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Reyach



THE DEATH OF DUPES?

ONES TO WATCH

CRAFTSMANSHIP VS INSPIRATION?

VOLUME VI
ON INSPIRATION

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reyach

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ON INSPIRATION

The etymology of "inspiration" comes from the latin word "inspirare" which means to 'breathe into or blow into'

It felt necessary, in the ending of this writer's sabbatical, to return to the subject of inspiration.

For those familiar with antiquity and with the Church Fathers, a key treatise called On the Incarnation or in the language of its time, De Incarnatione was written by St Athanasius as a defence of the idea that God assumed human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. It was not a suggestion. It was not a proposal offered for consideration. It was a defence written at cost, against opposition, because Athanasius believed the truth of what he was defending was too important to leave unspoken. Hence the front cover of this edition pays homage to the Saint.

Now Reyach is not a theological article or magazine. But in its own way, it serves the same function. Reyach exists as a treatise and defence of inspiration not as a vague sentiment, but as the legitimate origin of meaningful creative work.

If you were here from the beginning, you will remember the edition titled The Form of Perfume. That piece touched upon the idea of combining Plato's Theory of Forms with the creative theology found in Genesis two frameworks, separated by centuries, drawn together by a shared conviction that creation is not arbitrary. The outcome was a provisional pathway into understanding how a perfume is birthed, and a means of reverse-engineering the process so that we might comprehend what actually takes place when a perfumer composes. I wrote that piece because of my passion and because of our shared enthusiasm for understanding how fragrance comes into being. Not simply what it contains, but what it comes from.

That conviction has not changed. If anything, it has deepened.

We live in a world and specifically in an industry where the mainstream has abandoned depth for sales, traded stories for shallowness, and exchanged creativity for the safety of the norm.

This is not an exaggeration.

It is observable.

The release calendars grow longer each year, the compositions grow thinner, and the language used to describe them grows emptier. Flankers multiply. Originality retreats. And the consumer, flooded with options, is left with the quiet suspicion that something essential has gone missing even if they cannot name what it is.

What has gone missing is inspiration.

Perfume belongs with art. And art cannot be diminished, nor its characteristics tarnished, by the greed of a generation that yearns needlessly for something to quell a hunger it has not paused long enough to understand. You cannot satisfy a spiritual appetite with a commercial product. You can only distract from it. And distraction, however well-packaged, eventually wears off leaving the hunger exactly where it was.

Inspiration must become the route by which perfume is made. We cannot diminish the validity of a fragrance by reducing it to our preference alone. Inspiration seeks to translate an expression or idea into reality, and the measure by which we ought to evaluate a scent is how true it remains to its word.

Did the perfumer set out to capture something real a place, a memory, a conviction?

And does the composition honour that intent? That is the question worth asking. Not whether it projects. Not whether it garners compliments. Not whether it trends.

Skill deserves to be rewarded.

Deep inspiration should be platformed.

And so while this is not a treatise in the formal sense we press onward into other things I do not treat it as a mere article either. I defend and respect inspiration that is good for the soul, and I reject shallowness that chases after pockets. This has been the posture of Reyach since its first page, and it will remain so.

However and this matters this is not a slander of those who make perfume for commercial reasons. We vary in our roots. The goals that drive different lives are not uniform, and it would be dishonest to pretend otherwise. A perfumer who creates to pay their rent is not the enemy of one who creates from inspiration. They are simply operating from different starting





points, and both deserve the dignity of being understood on their own terms.

"This is a defence of something that is dying. It is not an attack on those who participate in its decline."

The economic state of the world has ushered people, perfumers included into a posture of survival. Needs must be met. Bills must be paid. Families must be fed. No one disputes this. But the consequence is that we rush the finer things.

Now you may be thinking, “this is just sentimentality. Show me what you mean.” And you would be right to ask. What does inspiration-driven perfume actually look like when it is done well? Not in theory. Not as a philosophical exercise. In practice, in a bottle, on skin, in the room.

There are many fragrances that achieve this, and time would cease to exist if I attempted to list them all. So I will choose one. One that I picked up this year, that stopped me, and that has stayed with me since.

It is called Agrani, by the house Byermia. The word Agrani means ***leader. A pioneer. A founder.*** In Sanskrit specifically, it points to someone who has emerged successfully, not by accident or inheritance, but through the pressure of becoming. This perfume is designed to personify a stage of life where innate strength is no longer latent but cultivated. Drawn out. Made visible. It speaks to a moment where the weight of circumstance does not crush a man but rather shapes him, pressing him into the fatherly figure he is called to be for those around him.That is not a marketing brief. That is an inspiration. And the distinction matters.

