



PERFUME SCULPTURE OF THE INVISIBLE

30 YEARS OF CREATION BY
FRANCIS KURKDJIAN

FOREWORD

"As a composer of perfumes for the past 30 years, he has invented many unprecedented olfactory creations, installations and scented objects, often made in collaboration with artists he admires, through conversations that blend fragrance with other media. Francis Kurkdjian creates scents to trigger "olfactory emotions" and turn his vision of the world and art into olfactory experiences. His perfumes are sculptures of the invisible, full-fledged works of art whose substance can be drawn into the lungs. With support from Marc Chaya, co-founder of Maison Francis Kurkdjian, he has gradually built a unique collection of fragrant works while also developing iconic perfumes

and spectacular artistic events. This exhibition traces the trajectory of a perfumer who tells us a story with each new creation."

Jérôme Neutres – Exhibition Curator



In 1999, I was asked if I would like to compose the smell of money for Sophie Calle. At the time, she was working on the theme of money. I was surprised by this request, especially since I was given carte blanche to imagine its smell, unlike the structured projects I was accustomed to working on. Faced with this unusual request, I realized that fragrance could never become a true artistic medium until it broke with the aesthetic and hedonistic codes of the commercial perfume industry. That is the condition that must be met if fragrance is to have a legitimate place in museums, despite its intangible nature.

Perfume is above all an art of creating emotion. But it's also an art of occupying space: it spreads out, infuses the air, and sometimes resonates with other olfactory compositions. Perfume is also an art of time: in its volatile form, it develops over seconds, minutes and hours, changing constantly, and it is impossible to turn back the clock. Above all, perfume is invisible. How can it be rendered visible? It was essential to present it alongside other art forms. By combining it with other disciplines, I was able to give shape to my fragrances by playing with space, light, sound and matter.

The people who inspire me the most often come from the world of art rather than perfume. Listening to Pierre Soulages speak about black and seeing James Turrell's work on light opened up different worlds to me. What I want visitors to "smell" in the olfactory journey at the Palais de Tokyo are not only emotions, but also questions, visions, sensations and new harmonies with the world as they explore the full potential of this rich and unique medium we call perfume.

Francis Kurkdjian
Fragrance Creator



A perfumer who ventures into the realm of contemporary art is exploring a world so uncharted that it is difficult to describe what is being produced. By considering new shapes, stories and ways to showcase perfume, Francis Kurkdjian is innovating and delighting, but also throwing things a little off balance. Does perfume really belong in an art center?

The exhibition *Perfume, Sculpture of the Invisible* offers an unprecedented conversation between fragrance and other forms of expression such as video, photography and music. These last have long been considered art forms, unlike perfume.

This bias is partly due to the highly technical and hermetic nature of the perfumer's profession, which, unlike most other forms of artistic expression, is not taught at school. At worst, the perfumer is perceived as a chemist, at best as an artisan capable of transfiguring roses and jasmine. Therefore, the bold composer who not only produces "things that smell good" but whose innovative mind concocts unique scents echoing the spirit of the times, the disruptor who explores new forms and ways to demonstrate fragrance, has trouble earning recognition. He must constantly battle clichés that portray him as a "nose" in a white coat whose only purpose is to produce a "juice."

Putting a perfumer's world on display for the first time in a museum setting is not a trivial thing. It's consecrating the artistic aspect of the perfumer's work. It's acknowledging his ability to carry us into imaginary dream-lands. But it also highlights a paradox. Out of all the artists involved in *Perfume, Sculpture of the Invisible*, the perfumer is the only one whose work can be easily copied, because fragrance formulas are not protected under Section L112-2 of the French Intellectual Property Code. Visitors are entitled to know that they will discover exciting olfactory accords revealing unexpected worlds, but that from a legal standpoint, none of the exhibition's scents are protected by copyright law.

It is about time to right this injustice.

Marc Chaya
CEO and Co-Founder
of Maison Francis Kurkdjian



I met Francis Kurkdjian in 2008 in New York. Together with Béatrice Ardisson, we created an olfactory and musical performance for the first Fête de la musique, or Music Day, in the United States, during which Francis Kurkdjian released thousands of scented bubbles into the air on Fifth Avenue. Then, in my position at the Grand Palais, I naturally thought of him for the Night of the Museums in 2010, where his bubbles blossomed throughout the Nave. Since then, we've continued to collaborate on rewarding projects, creating conversations between the art of fragrance by Francis Kurkdjian and the fragrance of art by great painters such as Monet, Vigée Le Brun and Jacques-Émile Blanche.

Francis Kurkdjian makes olfactory creations that turn perceptions and hierarchies in the art world upside-down. Perfume has sometimes been associated in a very minor way with fine arts, particularly at the surrealists' initiative. Belle-Haleine, Eau de Voilette by Marcel Duchamp (1921) remains a source of inspiration for Francis Kurkdjian, who perpetuates a similar Dadaist spirit in his own creations. However, perfume has rarely ever been showcased as an artistic medium in its own right. And that is the whole point of this exhibition, which will offer visitors a comprehensive visual, sound and sensory experience featuring a common thread of scents whose olfactory references are disconnected – sometimes quite radically – from the codes of traditional perfumery.

These creations and environments, which activate the sense of smell, are exceptional because they make you smell ideas and emotions. Francis Kurkdjian's fragrances give a sensory and intellectual substance to something intangible. That is what will make the visit unique and, hopefully, memorable.

