



CHRISTIAN DIOR

*Esprit  
de Parfums*

GRASSE INTERNATIONAL PERFUME MUSEUM  
EXHIBITION FROM 17 MAY TO 1 OCTOBER



# CHRISTIAN DIOR – *Esprit de Parfums*

INTERNATIONAL PERFUME MUSEUM - GRASSE

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**C**hristian Dior founded his fashion house in Paris in October 1946, and showcased his first collection on 12 February 1947. The event was a dazzling success, and was to make a lasting impression. Ten years later, Christian Dior passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in Montecatini in Italy on 24 October 1957, lending a new dimension to the fleeting decade and extraordinary life of the artist.

From 1957 on, the Maison Dior's adventure continued, with fragrance playing a leading role in the way in which Dior's brand image was to unfurl. Yet Christian Dior had already cultivated an interest in perfume as early as the end of 1946. Before even showcasing his first collection, Dior saw perfume as a crucial and complementary companion to his work as a designer, and launched Miss Dior in partnership with perfumer Paul Vacher in 1947. He wasn't the first fashion designer to do so. In 1911, Paul Poiret pioneered the concept of designers doubling as perfumers, while Coco Chanel launched her N°5 in 1921, and Jeanne Lanvin's Arpège met with success in 1927. But just as with the incredible, international popularity of his fashion house, Christian Dior's perfumes were an immediate, worldwide and long-lived hit, featuring fragrances that closely mirrored his collections. Today, Dior is synonymous first and foremost with fragrance, haute couture perfume that embodies an image of luxury and refinement.

It seemed only natural, then, that for 2017 the International Perfume Museum would choose to celebrate the 70th anniversary of his New Look designs with a tribute to this designer and the brain behind some of the 20th century's most famous perfumes – fragrances that continue to enthrall today. The museum's staff were thrilled by an opportunity to delve into the life and career of an artist as complex and significant as Christian Dior, experiencing real pleasure in dusting off a past that is so recent, yet feels so distant: the glory days of his youth, followed by the roaring twenties and his adult years, and finally the post-war period during which he reached the apex of his career as a designer and perfumer. Christian Dior's entire life is deeply anchored in the times in which he lived, and all its many different artistic movements and trends.

Our Christian Dior – Esprit de Parfums exhibition is also a celebration of places with a tie to the designer, the Provencal region he claimed as his home, from Callian and Montauroux to the Grasse area.

**Olivier QUIQUEMPOIS**

Curator for the International Perfume Museum

## The exhibition at a glance

Christian Dior: Esprit de Parfums

The only “Musée de France” labelled museum dedicated to the history of perfumery, the International Perfume Museum in Grasse is a state-funded establishment with a pro-active policy of temporary exhibitions and loans. The museum hosts two on-site exhibitions a year: a summer exhibition focussing on ‘general interest’ topics, and a more niche winter exhibition designed for special-interest audiences.

Following on from its *De la Belle Époque aux Années Folles* exhibition in 2016, covering perfume from the late 19th century to the 1920s, the International Perfume Museum is continuing its research into perfume in the 20th century, this time taking a closer look at the post-war period and the life of Christian Dior, who began his career as a designer and perfumer in 1947. This exhibition was designed in cooperation with Christian Dior Parfums, and showcases some of the highlights of the artist’s life, as well as his most famous olfactory creations.

Inspired by the Belle Époque and the world of flowers, Christian Dior paved the way for a return to French-style elegance and renewed femininity. Flowers occupy a central role in his work, from evocatively-named lines, ranges and designs (*Muguet*, *Corolle*) to floral fragrances (*Diorissimo*) or those bursting with bouquets of freshly-cut flowers (*Miss Dior*). In the 1920s, Christian Dior began forging real, intimate ties with people working in the arts, journalism and business, and this network of friends was to contribute to his personal development and the immediate success of his fashion house.

In the mid-1930s, he moved to the South of France and the Grasse region more specifically, where he deepened his knowledge of perfumery thanks to an encounter with perfumer Edmond Roudnitska. During World War II, he sought refuge in the Var region, where he would later regularly return to visit his sister in Callian, before purchasing the Château de la Colle Noire in Montauroux on 24 October 1950.