The composition opens with cherry, almond, and saffron. The heart moves into piped tobacco, leather, musk, and a selection of Burmese oud. The base lands on cacao and castoreum.For those not familiar with castoreum, it is better that I describe it here than have you search it, because what you find will likely make you question the sanity of anyone who puts it in a fragrance. The simplest way I can describe it is this: castoreum is the main character from The Revenant. Specific, yes. But it is the most honest comparison I can offer without your insides turning. It is raw. It is animalic. And in the right hands, it is extraordinary.

I picked Agrani up earlier this year specifically because of the inspiration behind it. The story. The motivation. The conviction that a fragrance could embody a particular kind of masculine becoming, not the loud, performative kind, but the quiet, earned kind. I myself am at a pivotal point in life, and this perfume brought a great deal of understanding to things I had not yet articulated. There are moments where the right scent does not simply complement your mood but clarifies it. **Agrani did that for me.**

When I wore it for the first time, I loved it. The saffron, cherry, and almond arrive immediately, warm, rounded, inviting. But so too does the cacao and castoreum, rising earlier than you would expect from base notes. What lingers longest on my skin, surprisingly, is the oud, the cacao, and the cherry, a combination that sits close and refuses to leave quietly. I want to be clear: this is not a blind-buy recommendation. This is not even a call to purchase. But when I asked myself what fragrance I could point to and say this is what it looks like when inspiration is genuine, Agrani was the answer.

WE REPLICATE WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT.

We add a single ingredient to an existing composition, relabel it, and call it a flanker as though novelty and originality were the same thing. We treat the market as though it were the measure of quality, when in truth the market measures only appetite. And appetite, unchecked, will consume anything placed in front of it including the very craft that once made this industry beautiful.

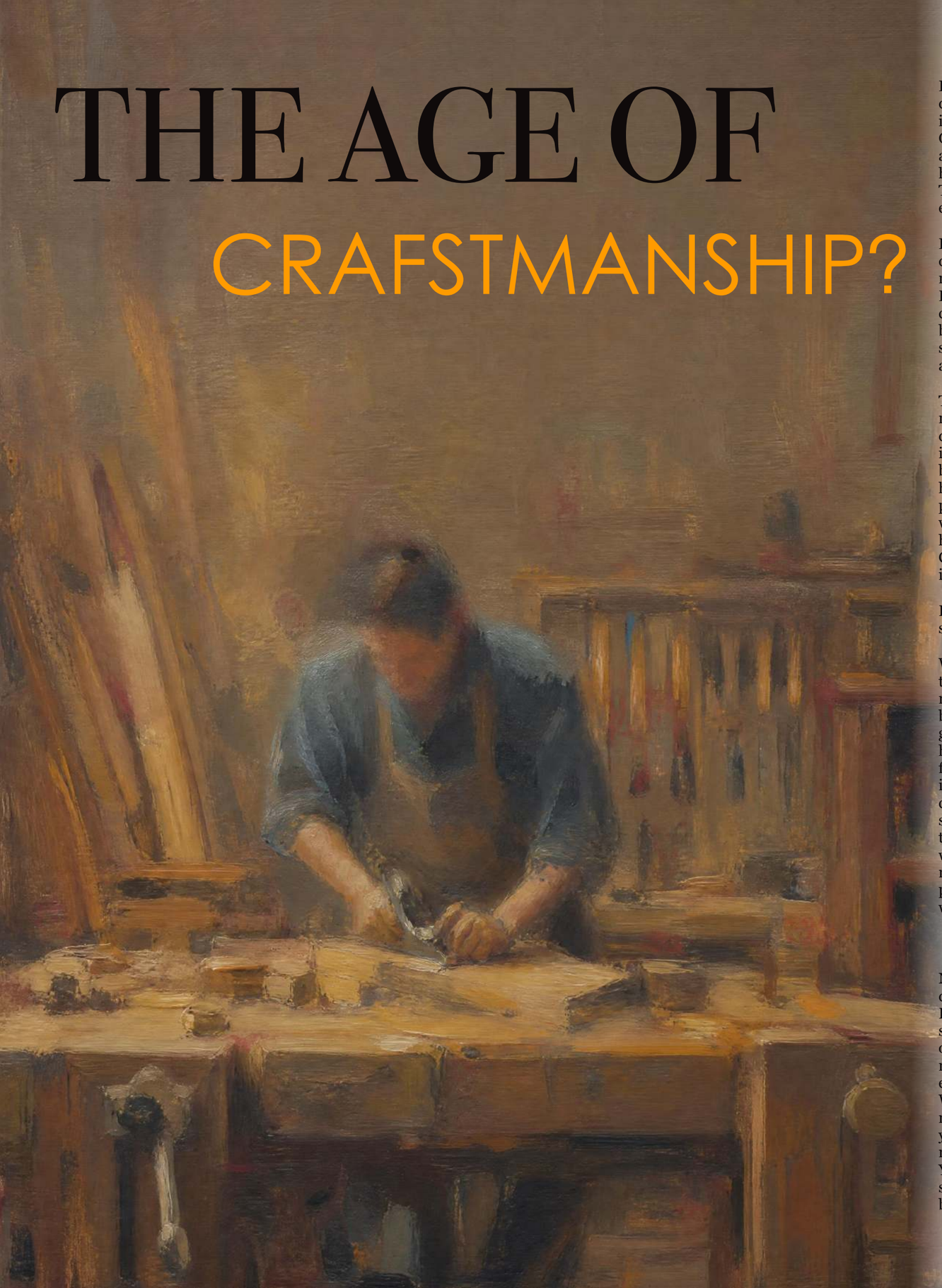
The finer things deserve more time than we are giving them.