Jérôme Neutres
Exhibition Curator



PERFUME, SCULPTURE OF THE INVISIBLE 30 YEARS OF ARTISTIC CREATION BY FRANCIS KURKDJIAN

A retrospective exhibition celebrating the rich olfactory world of Francis Kurkdjian is being held in the Saut du Loup space in Paris' Palais de Tokyo from October 29 to November 23, 2025. Curated by Jérôme Neutres, it highlights Francis Kurkdjian's unique approach which frees fragrance from its bottle and opens it up to new forms and destinations. From the start, Francis Kurkdjian – who quickly earned recognition for the success of Le Male, a fragrance he created for Jean Paul Gaultier in 1995 – wanted to bring the art of fragrance creation to new dimensions. With Marc Chaya, CEO and co-founder of Maison Francis Kurkdjian in 2009, he explored perfume's stories and modes of expression beyond perfumery's traditions and commercial constraints. His perfumes are sculptures of the invisible, full-fledged works of art whose substance can be drawn into the lungs.

An olfactory promenade

Fragrance in every shape and form, including the most unexpected, is the exhibition's common thread. Visitors are invited to embark on astonishing olfactory experiences while rethinking the role played by perfume in how we smell, see and understand art and the world. Each creation, installation and video leads to the discovery of a different scent. Some are diffused in the rooms, while others can be sniffed individually via automatic diffusers and "fragrance blotters" that visitors can take with them to prolong their olfactory experience.



A rose petal lane and the magic of scented candles

Revisiting creations from the past 30 years, the exhibition includes olfactory installations and environments that made their mark both in France and beyond. Visitors can relive magical moments created at the Grand Palais, the Palace of Versailles, the Philharmonie de Paris and the West Bund Art & Design contemporary art fair in Shanghai. As they wander through the rooms, they are greeted by a lane of porcelain rose petals made fragrant thanks to a partnership with artisans from the Manufacture de Sèvres porcelain manufactory. They see their reflection in a giant mirror surrounded by a scented atmosphere, immerse themselves in the magic of double wick candles in a decor evoking one of the famous Versailles garden groves, and watch video archives documenting key stages of the creative process in artistic and cultural venues.

Overlapping journeys toward the past and the present

Blending ancient know-how and innovation, Francis Kurkdjian draws inspiration from the history of perfume-making while questioning the forms it will take in the future. Over the course of the exhibition, we discover gloves scented using 18th-century techniques and a fragrance called Sillage de la Reine (In the Wake of the Queen) which recomposes a perfume in the style of Marie-Antoinette according to the formulation rules of her time. Though these creations revisit an olfactory legacy, in no way do they prevent Francis Kurkdjian from exploring new technologies. Whether he's creating a futuristic, portable perfumer's case or a fragrance released by a sculptural diffuser when grazed by passing air (designed by the silversmith Nicolas Marischael and the designer Felipe Ribon), his myriad experiments explore the past as much as they do the future.



Fragrances to see, drink or experience through virtual reality

Through a multisensory visit, this exhibition reveals the many methods Francis Kurkdjian has revisited or invented to diffuse fragrance. Some are poetic, such as the scented fountains and fragrant bubbles designed for the Palace of Versailles and the Grand Palais, and can be revisited thanks to photos and videos. Others astonish, such as L'Or bleu (Blue Gold) – scented, drinkable water developed in partnership with the artist Yann Toma. Still others are radically innovative, like the V-Scent designed by Francis Kurkdjian to diffuse digital fragrances through a virtual reality headset. This project, entitled Eden, is an experiment devised by Cyril Teste and the artist Hugo Arcier that invites visitors to create and grow their own visual and olfactory plant-world.

Optimum accords with Sophie Calle

The exhibition reflects the wealth and diversity of the “artistic conversations” Francis Kurkdjian has nourished with creators across a range of disciplines: plastic artists (Sophie Calle, Sarkis, Yann Toma), a theater man (Cyril Teste), a Michelin-starred chef (Anne-Sophie Pic), a conductor (Klaus Mäkelä), and pianists (Katia and Marielle Labèque). It highlights his very first encounter with Sophie Calle in 1999, where she asked him to create a fragrance conveying “the smell of money.” Presented in 2003 at the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, this fragrance, at once “attractive and repulsive” according to Francis Kurkdjian, has been recreated for the current exhibition.



With Klaus Mäkelä, music releases the notes

Through the reconstitution of a recording studio, the exhibition also underscores Francis Kurkdjian's special partnerships in the world of the performing arts, particularly his friendship with cellist and Orchestre de Paris Music Director Klaus Mäkelä. Together they put on an unprecedented concert-performance at the Philharmonie de Paris on December 2, 2022, taking advantage of how perfume involves "notes", "harmonies" and "compositions" just like music. Francis Kurkdjian created scented accords for each of the five movements of Bach's Cello Suite No. 2, exceptionally interpreted by Klaus Mäkelä himself. Visitors are invited to relive this creative olfactory and musical conversation through a video and fragrance blotters.

Other videos allow visitors to relive memorable occasions: in February 2023 at Vienna's national opera house, Cyril Teste took on Richard Strauss' Salome. The performance begins in dialogue with Francis Kurkdjian and the spicy, musky, sensual fragrance he created, which was diffused during "Dance of the Seven Veils." In March 2024 at the Philharmonie de Paris, two-piano suites from Philip Glass' Cocteau Trilogy, interpreted by Katia and Marielle Labèque, were accompanied by aromas diffused throughout the auditorium, in a scenography designed by Nina Chalot and Cyril Teste.



Perfumes and bottles leave their mark

Perfume can become a source of inspiration for plastic artists, several of whom have produced poetic works echoing the world of Francis Kurkdjian. In 2019, the Swiss-Canadian photographer Christelle Boulé placed several drops of Maison Francis Kurkdjian's most emblematic fragrances on conventional colored photographic paper in order to reveal their photographic "fingerprints." Many of the colorful, abstract pieces from her series "Expanded Drops" are on display, featuring perfume bottles and fragrances transcribed in images.

