

AN ADMAN'S EYE, AN ARTIST'S MIND

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ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE-TURNED-ARTIST **YVES HAYAT** EXPLORES LIFE'S BIG QUESTIONS THROUGH MULTIMEDIA PIECES THAT SEEK TO QUESTION, RATHER THAN DICTATE

Anyone who works in advertising is likely to be in awe of Chanel's timeless branding. The iconic outline of the Chanel No. 5 bottle, unchanged since 1924, is synonymous with the forging of one of the world's most successful luxury identities. It's not surprising then, that advertising exec-turned-artist Yves Hayat selected the symbolic shape as the basis for *Parfum de Revolt*, a series of works that aim to highlight the perils of materialism.

Hayat was born in Egypt, but has lived most of his life in France. He studied art in Nice, before embarking on a 20-year career in advertising. In his mid-40s, he found himself drawn back to the world of fine art, eventually abandoning his career selling other people's ideas for one in which he was free to express his own.

"In advertising you have to explain to the watcher what he has to understand," he says. "You're selling your perspective. In art, no. You have to leave it open and the viewer has to understand it with their feelings. People often see things in my work I have not done intentionally and that's very interesting... During my time in advertising I was so fed up, because you always have to show happy people. Life's not like that."

Hayat uses the skills he learned in advertising to create sleek, glossy pieces in multiple media, working primarily with photography. His artwork explores the complexity of life's big issues – war, love, worship, ownership – in a way that leaves viewers to draw their own conclusions.

"My work is not a critique at all," he emphasises. "It's just another way of showing the world. Jean-Luc Godard, the filmmaker, said, 'The problem is not to make political films, but to make films politically'. It means that you just explain every side... and the viewer has to take from it what he wants."

In *Parfum de Revolt*, Hayat recreates the shape of the Chanel No. 5 bottle using thin sheets of transparent film, which he singes over a flame until the plastic buckles and twists, then placed in a small Plexiglas box. Each label bears a number and the name of a city caught up in the wave of popular protests that have erupted around the globe since early 2011. The work opens itself up to multiple readings, highlighting an increasingly globalised capitalist consumer culture but at the same time suggesting a popular counter-movement, a growing call for change.



Hayat, *Parfum de Revolt*



Yves Hayat, *Portrait*, 2014

Other works explore the celebrity culture and the way in which film and rock stars and even politicians are becoming contemporary idols, to be emulated and adored. His satirical series *The Icons Are Tired* sees portraits of stars such as Jim Morrison and Marilyn Monroe or leaders including Saddam Hussein and Barack Obama doctored so that the subjects' eyes appear to be closed, rendering them vulnerable – blind, yet peaceful and disarming.

Hayat's use of overt religious symbols elsewhere in his work may prove more controversial, but the artist is unconcerned. "You reach an age where you want to do what you want," he shrugs. "Nobody tells me what to do. I do things how I like. And if somebody doesn't like it, it's no problem." ●