LESS

"TOP 10 AMBER FRAGRANCES"

MORE

"THIS FRAGRANCE REMINDS ME OF HOME"



THE AGE OF CRAFSTMANSHIP?

I have just spent considerable space defending inspiration and its importance. The title of this edition is On Inspiration. And yet here I am, about to place what may appear to be higher importance on craftsmanship. This is not a contradiction. Let me explain why.

In a previous edition, I referenced a quote that I love and very much want readers to sit with. It comes from Dreyfus and Kelly: “The task of a craftsman is not to generate meaning, but rather to cultivate in himself the skill of discerning the meanings that are already there.”

That line has stayed with me because it refuses to separate the two things we are discussing. The craftsman does not invent. He discerns. And to discern is to be attentive to something that precedes him, something that was already present before he arrived at the workbench. That something is what we have been calling inspiration. Craftsmanship, then, is not the rival of inspiration. It is its instrument.

But let us be honest about the current state of things.

We are in a time where inspiration, in the merit order of importance in the making of a perfume, has fallen. It has been displaced, not by something greater, but by the insatiable hunger of human nature and the relentless desire for something new. The discarding of inspiration has led to an intense competition, a sharpening of technical skill, a drive toward mastery of the craft that is, in many ways, remarkable to witness. The industry has never been more technically proficient. But proficiency without origin is movement without direction.

Now it is true that some of the hunger driving this market is rooted in greed. But not all of it. Some of it is driven by something more legitimate: the nature of being in genuine search of something more. We live in an age where everything is optimised. An Apple Watch tracks your steps. A Garmin monitors your recovery. You change your gym routine because a new methodology promises better results. You restructure your diet because a study surfaced last Tuesday. Humans, by conditioning if not by nature, now pursue the best in everything. They buy dupes because they cannot afford the original and refuse to settle for nothing. They buy the original and then continue buying because the collection itself becomes the pursuit. There is always another bottle. There is always something closer to the ideal.

This search for the best, which once unfolded slowly across centuries of craft and tradition, has been compressed into the span of a single decade. And that compression has produced diamonds. The perfume industry, under this immense and accelerated pressure, has yielded work of extraordinary technical achievement. Compositions that would not have been possible twenty years ago are now being produced by houses that barely existed five years ago. The pressure has made the industry sharper, more competitive, more skilled.

So what does this mean for the industry going forward?

Pursue craftsmanship.

Simple.

The level of craftsmanship has evolved. The age of dupes, which will be discussed further in this edition, has performed an unintentional service: it has separated the truly skilled from the merely competent. Those who were able to cultivate the discipline of discerning meaning in ingredients and accords, those who understood their materials at a foundational level, are the ones now reaping the rewards. The imitators have multiplied, but in doing so they have made the originals more visible, not less. When everything can be approximated, only the work that cannot be replicated retains its authority.

But here is where the argument turns back on itself, and where the apparent tension between inspiration and craftsmanship resolves.

