WILL THIS HOUSE win an OSCAR?

WHY THE BATHROOM IS THE NEW boardroom

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That Paris Flame
By Jane Larkworthy Photography by Olly Keenan
Styled by Sophie Perez

For performance artist Francis Kurkdjian, a room without a scented candle is a room without life. "Fragrance gives identity to a space," he says. A candle gives it a soul," so it's no surprise that Kurkdjian is introducing Homes Sweet Homes, a collection of five candles based on the olfactory memories of his formative spaces. Witness fragrances inspired by the bountiful gardens that bordered his parent's house near Paris (Rue des Gravelles), the abundance of lavender, rosemary, and hay surrounding an aunt and uncle's barn-turned-country house near Le Perche (La Trouvellerie), and the pine and salt air of his family's seaside cottage outside the outskirts of Bordeaux (Les Tamarins)—encased in a signature discreet white ceramic vessel.

The most personal of these may be Aroseia, a candle whose rosepetal-and-phlox scent was inspired by jasmin from his grandparents' place in Château de Vincennes, where he lived as a teen. "My parents' house was kind of tropical at the time, so I moved out when I was 17," he explains the 48-year-old, who grew up studying ballet, then shifted his focus to scent at the age of 15. He founded his company a couple years in 2009. "Grandparents love you for who you are and don't try to make you be someone else," he says.

Don't let Kurkdjian's heart-on-the-sleeve statement fool you. In an industry that often relies on fantasy and glitz, Kurkdjian is something of a disrupter. He shuns convention and scents that smell too familiar. Of course, his outside-the-box imagination has yielded his own bestsellers, including the cheery rose de pour of A La Rose and the sensual, bergamot-based Aqua Universalis, as well as more eccentric fare like Les Bulles d’Agathe, a collection of scented bubbles for children in Gold Mist and Violet, among other aromas.

These undertones of Japanese culture and elements stemming from a fireplace opened a few decades of dormancy are the keywords witting Kurkdjian’s Parisian loft in the 16th arrondissement (captured in this candle). An 18 or "to 12," playfully named after his street address. The apartment is situated in a former government building from the 1820s; its foundation includes beams from the Église de Notre-Dame, which provides a handy base to the high ceiling.

The décor is eclectic—vintage lacquer screen mixes with a pale blue Hekla Slippermann cotton sash to which he added matching covered buttons (made with fabric sourced from Hekla pillows—case)—and a circa 1920 French baby grand inherited from his fiancé, a concert pianist. "Wherever I’ve lived, there has always been a piano," says Kurkdjian, who has played since the age of six.

Listening to the transcendence with which he weaves wax about each home, past and present, it is clear that these candles were an incredibly intimate project, and that it’s not just rooms whose characters are defined by the lighting of a stick. "Tell me what candle you like to burn," Kurkdjian proposes, "and I will tell you who you are." (franciskurkdjian.com).
GOOD DESIGN

Those headed to Florida for their annual holiday pilgrimage can add the inaugural Kips Bay Palm Beach Show House to their festivities list. The spin-off of the New York design event will take over the 1920s Mediterranean-style Villa Belmonte from November 24 through December 19. Participating talents include the Bahamas-based Florida native (and Gucci PR alumna) Amanda Lindroth and the Palm Beach duo of Jenna Conte and Ashley Warren from McCann Design Group, whose aesthetic leans toward subtropicals-inflected light and bright.

“We thought Florida would be a good idea. It’s a different climate, different kinds of houses,” explains honorary showhouse chair and designer Bunny Williams. “Also, it opens things up to Southern designers, not just people in New York.” Proceeds will benefit two nonprofits for underprivileged children, the Kips Bay Boys & Girls Club and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Palm Beach County (kipsbaydecorationshowhouse.org).

FREE RADICALS

Against the backdrop of governmental and social unrest, a group of young architects and artists forges a politically resonant design movement. It could be a narrative of today, but the contingent in question is the subject of “SuperDesign,” the survey exhibition about Italian Radical Design from 1965–75 at the New York design gallery and showroom R & Company, with an accompanying tome from the Monacelli Press. Curated and written, respectively, by Maria Cristina Didero, they highlight the sometimes playful, often provocative, Pop Art-influenced work of lesser-known names like Gaetano Pesce (see one of his vases, above right) and Lapo Binazzi. Explains R & Company cofounder Evan Snyderman of the group: “[They] were trying to use design to change the world, as opposed to [using] war.”
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