An outstanding installation by the Chinese ceramist Wan Liya is being presented for the first time at this exhibition. Entitled *Thousands Kilometers Landscapes* (2025), it comprises 200 to 250 porcelain objects modeled after Maison Francis Kurkdjian perfume bottles. Arranged along a distance of 11 meters, hand-painted scenes reproduce a frieze inspired by one of the most famous landscape paintings from the Song dynasty (960-1279).



Awakening the five senses

The exhibition culminates in an immersive installation presented for the first time, entitled *The Alchemy of the Senses*, inspired by the iconic fragrance Baccarat Rouge 540. For the occasion, Francis Kurkdjian collaborated with the artist Elias Crespín, with the world's most starred female chef Anne-Sophie Pic, as well as with the composer David Chalmin and pianists Katia and Marielle Labèque. Under the artistic direction of filmmaker Cyril Teste, this groundbreaking installation celebrates the five senses.

Windows into the mind of Francis Kurkdjian

The world of Francis Kurkdjian thrives on cultural references and honors extraordinary people who have inspired him, including Sylvie Guillem, Yves Saint Laurent, Rudolf Nureyev and Françoise Sagan. By allowing visitors to enter his office, where cherished objects such as books, films and photographs are displayed, the exposition reveals more of a mental workshop than a laboratory, with windows into the perfumer's imagination.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR FRANCIS KURKDJIAN

Very early on, you initiated conversations with contemporary artists, and you were the first to do so...

FK : When I met Sophie Calle in 1999, I had only been a perfume creator for four years. She personified my inner craving for art before I even met her. I was successful at a very young age, but I also faced the realities of a profession regulated by many constraints.

Working with artists helps me satisfy my curiosity about things that are beyond my range of knowledge and skills. In my conversations with Yann Toma, Elias Crespín, Hugo Arcier and Cyril Teste, I try to understand how these artists operate emotionally and intellectually – their aesthetic, their cultural references, their ideals in terms of beauty and proportion. I listen to them speak about their craft.

These encounters have no other purpose than to push me into developing and expanding my own practices.

Music is an important component in the exhibition. You worked with the conductor and cellist Klaus Mäkelä, as well as the pianists Katia and Marielle Labèque, on olfactory concerts performed at the Philharmonie de Paris. How are music and fragrance tied to one another?

FK : Music is a big part of my life. There's an accomplished organist and composer in my family, and I play classical piano myself. Music and fragrance are both connected to the air: music is a vibration of air, and fragrance is conveyed by air. Music and fragrance share the same vocabulary. Both involve scales, notes, harmonies, and compositions. In terms of composition, if you take a piano, the size of the keyboard is finite but the

range of sounds and styles it can produce is infinite. It's the same with perfume. I strive to adjust my ingredients and modify the proportions to come up with completely new compositions.

A few years ago, you began working on a virtual reality perfume experience. What inspired you to do such a project?

FK : I think it's exciting to live with the times. In the 60s, my father was one of the pioneers of IT in France. I have always loved technology, so how could I ignore virtual reality? If the world becomes totally virtual tomorrow, smells won't just disappear. Our sense of smell is what differentiates us from machines, enabling us to live and therefore exist. It's intrinsically linked to our humanness. Sensoriality defines a relationship with the body. When I compose a fragrance, I draw on sensations, words, images.

Whatever I can't express through those sensations, word and images, I convey through perfume.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR MARC CHAYA

Luxury brands are sometimes tempted to call on artists to lend extra appeal to their image or products. Maison Francis Kurkdjian chose a different path, based on conversations and shared experiences...

MC : Francis Kurkdjian and I never talk about “collaborations,” but of “conversations.” Maison Francis Kurkdjian’s artistic dimension is not contrived in any way, it is an authentic, voluntary process. Because of his extraordinary sensitivity, Francis Kurkdjian naturally seeks out other contemporary creators while continuing to nourish his own vision of the world. Take Peggy Guggenheim for example, who surrounded herself with the greatest artists of her time. It was thanks to their creative genius and rich interactions that they were able to understand and anticipate the major

changes of the 20th century. I believe that, just like paintings, films and poetry, Francis Kurkdjian’s fragrances have the ability to move us and offer a different vision of the world.

Where did your love of art come from?

MC : I was born in Lebanon in 1973 and the civil war began in 1975. Before the war, harmony and beauty reigned in the country. All you had to do was stroll along the streets to admire Ottoman and modernist homes, almost all of which have been destroyed. In the face of that atrocious war, my relationship with art was a source of healing. I found refuge in my parents’ library, in music, art and dance. When I was afraid of the bombings, one of my neighbors would show me videos of the ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev. That beauty healed me. When I arrived in France, I honed my knowledge, my tastes. When I

was younger, I had a predilection for the early 20th century, a period that coincided with the emergence of major avant-garde movements like Dadaism, Surrealism and Bauhaus. Over time, my tastes changed and I naturally started collecting modern and contemporary art.

And your passion for fragrance?

MC : Most likely from my culture. In the Orient, fragrance is everywhere – in the flowering trees that line the streets, in churches filled with the smell of incense. My father would put on his cologne before leaving for work, and my mother had a small collection of fragrances... I fondly remember her bottle of Opium by Yves Saint Laurent. When I smell a perfume composed with sensitivity and intelligence, I feel the same sense of harmony that I experience when listening to music or gazing at a painting.



THE EXHIBITION IN 10 MOVEMENTS

1. Éclats de roses/Sparks of Roses, Shanghai (2024)

Olfactory installation

Inspired by his latest trips to China, Francis Kurkdjian dreamed up an artistic olfactory installation combining different forms of craftsmanship and incorporating influences from two ancient cultures. Initially presented in November 2024 at West Bund Art & Design in Shanghai and reactivated today, *Sparks of Roses* invites visitors to discover a lane of delicately scented porcelain roses. Handcrafted by artisans from the Manufacture de Sèvres, the roses sit atop brushed brass stems in a poetic scenography designed by Cyril Teste and Nina Chalot. Their petals, made of bisque porcelain, were fired at precisely 1050°C to ensure porosity, thus allowing them to be infused with fragrance. This technical innovation arose from a conversation initiated in 2016 between Francis Kurkdjian and artisans from the Manufacture de Sèvres.



