

INTERNET

Dior finds fragrant source of transparency in Web documentaries

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Still from Dior's Quest of Essences

By JEN KING

France's Christian Dior is setting out on a "quest for essences" in a Web documentary series exploring the relationship between the land, people and raw materials that contribute to its fragrances.

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Dior's perfumer-creator Francois Demachy serves as the series narrator since he is the direct connection between the house's fragrances and the sources of the materials used. Providing consumers with access to the creative process in an intimate way, relying on nature rather than Dior's codes, allows the quality of the brand's fragrances come through.

"Not all luxury fashion houses have an in-house perfumer, but those who want to remain at the edge of innovation do," said [Thoma Serdari](#), Ph.D., founder of [PIQLuxury](#) and adjunct professor of luxury marketing at [New York University](#), New York. "Franois Demachy adds exactly that type of legitimacy to Dior's perfume line.

"When speaking about the art of perfumery Mr. Demachy compares it to the art of cooking. He then clarifies that as in cooking, good perfumes are not created only because of good ingredients," she said. "One needs the appropriate recipe as well as the human hand and imagination that complete the process. Through his own explanation, therefore, Demachy becomes both the spokesperson but also the symbol of the art of perfume making.

"[Mr. Demachy] signifies the gifted nose, skilled perfumer, and trained artist who is also an innovator, experimenter and visionary. Without the added element of human intervention, or else perfume design, the process of perfume making remains incomplete or stagnant."

Ms. Serdari is not affiliated with Dior, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Dior was unable to comment directly.

Focusing on fragrance

At time of release, The Quest for Essences includes three episodes focusing on a different location and ingredient used in Dior Parfums. The Web site housing the series opens with a comment from Mr. Demachy that says, "To create a fragrance you need time. But also and above all you need to be stimulated by travel, going to terroirs and meeting the people who work them and keep them alive."

This transparent ideology continues in each of the three films shared so far. A brief introduction furthers Mr.

Demachy's thought by noting that the fragrances created by Dior are "postcards of all these voyages" and "part of a human adventure."

Episode 1 is focused on the May Rose sourced from Grasse, France, known as the "cradle of perfumery." The three-minute video shows Mr. Demachy as he visits two rose nurseries, the "Domaine de Manon" and the "Clos de Callian," which dedicate the May Rose harvest exclusively to Dior.



Dior's The Quest for Essences, Episode 1

The episode includes aerial shots of both nurseries as Mr. Demachy meets with their directors and tells of the May Rose's importance for Dior scents.

In the second documentary, Mr. Demachy travels to Calabria, the "boot" tip region of southern Italy, where Dior sources its bergamot. Here, Mr. Demachy "draw(s) inspiration from the beauty of the plantations."

This nearly three-minute video shows Mr. Demachy as he visits the processing plant and local estate that produces Dior's custom San Carlo Bergamot, also exclusive to the brand.



Dior's The Quest for Essences, Episode 2

Dior's final episode in The Quest of Essence series at this time focuses on jasmine grown in India. Mirroring his own sentiment and that of the late Christian Dior, Mr. Demachy says, "You cannot understand India if you do not understand the people's passion for flowers."

For this episode, Dior concentrates on two jasmine varieties: jasmine sambac and jasmine grandiflorum, the former used for the first time in J'adore Dior. This video also shows the contrast between urban India and its flower-producing regions.



Dior's The Quest for Essences, Episode 3

The Quest of Essences Web documentary series has been shared on Dior's social media channels as well on

DiorMag, the brand's news site.

"[Dior's] documentaries are very well produced: They are visually pleasing, succinct, and rich in details. They truly communicate the sumptuousness of each type of perfume (deriving from the May rose, Bergamot, and Jasmin) while also telling the story of each flower," Ms. Serdari said. "Where it comes from, how it is cultivated, who farms the land, how the flowers are plucked or the oils extracted, how these processes impact the people of the surrounding areas. The storyline, links each type of flower essence to a specific 'terroir' with unique traits as is the case with the wine industry.

"The final product is primarily exclusive but also a 'signature' product through and through," she said. "While we are not used to storytelling around the processes of perfume production, the documentaries capture the attention of the consumer with powerful visuals, pertinent context, and enriching background sounds as to prepare the senses for the olfactory experience that each perfume promises.

"The French are much more in touch with their olfactory sense and very much into discovering new, signature perfumes. Lately however, this area of interest is gaining traction in the US as well where we have seen a surge of niche perfumers, many of whom spend a lot of time educating the public on the art of the scent."

Transparent teasers

Luxury brands have seemingly tired of traditional craftsmanship videos and have moved toward touting transparency messages.

For example, LVMH-owned Champagne brand Veuve Clicquot profiled a number of its employees in a video series that celebrates the talents behind a flute of bubbly.

Housed on the brand's Web site, the "We Are Clicquot" series consists of five episodes capturing different vineyard roles to take a new spin on the notion of a craftsmanship video.

While craftsmanship videos are immensely popular among luxury houses, showcasing employees in a candid fashion personalizes a brand and its offerings through the creative insights shared by the featured individuals ([see story](#)).

Also, French luxury conglomerate Kering is helping the world visualize its environmental impact with an interactive environmental profit and loss statement.

Kering's results page on the conglomerate's Web site contains a grid depicting the various steps in production and environmental categories in which it could make an impact, with each square containing a circle in relation to the impact that has been made. Kering's transparency shows its dedication and the steps it has taken while also helping other companies to examine where they can make changes one step at a time ([see story](#)).

"Trust, transparency and consumer confidence can have a direct and profound impact on a luxury brand performance," said Anna Szubrycht, founder and president of [Chic Being](#), a Santa Monica, CA-based luxury brand consultancy. "Now, more than ever, all relationships between brands and consumers should be based on trust.

"Customers get close to the luxury brands who are legitimate, have an excellent quality, innovation and high ethical standards," she said. "Over the last few years, niche luxury fragrances took over a big part of the prestige fragrance market because they were perceived as much more transparent and of a higher quality. Therefore for big fragrance houses such as Dior underlining this transparency and supreme quality is so important.

"Documentaries take us to the fields of Grass, Calabria and India where the most beautiful and rare flowers are grown and handpicked for the Dior Maison de Parfums. The movies show how carefully selected and customized these ingredients are. It all reinforces the quality and truly unique products at the core of the brand."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York