

Fragrance Veterans Create the Society of Scent

A perfume laboratory with an accent on collaboration.

By [Pete Born](#) on September 19, 2017



A band of [fragrance](#) veterans — including Frederic Jacques and Jean-Claude Delville — has started an unconventional kind of perfumery operation, called The Society of Scent, which is driven by free-wheeling collaboration with rule-breaking creativity as its centerpiece.

“The idea is to create a movement,” Jacques said, “that is why we have The Society of Scent.” He added, “What we want [to do] is to make perfumery cool again.”

The focus of this movement is to put the perfumers back in the spotlight. He noted, “If you are going to create fragrances, you need to concentrate on the creation and not the production.” In order to avoid walling off management into silos, the core group of partners describe their roles more in terms of their functions, rather than their specific titles. Jacques, whose last job was heading the fine [fragrance](#) division of Takasago, describes himself as a coordinator and a “driver of the ship to the destination.” Delville, who was a senior perfumer at Drom Fragrances before he retired in April, is master perfumer of the new firm. Delville, who clearly values inclusiveness, said, “Yes, I am the perfumer, but we are all perfumers here. This is going to be a collaboration; we are going to work together...and push the envelope.”

Beatrice Dupire works as a creative director, curator and chief of content creation and oversees the content lab and proprietary image depository. She previously worked with a gamut of companies ranging from Yves Saint Laurent to Donna Karan to Estée Lauder to IFF and a number of advertising agencies. She even curated shows for photographers like the groundbreaking artist Nan Goldin.

“The pleasure here is to work in a collaboration between the scent, the sensorial experience, the storytelling and also the visuals that we are developing,” she continued.



Mireya Zendejas is in charge of evaluation and project management as well as the Institute, the educational arm. Zendejas, who is married to Delville, last worked at Fragrance Resources.

The management core is rounded out by Marisha Wadecka Jacques, who is married to Jacques, and heads up finance and operations.

An added creative punch has been factored into the equation by an outer ring of collaborators, ranging from freelance perfumers, photographers, digital and brand strategists, videographers, writers and even a master chocolatier. There is a fragrance manufacturer in the mix for customers who want to produce a scent and partners that can make packaging. Jacques estimated that there are 10 outside collaborators that can be called in as needed. "We can go from inception to manufacturing," he said.

The Society of Scent has another dimension, as a marketer of its own ideas. The firm plans to launch a So Scent collection, perhaps containing three or four fragrances and a candle, in the

fall, according to Jacques, who added that a collaboration with artists may be added in the future.

“We want to move the scent and the fragrance back into culture, not parrot it so closely with fashion.”

When asked if he worries that some customers might view the firm as a competitor selling its own fragrance, he carefully drew a distinction: Society of Scent is not a manufacturer of a product, like most suppliers who provide finished fragrance juice. “We don’t supply anything,” he said, noting that he has a supplier partner who does that. “We are a creative entity.” Jacques stressed that “instead of putting together a network of manufacturing, we can put together a network of creativity.”

The impending fragrance collection will be sold through e-commerce, with a focus on the digital experience, via the firm’s website. There is talk of merchandising the collection with a pop-up store, but traditional retail distribution isn’t currently in the picture. The mission is to involve the consumer in the scent experience. Jacques, Dupire and Zendejas traded notes on improving sampling and came up with the idea of using video to show Delville working on a fragrance in the lab. If, for instance, the perfumer was making a point that a fragrance was expensive because he was using a very high quality jasmine, then a sample of the pricey ingredient could be sent to viewers after they push a button. Dupire pointed out that the chef in the kitchen model had been very effective in food shows.

“The narrative is not anymore the advertising campaign,” she said. “It is a daily combination of visual element, scent element and testimonial that we are sharing with the customer.” The idea is to shift the relationship with a customer “to a space where scent is enjoyment connected to our daily experience, not a brand experience.”

Jacques contends that “the industry has a hard time connecting with its consumer base. It’s very trade-centric, instead of being consumer-centric. It’s led by distribution and distribution rules.”

He asserted, “Give the fragrance industry back to the fragrance people. You have to rebalance the creative side together with the trade and the financial side.”

With all the talk of sparking a movement, the group picked an office location with the right panache. Society of Scent rents a third floor walk up from Delbia Do in a building that they bill as the last fragrance factory in New York — more than 50 years old — on a gritty industrial street in the South Bronx. Neighbors include an old piano factory and the Hunts Point market is not far away.

Dupire suggested doing collaborations with the community, perhaps a pop-up shop offering fragrances, art books and perhaps a chocolate bar “just to invite New Yorkers to come and discover and have an experience.”

“We want to make it cool,” added Jacques, who also envisions staging fragrance workshops in Bronx, N.Y., schools.