A year after the 2016 renovation of the Château de la Colle Noire, Christian Dior’s last holiday residence, the Christian Dior – Esprit de Parfums exhibition examines Christian Dior’s love of the South of France, the passion he felt for its light and the richness of its beautifully scented flowers. The exhibition will run at the International Perfume Museum from 17 May to 1 October 2017, and will serve as an opportunity to showcase the museum’s large collection of bottles and posters, as well as some gems from the Maison Dior’s historical collections.

These pieces will be enriched by loans from public institutions and private establishments in order to provide context and broaden the monographic approach taken to the exhibition. Interactive features will be on hand to better showcase the collections and to extend the experience to all five senses, thanks to videos, interactive machines, olfactory features and tactile facilities.

### Part 1: Nature reinvented

*"What I loved best was learning the names and descriptions of flowers by heart from the colour catalogues at the Vilmorin-Andrieux house"*

Christian Dior

#### Madeleine Dior, a source of inspiration

A key figure in young Christian's early years, his mother Madeleine helped build the dream world in which her son grew up and contributed to enriching his repertoire of colours and shapes. Christian Dior owes much to his mother, an inspiring woman who gave him a childhood brimming with flowers, fragrance and fashion accessories. His memories of 1900-era dresses and perfumes would later inspire his refined, floral and famous New Look designs, and the ultra-concentrated Miss Dior fragrance. As the designer's first 'lady of the flowers', Madeleine embodies the inspiration Christian drew from the idea of a wonderland



Madeleine Dior



The garden at the Les Rhumbs villa

#### The garden at the Les Rhumbs villa

Madeleine Dior designed a pleasure garden at the family home in Granville, perched on a cliff overlooking the Channel Islands. In doing so, she bequeathed a love of gardens and flowers to her son, and asked him to create a pergola and pond in its western section. The garden at the Les Rhumbs villa became a joint project shared by mother and son. Later, as an adult, Christian tirelessly sought to recreate the scented memory of his childhood garden.

#### Mingling on the avant-garde art and literary scene

Christian Dior was drawn to architecture and wanted to study at the École des Beaux-Arts art school. His parents disagreed, and he ultimately enrolled at the École des Sciences Politiques in 1923. It was in this period that he delved into artistic, bohemian Paris, embodied by the spirit of the Le Bœuf sur le toit cabaret. He began broadening his circle of friends and met Jacques Bonjean, with whom he opened a gallery in 1927. Both showed a passion for neo-humanist artists such as Christian Bérard.



Christian Dior and Dalí with friends



### Part 2 : The light of the South

*"Close to the land, a stone's throw away from my vineyards and jasmine, I always feel comforted"*

Christian Dior

#### Discovering the Grasse region

In 1934, forced to sell the family business due to the financial crisis, Maurice Dior (widowed in 1931) began a new life with his daughter Catherine and governess Marthe Lefèvre in the South of France, in Callian (Var). Christian Dior regularly went to stay with them, and even took refuge in the new family home from June 1940 to 1941. It was during this period that his boyhood love of nature was revived, and he would often harvest fruit and vegetables with sister Catherine



Christian Dior in pre-World War 2  
South of France



Rose centifolia

#### Dior and Grasse roses: Catherine, Carole and Armelle

After the war, Christian Dior regularly returned to Callian to visit his sister Catherine, who had become a freshly-cut flower trader, working as an intermediary to sell flowers grown in the South of France to the rest of the country. Family summers in Les Naysés remained a tradition until 1957, which meant that Christian was well versed in the art of centifolia roses. In 1950, he began planting fields full of roses, jasmine and lavender across the newly purchased Colle Noire estate. Catherine Dior grew Centifolia roses in Callian until her death in 2008. Catherine Dior grew Centifolia roses in Callian until her death in 2008.

#### Miss Dior: a Grasse perfume at the heart of Dior's New Look

For Christian Dior's first fashion collection in 1947, a mysterious and heady fragrance inundated 30 avenue Montaigne, which had been decked out in thousands of flowers for the occasion. Christian Dior launched Miss Dior, his first fragrance, and the essence and spirit of his New Look designs.

Inspired by the Grasse region, developed by Paul Vacher and based on rose and jasmine, Miss Dior was more highly concentrated than fragrances produced by other houses, similar in its extravagance to the vast quantities of fabric the designer would sometimes use on a single dress.



