

EM

ARTISTIC PERFUMERY



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KAON

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERTO DRAGO, CO-FOUNDER OF KAON AND LABORATORIO OLFATTIVO

EXPORT MAGAZINE: KAON has been present in the world of artistic perfumery for some years now. Can you tell us your story...

ROBERTO DRAGO: KAON has been operative for 22 years. Daniela Caon and I are the founders.

Both of us come from the sector of perfumery: Daniela owned a perfumery with her sister and was then an agent in perfumery, while I follow in my family footsteps as both my parents were perfumers and with a background that saw me first as an agent then as manager of some multinationals. We met, there was also a story of personal life together and, in 2001, we took the opportunity to distribute an English brand (Pecksniff's) in Italy. This is how Kaon, a distribution company operating, by our choice, in the sphere of artistic perfumery, came into being. We were amongst the pioneers of this sector: you only have to think that at the time the so-called niche perfumery only had about fifty stores in Italy. I want to emphasize that, from its beginnings, this project has been able to be what it has become thanks to sharing the activity in all its aspects with Daniela. Our skills complement each other, we are both driven by a very great passion for fragrances and have in common the same vision of how to operate; I am convinced that our daily discussions lead us to reach goals that on our own we would not have obtained. We had the luck, as well as the capacity, to find ourselves



Roberto Drago and Daniela Caon

in the middle of a river which was widening its banks; artistic perfumery has increased gradually in visibility. More and more stores and consumers are sensitive to this channel; today we are recognized as an important distributor in our sector, and, counting proprietary brands and brands in distribution, we have 21 brands.



EM: What are the keywords that distinguish your business?

RD: From the very beginning, the first keyword is 'coherence', where seriousness is taken for granted, in the past it was also important to speak about 'search' for example, the search for new brands, today when we talk about search we mean searching for new trends and ways of expressing ourselves through fragrances.



Perfumology, Turin



Laboratorio Olfattivo Store, Turin



Laboratorio Olfattivo Store, Milan



Laboratorio Olfattivo Store, Rome

EM: You have a variegated portfolio, are you particularly attentive not to have brands that overlap?

RD: Again for a question of coherence, we try to avoid conflicts between brands and we want to touch of different universes. In addition, it is important not to compromise on quality and on the coherence that has to characterize every single brand: the fragrance, the bottle, the packaging and the price have to be harmonious, otherwise the consumer will give it the thumbs down.

EM: We know that in your laboratory in Turin you hold initiatives for the consumers...

RD: We organize evenings where we explain to the participants how a perfume is created, what the main raw materials are. What drives me to do this, sacrificing part of my leisure time? In the first place, passion, which for me is a constant, and also the desire to create more and more consumers who are aware of what they are buying when they approach a perfumery which is not yet known to them such as artistic perfumery, which can lead them to leave their comfort zone, i.e. the channel of classic perfumery or remain in their previous convictions? The important thing is always to opt for a conscious choice, and this is a duty that is not only ours, but of all the professionals in the sector.

The ultimate test? Fragrance is emotion, if a fragrance moves me, I will continue to buy it.

EM: What led you to create your brands?

RD: For some time we had been caressing the idea of a brand of our own to express our creativity, taking advantage of the experience we had acquired; in 2009 we also made a careful reflection on the figure of the distributor. And how its value is linked to the brands it distributes and that it could lose for reasons not depending on its will or type of management. One more reason to create our own brand was that nobody can take away from you unless that is what you want. This was how 'Laboratorio Olfattivo' came into being, our first brand. In 2014 we created Kaon Lab, a production company, which packages our brands. Over time we have added Lucien Ferrero Maître Parfumeur (a brand that we have under licence for the whole world) and Maison Tahité. Kaon Lab also has private label activity for private label projects, for those companies that are increasingly asking us for them; this is why we are boosting our structure which already has 31 people, divided between the facilities in Rome and Turin. It is a great satisfaction to be able to expand our activity of fragrance creators, making available our know-how.

EM: Observing the multiplicity of your activities, the existence of an entrepreneurial project is very clear. How do you succeed, Daniela and yourself, in combining entrepreneurship, essential for rational growth, and the creative skills, the imagination and the originality that distinguish artistic perfumery?



RD: As I sometimes do, I will say something which does not belong to me: 'There is no favourable wind for a sailor who does not know where he is going.' Being an entrepreneur, means 'risking'. To transport this risk into a sector like ours, where nothing is taken for granted, you have to have a vision. Every day we try to transfer our project skills and creativity into this aspect of risk. The market, which by its very nature is dynamic, not static, has to be constantly monitored and this is why we often have to correct specific objectives.

EM: How is the company structured?

RD: Our first site is in Palestrina, outside Rome. This is where the operative, commercial, administrative and productive departments are. It is also where, for more than ten years, the digital activity, which has always been deemed fundamental, has taken place. Production takes place in an area of 900 square metres, with an adjacent warehouse; the products in distribution are stored in another warehouse of 400 square metres. In Turin, we are planning to expand the existing spaces to increase the private label activity, as I said earlier.