Craftsmanship and inspiration are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the relationship is the opposite of what most assume. The most inspired perfumer is the better craftsman. Not despite the inspiration, but because of it. And here is why: skill and craftsmanship, pursued in isolation, are arbitrary and hollow without a source for what is right. Without a foundation, technical mastery produces impressive work that leads nowhere. It dazzles without communicating. It performs without speaking.

Consider a physicist. A physicist can construct theory, can model behaviour, can propose elegant frameworks. But no theory becomes foundational unless it reconciles with what is inherently true about mathematics, about the structure of reality itself. The theory does not create truth. It discovers it. And its value is measured by how faithfully it corresponds to what was already there.

Perfumery operates on the same principle. A craftsman evolves and improves not merely by accumulating technique, but by understanding the complexities of each ingredient at a level that reveals new possibilities. When you understand why saffron behaves the way it does, what it opens up when placed beside cherry, what it closes down when overwhelmed by a synthetic musk, you are not inventing combinations. You are discerning them. You become one with the ingredient because you have been there with it from the foundation, and you understand its purpose before you attempt to redirect it.

This is not sensationalism. This is the truth of how great work is made, in perfumery and in every other craft that aspires to meaning.

Craftsmanship must prevail so that inspiration will prevail. The two rise together or they fall together. An industry that pursues skill without spirit will produce impressive emptiness. An industry that honours inspiration without developing the craft to express it will produce beautiful intentions that never reach the skin. The perfumer who cultivates both, who sharpens the hand while keeping the ear turned toward something deeper, is the one whose work will endure long after the trend cycles have exhausted themselves.

A HARRODS SUMMER

So in the summer hiatus, what did the editor do?

Took a needed break. Went to many weddings. Went to Greece and Albania in the same day, a story for another time. But most relevant to this publication was my time at Harrods. For those not familiar, Harrods runs a “Meet the Perfumer” season each summer where established houses host events on new releases, existing collections, or the philosophy behind the house itself. If you enjoy perfume beyond the appearance of owning a collection, these events are worth attending. You leave differently from how you arrived.

I attended two. BDK Parfums, driven by new releases I had been meaning to test, and Widian, one of my favourite houses for uniqueness, quality, and class.

BDK Parfums

This event celebrated ten years of BDK and the launch of their Collection Studio. In their words: “The Collection Studio creates an intimate dialogue between perfumery and fashion, two sensory languages capable of going beyond words to convey pure emotion.” Three releases: Stellar Silk, Oud Paradisio, and Silver Ceremony. Before the scents, what mattered more was the conversation. David, the founder, came from fashion before life pivoted him into perfumery. A pattern I keep noticing among the most interesting people in fragrance: they arrive from elsewhere and bring a vocabulary perfumery alone would not have given them.

Both David and perfumer Jordi Fernandez have synesthesia, a condition where senses cross paths involuntarily, one experience triggering another. Seeing a colour produces a texture. Hearing a note generates a feeling. This was the foundation of the entire collection. They spoke about translating the tactile sensation of touching fabrics into perfume. For David it is a summation of his former life in fashion and his present life in fragrance, distilled into a bottle. A genuinely inspired premise. Whether the compositions deliver is another question.

Widian

This was the one I had been looking forward to. I own Sahara and Limited 71. Got them signed. Truly one of one now.This event centred on the existing collection and what Widian is about as a house. We spoke directly with owner Ali Aljaberi and perfumer Hamid Merati-Kashani. Three things stayed with me.

First, Hamid described knowing what a fragrance smells like before he creates it, the way an artist holds a picture before the brush touches canvas. He described this in relation to Polite Oud. It confirms what I have always suspected: the work starts long before the lab.

Second, a reframing of niche. Niche is not a volume category. It is niche because it comes from the heart. That moves the word from a price bracket to a posture.

Third, manufacturers like Firmenich are developing proprietary molecules and using them as anchors in formulas so compositions cannot be duped. A significant industry shift we will expand on in the next chapter.

In Summary

My time at Harrods this summer was well spent. These were not marketing presentations dressed up as events. They were real conversations with people who care about what they make, and who were willing to share how they think. You leave understanding more than you did when you walked in, and that changes the way you smell things afterwards.

I would encourage anyone who enjoys perfume beyond surface level to seek these events out. And I want to give a shoutout to The Niche Show, which continues to create space for exactly this kind of thing. If you are not familiar, look them up. Worth your time.