2. Le roi danse/The King is Dancing, Palace of Versailles gardens (2008)

Candle-lit olfactory installation

On a summer evening in 2008, Francis Kurkdjian infused fragrance into the Ballroom Grove amphitheater, glowing with 600 double-wick candles. The King is Dancing powerfully echoes that scented atmosphere: a powdery fragrance punctuated with violet floats in the air while hundreds of LEDs arranged in circular tiers glow. Through this scented 360° evocation of the candle-lit Ballroom Grove, visitors relive an unforgettable nocturnal event suspended in time, graced with music and fragrance.

Since 2006, Francis Kurkdjian has designed several olfactory installations in the Palace of Versailles gardens evoking the Sun King's lavish parties. He has illuminated and perfumed the Orangery pool (Soleil de minuit/Midnight Sun 2006 video); graced the stairs of Latone's Parterre with thousands of bubbles releasing aromas of pear, strawberry and melon, the favorite fruits of Louis XIV (Préambules, 2006/2007 video); and concocted a sound, visual and olfactory installation in the Three Fountains Grove, where a brushed steel rose exuded its delicate fragrance (Chutt d'eau, 2007/2008 video).



3. L'odeur de l'argent/The Smell of Money/Sophie Calle, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain (2003)

Installation and video

The Smell of Money was Francis Kurkdjian's first artistic partnership, inspired by a conversation begun in 1999 with Sophie Calle. Given full creative reign by the artist, he designed a fragrance at once "attractive and repulsive," distancing himself for the first time from the idea that a fragrance must always smell "good." The memory of a well-worn dollar bill was the starting point for this composition combining the scents of linen-fiber paper, ink, and grime caused by constant handling.

Recreated for the exhibition, *The Smell of Money* was first presented in 2003 for a Nomadic Night event at the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain.



4. L'Or bleu/Blue Gold Yann Toma, Paris/Toulouse (2012)

Drinkable scented water for Ovest-Lumière

After meeting each other in 2009, Yann Toma and Francis Kurkdjian quickly decided to join forces in an artistic endeavor combining their respective imaginations and styles. A unique, experimental work of art was born of their encounter: a scented drinkable spring water. Their project has been reactivated for the exhibition with pictures of the original installation and a fountain allowing visitors to taste the water and absorb the artistic energy it creates.

This drinkable fragrance was presented in March 2011 at EDF Electra, then in May 2012 in an initial exhibition entitled L'Or bleu, eau parfumée en Ovest-Lumière, held at the EDF Bazacle space in Toulouse during the 6th annual World Water Forum. Since then, *L'Or Bleu* has been included in several contemporary art exhibitions.



5. Eden/Cyril Teste and Hugo Arcier, Scène nationale d'Annecy (2017)

Virtual reality olfactory experience

One of Francis Kurkdjian's greatest ambitions is to push the boundaries of fragrance diffusion. Designed in collaboration with Cyril Teste and the digital artist Hugo Arcier, *Eden* is an interactive, sensory virtual reality experience. Each participant wears a VR headset with an embedded olfactory device that releases fragrance while a virtual plant-world develops and grows right before their eyes. This system, featuring six scents composed by Francis Kurkdjian, is combined with a soundtrack so visitors can hear leaves rustling as they breathe in a damp, earthy scent. With this fascinating immersive experience, Francis Kurkdjian introduces a radically experimental dimension to fragrance for the first time.



6. Expanded drops/Christelle Boulé (2019)

Photograms

Fragrance is an invisible sensory experience. Yet in 2019, the Swiss-Canadian photographer Christelle Boulé endeavored to convey images of fragrance by creating photographic “fingerprints” of Maison Francis Kurkdjian’s most iconic perfumes.

Every scent has a unique identity based on its chemical composition. By placing several drops on conventional colored photographic paper, Christelle Boulé revealed a unique image, at once abstract and poetic, of each fragrance. These images create a singular, unprecedented connection between the sense of sight and smell. *Expanded drops* displays a selection of these “photograms,” several of which are in an oversized format, alongside Maison Francis Kurkdjian perfume bottles.



**7. L'essence de la musique/The Essence of Music/Klaus Mäkelä,
Philharmonie de Paris (December 22, 2022)**

Fragrant concert

For the past several years, Francis Kurkdjian has nurtured a rich artistic conversation with cellist and Orchestre de Paris Music Director Klaus Mäkelä. The latter is passionate about perfume, while the former is a self-described composer. Their friendship led to a concert-performance in which they appeared together on stage at the Philharmonie de Paris. As Klaus Mäkelä interpreted Bach's Cello Suite No. 2, Francis Kurkdjian complemented the music with his own score. Letting the musician's crescendos and diminuendos be his guide, he created a fragrance accord for each of the Suite's five movements, transposing the emotions and sensations induced by the music. Visitors are invited to relive this unforgettable olfactory and musical encounter in a "music lounge" where fragrance blotters – infused with the fragrance specially created for the suite's Courante movement – await them.