Our business is divided into two parts: Kaon Lab which deals with the production of our brands and private label, and a second company which deals with the brands we distribute. Laboratorio Olfattivo has opened three single-brand stores, the first in the centre of Turin, the second in Via delle Carrozze in Rome and the third in Via Fiori Chiari in Milan. For the brands we distribute, we have started a new project opening a first store in Turin called Perfumology, a showroom of all the brands in distribution. The website perfumology.it is linked to it. Commercially, in Italy we work with six agents who also handle other brands.

EM: How important for you is the distribution of your brands abroad?

RD: The foreign market is a fundamental resource, and not only for our company. From the financial point of view, it allows us to optimize the costs of production thanks to the increase of volumes. Visibility is the second extremely important aspect. Having visibility at

international level means having solid brand awareness, with positive fall-out on all the markets. Laboratorio Olfattivo is present in 54 countries in 14 years, and we have carved out an important space and we are proud to take Italianness into the world; international distributors are satisfied with working with us thanks to the offer that we put at their disposal, to which we have added the two brands, Lucien Ferrero Maître Parfumeur and Maison Tahité. We are amongst the few companies in the sector with a complete offer and diversified creative concepts, with a universe of products that ranges from personal perfumes (30) to home fragrances (18), respectively 60% and 40% of our total turnover.

EM: What are the main errors to avoid in the world of artistic perfumery?

RD: In part we have already mentioned them: the first error to avoid is not being coherent, the second, serious one, not respecting the consumer. In my opinion, you first have to start from an idea and then think of the consumer to whom the project in question addresses. Starting from the consumer to create a project, we only do a marketing operation, which is not very sincere or coherent. Another error not to make concerns the price positioning. Especially today it seems almost self-evident that a niche perfume, or one of artistic perfumery, should be expensive. From the very beginning of our sector, what was meant by niche? A product for few consumers who loved exclusivity, not necessarily a high price. This is justified only where there is a set of values, the research behind the fragrance and the preciousness of its raw materials, quality in all the components, from the container to the secondary packaging. In my opinion, the price attributed must correspond to the effective value of the product, without unjustified increases.

Claudia Stagno



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2 Accademia del Profumo finalists in the
Best Made in Italy Perfume Category



Luca Maffei



MISS_U and TIL... **by LABORATORIO OLFATTIVO**

The two new olfactory chapters signed Laboratorio Olfattivo. They will be presented as a world premiere during Esxence 2023, bear the signature of Luca Maffei.

MISS_U a revolutionary concept, diametrically opposed to its twin **NEED_U** where the scent needed the skin to sublimate. Here it is the skin that cries out to the perfume I Miss you! A love match between skin and perfume ... or who knows! A sensual and intriguing pampering, a strong contrast between sacred and profane. The jus opens between zests of Bergamot and Mandarin, a vibrant heart with Sichuan Pepper and Agarwood Black in an embrace of Patchuoli and Vanilla. **TIL ...** is part of the Laboratorio in Fiore collection, where the key word is Realism. Linden, flowery, green and with honeyed nuances facilitated the allegiance to Realism with its many facets and memorable links. It has a whiff of Spring, is a guarantor of lightheartedness and good humor, evokes the end of school, seals new loves and bodes well for business ... a composition that captures nature in a bottle with a reassuring and optimistic message.

SĀLUM

A collection of fragrances that interprets an unexpected sea scent



From the creative sensitivity of Massimiliano Minorini, whose mind has already given us many successful projects in the world of beauty and design, and from the union with Luca Maffei, talented 'nose' and name of the best Italian perfumery, comes Sālum, a collection of fragrances called 'Unexpected Sea Scent'. As Minorini explains to us, *"I was inspired by a somewhat unusual sea, that of a night in Arabia, full of mystery, sensual and silent."* My vision is one without seasons, where a concept of exclusivity and luxury prevails, underlined by the gold and black packaging. Luca Maffei has been able to interpret to the full the spirit of the brand, creating a collection of three particularly intense and enveloping fragrances.

AMBER WAVE

We are plunged into the secret abysses of the Arabian Sea, with salty marine and ozone nuances. Spices and citrus fruit merge with a dark heart full of seduction. Saffron Flower, Blonde Tobacco and Myrrh come together in a unique magic, to which are added hints of Coffee. The base note is a triumph of secret sensuality, produced by the union of Amber, Oud and sensual woods.

MARINE OUD

This fragrance interprets a deep, nocturnal sea. The top notes contain Salt Crystals, Citrus fruit and a touch of Pink Pepper, the middle note is characterized by a blend of Saffron, Labdanum Geranium, with a veil of Leather. The base note features notes of Amber, Incense and Smoked Woods.

ABYSS ROSE

This is the precious expression of Damascus Rose, made dark and mysterious by Guaiac Wood, Patchouli and Birch, to express a deep and sensual sea. The fragrance continues with the elegance of Suede, Cedarwood and Amber and ends with the refinement of Musk and Vanilla Orchid.



'I think that Luca Maffei has been able to interpret to the full the mood of a sea, the Sea of Arabia,' continues Minorini, "which for me represents a journey, above all of the soul, always in search of new nocturnal caves where to hide, to then wake up and feel regenerated. I hope that those who approach Salum - ideally I am addressing a transversal universe - can appreciate the intensity of these fragrances and feel unique emotions."





SĀLUM

UNEXPECTED SEA SCENT

ABYSS ROSE
EAU DE PARFUM



MARINE OUD
EAU DE PARFUM



AMBER WAVE
EAU DE PARFUM

