



Marita van Oldenborgh

Unilever Fragrance Awards 2011

MARITA VAN OLDENBORGH interviews MARCELLA BARTOLETTI, Global Fragrance Director at Unilever
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INTRODUCTION

New directions in applied fragrances for home and personal care products will be showcased at an industry awards event on 18 May in London, hosted by Unilever.

The second Unilever Fragrance Awards "highlight the importance of fragrance as a prime driver of consumer preference and hence product superiority", according to a communiqué from Global Foods, Home & Personal Care president Michael B. Polk and Chief R&D Officer Geneviève Berger.

The biennial Awards recognise teams – including fragrance house partners – that have achieved fragrance excellence and contributed to pushing the boundaries of fragrance creation and best practice for Unilever home and personal care brands. Unilever's home and personal care brands sell in more than 180 countries and six of them – Axe/Lynx, Omo, Dove, Sunsilk, Rexona, and Lux – have sales of more than a billion euros a year.

STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES

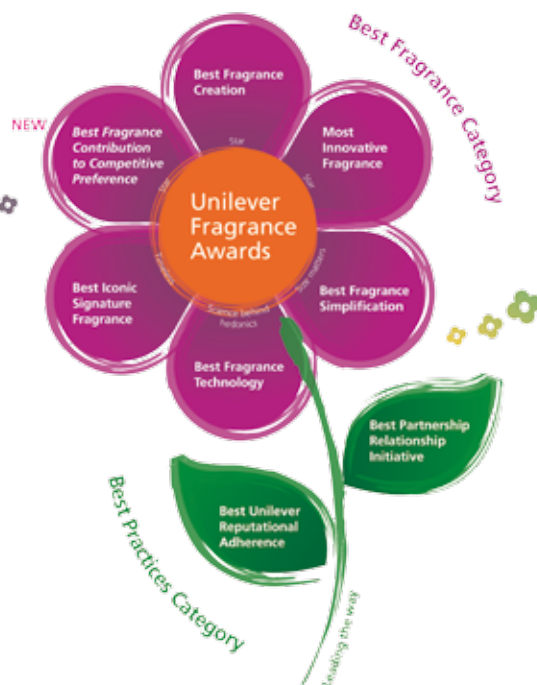
"The fragrance industry has established awards events especially for fine fragrances like the FIFs, but we felt that

achievement in applied fragrances deserved special recognition", says Marcella Bartoletti, Global Fragrance Director at Unilever.

"Creating a winning fragrance for a branded mass-market home or personal care product is a terrific challenge. Not only do you have to understand thoroughly what consumers are looking for in a certain product, you then have to translate that into a fragrance that fulfils all those expectations, which works in the formulation, and is iconic for your brand. Potentially across dozens of countries, taking into account cultural differences in scent preferences and habits, climate and stability issues and so on. It is no small task and the people who work on it develop very specific skills, expertise and experience".

Unilever has been stepping up its investment in fragrance and the launch of its biennial Fragrance Awards in 2009 is no coincidence. Its strategic focus on fragrance recognises that fragrance plays a big part in building consumer preference by offering outstanding product experience on the shelf and in use, and hence achieving product superiority. The awards help to raise awareness and excitement about the pivotal role that fragrance can play, explains Bartoletti and continues:

"We want to keep raising the bar and inspire everyone to keep innovating and aiming higher [...]. These awards are a great way to do that, give people the recognition they deserve and a chance to stop and smell the roses. We believe they are the first awards of this kind in the industry".



