



Left: Buly 1803 founder Ramdane Touhami. Opiat dentaire, scented € 20.



“It was a gift for my wife”, says designer Ramdane Touhami of Buly 1803, the couple’s new venture in the heart of Paris. Their modern-day version of a famous 19th-century French parfumeur offers the best natural treatments for hair, face and body.

“There is a lot of shit.” Ramdane Touhami (1974), artist, designer and all-round beautifier, isn’t a man to mince words. He’s referring to the beauty industry, and the sea of products it targets daily at the millions of consumers willing to spend money on skin care. “99 percent of the stuff that is on sale has been developed by marketing people”, says Touhami, a designer, entrepreneur and all-round beautifier with a CV so varied that it prompted American Vogue to name him a ‘man of a thousand trades’. “They think only of what will sell – there is no love involved. The result is just lots of packaging. I actually love making things.”

Touhami is a child of his time, but he loves and honors tradition. In 2007, he took over Maison de Cire Trudon, a French luxury candle brand that had trouble carrying its 350-year-old history into the modern age: today, Cire Trudon products are sold in luxury department stores around the world. Touhami is CEO and co-owner of Trudon, but apparently still has time on his hands: last year, he reinvented Buly, a French parfumeur once famous for its vinaigres de toilette or scented vinegars. Founder of the original store was Jean-Vincent Buly, a distiller, parfumeur and cosmetician who opened shop in 1803 in the Rue Saint-Honoré, launching perfumes and scented vinegars that were quickly sought after. Starting out as a follower of the Ancien Régime tradition of the trade, Buly was excited and clever about the wave of new species and flowers that followed Napoleon’s rise to power. Buly’s greatest success was his ‘Vinaigre de Buly’, a scented skin lotion that was a hit throughout Europe. The man even inspired fiction: the protagonist of Honoré de Balzac’s 1837 novel César Birotteau is a Parisian parfumeur whose good fortune turns awry when he gets involved in property speculation. In real life, the Buly brand lasted and thrived for over a century. “Up until the 1950’s, a bottle of Buly was a staple on a French lady’s dressingtable”, says Touhami. The house itself, however, gradually declined, finally closing down in 1980, with no heiress left.



## BULY 1803: MIXING OLD AND NEW

Text by Sandra Heerms van Voss  
Images by Buly 1803



Left: Interior shop Paris. New: Hinoki water-based fragrant combinations € 120.

The story caught Touhami’s imagination, prompting him to dive into Paris’ archives: “I went to the mairie, to the chambre of commerce – I wanted to make sure that I got everything right.” By this, he means the entire outlook of the shop, with subdued wooden panels and turquoise tiles – more a refuge than a shop in atmosphere. By the time Ramdane stumbled upon an empty gallery space on 6 rue Bonaparte, just a few blocks from the duplex penthouse he lives in with his wife Victoire de Taillac-Touhami and their three children, he was ready. “I knew exactly what it had to look like”, he says. “It was all in my head.” He removed one ‘l’ from the original name because “Bully with two LL means not a very positive thing in English.”

The products on sale are the same mix of old and new. Touhami is a big traveller, and he’s been on the hunt for oils, powders, incenses and clays – the best natural ingredients the world has to offer – for over twenty years, he says. The ingredients, coming from countries like “Kenya, Morocco, Japan, Indonesia, India, Australia, Ukraine and 17 others”, are taken to a French laboratory to create modern-day skin products free of parabens, silicon or phenoxyethanol. Buly’s fragrances contain no alcohol and glycerin – their water-based perfume is currently the biggest-selling product.

The muse behind the scenes is Touhami’s wife Victoire, who also stepped forward as head of the shop, receiving

and advising customers personally when the family isn’t traveling. There isn’t a single Buly product that hasn’t been tested and approved by her. The range covers the whole body, with products for hair, face, hand, feet, even teeth, with firm Italian tooth brushes with real hair. There are remedies for sunburn, balms and body lotions, sponges and soaps, combs and hair brushes – all you could hope to find in a pharmacie, made with extra care and refinement.

Touhami is known for his restlessness jumping from one successful project to the next, but he is adamant that the Buly venture is as lasting as his love for his wife. Plans to open Buly1803 franchises in Seoul and Tokyo are currently in development. “This is not a hobby for us”, says Touhami. “It’s a serious business that we took a long time to prepare. That’s why it will last.”

Buly 1803, 6 Rue Bonaparte, Paris. [Buly1803.com](http://Buly1803.com)