8. Thousands Kilometers Landscapes/Wan Liya (2025)

Ceramics installation

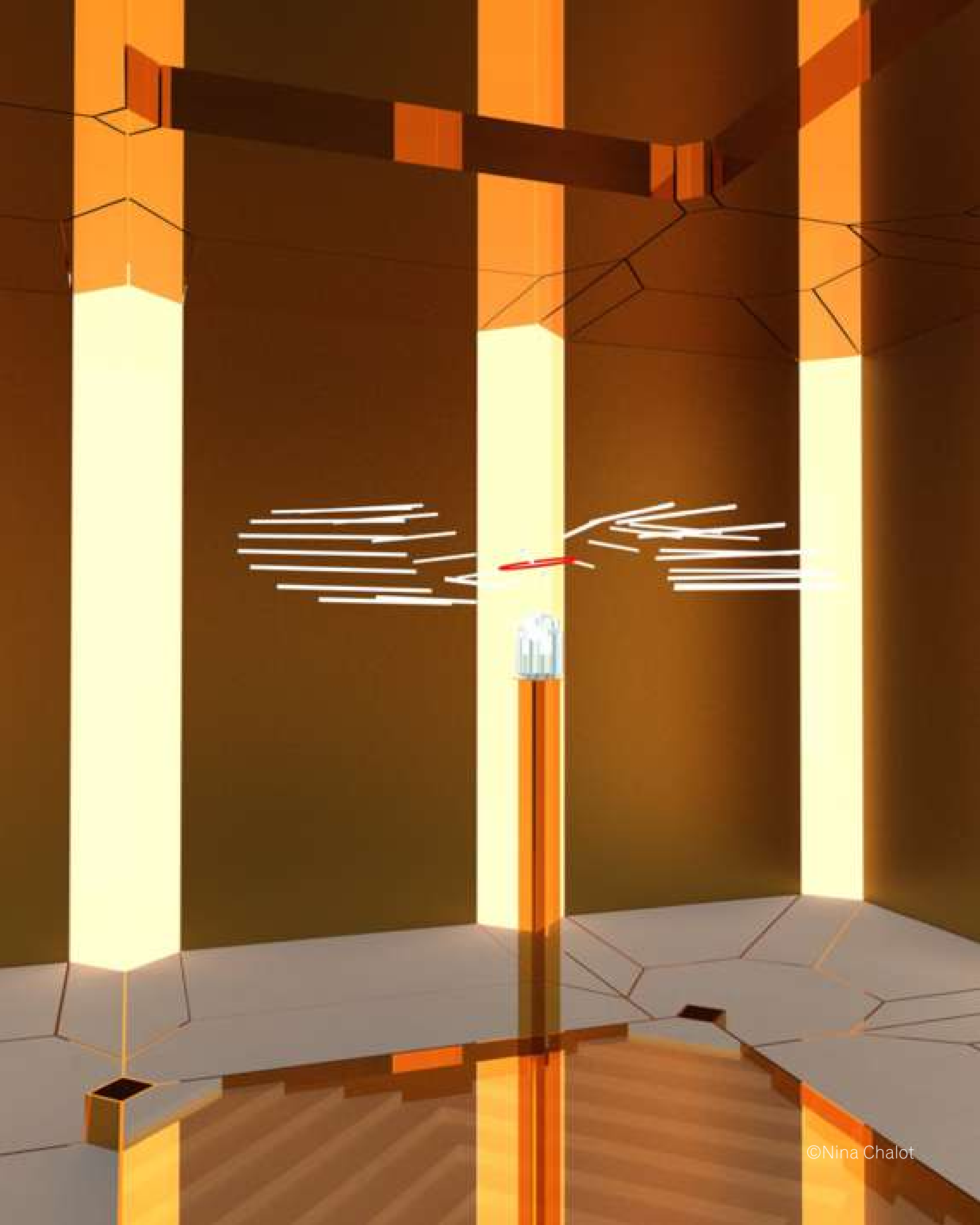
The contemporary Chinese artist and ceramicist Wan Liya drew inspiration from the aesthetic codes and spirit of Maison Francis Kurkdjian to create an unprecedented work of art. His medium: porcelain objects modeled after the Maison's signature bottles and products. The 11-meter installation reproduces a frieze inspired by one of the most famous hand scrolls from China's Song period: A Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains by Wang Ximeng (1096-1119). In his workshop in the Chinese city of Jingdezhen, famous for its porcelain, Wan Liya reproduced the scroll's landscapes on 250 pieces of ceramic rather than painting on silk, using a cobalt blue specifically designed for this project. By combining Chinese landscape painting with Maison Francis Kurkdjian bottles, Wan Liya continues to develop his deep reflections on modern civilization, traditional culture in the era of globalization and the relationship between humankind and nature amid wide scale industrialization.



9. Windows into the mind of Francis Kurkdjian

It is easy to picture a perfume creator's office as a sterile laboratory. But in fact, Francis Kurkdjian's is a living, personal space that reflects his cultural references and his admiration for the exceptional people who inspire him. By allowing visitors to enter a replica of his office, the exposition reveals a "mental workshop" with windows into the perfumer's creative imagination.

Novels by Françoise Sagan and Marcel Proust speak of memory, speed and freedom. Portraits of Coco Chanel, Christian Dior and Yves Saint Laurent evoke his love of fashion. A cult video of an interview with Maria Callas reveals his passion for music. A photograph of the arched foot of the great ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev symbolizes his love of classical dance, and an excerpt from the 1975 movie *Le Sauvage* evokes the power of cinema. In this film directed by Jean-Paul Rappeneau, Yves Montand plays a perfumer whose charm and sass inspired Francis Kurkdjian to discover the profession. Last but not least, a poster of "Le Male" showcases his first major success when, in 1995 at the age of 26, he created this fragrance for Jean Paul Gaultier, winning over the entire planet.



10. The Alchemy of the Senses/Cyril Teste, Anne-Sophie Pic, Elias Crespín, David Chalmin, Katia and Marielle Labèque (2025)

Visual, sound and sensory installation

Baccarat Rouge 540 was born of an encounter between Maison Francis Kurkdjian and Baccarat, in the occasion of the crystal manufacture's 250th anniversary in 2014. To magnify this celebration, Francis Kurkdjian captured the poetry, transparency and density of Baccarat's emblematic red crystal in an unprecedented olfactory composition featuring three auras: mineral, fire, and craftsmanship. In 2025, this fragrance-turned-icon of modern perfumery has been reinvented in a Millésime edition. The new composition showcases ambergris – a precious olfactory treasure from the ocean – in a new streamlined, travel-ready bottle sculpted from a block of radiant red crystal, produced by the alchemy of molten crystal fused with 24-karat gold.

