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# THE GLOSS

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## Wake Up!

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# CAUGHT IN A MOMENT

*In their own inimitable way, Coco Chanel and Robert Piguet epitomised Parisian chic. During the first half of the 20th century, they created unique fragrances that would stand the test of time*

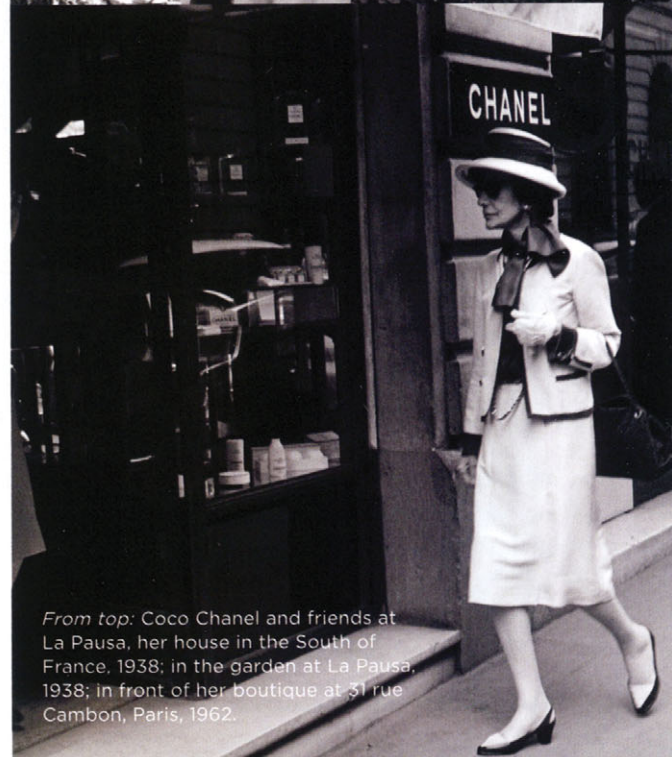
**T**hese days, most designers have their own perfume, yet finding any discernible link between the fragrance and the fashion can prove difficult. Last year's frenzy for re-issues of clothes and accessories was telling of our desire for a time when fashion was more considered, less throwaway, perhaps. And it would seem we feel the same about our fragrance: we're increasingly turning our nose up at common, contemporary offerings in favour of older fragrances that were developed with thought, using the finest raw materials, and as a true extension of a fashion house.

Last year, fans of **FRACAS**, Robert Piguet's unmistakable tuberose scent, were thrilled to discover it was being stocked in Harvey Nichols - previously they'd had to wait for shopping trips to New York or London to stock up. And this month's discreet delivery of six new Chanel fragrances will undoubtedly revive interest in those 'confidential' scents they are joining, to form a collection called **LES EXCLUSIFS**. The collection's founding fragrances, No 22, Bois des Iles, Cuir de Russie and Gardénia are Chanel's little secret. Created in the 1920s by Coco Chanel and the house's original nose, Ernest Beaux, they are stocked only in Chanel boutiques, where they are sought out by those customers seeking something a little different - a '**SIGNATURE**' SCENT.

As Joe Garces, president of Fashion Fragrances and Cosmetics, distributor of Robert Piguet's fragrances, explains, "Certain perfumes transcend both time and fashion. 'Niche' fragrances, like Fracas, or Joy by Jean Patou for example,



GLOSS-ARY STYLE



*From top: Coco Chanel and friends at La Pausa, her house in the South of France, 1938; in the garden at La Pausa, 1938; in front of her boutique at 31 rue Cambon, Paris, 1962.*



From left: Robert Piguet, "a tall, elegant and distinguished man", as described by former apprentice Hubert de Givenchy; the House of Piguet, Rond-Point des Champs-Élysées; his clients – beautiful, elegant and cosmopolitan women – were often close friends who would arrive in time for afternoon tea and fruit tarts.

are as modern today as when they were launched. Their distinctive, bold notes appeal to the **SELF-ASSURED WOMAN**: she wants people to notice when she walks into a room." Coco Chanel's clothes catered for this very woman; when the fashion all around was for ruffles and fuss, the elegant simplicity of her clothes struck a chord with those wanting to distinguish themselves from the demi-monde. Chanel was non-conformist to the core (wearing trousers and sunbathing) and with her fragrances, she would **BREAK THE MOULD** again. Together, Beaux and Chanel were pioneers and, when the trend was for heavy, single-flower fragrances, their creations went against the grain.

In an industry that remains male-dominated, the role played by women in the development of these ground-breaking fragrances is as surprising now, as it was then. Chanel was the first female couturier to develop a scent and, shortly before the end of the war, in 1944, Piguet commissioned France's first female nose, Germaine Cellier, to create his initial fragrance, **BANDIT**. The spirited, uncompromising vision of these avant-garde women is surely key to the enduring appeal of the 'signature' fragrances they created.

But what exactly is a 'signature' fragrance? Garces believes it boils down to **ROMANCE AND NOSTALGIA**: "Specific smells remind us of a special time in our lives. Our desire to revisit these episodes becomes addictive and thus a fragrance becomes your 'signature.'" The idea of capturing a moment in time is the basis of Chanel's Les Exclusifs collection. Using the

four existing scents as a blueprint, current nose Jacques Polge developed six new additions that form an olfactory retrospective of Chanel's life. Like different chapters, the fragrances are named after the passions, people and places that shaped her work and personal life. As Polges believes, fragrance should "take you on a journey" and it is perhaps this **INTOXICATING ROUTE**, back to the glamorous worlds inhabited by Piguet and Chanel, which we find so appealing. Like Chanel,

Piguet counted the most innovative artists of the day among his close circle of friends and during its brief existence, his couture house was an illustrious training ground for some of history's greatest designers, including Christian Dior and Hubert de Givenchy.

A fragrance that stirs one woman, however, can be anathema to another. "Choosing your perfume is as important as buying a piece of jewellery," Garces

warns us. "It has to work with your body and **MAKE YOU HAPPY**. The way you smell is an integral part of your identity." Practise caution when purchasing classic fragrances like Fracas – they have strong twists and turns that have varying effects, depending on the wearer. Choosing from the Les Exclusifs range may seem daunting: ten identical bottles, with names which give little away of their ingredients. Luckily, each purchase comes with a free tester vial, allowing you to make sure you've made the right choice. ■ CAROLINE SCOTT

*Les Exclusifs, a selection of ten fragrances, is available at Chanel, Brown Thomas, (200ml, €180 each); Fracas, Bandit and Baghari, by Robert Piguet, are at Beyond Beauty at Harvey Nichols, Dundrum (50ml, €75).*