8 AWARD CATEGORIES

The awards recognise achievement in eight categories, reflecting the complexity of the challenges involved in creating successful applied fragrances:

- Best Fragrance Creation
- Best Fragrance Contribution to Competitive Preference
- Most Innovative Fragrance
- Best Fragrance Technology
- Best Fragrance Simplification
- Best Iconic Signature Fragrance
- Best Partnership Relationship Initiative
- Best Unilever Reputational Adherence

RIGOROUS JUDGING

Entries are assessed not only on the excellence of the fragrance creation but also on a number of other specified criteria depending on the award category. These vary by award but include fit to brand, obtaining winning results in benchmarking tests and technology that delivers consumer-perceptible improvements. The Best Fragrance Simplification Award rewards efforts to simplify the brand fragrance portfolio in order to deliver margin improvement, top line growth, improved sustainability, better service levels to customers and a healthier business for suppliers. The judging process includes two smelling sessions, in which entries are reduced first to a longlist and then to two finalists per category, in parallel with assessment of the brand and business-specific criteria.

EXPERIENCED EXTERNAL JUDGES

On the judging panel this year alongside Unilever senior managers are five independent perfumers – Annie van As, Philip Hausel, Jean Spaeth, Laura Tonatto and Bernfried Warnecke.

All have extensive experience of both fine fragrances and applied fragrances for home and personal care categories and bring an authoritative, external and independent perspective to the judging process, Bartoletti points out. "They understand what it takes to create winning home and personal care olfactive signatures that meet specific customer preference profiles regionally and globally, cue the product's functional benefits and overcome technical challenges like varying bases".

Laura Tonatto also judged the first awards two years ago, as did Jean Spaeth and Annie van As. "The quality of the entries last time was really impressive and the diversity and innovativeness of the projects submitted fascinating" she says and continues: "It is hard work though – it is not easy selecting winners from so many high quality entries and the judging process is extremely rigorous".

WINNING CREATIONS

Winners last time include Axe Dark Temptation, which won the Best Fragrance Creation Award and Cif Cream Regular, which won the Most Iconic Signature Fragrance.

Axe Dark Temptation, launched in 2008, is amongst Axe's most successful global variants to date, selling in some 55 countries. The challenges of this fragrance project illustrate well the complexities of an applied fragrance brief, Bartoletti says.

The gourmand, chocolatey fragrance had to be a perfect fit with the Axe brand values and be masculine, clean, fresh and sensual in keeping with the Axe vision to "Give guys the edge in the mating game". The fragrance had to have prestige quality but mass appeal and be central to the presentation of the new product, from packaging to advertising and communications.

At the same time, the fragrance had to perform outstandingly also at a functional level, that is, give excellent odour protection, cue freshness and last a long time. It also had to work in both deodorants and shower products.

Another winner, the Energise variant in Dove's Go Fresh range, won the award for Most Innovative Fragrance. The new fragrance managed to combine the caring, creamy and feminine aspects of Dove with a citrus freshness thus attracting a younger target market to Dove while remaining true to the brand. It was also designed to work in three product types: bar soap, body wash and deodorants.

The Dirt is Good brand, which encompasses Skip, Persil and Omo in various markets, won the Fragrance Award for Best Technology for the encapsulation technology used in these laundry products. "Since then we have partnered the Houses to further exploit the technology, to meet consumer expectations across all key moments, and we are now seeing blind and branded winners across the category", says Aline Santos, global brand vice president for Dirt is Good and continues: "The Fragrance Awards are a tremendous opportunity for categories to share best practice and leverage scale to win in the market".

Olivier Gurtler, VP Unilever Global Account at Firmenich, is similarly enthusiastic. "Since winning the Fragrance Technology Award with the Dirt Is Good team in 2009, we have constantly strived to improve our technology and recently validated the next generation of capsules with increased impact and performance" he says and continues: "The Fragrance Awards are an important initiative that motivates our creative and technical talent to co-create, with Unilever, the future winning portfolio of smarter fragrances and fragrance systems".

AWARDS CEREMONY IN LONDON

This year, entries are up on last time by nearly 20 percent and total nearly 80 submissions, Bartoletti reports.

Judging is underway. The Awards ceremony in May will be attended by the finalists, judges, Unilever senior management, fragrance house partners, suppliers and other invitees and the winners showcased both in internal communications within the company and publicly via a website and press materials.

Marcella Bartoletti.