For the Palais de Tokyo exhibition, Francis Kurkdjian and his friend, filmmaker Cyril Teste, concocted *The Alchemy of the Senses*, an installation in which the five senses converse with each other, each personified by a different artist and longtime friend of the perfumer. Each artist was given the same mission: to embody – through their art, technique and expertise – the alchemy of crystal and Baccarat's mythical Rouge à l'or technique, in a nod to the creation of the fragrance Baccarat Rouge 540.

Invited to discover *The Alchemy of the Senses*, visitors taste a novel creation by Anne-Sophie Pic, the world's most starred female chef, before entering a space suspended in time where the lighting changes from gold to deep red. The beating heart of this sensory pavilion is Baccarat Rouge 540's new sculptural bottle made of deep red crystal, crowned with a creation by the kinetic artist Elias Crespín. Visitors are then introduced to the exquisite scent of the new millésime rouge interpretation of Baccarat Rouge 540, while music composed by David Chalmin is played by the famous duo of pianists, Katia and Marielle Labèque.

Designed by Cyril Teste as a total sensory experience involving hearing, touch, smell, taste and sight, *The Alchemy of the Senses* offers a rare instance of introspection and wonder.

HISTORY OF THE MAISON

Maison Francis Kurkdjian was born of an encounter between Francis Kurkdjian and Marc Chaya. This friendly duo with complementary talents dreamed up a generous and multi-faceted venue for unhindered creative expression where, of course, fragrance is the star.

In 2009, they co-founded Maison Francis Kurkdjian, which thrives on the creative power and extraordinary personality of the perfumer whose name it bears. The Maison is managed with a captivating yet precise set of codes, which include purity, sophistication, timelessness and audacity. There, different types of know-how interact and resonate with each other, forming the cornerstone of Maison Francis Kurkdjian and contributing to its singular reputation. The Maison, which chose a measured, self-assured growth model, is present around the world today.

"When I smell a perfume composed with sensitivity and intelligence, I feel the same sense of harmony that I experience when listening to music or gazing at a painting."

Marc Chaya – CEO and Co-Founder

"Working with artists helps me satisfy my curiosity about things that are beyond by range of knowledge and skills. These encounters have no other purpose than to push me into developing and expanding my own practices."

Francis Kurkdjian – Fragrance Creator



BIOS

Francis Kurkdjian was only 26 when he composed Le Male for Jean Paul Gaultier, his game-changing first fragrance that went on to become an international bestseller. But instead of succumbing to the ease of this very promising career launch, he made the pioneering decision to explore the myriad possibilities of perfume and bring an artistic dimension to olfactory creation.

With a visionary approach in mind, he opened his custom fragrance workshop in 2001 – disregarding the then-current trend of making perfume more accessible to the masses – while continuing to share his expertise and sensitivity with legendary brands such as Dior, Guerlain, Burberry, Saint Laurent and Lancôme, as well as major fashion designers like Rick Owens, Hedi Slimane, Alber Elbaz, Riccardo Tisci, Giorgio Armani and John Galiano.

Beginning in 1999, the artists Sophie Calle, Christian Rizzo and Sarkis commissioned him for olfactory creations. These encounters were the starting point of his aesthetic quest to break down the boundaries between disciplines and the senses. He created the stuff of dreams with incredible olfactory performances in France and abroad, in majestic venues and artistic institutions including the Grand Palais, the Palace of Versailles, Villa Médicis, the Grand Mosque of Paris, the Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent, the French Embassy in New York, the Spedale degli Innocenti in Florence, and the 2010 and 2015 World Expos, respectively held in Shanghai and Milan. Thanks to his magical fragrances, scented bubbles, misters, artificial snow, fountains and water wall, the ordinary becomes extraordinary.

In 2009, Francis Kurkdjian co-founded his eponymous fragrance Maison with Marc Chaya, the current CEO. In 2017, the Maison joined LVMH.

In 2008 he was inducted as a Knight in the French Order of Arts and Letters. The same year, he won Cosmétique Magazine's oscar for best perfumer. His fragrances have won several international awards.



During his childhood in Beirut in the 70s, **Marc Chaya** developed an interest in drawing, architecture and literature, though his parents encouraged him to study economics and finance. He began his career with the international consulting firm Ernst & Young, where he rapidly rose through the ranks, holding positions in finance, strategy and management consulting. At just 32 he became the global head of telecom markets and was appointed partner in under ten years – a record for the firm.

During the same period, he met the perfumer Francis Kurkdjian and was immediately stupefied by the lack of recognition granted to even the most talented perfumers. The two became close friends, jointly exploring and launching a series of initiatives that would bring the perfumer and his creations to the forefront of the art scene. In 2009, they decided to co-found Maison Francis Kurkdjian in a move intended to promote artistic and entrepreneurial freedom. Marc Chaya became its CEO and Francis Kurkdjian its perfumer. They closely collaborated on the artistic direction and strategy of the Maison, which established itself as a key player in luxury perfumery, present in more than 52 countries. In 2017 they decided to join LVMH, with Marc Chaya maintaining his position as the Maison's CEO.

Marc Chaya graduated from EM Lyon Business School and also holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Saint Joseph University of Beirut and a Master's degree in banking and finance from University Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne. He has lived in France since 1994 and has dual French-Lebanese citizenship. He was inducted as a Knight in the French National Order of Merit and is treasurer and an administrator for Comité Colbert, a French nonprofit organization promoting the concept of luxury.

