

## Perfumer Q&A

# Lush-ious Fragrances

Lush perfumer Simon Constantine shares the company's out-of-the-box approach to personal care fragrance creation

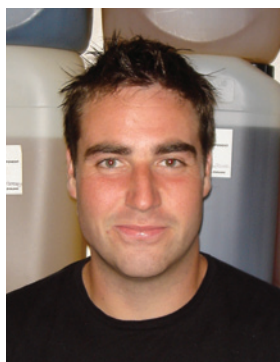
**S**ince Lush opened its first shop in England in 1995, people have been flocking to experience the natural handmade personal care products. Resembling a neighborhood deli, customers are encouraged to choose their cosmetics personally from the pic'n mix of bath, skin and hair care products. Even more appealing is the company's use of high-quality natural and organic ingredients wherever possible. The resulting products are crammed with herbs, fruit, flowers and essential oils. These creations are developed in-house by the Lush creative team, which includes Simon Constantine, son of founding member Mark Constantine. P&F magazine recently talked with Simon Constantine to discover how he goes about creating fragrances for such an unconventional company.

**P&F:** Can you tell us about your background in perfumery?

**SC:** I have been working in the fragrance department at Lush for the past four years. In November 2004, I completed the IFEAT (International Federation of Essential Oils & Aroma Trades) Diploma in Perfumery from the University of Plymouth. I have applied for associate membership in the British Society of Perfumers (BSP) recently and have attended meetings of both IFEAT and the BSP. I have traveled a lot recently, visiting many of our oil suppliers in an effort to understand more about the origins of the essential oils we buy.

**P&F:** How do you, and Lush, seek out new fragrance concepts and trends?

**SC:** We don't have any particular interest in what is happening in the wider market when it comes to fragrance, other than from a business perspective. Our criteria for creation are very different from those of other companies. We place more emphasis on delivering quality ingredients to the customer. We avoid using



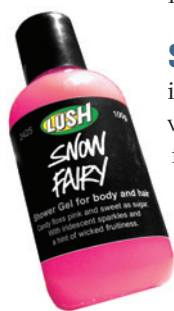
Simon Constantine

cheaper synthetic blends of natural materials and opt for using high-quality naturals as much as possible. It tends to be more expensive, but we prefer to invest in the quality of our ingredients and make much more beautiful products that the customer trusts and enjoys than to spend millions on excessive packaging.

At Lush, we tend not to follow any predetermined pattern or trend for the fragrances. Sometimes they are simple blends of essential oils, while others are more advanced compounds using natural materials and synthetics. Some products are designed for their benefits, while others simply are created because they will provide a wonderfully luxurious bathing experience. A product can be created to be the carrier for a fragrance. Examples include our Ballistics, or our shampoo bars that can be used as a hair fragrance.

Lush really doesn't have a marketing team or fragrance division. We won't say, 'Lush will be doing Oriental fragrances this year,' nor do we create ranges around a single ingredient. Lush is pretty unusual in that we make all our own fragrances to go into our products. In addition, usually the fragrance does not just serve as the smell, but also offers other benefits for the product.

**P&F:** What was the first fragrance/product you created? What was the customer reaction?





*Overflowing bins of Lush's bath bombs.*

**SC:** My mum requested that I make a fragrance that would smell of sweets for a product idea she had. The fragrance I came up with ended up going into a dusting powder called Candy Fluff. It has been very well received by customers and has since been made into a shower gel called Snow Fairy.

**P&F:** Where do you draw your inspiration for creating fragrances?

**SC:** Inspiration can come from anywhere. I travel a lot, and that often provides inspiration in the products they produce there, the smells of the food or the use of the location's natural materials. Other times, I am asked to produce a blend that customers are interested in or contribute to an idea that the creative team has produced.

**P&F:** Can you give us an example of how you translate inspiration and trends into a fragrance/product?

**SC:** I recently visited Provence, in France, to see the lavender fields being harvested. When I returned, a



*A deli-style arrangement of Lush's bubble bars.*

customer had requested a lavender and black currant fragranced product. I then used several different types of lavender to create the Black Pearl Ballistic, which was inspired by that trip. This is a typical

example of how Lush perfumers can combine personal inspiration with what the customer desires.

**P&F:** With more than 72 percent of Lush's products being vegan-friendly, how have tightened regulations surrounding labeling, etc., affected your work?

**SC:** To be honest, it's not had that much of an impact on Lush. We always have been in favor of transparency and have placed our ingredient listing in clear view so that

our customers know exactly what they are using. The only change is that now we have had to add the components of some of our ingredients.

**P&F:** You have said that you feel a lot of creativity is stifled by marketing campaigns and that the industry seems lackluster. How is Lush different?

**SC:** Ever since I have been involved with the fragrance industry, I have found that there is a considerable lack of ingenuity and enthusiasm for much of the most interesting parts of the field. With the use of the GC machine and the introduction of headspace

technology, a lot of the mystery and intrigue have been removed from the art of perfumery. It has become more about the bottom line and what the company next door is producing. At Lush, we don't really worry about this because we believe it's better for us to have quality ingredients and deliver what we promise to the customer. Of course, Lush has to make money, but there are more productive and enjoyable ways of achieving this. For example, in the past couple of years, we have started direct sourcing.

**P&F:** Of which creation are you particularly proud and why?

**SC:** I am quite proud of the fact that other people in the company like my creations and see some of them as suitable for use in new products. However, for me, personally, I feel that I still have so much to learn, so I don't know that there is one creation of which I am particularly proud.

**P&F:** What perfumers and/or fragrances do you admire?

**SC:** Guerlain fragrances were what initially interested me in perfumery. I remember sniffing through a range of their fragrances spanning back 180 years. It was about as close as I could get to actual time travel, and it showed me the power of fragrance. **p&f**