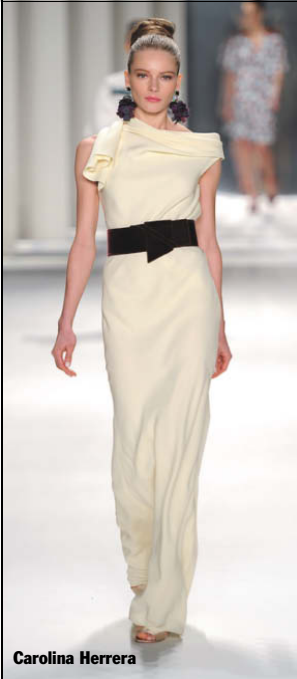


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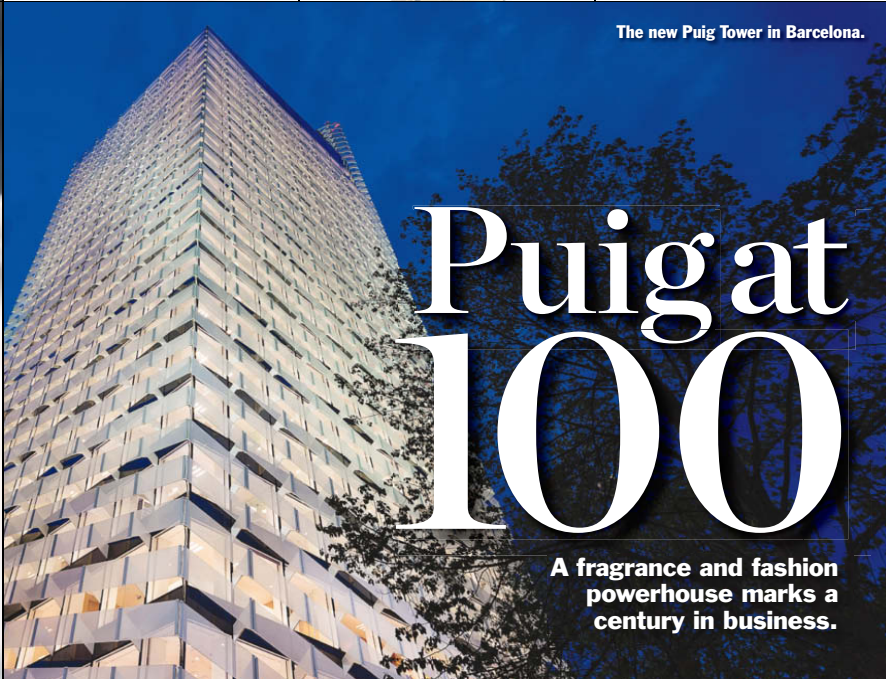
# WWD MILESTONES



Jean Paul Gaultier



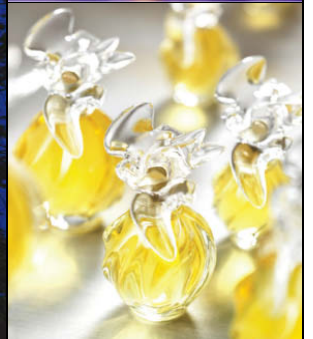
Carolina Herrera



The new Puig Tower in Barcelona.

# Puig at 100

A fragrance and fashion powerhouse marks a century in business.



Paco Rabanne



Nina Ricci



RUNWAY PHOTOS BY GIOVANNI GANNONI

WWD MILESTONES

# Habit-Forming Fragrances

Senior perfumer Elisabeth Vidal uses the powers of scent to stir sales. By Joelle Diderich

ELISABETH VIDAL SEES HER job as creating addiction.

As senior perfumer of prestige fragrances at Puig's Perfumery Center, she is in charge of developing scents for Paco Rabanne, Nina Ricci, Carolina Herrera, Prada, Valentino and Comme des Garçons. For each one, she is after that elusive combination that will provoke desire.

"People seek out and accept smells they find very addictive linked to certain moments in their lives that elicit an emotional response, and this regressive and addictive aspect to perfume is very important," said Vidal, sitting in an office in Puig's year-old headquarters on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris.

Hitting the right note between a creative and a commercial concept is a delicate exercise for Puig's three in-house perfumers, who must work in what Vidal described as a "creative triangle" with marketing trends and external perfumers.

Besides Vidal, there is Gregorio Sola, who is in charge of beauty brands including Shakira, Antonio Banderas, Mango and Benetton, and Camilla Latron, who works with both Vidal and Sola. Four evaluators and a laboratory operator round out the Perfumery Center team, spread between Barcelona and Paris.

Once the marketing team has defined a concept, it goes to outside partners in a con-

sultation process that generally lasts six to eight months. At this stage, having in-house perfumers is particularly useful, said Vidal, explaining that they serve as go-betweens for marketers and perfumers who submit their interpretation of the brief.

"We can translate marketing feedback in a language more suited to perfumers," she explained.

"What I like is when you see the response of several perfumers to the same brief, because sometimes they are completely different," added Vidal. "Working on several ideas at once shows you where to take the project and helps you stay creative."

It helps that she has known many of the perfumers for decades. Now 47, Vidal met the likes of Aurélien Guichard and Olivier Cresp as a 25-year-old, when she was training in places such as Geneva and Grasse.

She originally studied chemistry, joining Puig through its cosmetics laboratory. Having expressed an interest in perfumery, she began training in the evenings to learn about the different raw materials, and was eventually charged with putting a quality control system in place in the perfumery division.

