wearing."

Similarly, Rose de Grasse (£135 for 50ml EDP) is Aerin (granddaughter of Estée) Lauder's "belt and braces" homage to tradition, but there's more to this than the name implies. After the first dewy rush of *centifolia*, the spicy resonance of Bulgarian and Turkish rose absolute (both *damascena*) comes through. A delicate musk and amber background mingles effortlessly with skin to leave an impression of lightly powdered warmth in this excellent rapprochement between an American clean-cut feel, French sophistication and eastern promise. Deftly contrived scents such as these will doubtless ensure a rosy outlook. ♦

MORE OF THE ROSES

Aerin, www.aerin.com and see Harrods. **Dear Rose**, www.dear-rose.fr and see Harrods. **Electimuss**, www.electimuss.parfum.com and see Roullier White. **Ex Nihilo**, www.ex-nihilo-paris.com and see Harrods. **Fenwick**, Brent Cross Shopping Centre, London NW4 (020-8202 8200; www.fenwick.co.uk). **Frédéric Malle**, www.fredericmalle.com and see Les Senteurs. **Guerlain**, www.guerlain.com. **Harrods**, 87-135 Brompton Rd, London SW1 (020-7730 1234; www.harrods.com). **Harvey Nichols**, 109-125 Knightsbridge, London SW1 (020-7235 5000; www.harveynichols.com). **Jo Malone**, 150 Sloane St, London SW1 (037-0192 5121; www.jomalone.co.uk) and branches. **Lancome**, www.lancome.co.uk. **Laurent Mazzone**, www.lmparfums.fr and see Harvey Nichols. **Les Senteurs**, 71 Elizabeth St, London SW1 (020-7730 2322; www.lessenteurs.com). **Liberty**, Regent St, London W1 (020-7734 1234; www.liberty.co.uk). **Liquides Imaginaires**, www.liquidesimaginaires.com and see Harrods. **Living Laliq**, www.living.laliq.com and see Harrods. **Maison Francis Kurkdjian**, www.franciskurkdjian.com and see Liberty. **Roja Parfums**, www.rojaparfums.com and see Harrods. **Rouge Bunny Rouge**, www.rougebunnycastle.com and see Fenwick. **Roullier White**, 125 Lordship Lane, London SE22 (020-8693 5150; www.roullierwhite.com). **S-Perfume**, see Liberty. **Wild at Heart**, 30A Pimlico Rd, London, SW1 (020-7229 1174; www.wildatheart.com) and branch and see Liberty.



From top: Laurent Mazzone Epine Mortelle, £195 for 100ml EDP. Aerin Rose de Grasse, £135 for 50ml EDP. Rouge Bunny Rouge Incantation, £90 for 50ml EDP. Frédéric Malle Une Rose, £140 for 50ml parfum. Liquides Imaginaires Dom Rosa, £140 for 100ml EDP. Electimuss Rhodante, £145 for 50ml EDP

A bunch of subversive rose fragrances determine to lead us into compelling, dark and thorny lands