Diorama.  
Light amphora with rings - 1949  
© Philippe Schlienger  
Collection Christian Dior Parfums

#### Christian Dior and the perfumers of Grasse

Passionate about flowers and fragrance, Christian Dior and Serge Heftler-Louiche, founder and first CEO of Christian Dior Parfums, approached Grasse's perfumers to concoct their very best perfumes. Following in Paul Vacher's footsteps after *Miss Dior* in 1947, Christian Dior met the self-styled 'perfumer/composer' Edmond Roudnitska. Fragrance after fragrance ensued: *Diorama*, *Eau Fraîche*, *Diorissimo* and *Eau sauvage*. Thanks to the expertise of its perfumers, Grasse was always central to Christian Dior scents: Guy Robert for *Dioressence*, Edouard Fléchier for *Poison* and Jacques Cavallier-Belletrud for *Eau de Dolce Vita*. Grasse-born François Demachy has been the official perfumer and fragrance has been the official perfumer and fragrance designer for the Maison Dior since 2006



Christian Dior with Serge Heftler-Louiche for the  
*Diorissimo* launch 1956

## Exhibition structure

Christian Dior: Esprit de Parfums

### Christian Dior at Colle Noire

On 24 October 1950, Christian Dior purchased the Château de La Colle Noire, a former 18th-century coaching inn nestled in sprawling grounds just outside Montauroux. He fulfilled his early architectural ambitions with a new project on the estate, featuring a garden and 50 hectares of fields given over to growing rose, jasmine, lavender, vineyards, olive trees, fruit and vegetables. A place devoted to art, creativity and friendship, the Château de la Colle Noire hosted many a prestigious guest from 1951 to 1957, from Bernard Buffet, Marc Chagall and Marie-Blanche de Polignac to René Gruau, Georges and Nora Auric and Marie-Laure de Noailles. The artists flocked here to share a little slice of Christian Dior's life and his Provençal dream and vision.



Château de La Colle Noire



### Part 3: Christian Dior, Designer & Perfumer

*“People cannot imagine the care and attention that goes into designing a new fragrance, creating a bottle or simply coming up with the packaging. The work is so thoroughly absorbing, I feel as much a perfumer as I am a designer”*

#### Christian Dior

#### 30 avenue Montaigne

12 February 1947 is a key date in the Maison Dior's history: Christian Dior launched his first collection with the Corolle and En 8 lines that were then christened 'New Look' by famous Harper's Bazaar editor-in-chief Carmel Snow. The fashion house was set up at 30 avenue Montaigne in a town house featuring regular, orderly architectural design. Before it was officially opened, Serge Heftler- Louiche suggested his childhood friend Christian Dior found the Christian Dior fragrance company, which saw the day on 13 March 1947. Miss Dior was released for sale in late 1947, after a long year of trials and testing carried out in the apartments at 30 avenue Montaigne.



Christian Dior and model Simone wearing the Miss Dior dress photo by Jean Chevalier, 1949



Miss Dior, crystal perfume bottle, Baccarat, 1949  
© Philippe Schlienger  
Collection Christian Dior Parfums

#### Fine Crafts at the Service of Perfumery

Christian Dior always wanted to dress his perfumes in bottles which would reflect their exceptional qualities. The House of Dior thus appealed to unique expertise in his historic collaboration with the legendary crystal manufacturer, Baccarat, as well as other French master craftsmen and his own fine jewellery workshops.

In 1949, Christian Dior sought the savoir-faire of the master glassmakers of the Baccarat factory to create his unique bottles for *Miss Dior* and *Diorama*. Three tricolour amphorae (blue, white, red) in clear crystal, lined in colour and gilded were the result of this unique collaboration. The success of this first experiment was continued with *Diorissimo*, *Diorling* and right up to today with *J'adore*.