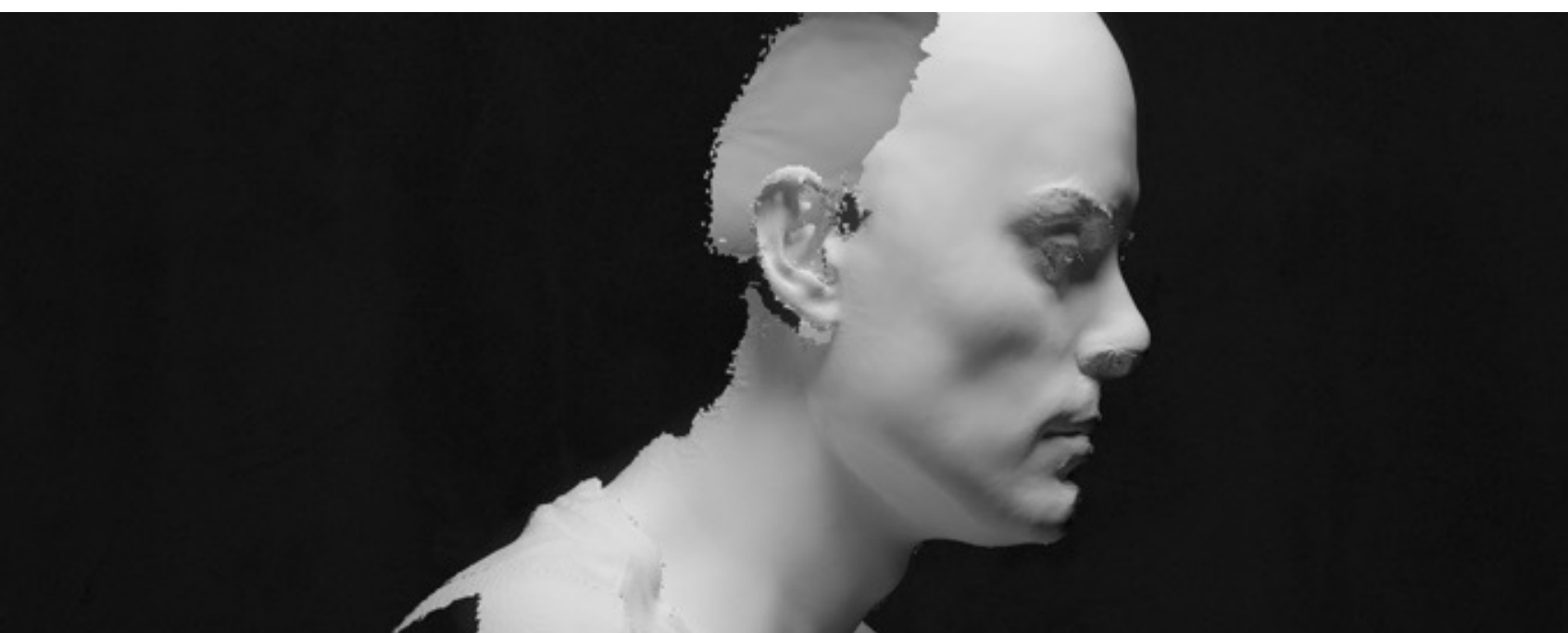


Jérôme Neutres holds a PhD in text and image semiotics (University Paris-VII). He has curated more than 60 art exhibitions since 1995, including several retrospective exhibits in the national galleries of the Grand Palais showcasing artists such as Helmut Newton, Bill Viola, Robert Mapplethorpe and Irving Penn. His research focuses primarily on groundbreaking artists and innovative artistic forms and media. He has also written several essays on the history of art and literature and has published around 200 articles in France and abroad. He is the former director of Réunion des Musées Nationaux-Grand Palais, a position he held for ten years, and the former president of Musée du Luxembourg in Paris. He also served as Cultural Attaché for the French Embassies in Spain, India and the United States. He currently focuses on independent artistic production. In 2023 he was inducted by the French government as an officer in the National Order of Arts and Letters.

He began working with Francis Kurkdjian in 2008. Together they organized several artistic events in New York and Paris, such as Paris-New York (2009) and NoctamBulles (2010) in the Nave of the Grand Palais. Other collaborations include olfactory conversations with Monet (2010, on the occasion of a retrospective in the national galleries) and Vigée Le Brun (2016). A temporary exhibition at Fondation Pierre Bergé-Yves Saint Laurent in 2012 focused on Marcel Proust and Jacques-Emile Blanche, later becoming part of the permanent collection at La Villa du Temps Retrouvé in Cabourg.



By turns described as a conceptual artist, a photographer, a videographer and even a detective, **Sophie Calle** has been the focus of several exhibitions around the world since the late 1970s. In her rituals, this internationally recognized artist blurs the boundaries between intimate and public, reality and fiction, art and life, while always leaving room for chance. She represented France at the Venice Biennial in 2007 and has had shows in the world's greatest museums, including the Centre Pompidou and the Tate Modern. In 2023, Sophie Calle became the first artist to occupy all the galleries of the Picasso Museum in Paris with a monographic exhibit. She was the recipient of the Hasselblad Award in 2010, and in 2024 in Tokyo won the Praemium Imperiale Award – considered the Nobel Prize in arts – for painting. Her work features in the collections of many renowned institutions including the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Tate in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and the Louisiana Museum in Denmark.



Born in 1976, **Hugo Arcier** is a digital artist based in Paris. In 2004, he began making speculative works exploring the specific nature of computer-generated 3D imagery and virtual worlds. His art has been presented in many festivals (Némo, Mutek, Elektra) and in collective exhibitions (New Museum in New York, Palais de Tokyo in Paris, Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in China). In 2017, he founded N°130, a creative studio dedicated to immersive experiences.



