



"EVERY NOSE HAS NOTES THEY FAVOUR AND THOSE THEY DON'T, AND AS THEY BECOME BETTER KNOWN THEY REFINE THEIR PALETTE TO USE INGREDIENTS THEY LIKE BUT PRODUCE WHAT THE CLIENT WANTS"

Dove believes that Roudnitska's true style successor today is Jean-Claude Ellena, the house perfumer at Hermès since 2004 (previous successes include First for Van Cleef & Arpels and Eau Parfumée for Bulgari). "His fragrances don't follow trends but they have the house's understated elegance," he says. "They are very open and clean, with not so many ingredients, and there is a wonderful, hidden sexuality that comes from a base of woody and animalic notes that would be quite rude if you smelt it alone, yet seems so refined." Ellena, who comes from a family of perfumers in the industry's heart at Grasse in Provence, became fascinated by Roudnitska's work in the 1970s.

"He became a part of my life. I was attracted to his writings and the aroma of his creations, which became objects of knowledge," says Ellena, who now, like his mentor, describes himself as a "perfume composer". He experiments with a minimal palette of odours, eliminating any he considers surplus. "I believe fragrances should have form, distinction, sensuality and surprise, so no perfume is reduced to the status of a commodity," he says. "Odours are like building materials of my own craft and construction." Past creations have been based on anything from the scent of different exotic gardens to the earth itself, yet his latest, Voyage d'Hermès, goes further, into abstract realms, defining what a journey might mean rather than any specific example, and mixing woods with fresh angelica and musk.