



BEAUTY

Philippe Starck To Make His Fragrance Debut

- The designer is introducing his premiere trio of scents under Starck Paris.

BY RACHEL STRUGATZ

Have you ever wondered what “elsewhere” smells like?

Philippe Starck has thought about it a lot – so much so that he’s bottled it and is introducing it as part of his first fragrance collection under Starck Paris. The designer, who inked a deal with the Perfumes y Diseño Group in September of 2013, created a collection of three eau de toilettes that will launch at Neiman Marcus next week.

“I’m a dreamer. Since I’m born, I’ve [felt like I’m] not in the real life, [like] I’m flying nonstop without limit. It’s not very comfortable,” Starck said of the inspiration for Peau D’Ailleurs, or the scent of “elsewhere.”

Starck’s out-of-the-box thinking, which made him a world-famous designer, is evident from concept to packaging and even marketing materials – a

series of portraits with faces so blurry that it’s hard to discern the gender of the subject.

See WWD on Wednesday for an interview with

Starck, as he elaborates on everything from his inspiration in creating the fragrances to his philosophy about life.



Philippe Starck’s Peau de Soie, Peau de Pierre and Peau D’Ailleurs.



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Philippe Starck Makes Fragrance Debut With Parfums Starck Paris

● Starck's first fragrances, a collection of three eaux de toilette based on abstract concepts, go on sale next week.

BY RACHEL STRUGATZ

Philippe Starck is taking the artisanal fragrance trend to another plane. It's more concept than consumer product.

Introduced by his licensee, Parfumes y Diseño Group, or PYD, as being a revolutionary, Starck leaped to the challenge with a rapid-fire series of head-turning one-liners that seemed to redefine the most common notions associated with fragrance.

This was the takeaway from architect Philippe Starck's preview of Starck Paris in May, his fragrance brand that makes its debut next week. The first in the Parfums Starck Paris range is a collection of three eaux de toilette that will be carried exclusively at Neiman Marcus and Neimanmarcus.com starting Aug. 21. According to the company, Neiman's will have an 11-day exclusive before the fragrances roll out to retailers in Spain and France. Each scent retails for \$100 for 40 ml. and \$150 for 90 ml.

Starck unveiled the premiere set of eaux de toilette, his cerebral approach to fragrance. Starck inked a deal with PYD Group in September 2013, and spent the better part of the last three years working on this project.

"I don't want to be pretentious. But it's a product for intelligent people," Starck said of the three scents: Peau de Soie, Peau de Pierre and Peau D'Ailleurs. The first is suggested for women, the second for men and the third, is, well, somewhere else. These are merely suggestions, as nothing is black or white in Starck's world.

While the first two are traditional women's and men's scents – or as traditional as Starck could muster – Peau D'Ailleurs is the designer's effort at the scent of "elsewhere." It's genderless, and to understand "the mental game we have created," Starck mandated that intelligence is a necessity.

He's taking fragrance into a different realm. He's developed these three eaux de toilette based on his concept of what humans are; namely, what we have been, what we are and what we will be.

He's rethinking skin. To him, skin is the "barrier to the soul" and fragrance is an inti-

mate skin. Each one is named for a different type of "skin," or "peau" in Starck's native French. For instance, Peau de Soie translates to the "skin of silk."

"The real perfume isn't the perfume alone; it's perfume and the skin. I make the connection about skin," Starck said.

The flamboyant artist demonstrated the path of his thinking, over and over again. It's clear that his out-of-the-box approach, which helped propel him into becoming a world-famous designer, has been applied to this project.

"It's absolutely not marketing," he declared. "We don't do it to please the market. We make what we want, but we do it with honesty. We are the opposite of marketing – perhaps we will see the opposite result," he said with a laugh.

"I have no legitimacy to make my own perfume, but I have very precise ideas and they [PYD Group] understand that," Starck added. He's an admitted control freak, comparing himself to the late Steve Jobs. He referred to Jobs as the "number one" control freak, and now that Jobs has passed on, Starck proudly declared himself the "emperor of the control freaks."

He explained his creative process, which has nothing to do with the notes or actual ingredients that make up each scent. For him, perfumery is a story.

Peau de Soie is billed as a women's scent whose femininity "wraps around a man's heart" and the second eau de toilette he created, the men's Peau De Pierre, is a masculine fragrance that has a "woman" on the inside. They were created by master perfumers Dominique Ropion and Daphné Bugey, and according to Starck, the female perfume was made by a man and the male's was made by a woman.

