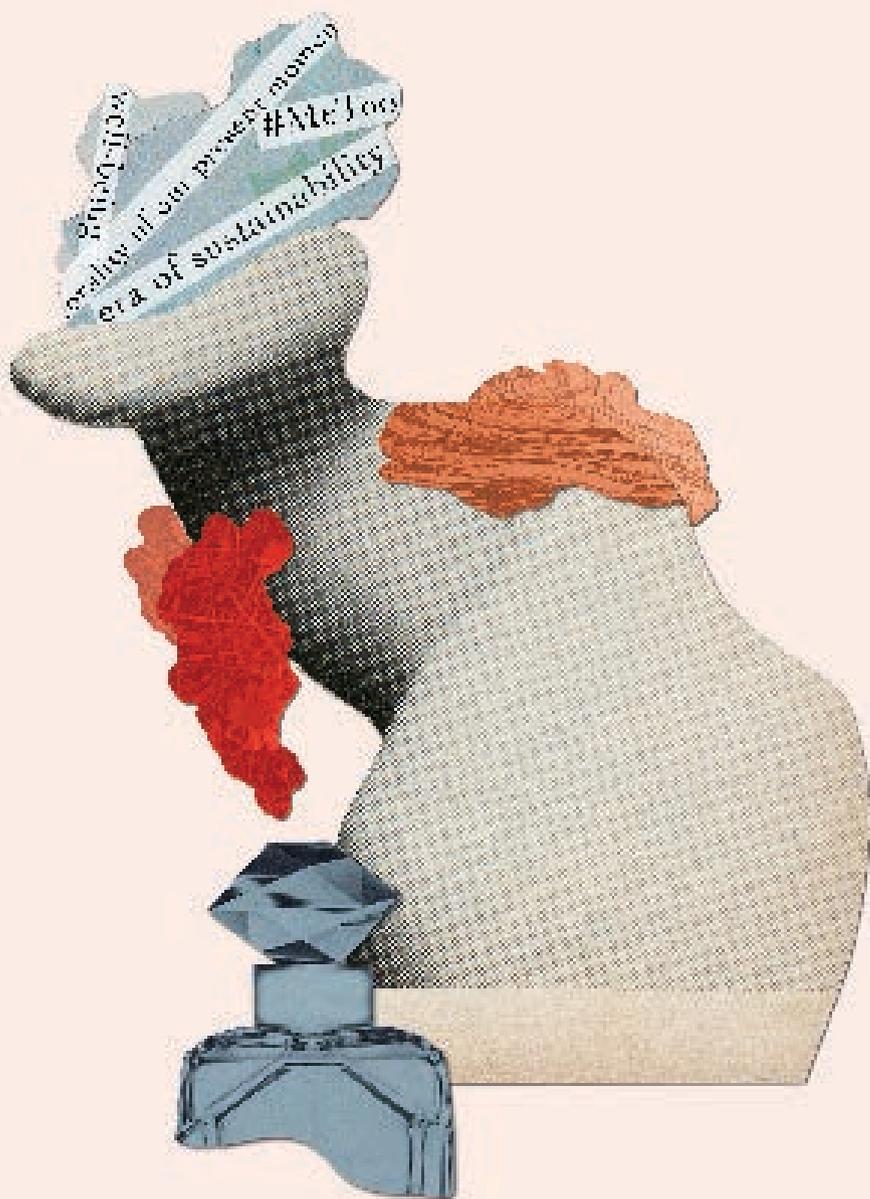


## In the Air

What does the present moment smell like? The latest perfumes tap our collective preoccupations—and promise to linger beyond the news cycle.



Scroll back for a moment to 1994. Whitewater dominated D.C. chatter; Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan were embroiled in scandal. Kurt Cobain spun out, a white Bronco cut loose, and a sitcom about six friends with an implausible New York apartment debuted on TV. That same year, Calvin Klein released CK One into the fragrance ether. The scent was democratic in purpose—it predated the gender-agnostic wave by about 20 years—with a linear architecture that didn't morph much as the hours passed.

If CK One was a remedy for its time, the fall fragrance class of 2018 is a reflection of and reaction to the present. Take Calvin Klein's latest: Called, simply, **Women**, it responds to the #MeToo movement with a message of empowerment, a female-led creative team (noses Annick Menardo and Honorine Blanc, along with artist Anne Collier), and a campaign fronted by whip-smart actors Lupita Nyong'o and Saoirse Ronan. A woody riff on more predictable florals, the scent itself is vying to be the official flacon of the Fourth Wave.

"A lot of the work in fragrance is about connecting with people emotionally, whether it's politics, the environment, or sustainability," says Ben Gorham of Byredo. His perception of the current mood is expressed in **Eleventh Hour**, billed as the "last perfume on earth"—in step with dystopian shows like *The Handmaid's Tale*. He sees hope (and ripe fig notes) in that twilight of civilization, but adds, "I think people are imagining the end more than ever." They're also considering how to deal with it. "Now women are choosing perfume that reflects their lifestyle, too," says The Harmonist's Lola Karimova-Tillyaeva, referring to the feng shui principles that ground her niche line. Its latest scent, **Yin Transformation**—an aqueous blend of rose, Calypso orchid, and ylang-ylang—seems a tranquil fit for the uptick in fringe forms of healing.

"This generation wants your mission to be driven by their same values," says human rights activist Barb Stegemann. Her perfume brand, **7 Virtues**—handpicked for Sephora's new transparency-minded hub, Clean—sources fair-trade raw materials from farmers in economically depressed areas: vetiver from Haiti, orange blossom from Afghanistan. If that collection drops pushpins across the map, **Régime des Fleurs'** new launch homes in on a single island: Oahu, where founders Alia Raza and Ezra Woods soaked in the lush scenery during a recent residency. Personal/Space—a new five-piece suite for self and surroundings—comes in bottles that glow in frosted jewel tones. With our country marred by ugly rhetoric, the line (with evocative scents like Waves and Shells) is a reminder of the beauty that exists right here in the U.S. of A. That it's also ready for an Instagram close-up makes it all the more timely. —FIORELLA VALDESOLO

### MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

A LINEUP OF NEW FRAGRANCES REFLECTS THE ZEITGEIST, FROM #METOO TO THE WIDE WORLD OF WELLNESS. ILLUSTRATION BY LISA RYAN.