STELLAR SILK



A pleasant santal and benzoin composition with a vanillic quality, steering clear of the familiar Bianco Latte direction. Airy, milky, powdery and toasted, with an almost nutty edge. Smelling the individual accords beforehand elevated the experience, but the finished fragrance did not stay with me. Well made, though at this price, I want more.

OUD PARADISIO



If you are tired of oud paired with whichever tropical fruit is fashionable, I understand. But Oud Paradisio earns its place through a distinctive pineapple ice cream accord that could almost stand alone as a perfume. Familiar territory, with enough difference to warrant a try.

SILVER CEREMONY



If you are tired of oud paired with whichever tropical fruit is fashionable, I understand. But Oud Paradisio earns its place through a distinctive pineapple ice cream accord that could almost stand alone as a perfume. Familiar territory, with enough difference to warrant a try.

LONDON



Any true Londoner knows the city is less romantic than this perfume suggests. It rains, and the Tube smells like the Tube. But Widian captures the London you miss when you are away: sweet, juicy rose, fruit and a soft powdery finish. Generous without overdoing it. Great stuff.

LONDON HARRODS EXCLUSIVE



Some find this too similar to the original. I disagree. The shared DNA is clear, but a raw oud makes this woodier, more animalic and, to my nose, more refined. It has an edge the original rounds off. That is what I want, and why I prefer it.

POLITE OUD



Inspired by the aftermath of a Middle Eastern wedding: lingering bakhoor and fifty perfumes mingling in a room that still remembers its guests. The result is a light, clean, approachable oud. Memorable for its wearability, though I want something that makes me pause rather than nod. Still, it fulfils its brief, and I respect that.

ARE DUPES DYING?

2024 until now has seen a massive influx of copycat fragrances or 'dupes', these have sent the industry into disarray with many differing opinions on the ethics behind this. This unflux has now settled and it seems the hype behind dupes have died. The main reason dupes exist and have purpose is they are a gateway to highly inspired and quality fragrances without the price tag that follows. So you can own "Amouage Reflection Man" for under £50. This is the key to the relevance and at first there is no drawbacks to this because you are often smelling something at least 90% similar to the original for a fracture of the price. The key anchor and turning point here is the quality is different. Those in the industry know the margins made on a lot of perfume is high without most fragrances returning at least 50% over the unit cost and dupe fragrances this increases. The following issue that comes is the drop in quality, cheaper raw ingredients and cut corners. However the over arching feeling as to why dupes are dying is the nature of dupes, the copy no matter how good it is will never hold the same value as the original. If i have a picture of the Mona Lisa even though it looks exactly the same it will never hold the same weight as the original, why? Because by nature we value and are attracted to inspiration and when access to the original appears then the former fades away. Another issue arising is simply craftsmanship is evolving like i alluded to in the previous chapter. Dupe houses are starting to find it difficult to copy formulations as they become more complicated and ingredients find harder to identify through their fancy machines.

So what does the future hold for dupes? Well dupes wont die but there certaintly will not be a "dupeflation" again, inspiration had been sifted and what remains are good wheat. As long as inspiration remains dupes will always have a market but it remains to be seen how houses plan to combat their formulations being copied.



OTW

OTW

During the time off I thought how can Reyach be a voice that resounds creativity and craftsmanship from those are unseen. So seen this a list of houses that are criminally underrated, up and coming. This is not a shade to well known houses but there is food at the table for everyone to eat. The first three are houses I have tested and know are worth a deeper look and the final two are brands I am going to investigate and encourage others to investigate.

Scents of Wood

Wood is both subject and method at Scents of Wood. The house ages organic sugar cane alcohol in wooden barrels, allowing the vessel to participate in the perfume's character. Its fragrances explore the forest through unexpected textures and associations, from resin and earth to the warmth of fruit and bread.

Contes Parfums

Contes de Parfums places the perfumer's name beside the story. Each fragrance offers a personal recollection, shaped by a place, an encounter or a moment that endured. The house gives its creators freedom to translate those experiences into scent, making perfume a means of sharing something otherwise private and particular.

Profumum Roma

Established by the Durante siblings in 1996, Profumum Roma carries a family's Roman perfumery heritage into highly concentrated compositions. Its subjects are tangible: salt, wood, sweetness, the remembered atmosphere of a place. The house seeks an immediate emotional connection, giving familiar materials enough presence to summon something personal through scent.

