



PURPLE RAIN

How perfumes and colours are intricately linked: we've got the dibs and a colour-picking wheel to go with *By Shantila Lee*

PERFUMERS AND DESIGNERS SPEAK OF CITIES, memories, grand fleurs and fashion moments that inspire them to conjure a fragrance that captures it all, so with a spritz and a big whiff, you get a jolt of what they were endeavouring to capture in a bottle. The exact same thing goes for colours—maestro noses like Francis Kurkdjian and Jean-Claude Ellena recognise, and are stirred by, the bond between colour and fragrance that is a major factor in the iconography of a perfume. Ergo: think Chanel No. 5, and what pops to mind is that golden flacon, an amber tone specifically designed to represent that timeless, haute elegance we all



associate with the floral aldehyde smell of No. 5. Or take Narciso Rodriguez's *Her* EDP's nude, minimalistic bottle, inspired by his devotion to a woman's grace and understated elegance.

SEEING RED

The fact is that all of us, on some level, relate emotions to colour—like red with passion, yellow with cowardice, blue with loyalty, and could envy be anything other than green? The techy term for this is synaesthesia, when the senses collide and



Chanel No. 5 EDP



Frederic Malle's limited edition fragrances adorned with the colours he sees in them

one cognitive sense leads to an automatic, involuntary reaction in a second sensory conduit. Perfumer extraordinaire Frédéric Malle is a synesthete, wielding a rare neurological superpower: when he smells a scent, his brain translates the noise into a colour scheme, a vision he shared via smashing colour illustrations that adorned the packaging of a limited edition line for Barney's New York. "When smelling fragrances I see colors. A few years ago, I decided to put these visions that I have when smelling the perfumes of our collection on paper. I used Photoshop, its many layers and its many brushes to illustrate the layers and textures that I smell when smelling these scents. The purpose of these images was to explain each perfume, not using words," muses the perfumer. "While I receive inspiration from all things—nature, things I see while walking, design, I certainly am also inspired by these colors."

Identical twins Dawn and Samantha Goldworm, the virtuoso noses behind 12.29, who also have an acute sense of synaesthesia, seeing smells as colours and vice versa, created a fragrance for Prabal Gurung that was liberally doused on the runway of his Spring 2014 show, with a 'bite' to connect the soft pink in his collection in an earthy, animalistic scent. "The colour stays there as long as I smell. When I stop smelling, it goes away," says Dawn. I believe it's scent will smell like its colour—not just to me, someone with synaesthesia, but to everyone."

TRUE COLOURS

So when picking a perfume to splurge on, the colour of the bottle, liquid or even a colour in the name of the scent could be an indicator of whether you would immediately swoon or scream *ew* and run the other way. "The hue of a perfume absolutely signals the type of fragrance you're going to smell," says The Fragrance Foundation President, Elizabeth Musmanno. "Blue fragrances—they are going to be aquatic, clean. When you see the amber tones of Chanel No. 5, Opium, or Shalimar, you're in the world of classics. But if you saw a green fragrance and it smelled like a sexy oriental, it would be jarring. Color helps fragrance tell its story." It's all designed to cue you in to the feeling or sense the fragrance is meant to induce: when a fragrance has an homme and femme version, like Gucci Guilty, the men's bottle almost always gets decked out in a dark hue. When a perfume gets revamped into a lighter, *eau fraîche* permutation, the bottle also gets a lighter, more delicate hue (take YSL Paris: the original bottle was gold, the softer Premieres Roses edition was a punchy pink). Or envisage Dolce & Gabbana Light Blue: the bottle's blue topper, the ad with David Gandy and Bianca Balti afloat on a sparkling blue Mediterranean sea; all three elements, the name, the flacon and the ad campaign, crafted to give you that cool blue Italian holiday, calm-yet-chic ooze, and so it follows that the scent of Light Blue itself smells lusciously breezy and marine-esque.



Dolce & Gabbana Light Blue EDT

The takeaway from all this is whether we realise it or not, colour is a way for us to classify or recognise what we smell. "What's astounding about the sense of smell is that it's the worst sense we have for conveying intellectual data, but it's the best for viscerally conveying an abstract concept," says Chandler Burr, an ex-New York Times scent critic. "Color has no scent, but when you smell Chanel Beige or Byredo Parfums Green, you are absolutely convinced that this is the scent of that color." Les Exclusifs de Chanel Beige was inspired by Coco Chanel's favourite couture shade for its understated modishness, and the scent invoked the equivalent in delicate, discreetly sensual white floral accords, proof that colour can be as crucial as any other ingredient in creating a fragrance. Realise that when you reach for that blue bottle of Light Blue or Elie Saab's Resort Collection Le Parfum, you are either reacting to the colour and the emotions it invokes, or projecting yourself unto the fragrance in the way it matches what appeals to you.