### Part 3: Christian Dior, Designer & Perfumer

#### The Dior Codes: Gold

Gold would just have to be part of the codes of the Maison Dior. In fact, no other precious material could better evoke the splendour of the palaces of the 18th century with their stuccoes and woodwork covered in gold leaf. Gold is the universal expression of luxury, opulence and rarity. It fascinated Christian Dior who used it to adorn his dresses and his fragrances. It appears in the very first fashion Collections in the *Aladin* dresses of 1947 and *Pactole* dresses in 1949. The first perfume bottles were sealed with a gold thread and presented in boxes enhanced with gilt borders. From the first bottles of Diorissimo in 1956 and *Diorling* in 1963 with their sculpted golden stoppers to the flakes of *J'adore*, gold is ubiquitous in the packaging of Christian Dior perfumes. With *J'adore*, it was the first time that Christian Dior Parfums had used gold in abundance and excess, incarnating luxury à la française under the crystal and gold of Versailles. For Christian Dior, gold is an absolute reference, it is the elegant signature of the House and an essential code of the aesthetics of the French 18<sup>th</sup> century.



*J'adore* in clear Baccarat crystal, exceptional edition, 2010  
© Laziz Hamani



A special Dior creation worn by Charlize Theron for the 2010 *J'adore* campaign  
DR © Christian Dior Parfums

#### Zénith Chandelier

The first crystal manufacturer to introduce chandelier components and to produce coloured pieces, Baccarat lit up the world. The Zénith, the best-known Baccarat chandelier, is made up of components cut into bevelled diamonds and twisted branches known as “twisted bamboo” crafted by the Best Manufacturing Workers in France. This icon is continually evolving over time and has been reinterpreted by the greatest international artists and designers.

## Acknowledgments

Christian Dior: Esprit de Parfums

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Granville, Musée Christian Dior  
Marseille, La Maison Méditerranéenne des Métiers de la Mode  
Menton, Musée Jean Cocteau  
Monaco, Palais Princier  
Nice, Musée des Beaux-Arts  
Orléans, Musée des Beaux-Arts  
Paris, Baccarat  
Paris, Christian Dior Couture  
Paris, Christian Dior Parfums  
Paris, Maison Pierre Frey  
Paris, Mobilier National  
Paris, Musée d'Art Moderne  
Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts  
Les prêteurs privés



*Lustre Zénith, à 24 lumières, 2014 / Zénith chandelier, 24 lights, 2014*  
*Clear and golden red cut crystal, blown moulded and twisted branches*  
© Baccarat

### The International Perfume Museum

Established in 1989 and renovated in 2008, the International Perfume Museum was founded in Grasse, the cradle of the luxury perfume industry.

A bold architectural project designed and brought to life by architect Frédéric Jung, the International Perfume Museum is a state-funded and Musée de France-labelled establishment that draws on an anthropological approach to examine the multi-faceted history of fragrance, from raw materials, manufacturing and industry to innovation, trade, design and uses, through a series of very diverse tools (art, decorative pieces, textiles, archaeological evidence, unique standalone pieces or industrial features). The museum aims to safeguard, study and showcase the heritage of one of France's most prestigious industries: perfumery.

Welcome to the world of fragrance...

### The Museum Shop

Museum souvenirs, art books, perfumery items, personalised gifts. The shop is an extension of the museum experience.

Tel.: +33 (0)4 97 05 58 10 (same opening hours as the museum).

### Opening hours

Open from 10am to 7pm.

### International Perfume Museum (MIP) ticket prices

- Standard MIP ticket: €6.
- Yearly MIP pass: Family (2 adults + kids under 18): €17 – Individual: €12.
- Show your ticket for one of the MIP/JMIP museums and get 50% off your ticket for the other (valid for 7 days).
- Free entry (proof required): under - 18s, unemployed and disabled visitors, school groups.
- Audio guide available upon request: €1.

### Guided tours (1h30)

- Saturday at 3 p.m (and daily during school holidays except Sunday) (May/June and September).
- Daily at 11am (exhibition tour), at 2pm (general tour) and at 4pm (exhibition tour) (July/August).
- Guided tour price: €2/person + ticket price.

Group activities and tours, pre-booking required at +33 (0)4 97 05 58 14 or [activites.musees@paysdegrasse.fr](mailto:activites.musees@paysdegrasse.fr).

### School holiday workshops for kids and families:

During school holidays in French school zone B, the museum offers introductory workshops covering the arts, science and technology, designed for kids or families.

Summer holidays:

- Family workshops: Mondays from 2:30pm to 4:30pm.
- Kids' workshops: Thursdays from 2:30pm to 4pm, Fridays from 10:30am to noon.