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Plastic Fantastic

In the City of Light, an upcycling artisan finds beauty in the discarded

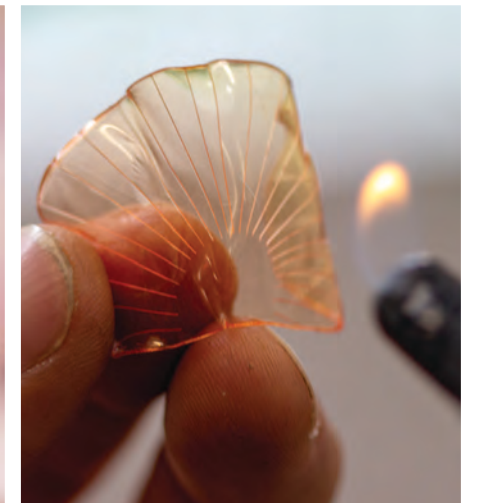
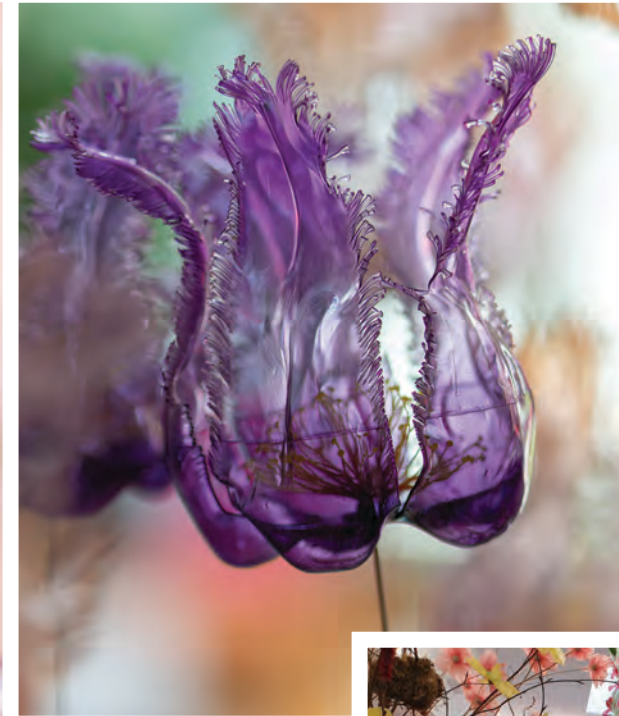
IN WILLIAM AMOR'S TINY Paris atelier, Les Créations Messagères, roses trail the walls and camellias and peonies line a windowsill. But this isn't a chic floral shop. Amor's wonderland is a playground for transforming discarded materials—plastic grocery bags, fishing nets, cigarette butts, and Nespresso pods, among other items—into life-like flowers for public installations and luxury brands. "I want to show people that there is another way of looking at waste," the artisan says. "It can be something beautiful."

A lifelong lover of plants, the Nancy native had planned to pursue a career in botany, but found his way into fashion and art public relations instead. Kismet intervened 15 years ago, when he was grocery shopping and noticed similarities between plastic shopping bags and flower petals. Captivated by the way plastic "catches air and light," he began experimenting with it, developing techniques to make it mimic the nuances of native flora. "Flowers are the haute couture dresses of nature," he comments. "They are a symbol of emotion, sophistication, and seduction."

In 2015, he left the corporate world to pursue his hobby full-time, quickly landing work for fashion brands like Dior, for whom he created beds of roses and lilies for an exhibition, as well as high-end shopping malls in Hong Kong and Paris. Last spring, he crafted damask roses, leaves, and vines to bedeck Baccarat crystal bottles of Guerlain's new perfume, Bloom of Rose, as well as the fragrance house's Champs-Élysées store.



Petal Pusher
 In his Paris atelier, William Amor (OPPOSITE) uses a variety of tools and heat to shape discarded plastic into flower petals and blossoms. (THIS PAGE CENTER) A limited-edition Guerlain bottle features damask roses and leaves. (BOTTOM) Amor's associates Florie Souday and Jenna Broult at work in the studio. See Resources.



PORTRAIT AND THIS PAGE CENTER: © JEAN PIGNON/SAY WHO; TOP RIGHT: REISS/ANA ORLAND GALLERY; ALL OTHER PHOTOS: COURTESY OF WILLIAM AMOR

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To bring his vision to life, Amor and his assistants first sanitize plastic bags in boiling water and leave them to dry, after which they paint them with custom-mixed pigments. Next, Amor pulls and twists the plastic in his hands to create each petal's delicate pleats, which are cut out with scissors or a scalpel and heated with a flame along the edges to retain the shape and add texture. To make flowerheads for a perfume bottle, he secures groups of petals together with a metal jewelry primer, which attaches to a thin metal wire encasing the flask.

Always on the hunt for raw material, Amor now has his eye on the discarded face masks that currently litter the streets of Paris. "It has caused a massive pollution problem," he says. "My goal is to turn them into flower blossoms." —*Kelly Velocci*