Chanel Les Exclusifs Beige EDP

HOW SYNESTHETES SEE SCENTS



Frederic Malle sees a blue-green array with a slash of orange in *Bigarade Concentree*



An effervescent, airy palette of blue, beige and grey, sketched by Malle of *Eau de Magnolia*



Malle translates *Portrait Of A Lady* into a dark, somber punches of reds, browns and pinks



Dawn Goldworm envisions *Calvin Klein Euphoria* with punches of pink, purples and oranges



Goldworm interprets *Burberry Brit* as a rainbow of pink, beige and mint



Goldworm's colour vision sees pink, purples and white in *Bulgari Omnia*

TRUE COLOURS



Chanel No. 5



YSL Opium

Amber, deep gold-ish tones always signal a classic parfum with musky, woody accords



Gucci Guilty Diamond



Gucci Guilty Homme

An homme version of a fragrance is normally shrouded in a darker hue to epitomise masculinity



YSL Paris



YSL Paris Premieres Roses

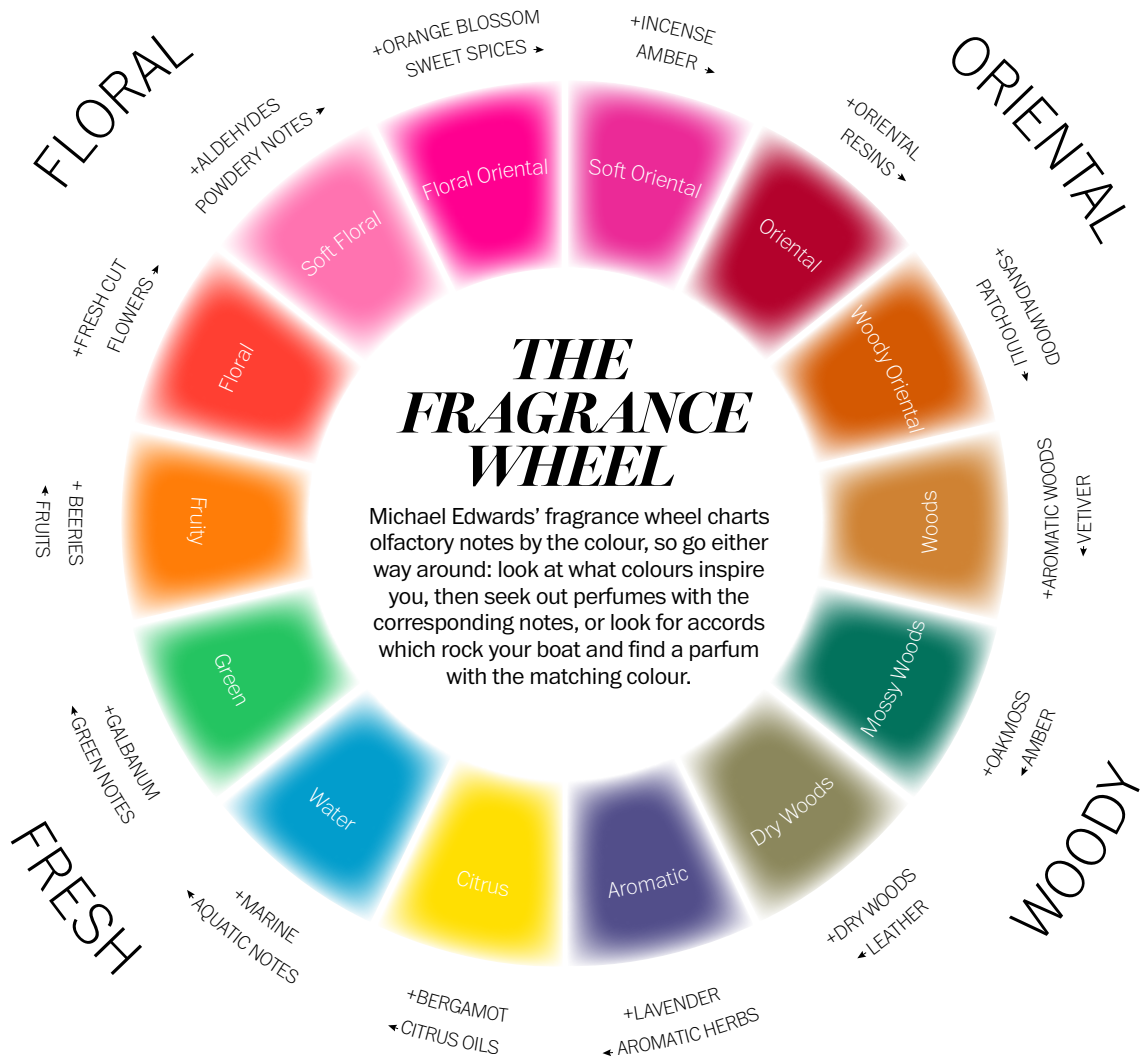
An eau fraîche, lighter version of a scent always comes in a brighter, pastel hue

PICK 'EM LIKE A PRO

This perfume-evokes-colour-evokes-perfume olfactory journey is one way of narrowing down perfume choices to pick that 'it' fragrance that does it all for you: how the colours in the bottle, name, imagery, the whole shebang, either whisks you away to an aquatic yacht-bound tropical holiday, or gives you a certain sensation, like a rush of confidence, insouciance or that wee dose of audacity we could all use on rough days. The fragrance's notes embody this sensation, in a sense that a perfume will smell exactly like it's colour.

Before venturing out looking for your fave ra-ra red bottle,

check the fragrance wheel below: Michael Edwards, author of *Fragrances of the World* (also regarded as a fragrance bible), has mapped every top, bottom and heart note to a certain hue that resonates with it. For example, I love pinks and I immediately fell for the very pink-imbued *Roses de Chloé* scent, a soft floral with a delicate pink flacon and notes of rose and amber. So think in colours: check the colour you fancy, then look for fragrances with similar matching notes—if blues and greens are your thing, seek out scents with aquatic and woody notes (cue Davidoff's *Cool Water*). Narrow it down to three or four, head to a beauty hall near you, sniff away and find the *one*. **mc**



IT'S IN THE NAME (AND SMELL)



Elizabeth Arden's Red Door exudes luxury and smells bold



Hermes' Un Jardin Sur Le Toit emanates and smells like a green freshness



Versace's Yellow Diamond oozes class, smelling heady and opulent