Daniel Josier

Daniel Josier's house bears the name and sensibility of its perfumer. Its approach places careful material selection alongside patient composition, pursuing a modern character without unnecessary excess. The work centres on balance and personal expression, with each fragrance intended to carry the author's inspiration through the experience of wearing it.

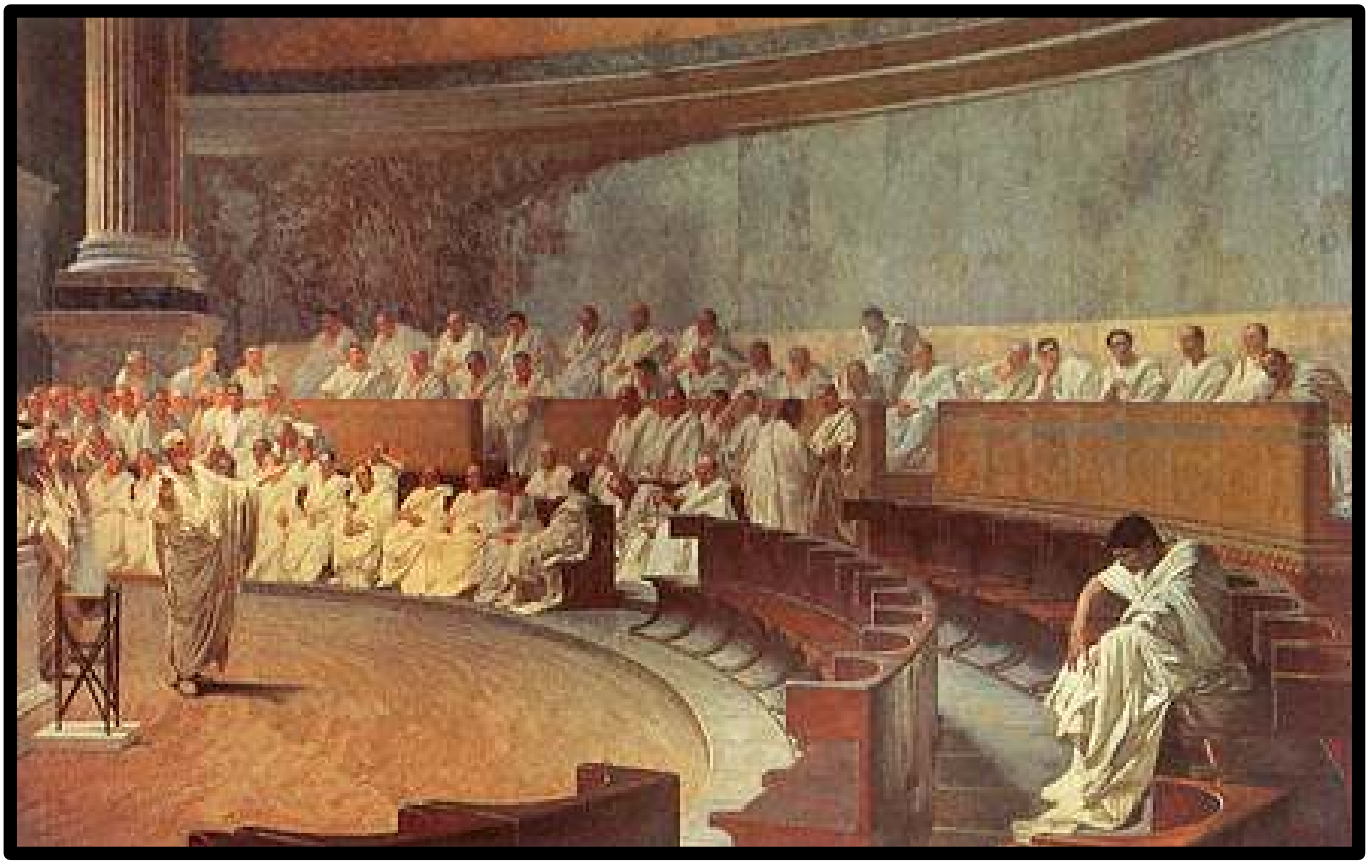
Renier Perfumes

For Renier Rodríguez Méndez, painting and perfume are connected practices. His house translates the colours, tensions and emotions of his paintings into fragrance, carrying an image beyond the canvas. Based in the Czech Republic, Renier Perfumes draws on surrealism and romance, asking how the eye's experience might reach the nose.

Looking forward

In the next months edition we will be your guide to what to buy for Christmas.

Take care and share this with a friend.



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen.