

Why Home Fragrance?

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An opportunity to communicate the thinking behind my latest venture, home fragrance, is indeed a pleasure. When asked to describe in one simple sentence what I do, I haven't yet determined how to put it succinctly, except to say I am a designer of accessories. I went into business fourteen years ago designing fabric flowers. I have always had a passion for fresh flowers and I felt that artificial flowers could be beautiful, too, if given the proper attention.

Once I started designing flowers it was hard not to get involved with the containers which hold them. So soon I was designing vases and then other decorative objects to go with the vases and flowers. The final outcome was the creation of still lifes that would include flowers, vases and accessory objects.

A basic philosophy underlying this approach has been the very foundation of all my work since the beginning. In a design, the various parts of objects cannot be isolated. For example, when a woman creates a beautiful outfit, all the ingredients—dress, shoes, hat, jewelry—should be in harmony and add to the total impression. It is exactly the same in interior design. Just putting favorite things together does not necessarily assure that they will look great. Every object is affected by every other object with which it is placed. It has been my aim to create the most

beautiful combination of objects possible. You start with one object that you love. When you place it in a setting you are immediately involved with all the other elements in the setting because they directly affect how that object looks. My interest is in controlling all those elements so that the still life will be an artistic whole. Every room in the home is another still life.

At the same time I had embarked on the design of jewelry: first precious jewelry and then costume jewelry. Of course, I couldn't leave it at that and soon I tried handbags and scarves. Although you may think these two areas of design incompatible, for me it made perfect sense. An accessory, whether worn or for interior decoration, performs the same function—it completes the setting.

There is a bond between the worlds of fashion to wear and home fashion, and with the public's increased interest in both these worlds they have become more symbiotic than ever before. How can you not be affected in your choice of colors and textures for your home by what you are wearing? Even when I am doing a new window display at my shop I am invariably wearing the same color I am planning to use. When I think green, everything goes green. This is never a conscious choice; it just seems to happen. A few years ago everyone was wearing

purple, and it soon took expression in the home with lavender and mauve. Today people have come to enjoy wearing natural fibers such as cotton and linen, and they also enjoy living with these materials. Which came first, I couldn't say and I don't think it matters.

How is it that today there is such acceptance of the Japanese fashion designer? I believe this interest was established years ago with the tremendous influence of the Japanese aesthetic on interior design. The Japanese love the asymmetrical format, natural fibers and subdued coloration. We've seen it in the home and now we see it in their clothing designs.

I am in the perfect position. My work permits me to straddle daily these two enormous arenas of design. What better opportunity for me to really understand the underlying currents that affect all design?

You may be wondering how home fragrance fits this Atlas pose. But I have always contended that just as a woman applies fragrance to complete her outfit so too is home fragrance the final touch to complete the ambiance in a home although used in a very different way than a personal fragrance. Most obviously it is not going to be applied to the skin, but emitted directly into the air. With this difference come many technical differences. How do you capture the fragrance in a candle form, potpourri, room spray and sachet? How do you sustain the level of fragrance over long periods of time, months in some cases, rather than a couple of hours? And, in my mind, the most important consideration: how do you create a fragrance that is appropriate and enjoyable to everyone: young, old, male and female? Personal fragrance, by definition, should be intimate and evoke a particular impression. Home fragrance has a different purpose.

We know that any fragrance, whether we are conscious of it or not, alters our impression of a person or place. When visiting a home the very first thing we encounter is its smell. It reaches across the threshold even before we set foot inside. If there's an apple pie in the oven we notice that; if it's not a pie, but cabbage soup, we are well aware of the difference. Cats and dogs don't have to be seen to be noticed, nor do you have to see the cigar smoker. Vases of fresh flowers and plants also convey their fragrance. Some of these smells are positive and some negative, but all are noticed. Why not control that impression of place as we do on our person?

When you create a personal fragrance, you first decide upon a vocabulary to describe the fragrance: sporty, sultry, oriental, floral, spicy

and so on. With a home fragrance there is always one word that is constant and that is "fresh." No matter what else, we want our home to smell fresh. To that can be added anything you choose. I call my fragrance "a garden after the rain." When I first consulted with the perfumer that developed the fragrance, I explained I wanted to capture the incredibly fresh smell that hangs in the air after a summer's rain when all the floral and green notes blend.

Just as an individual selects the level of personal fragrance for a particular situation by choosing a cologne, body splash, powder, bath oil or perfume, so too does the user of home fragrance determine how much fragrance is appropriate. If you are returning home from work it is agreeable to be greeted by a fresh smell when you turn the lock, in the hall closet and as you enter your living room. A guest feels very pampered and welcome to find potpourri in a bowl on a bureau or sachets in a drawer. If the occasion is festive and guests are coming for dinner, just as you are apt to apply more perfume, scented candles are a perfect way to boost the level of fragrance. Flickering lights also have a magical quality.

We have examined the olfactory characteristics of a home fragrance; it is now time to address its visual impact. Although millions of dollars are spent on the design of containers for a personal fragrance it does not have the lasting importance of a home fragrance container which, because of its use, becomes a decorative element in the home. Perfume bottles are wonderful and intended to capture visually the mood of the fragrance they contain, but no one continues to wear a fragrance because of the design of the bottle.

When planning the introduction of my collection and the advertising campaign, it was crucial to establish in the mind of the public that the collection was to be enjoyed two ways, by sight and smell, and it was therefore called "Objects of Fragrance." In the design of the receptacles for the different products, I had my chance to design objects that I thought would be decorative assets. It was important that the containers not intrude on the room setting, and hence be tucked out of view, but that their design enhance the appearance of a coffee table or hall console.

Until now it seemed to me most home fragrance containers had a decidedly feminine look with their ribbons, laces and little flowers. This approach related them to the intimate areas of the home and not the public spaces. I chose to make my containers in colorless frosted glass

with details in a silvery/bronze metallic. The neutrality of these colors made them complementary to any color scheme, and the classic shapes are suitable in the most traditional or contemporary settings.

The colorful notes in the collection are in the product itself. Different colors do not indicate different fragrances as in other home fragrance lines. There is only one fragrance and that is "a garden after the rain." I have made the products different colors to enable purchasers to choose the color most complementary to their decor. My "Love Petals," for example, come in two color combinations—the warm tones of peach, wine and rose complement a room with apricot and beige, and the cool tones of blue and celadon would be perfect in a blue or grey setting.

I took another liberty in my use of color because I wanted to remove any possible association between my home fragrance products and personal fragrance products. I colored the oil in the vial of refresher oil a teal green and the liquid of the room spray a rosy peach. There could be no mistaking them for the amber and gold tones of perfume and cologne.

All of these products are from a collection that I have designed for Prestige Place. It is called Diane Love for Prestige Place and is currently sold in the finest stores in the United States. It was introduced last fall and I am overjoyed to say the response has been very enthusiastic. My greatest satisfaction has been to see first hand the public's genuine delight and interest in the collection.

Home fragrance is a 365-day-a-year product. We don't stop applying perfume after Christmas; why shouldn't our homes smell just as good all year round?

Why home fragrance? Because it completes the home environment in the same way personal fragrance helps us complete our own self image. It is time to explore the public's innate interest in fragrance. Once people become aware that they can choose a fragrance for their homes, they will seek it out and apply the final touch of fragrance to their home just as they do to themselves.

