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## Beauty Beat: Hirst: Look for Image Over Function

**By Michelle Edgar**

NEW YORK — Design guru Kenneth Hirst of Hirst Pacific has found that in today's saturated fragrance market, design has become more important than ever. At the point of purchase, consumers' attention has shifted from how well a product functions to a company's overall brand image.

"What we're seeing is that brands are starting to create a much broader product offering than they traditionally do," Hirst, president of Hirst Pacific, a New York-based strategic design firm, said in a recent interview. "How we perceive the strength of a brand's image, style and quality gives us the desire to buy into a lifestyle that we want to make our own."

According to Hirst, this shift away from product functionality can be seen across a variety of industries from beauty and fashion to automotive. For example, Ferrari's focus has evolved from producing high-quality cars to "We sell lifestyles." Because of the brand's image, strength, quality and style, consumers want to buy into that brand's lifestyle image, Hirst claimed. He also pointed to Ralph Lauren as a fashion designer who expanded his business into the fragrance, eyewear, luggage and personal accessories markets.

"Brands continue to evolve in the mind-set of the consumer. The emotional connection and brand presence is turning the purchase decision from a production selection to a lifestyle choice," said Hirst.

Hirst's design expertise covers a range of disciplines, from high-end fragrances and personal care items to mass market packaged goods and accessories. With 20 years of experience, he has worked on everything from Tommy Hilfiger to the packaging of Gillette Series men's grooming products.

He's also applied his philosophy when designing celebrity fragrances, including Celine Dion's *Belong*, Jennifer Lopez's *Still* and, most recently, Hilary Duff's *With Love...Hilary Duff*. Because the packaging conveys something about the celebrity, consumers connect to the stars by purchasing these products, he contended.

"The celebrity is the brand. We are producing a package that embodies their lifestyle. It's all about their persona," said Hirst. "Consumers are buying a little piece of that celebrity when they buy that fragrance bottle."

Before designing bottles, Hirst investigates his subjects, studying their personalities, styles and personal tastes. While working with Dion, Hirst discovered that she's very superstitious and that her favorite number is five. These elements were incorporated into his bottle design — an inverted rectangular pyramid shape with five points.

For Lopez's *Still*, Hirst centered the bottle's design around her "voluptuous body forms." The bottle not only conveys something about Lopez, but also appeals to consumers who like the "sexy, voluptuous shapes" in today's market.