

# Rule

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and Comme des  
Garçons Parfums

# Breaker

Tar, nail polish, and an effervescent tablet fizzing in water. Only Comme des Garçons Parfums dares to package these elements as fragrance. After 30 years, the radical olfactory line hasn't run out of ways to up the *anti*. Adrian Joffe, president of Comme des Garçons International, weighs in.



**MANIFESTO:** You've been overseeing the fragrance line since its beginning. What is the greatest lesson?

ADRIAN JOFFE: I think that the greatest lesson after 30 years and everything that we have achieved is that we are still at the beginning and learning every day.

**M** Which fragrance sums up the journey of Comme des Garçons Parfums thus far?

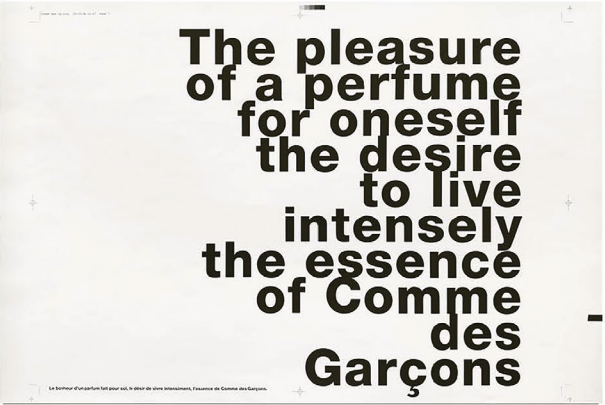
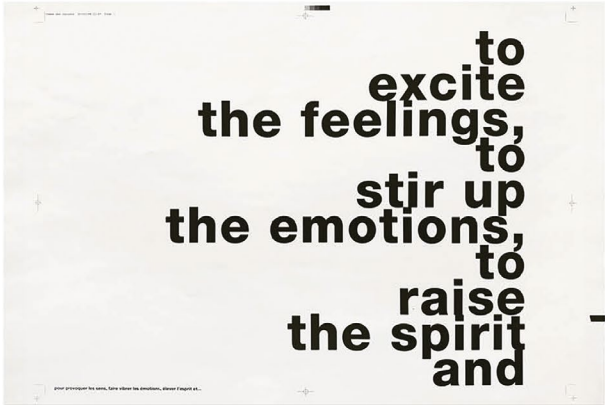
AJ The *Original* and first Comme des Garçons fragrance – it set the tone for everything that came and is to come. It created the language of the Comme des Garçons perfume.

**M** Comme des Garçons Parfums has built a cult following by upheaving modern perfumery conventions. At the start, did this *anti-perfume* stance come with pushback?

AJ I think there is always a bit of pushback when you launch unconventional products, but we still somehow managed to build a loyal following since the beginning. Being ahead of one's time is the motor for creating new things. For the acceptance and understanding of this revolution, one needs patience.

**M** Comme des Garçons is unique in its balance of creative and commercial success. You





006/007 EAU DE PARFUM, press catalogue, 1994; creative direction Comme des Garçons  
photo Mitsuhiro Imamori, graphic design Marc Atian

**described “creative business ideas” as key to this, citing a partial licensing deal with Puig. 23 years on, can you reflect on this unique decision?**

AJ The multi-year deal was quite unconventional and we are very grateful for the fantastic collaboration we had with Puig over many years. Since 2024, we have bought the license back and are now fully in control of all our products, which is a new challenge that we are happy to take on, and we will see where it leads us in the shifting landscape of perfumes and beauty.

**M The unconventionality is further reflected in the bottle design like the *Pebble*. Why do you think it still captivates consumers today?**

AJ The *Original* bottle shape was designed by Rei Kawakubo – the most unique aspect at the time was that it did not stand up, which was novel but also impractical. However, beautiful objects need not be practical.

**M Describe your collaboration with Rei Kawakubo and Christian Astuguevieille. Has it morphed through the years?**

AJ Christian has overseen the fragrance development for us since day one, not only for the Comme des Garçons fragrances but also the *Series* and all collaborations. Rei and Christian have always been very synergetic – she validates the brief but leaves him a lot of freedom to push the boundaries of scent. Rei always works on the visual elements like the packaging and graphic design. To this day, their collaboration works very well and we look forward to exploring new facets of the fragrance world.

**M Tell us about the special 30th anniversary book published by Simonett & Baer.**

AJ Of course it was great and emotional to see almost everything we have ever done in one place – it shows how time flies. We are very happy by the outcome of the book and the collaboration with Simonett & Baer

– the book is a good milestone. We can be proud of what we have achieved so far with the company, but it also helps me realise that we cannot stand still and have to continue to try and push the boundaries.

**M There have been various collaborations with brands and individuals across art, media, and fashion. Which has left the greatest impression on you?**

AJ All of them have left a great impression on me personally – every collaborator is unique and each and every one has informed the trajectory of the company. Of course, commercially speaking some are more successful than others, but we also believe in telling a story and reaching different people through perfume. Making a small audience happy is sometimes as important as making a product that flies off the shelves.

**M Has there been any strategy shifts since the rise of social media?**

AJ We fundamentally believe in our approach to marketing – we try

and create strong images and press releases that reflect each fragrance, but tend not to overshare them through advertising. While this approach might seem contradictory, it is interesting to see how some of our earliest images get posted on social media these days. I would say our approach to social media is to not ignore it but let it have an organic reach.

**M Has your outlook on the Comme des Garçons universe changed as a whole since delving into the world of scents?**

AJ I wouldn’t say so. The principle of the company – creation as the guiding light – is the same.

**M What do you think is the biggest shift in the fragrance industry?**

AJ It is interesting to see how many niche brands have started and grown to quite an impressive size over the years. Many went from being small and for those in the know to being widely available today, while keeping a good image and product.

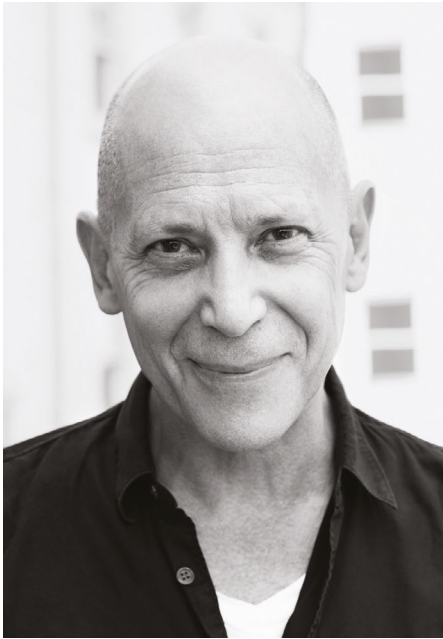
**M What do you think is the greatest challenge that the fragrance industry is facing?**

AJ I don’t see a particular challenge. On the contrary, I find the brands, products, and retail concepts coming from all over the world, including South Korea and markets that were historically not very important for the fragrance industry, quite inspiring. If there is a challenge, it is to carry on trying to break the rules as well as continue to not follow trends as this can only lead to average products.

**M Which fragrance do you find yourself spritzing the most?**

AJ *Marseille*. It’s an instinctive and an emotional thing. How do you give a reason to instinct? How do you answer a *why* to an emotion?

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ADRIAN JOFFE