Starck takes a dim view of men. In fact, he said he believes the only thing that can save men is if they "recognize their femininity inside."

And Starck is clearly a lover of women. He confessed that when growing up he never did anything "that boys do." He attended his first soccer game this spring while visiting Portugal and was astonished at the 64,000 men "screaming with valiance."

Starck continued on about his self-hatred of men. He admitted that in his 67 years, he's never liked or respected men, and called



them “stupid” and “useless.” As a heterosexual man himself, he has a “beautiful wife” and five children. Starck professed that the only other male friends he has are “very feminine.”

As for the Elsewhere scent, he said creating it was nearly impossible.

“I’m a dreamer. Since I’m born, I’ve [felt like I’m] not in real life, [like] I’m flying non-stop without limit. It’s not very comfortable,” Starck said of the inspiration for the third fragrance in the trio, Peau D’Ailleurs, or the skin of “elsewhere.”

At the onset of the project, he wanted the remaining fragrance to embody “the smell of emptiness” – the result of spending the entirety of his life “nowhere” or “elsewhere.” He instructed Annick Ménardo, the master perfumer who worked on the scent, to create “the smell of gray, the smell of positive sadness, the smell of space.”

Imagine putting this in a bottle.

Ménardo was panicked, but eventually Starck’s vision came to fruition. She was able to mix the ingredients to accomplish Starck’s goal: an elusive scent or the perfume of a shadow.

The essence of fragrance is that it could transport the user to a certain period of time – and Starck is seeking to use his scents as a vehicle to take fragrance to its roots.

Starck’s eccentricities abound in

everything from concept to packaging to the fragrance juice and even marketing materials.

For the latter, Starck worked with GBG, an English graphic design studio, on a series of portraits with faces so blurry that it’s hard to discern the gender of the subject.

He said it took more than a year to select the people in the images and hundreds of people were shot to find the perfect “mask of mystery and emotion” he wanted. He also said that he worked with GBG for over six months to find the right level of blur – one that would “keep the level of emotion” but never let the consumer recognize who the subject was.

Ironically, even though the bottles are arguably one of the most attractive objects about the product – they are clear with flowing, pale colored inserts that seamlessly connect like a puzzle when all three are placed alongside one another – he insisted that the bottles were an afterthought. The inserts are concave and fluid, giving the feeling that each bottle flows into the next.

“I am not interested by the bottle but by what is inside,” he said, a startling claim from such a world famous designer of objects. He called bottles nowadays “gimmicky,” saying that brands use advertising to get people to buy into their brand via the bottle. It’s an easy and non-costly way to purchase a designer object to “have the bottle in your bathroom.”

He’s witnessed a trend in perfumery that skews more to fun and less than serious. He cited Moschino’s Fresh Couture – the kitschy eau de toilette from the brand that comes inside its version of a Windex bottle.

“It’s really fun. But it’s not me....I am not looking for fun in perfume. I am looking for emotion; I am looking for soul; I am looking for philosophy; I am looking for everything – but not fun. There is no humor in perfume.”

He’s most concerned with what’s inside the bottle – although beyond his ideations and gender concepts – he’s decidedly vague about what actual notes and ingredients the perfumers used in creating each fragrance. The company declined to list the fragrance notes in 19 pages of press materials. When queried, a spokeswoman said, “Mr. Starck does not wish to emphasize particular ingredients or notes.”

Starck maintained that the perfumers had total freedom and the highest quality ingredients were used. And for Elsewhere specifically – the most abstract – it contains a molecule that’s never been used in a scent, he claimed, while not bothering to identify the supersubstance.

“It was a molecule which didn’t exist before, nobody has smelled it before. We are really somewhere else,” he said. “It’s purely, purely chemical. It’s a creation from human intelligence and because nobody has smelled it, there’s no name.”

Although he is clearly passionate about his perfume, don’t expect to see Starck sharing his enthusiasm with the public as part of an in-store appearance.

For him, a good product speaks for itself, and potential customers have to discover and understand Starck Paris for themselves. “If I can avoid those [I will]....I think it’s counter-productive,” he said, referring to store visits.

Starck said he’s almost done with the next collection of three fragrances that will come out next year, and he’s working on another three that will come out in 2018. The next set will also be based on the idea of skin – but even more abstract.