Born in 1984, **Christelle Boulé** is a Swiss-Canadian photographer who splits her time between Lausanne and Paris. Her work centers on experimental photography, publishing and printing processes, with a special focus on visual representations of the intangible. Her fascination for the sense of smell and how it can be expressed through photography led to her series *Parfums* (2015) and *Drops* (2018).



Born in Finland in 1996 into a family of musicians, **Klaus Mäkelä** is a conductor and cellist. He began conducting at the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra in 2017, and has since successfully conducted for some of world's most prestigious orchestras and philharmonics, including the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchestra, Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He was appointed Chief Conductor of the Oslo Philharmonic in 2020 and became the eighth music director for the Orchestre de Paris on September 1, 2022, with an initial contract of five seasons.



Katia and Marielle Labeque are sibling pianists renowned for their ensemble of synchronicity and energy. Their musical ambitions started at an early age and they rose to international fame with their contemporary rendition of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue (one of the first gold records in classical music) and have since developed a stunning career with performances worldwide.

They have played with the most prestigious orchestras such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Bayerischer Rundfunk, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Czech Philharmonic, Dresden Staatskapelle, Filarmonia della Scala, Leipzig Gewandhaus, London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Philadelphia Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Santa Cecilia and Vienna Philharmonic, Herbert Blomstedt, Semyon Bychkov, Seiji Ozawa, Antonio Pappano, Georges Pretre, Sir Simon Rattle, Santtu Matias Rouvali, Esa-Pekka Salonen. Katia and Marielle presented the world premiere of Philip Glass's new Concerto with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Gustavo Dudamel, the world premiere of Bryce Dessner's concerto at Royal Festival Hall with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and John Storgards.

The Labeques play in festivals and renowned venues worldwide including the Vienna Musikverein, Hamburg Musikhalle, Munich Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall, Royal Festival Hall, La Scala, Berlin Philharmonie, Blossom, Hollywood Bowl, Lucerne, BBC Proms, Ravinia, Tanglewood, and Salzburg. An audience of more than 33,000 attended a gala concert with the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Sir Simon Rattle at Berlin's Waldbuhne. A record audience of more than 100,000 attended the Vienna Summer Night Concert in Schonbrunn. More than 1.5 million viewers followed the event worldwide on television.

They are currently touring their project the "Cocteau/Glass Trilogy" with stage director Cyril Teste and perfumer Francis Kurkdjian after the premiere in Paris Philharmonie.



David Chalmin is a composer, producer, sound engineer, musician and member of the trio Triple Sun. As a producer of both classical music and experimental rock, he consistently seeks to build bridges between different musical genres. He has been commissioned to compose works for a number of concert venues and festivals. In 2012 he took the helm at Studio K Paris, created by Katia and Marielle Labèque.



Anne-Sophie Pic, an emblematic figure of French gastronomy, is known for her mindful and audacious cuisine imbued with a unique aromatic complexity. Guided by her Permeation philosophy, she conveys emotion through her creations while exploring blends of texture and flavor, which she enhances with a curated selection of wines. Constantly seeking new combinations for her restaurants around the world, the Pic Lab – her culinary research and innovation center in Valence, France – is where she and her teams explore the aromatic diversity of ingredients and regions, with special emphasis on plant-based cuisine. She represents the fourth generation of a family of prestigious chefs, and in 2007 earned three stars from the Michelin Guide for Restaurant Pic*** in Valence. In 2011, she was voted Best Female Chef by the World’s 50 Best Restaurants. Restaurant Pic*** was also voted the world’s best restaurant by Tripadvisor in 2024. Lauded for her creativity and innovative spirit, she remains the world’s most starred female chef today.



Born in 1969, **Yann Toma**, the President for Life of Ouest-Lumière, is a French artist and researcher. His work focuses on Ouest-Lumière, a former electricity company that currently produces and distributes Artistic Energy (AE). There, he conducts research on energy, light and networks. He has been an artist-observer at the UN since 2007 and has created major monumental installations such as Dynamo-Fukushima (Grand Palais, 2011) and Human-Energy (COP21, 2015). His works, which are displayed both in France and internationally, are part of the Centre Pompidou collection and the Fonds National d’art contemporain, a French state-owned collection of contemporary art. He divides his time between Paris and New York.



Born in 1975, **Cyril Teste** is a French filmmaker and graduate of the National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Paris. His creations consistently bear the same aesthetic signature in which video and lighting effects play a key role. In 2000, he co-founded Collectif MxM which explores filmic performance, an art form in which filming, editing and mixing are all done in real time before the audience. Over the past several years, he has worked with Francis Kurkdjian to incorporate an olfactory dimension into his live performances (Festen, Scène nationale d'Annecy, 2017; Opening Night, French tour, 2019), and in his opera scenographies (Salome (2023) and Norma (2025), both for the Vienna National Opera).



Born in 1963, **Wan Liya** is a Chinese ceramicist with workshops in Qingdao and Jingdezhen, China's most famous center of porcelain production. He is known as one of the first artists to have breathed new life into Chinese ceramics through his use of a bold, contemporary style. His works have joined the collections of international institutions such as the British Museum, the Royal Delft Museum and the Fondation Louis Vuitton in France.



Born in 1965 in Caracas (Venezuela), **Elias Crespín** studied computer engineering before moving to Paris. His programming and coding knowledge inspired his earliest artistic experimentations, leading to the creation in 2004 of his first major piece, *Malla Electrocinética I*. His work is at the crossroads of kinetic art, robotics and geometric abstraction. Since 2004, his moving sculptures have been displayed in prestigious cultural institutions including the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Grand Palais and the Louvre, where his kinetic piece *Onde du Midi* was permanently installed at the top of the Midi staircase in 2020.

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PARFUM SCULPTURE DE L'INVISIBLE

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