Over the next five years, she visited industry powerhouses like International Flavors & Fragrances, Givaudan and Firmenich to learn her trade.

Vidal has seen Puig evolve from a largely domestic player into a company with a global beauty vision — a process that has accelerated over the last 10 years.

"We started to work in a much more international way and to look more for trends that work globally," she noted. "Having this increasingly international vision also allowed us to pick up much more on trends in the gourmand category."

Vidal believes those notes, which burst onto the perfumery landscape with the 1992 launch of Thierry Mugler's Angel, still have a thriving future.

"Perfume evolves much more slowly than fashion," she said.

"We are working out how we could interpret gourmand notes in a different way. There are some interesting notes to be explored on the saltier side," she added, citing the example of hazelnut and coffee.



Elisabeth Vidal

PHOTO BY FRANCIS GOIZE



Paco Rabanne's best-selling 1 Million fragrance, Agatha Ruiz de la Prada's Beso perfume and Nina Ricci's classic scent, L'Air du Temps.



## Every Picture Tells a Story

Puig marketing spins tales to seduce consumers. By Cynthia Martens

FROM SAILORS TO athletes to princesses, Puig fragrance ads feature an impressive lineup of characters. For years, the firm has poured its creative energy into carefully constructed, fantasy-filled commercials that each tell the story of a specific brand.

Charles DeCaro, co-owner and creative director of the Laspatia DeCaro creative marketing agency in New York, said Puig excels at creating unified narratives, which in turn give their products greater credibility with consumers. Prada's Luna Rossa fragrance campaign, for instance, explicitly refers to the fashion house's Luna Rossa Challenge sailing team, connecting the perfume to real athletes.

"It gives more validity to what the visual narrative is. That's what resonates with consumers, when they feel that there's a genuine connection on multiple levels and [the company is] not just selling a fragrance in and of itself," DeCaro said.

He also pointed to Puig's blockbuster Paco Rabanne 1 Million scent, launched in 2008, featuring a bottle designed to resemble a solid gold ingot, as a convincing representation of the fashion brand.

"You think of the Sixties, these exquisite metal dresses —

1 Million is the extension told in the modern vernacular. When I think of Paco Rabanne, the first thing I think of is gold. The packaging hits all the touch-points of the brand — the bottle is sexy, solid, shiny," he said.

Puig's talent for storytelling has allowed it to go beyond relying on big-name celebrities to carry campaigns forward, DeCaro added. "If you hire a model du jour, sometimes that works and sometimes it falls flat — eventually it wears thin, because it's so ubiquitous," he said.

Lele Del Fabbro, founder and creative director of LDF,



A Prada Candy ad featuring Léa Seydoux.

a Milan-based luxury branding and advertising agency, said Puig's strong music selection and respect for the core identities of each brand in its portfolio set it apart from the competition.

"That's not a given in fragrance advertising: often, the focus is just on creating a mood, without a real meaning," he said. "[Puig] fragrance ads are all mini-tales, a bit surreal, but that give you the chance to think."

Del Fabbro added the commercials had a "classy" vibe, and cited Valentino's Valentina fragrance campaign, shot in Rome, as an example: in the film by Johan Renck, model Freja Beha Erichsen plays Valentina, a rebellious young beauty who sneaks out of a party at her family's ornate palazzo and enjoys a night on the town with friends.

"It's much easier to get people's attention instantly if you feature a nearly naked woman. But if instead you say, 'Let's dress her — Who is she? What is she all about? Who is Valentina?' it's more interesting," Del Fabbro said.

The original Prada Candy ad was also a standout, he added, noting the attention to detail extended to a visual similarity between actress Léa Seydoux's blonde fringe and the shape of the perfume bottle's cap.



Paco Rabanne's Invictus campaign.

"Puig is able to put the whole package together," agreed Leila Rochet-Podvin, founder and chief executive officer of Cosmetics Inspiration & Creation, a Paris-based marketing agency. "Each brand has its story, its heritage, and with Puig there is always a signature and very strong coherence that extends to the fragrance bottles. Today, consumers need to be drawn into a [brand's] universe and it has to trigger their desire....All the pieces have to fit together."

She said the Nina by Nina Ricci campaign, with its "La tentation de Nina" film, was particularly powerful: feminine and romantic, it made fairy-tale references with its bright, apple-shaped bottle, but also offered "a modern experience

of the brand." In a recent study of 100 French women age 18 to 25, Rochet-Podvin and her colleagues found that many of them were fans of Nina Ricci, which she attributed partly to Ricci's on-target fragrance campaigns.

Rochet-Podvin also praised the men's Paco Rabanne Invictus campaign, shot by director Alexandre Courtes in 2013, as a clever combination of "mythology and modernity" that encouraged viewers to connect athletes with ancient conquerors. "You may like it or not, but it doesn't leave you indifferent," she said.

Vincent Bastien, a professor of marketing in the luxury sector at Paris' HEC School of Management and a former ceo of Louis Vuitton, Yves Saint Laurent Parfum and Lancel, said large-scale distribution had fundamentally changed the perfumery sector over the past few decades, making it less selective. While he agreed storytelling was important — "advertising is not just about selling, it's about making people dream" — he stressed the importance of having a quality scent to begin with.

"You don't buy a perfume for the story — the product is paramount," Bastien said, adding he perceived a certain "Catalan playfulness" and whimsy in Puig's campaigns. "[Puig is] fun, and very creative," but the firm's ultimate strength lies in convincingly "tying the scents to the stories."

PRADA CANDY PHOTO BY JEAN-PAUL GOIZE