



THE NOSE KNOWS
Malle at his office on 69th Street in Manhattan, with Boyd Webb's *Lung II* behind.

TRACKED

FRÉDÉRIC MALLE

With two new stores opening this spring, perfumer Frédéric Malle's fragrance empire is in full bloom.

BY CHRISTOPHER ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTINE FOUGERON

IT MAY COME as little surprise that Frédéric Malle, 51, the founder of the fragrance company Editions de Parfums, possesses a singularly sensitive nose, though he insists that the mark of a great perfumer is not a physical but a mental capacity for distinguishing scents. "I think it was Voltaire who said, 'What is well-conceived is easily spoken,'" he says. Nonetheless, if anyone is genetically suited to the profession, it's Malle. His grandfather founded Christian Dior's perfume line in 1947, and his mother was its art director, helping to develop the classic Eau Sauvage fragrance for men. A precocious child, Malle began serving as Mom's test subject for scents at the age of 5.

The role he plays today at his company—which has

counted Catherine Deneuve and Naomi Campbell as devotees—is modeled after a literary publisher: the name and color scheme (red, white and black) of his business are references to Éditions Gallimard, the hallowed French book publisher. As a Maxwell Perkins overseeing the F. Scott Fitzgeralds of the fragrance world, he celebrates the perfumers he works with regularly, hanging their portraits on the walls of his stores and printing their names on perfume bottles.

His emphasis on individuality is in sharp contrast to the corporate fragrance world, where Malle cut his teeth as a consultant before becoming disillusioned with the direction of the perfume behemoths. His first shop opened in Paris in 2000, and he now has three stores there and one in New York, with new

locations forthcoming: in Rome, in April; and New York's West Village, in May. In Malle's eyes, the fragrance industry, much like Hollywood, is obsessed with one-size-fits-all blockbusters that manage to please precisely no one. He envisions a unique character for his scents, like the ever popular Portrait of a Lady. These are often inspired by real people, such as his aunt or his father's charismatic best friend. "People find fragrances that epitomize their personality without even knowing it," he says. "They do it in a primal way." Malle's soft-spoken manner, his casual savoir faire and his sedate, elegant stores evoke a quieter, more civilized world. Catching a whiff of an Editions de Parfums fragrance, one has the sense, if fleetingly, of having entered it. >

7:33 a.m.

Eats breakfast at home with his daughter, Jeanne, and their dog, Elvis. Malle eats light (Fage yogurt, apple, English breakfast tea) to maintain a clear palate.

**\$0**

Amount Malle has spent on advertising. Bucking the industry trend of hiring celebrities to sell product, Malle is tight-lipped and protective of his famous clientele.

2,000
raw materials

The amount at the International Flavors & Fragrances scent lab for creating perfumes. Roughly 250 are used regularly by Malle and the perfumer Jovanovic.

9

His handicap in golf. "It's the only thing that takes my mind off of work," he says.

400
square feet

The size of his forthcoming New York store at Greenwich Avenue and Jane Street, in a landmarked building.

July 17

The birthday Malle shares with Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, the obsessive, genius perfumer and protagonist of Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume*.

4

children

Jean, 12, Lucien, 17, Louise, 21, and Paul, 23, with wife Marie, a clinical psychologist.

7th

arrondissement

The area in Paris, on the rue de Courty, where he was raised. His bedroom as a child was formerly the bedroom of the famous perfumer Jean-Paul Guerlain.

350

The approximate number of variations Malle and a perfumer typically go through in developing a single scent.

19

fragrances

The number in his current collection, including one collaboration with his friend Dries Van Noten. Malle opened his first store in Paris with only eight. ●

**8:02** a.m.
Opens the Madison Avenue store.

The three "smelling columns" are Malle's invention, meant to isolate and then vacuum out scents.

**8:40** a.m.

Arrives at the office.

Malle video-chats with his Paris team and checks in with his assistant on his upcoming travel plans.

**10:58** a.m.

Sniffs scents with perfumer Bruno Jovanovic at fragrance manufacturer IFF for development of a new product.

**3:21** p.m.

Meets with Steven Holl, the architect, to discuss the design of Malle's new New York store. He's nine minutes early, for once.

5:27 p.m.
Conducts brief phone call

at the Upper East Side restaurant Sant Ambroeus, where he has a drink with an old friend, publicist Alejandra Cicognani.

