

A WAVE OF INSPIRATION

The sea is a magnet for David Cox, and an inspiration for his work

Fresh from a site visit, David Cox is a little concerned about the concrete in his new build. “Oh, it will be fine, fine. Two weeks, I think, we’ll be in in two weeks, the August bank holiday. What will I do first when we move into the house? I’m not sure. Cut the grass? Have a big drink?”

If it’s a fine evening, David will probably walk out the back door of his new/old home in Sandycove (more of that later) and down to the rocks overlooking the wide expanse of Dun Laoghaire Bay. It’s a trip he’s been making since he was a small boy - then it was to push off in his little Mirror dinghy and hammer around, “swallowing half the bay when I capsized”, now it’s to survey the sleek Tom de Paor-designed extension to his childhood home. After years of visiting his own parents, Jill Cox, and her late husband Brian, this month he’ll take up residence again with his own family. [David is married to Orna Mulcahy, and has three children, Andrew, Kate and Amy.]

The managing director of Fragrances of Ireland which this year celebrates 25 years in business, describes the sea as a magnet - “the sound, the smell; it’s a big part of my life”. He began to translate his love of the sea into fragrance ten years ago, when he took the creator of the original Inis cologne, the late Arthur Burnham, to Dog’s Bay in Connemara on a bright day, to describe the feeling he wanted to evoke in scent: clean, cold water lit by soft sunshine, a fresh breeze, an Irish summer’s day at the beach. It was to become a fragrance classic, what the industry calls an “ozonic” but one with staying power, one that endured as other industry “noses” began to dabble in heady orientals and later, to revive the then-unfashionable floral. Fragrances

of Ireland responded to these shifts in fragrance fashion and other Inis fragrances followed the crisp cologne: warmer, woodier, sexier Inis Ór and rosy Inis Arose, but the original juice has remained an exuberantly good seller. In a business driven by celebrity, where A-list actresses are paid millions to front fragrance launches, Inis has as its ‘face’ seven surfing dolphins. Clever ad campaigns count only for so much, ditto high price tags, ridiculously exotic ingredients, and what fragrance critic Tania Sanchez calls “lush official descriptions”. Believe your nose, she says: in other words, wear a fragrance because you love it, because you can’t bear not to. It’s the reason Inis, with its relatively modest marketing campaign, pops up in the best bathrooms, and out of the grandest of handbags. Believe your nose. It’s a creed that Fragrances of Ireland espouses, and it describes the very individual, thoughtful way in which Cox approaches the creation of a new scent.

David recently bought his brother-in-law John a kayak for his birthday, and last week he paddled it out across the bay with Kate and Amy aboard. “We came face to face, literally, with a seal whom we have called Sean. They are rather imposing up close.” It’s the sort of encounter this sea-salty family relishes, and one to which David hopes to add almost-daily swimming in the Forty Foot (“another alarming sight: my wife is less enthusiastic about this”) and continuing the tradition, long established by his monther, and her parents before her, of big, noisy family dinners at the house. In late August, David will take part in Whale Watch Ireland’s whale and dolphin-watching day, [see Glossary, page 13] which is supported by Inis. But mostly, he’ll relax and, once the earthy odour of the drying concrete has ebbed away, he’ll smell the sea again, and dream up a new fragrance or two. ■ SMCD

“I’m lucky enough to have always lived by *THE SEA* in a beautiful part of Ireland. It’s a part of me and, accordingly, a part of Inis which is a *CELEBRATION* of the sea. Creating beautiful *PERFUMES* is the really rewarding part of the job and one we’d do all the time if we could.”

