

Destroy, She Said₁ She Would Buy the
Flowers Herself₂

Duras

Woolf

I remember walking slowly through Tino Seghal's *Carte Blanche* at Palais de Tokyo. A hired performer engaged me in a conversation around the notion of progress. He asked me what I want to do in my life. "Buy perfume," I answered. "That's all?" he responded. "That's all I want to speak with you about." The following afternoon, several overcast, damp days in Paris were chased away by cool, delicately potent sunlight. I made my way along Rue de Archives wearing soft grey cashmere, holding hands with a beautiful man. The satin handles of several small bags were slipped over my wrist: in one, an assortment of hand-made marshmallows, in another, a bottle of scent.

Meaning is produced in the excesses (volatile, ballistic) that extend beyond what is organized within an epoch and in the traces that remain after the programme designed into such a period has trailed off (the dry down). An empire declines; through its faltering, 'flowers of evil' bloom. And as the desiring dandy emerges into the streets of an industrialized world, reflected in shop windows, identity as it is understood today becomes sensible as an effect of capital. We buy ourselves. And it would follow that as civilization disintegrates—as it has done, and will return to do

again—its discontents, who have been constructed in relation to the aesthetics-ethics that they now observe shattered in deadly repose before them, feel the inevitability of their own utter dispersal. Just as the suspenseful turn of a cultural third act might threaten suffocation, an intoxicating floralcy is noticed hanging in the air. It gives expression to one's deepest drives toward pleasure and death. It is the sultry, misbehaving tuberose balanced with rooibos sweetness and orris fairy dust in Régime des Fleurs' *Floralia*. It opens onto the gardens that Alia and Ezra tend (and tend to provoke toward overgrowing past contemporary codes of comportment that resist remembering).

Régime des Fleurs affirms a Decadent potential to incorporate artifacts, anachronisms, and huffy aldehydes into a counter-narrative that is more inwardly stirring than it is competitive with the unconscious escalation of the global fragrance economy (reported by CNN last year to be worth more than \$50 billion). Luxurious, sure, but Régime is daringly louche and endearingly languid as well; a dirty pearl, as Anita Lane would say. Successive collections of perfume are complimented with collaborative projects that slip rebelliously through photography, music, pâtisserie, ceramics, video, and inquisitive speculations that resist such classifications altogether. Gardenia permutes, recurring like longing for unrequited love games. Years back, I came to describe my art practice as acting like a courtesan with ulterior motives: here,

I find my sisters. These scents and the other ancillary forms that Régime's imagination takes are coquettish and conceptual. Rear ends and what might have been. The painted façades of the *Fait Main* collection are stripped from the bottles' backsides. Their juices are exposed. Amongst the ongoing *Artefacts* projects, *No. 12: Prayer to Saint Thérèse* features a series of Polaroids in which a bare bottom Chloë Sevigny poses as a rosy ghoul centerfold whose visage recalls Ross Bleckner's most sumptuous paintings of floral wreaths and photographer Melanie Schiff's candid eroticism. As I watch *Feel Me*, one of several iPhone videos by Mirabelle Marden for Régime's *Artefacts*, the artist pulls piles of pink rose blossoms from her black shirt and reminds me of a corset McQueen designed in 2007 that overflowed with flowers. I think also of cult perfume designer Serge Lutens as he wistfully recounts a black dress that belonged to his mother. Then I think of my own mother and the perfumes my father has selected for her to wear throughout their marriage. I was always going to make my way back to this: my parents' bathroom, bottles of my father's cologne and my mother's department store perfumes arranged across a white wicker shelf.

Régime's *Mirror* shuts off my eyes—recognition not of an image matching my gaze, but rather something overcast, damp, drifts into a boudoir. A sniff of doom. Violets crush underfoot, fog, sawdust from the wood paneled room falling open, ashes, ashes, a throat

cleared. In *Swan*, one of Régime's candles, some of *Mirror's* notes are recomposed into reverie and ritual, mingled into gentle musks that conjure a body readying himself for immolation.

Régime des Fleurs acts through infusions and diffusions, drawing together fragments and releasing them to scatter. Following on Joris-Karl Huysmans and his literary milieu, culture and nature are treated as continuous rather than oppositional. For all of the remote ingredients sourced and collaborations uninhibited by distance, this work does not enact a strategy for escaping from life into fantasy but rather serves to articulate the experience of being in one's own body, with one's own memories, holding remnants of disparate histories, hearing the swan song, becoming flowers.

by Matt Morris

FIELD & FLORIST



