

## ● spotlight on **beauty**

BY SANDRA MARDENFELD



### **For Chantecaille's Mother and Daughter Team, Beauty Does Run in the Family.**

Some might be wary about working with their mother. Not Olivia Chantecaille, 24, who labors alongside her mother Sylvie, 50, as Creative Director of Chantecaille, the business her mom started two years ago.

"There are some people you really connect with, where you don't even have to speak," said Olivia. "We don't have to have huge board meetings to make our decisions."

Sylvie, Parisian-Born and a 20-year veteran of the Beauty industry opened her company as a fragrance house, Parfums Chantecaille, featuring three floral scents. "Mom was tired of makeup," said Olivia, "and fragrance was new." Sylvie chose two houses she had worked with previously, Firmenich and Florasynth, to help develop the scents. Throughout the creation of Chantecaille's perfume line, Olivia acted as her mother's consultant. "We're best friends," said Olivia. "She needed someone to bounce ideas off of, and I was there." Last winter she became the company's Creative Director. "When my mother and I work, we're two professionals coming together," she said. "We switch into work mode. Now that I work with her I respect her even more."

The perfume line became available in March 1997 and was sold exclusively in Neiman Marcus. "What was noticeable about the perfumes," said Olivia, "was the simplicity of the packaging and the scents themselves. Whenever I wear it someone will comment on it."

The creation of the makeup line soon followed. "People kept telling her, 'Sylvie we want makeup from you not just perfume. Your thing is makeup,'" said Olivia. Sylvie and Olivia perfected the line for more than eight months, traveling to manufacturers in Japan, Italy, and France. "We sat in front of a tremendous array of colors and looked for ones we wanted to have ourselves," she said.

Growing up around her mother, Olivia couldn't help but become fluent in the business of makeup. "As I was growing up makeup was always there," said Olivia. "I played with dolls and makeup bottles. It wasn't like my mom gave me lessons. Without knowing it, I learned about makeup. On holidays, we would go to Italy to labs. To me, that was fun. I'd play with the colors. Even today, I find it fun. You get to play."

Olivia, a Ford model for four years, also knew makeup tricks from her modeling work. She started modeling in college when she did a photo shoot for *Mademoiselle*. Soon the art history major was attending classes two days a week and modeling the rest of the time. "I learned as I went along," said Olivia. She signed with IMG and did editorials for *Mademoiselle* and *Elle*, and shows (Versace, Armani) in Milan. When she was 22, Olivia moved to Milan to study and model. "Since I modeled, I knew about makeup and new trends in it," she said. "It helped me give some intelligent feedback. Working with makeup came very naturally. I feel like I was born to do this."



Nor does Olivia miss modeling (although she still does it periodically—the last time was for a local magazine this summer). “If you’re going to do modeling, you need to be realistic. At a point the jobs start to lessen,” she said. “I never wanted to reach a point where I didn’t know what to do. When you’re labeled a model, people see you just as that. The advantage of this company is it’s a job I could get and prove myself.”

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Launched in July, the Chantecaille line, featuring 48 lipsticks and 48 shades of eyeshadow, uses some of make-up’s most sophisticated technology. For instance, Real Skin (\$47), a translucent foundation stick was developed in conjunction with a Tokyo cosmetics lab. The formula blends micro-particle powder and amino-acid emollient oil to form a lightweight gel. “Our textures are advanced and new on the market and they work with the skin well. Some are fine particles, nanoparticles, so they mesh with the skin naturally and very subtly.”



The Chantecaille line emphasizes an easy and comfortable lifestyle. “We’re like everyone,” said Olivia. “We’re not movie stars. We want textures and colors to put on that are simple and beautiful. We don’t want to spend too much time putting on makeup.” Made with natural ingredients, some of the labels even read a bit like a natural foods store; their stick foundation, for instance, includes vitamins E and C, green tea and ginkgo biloba to calm the skin. And there is no animal testing. “There were so many delays before the line came out,” said Olivia. “It can be tedious. For example, when our products were to be shipped for our launch from Europe, they had an air strike before the soccer World Cup (in France) and our products were stuck on the runway when they needed to be here. Eventually they (the parties involved) came to agreement and the products came. You can’t lose faith. You can’t lose your vision. Things constantly come up and you have to float through it and keep going.”

Chantecaille’s packaging features silver chrome containers and boxes with a vibrant shade of violet dubbed “wisteria”—a color Sylvie believes has spiritual powers. “When we received our first compacts it was so exciting,” said Olivia. “We had been visualizing them for months and when the company finally sent them, they looked wonderful.”

Even the testers for the stores’ counters were planned in detail. Chantecaille worked with a designer friend to develop product testers made of Lucite frosted glass with a little metal. “We wanted everything very transparent and light, not like the dark look we saw so much of,” said Olivia.





Chantecaille uses a virtual office system. Olivia often works from her apartment in "Nolita" (North of Little Italy) in New York. "It's a very European area," she said. "It's relaxed, but exciting. There are always new shops and little cafes, and people who are venturing out on their own and creating new companies are here. It's becoming trendy. There's something very charming about this neighborhood." Her mother normally works from her home in New Jersey. In the summertime, mother and daughter work and play in East Hampton at the family's 200-year-old whaling cottage. "We usually pick the biggest table," said Olivia, "which happens to be the dining room table and then we lay everything out." Sometimes they'll consult Olivia's siblings Alexandra, 21, and Philippe, 13, for feedback.

Since Chantecaille is a small company, Olivia and Sylvie wear many hats. "I can do anything from PR to determining packaging or colors for a product, meeting with editors, meeting with stores, or even working behind a counter," said Olivia. "I want to know what's going on. How the girls are selling. What people like. What products are being asked for that we don't have."

Chantecaille products are available exclusively in the U.S. at over 30 Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman stores across the nation; in London at Harvey Nichols and Space NK; and in Hong Kong at Joyce Boutiques. New products are created constantly. In September, a set of lip-glosses were added to the line. Soon body creams and candles to accompany the fragrances will appear. And, next year, Chantecaille plans to bring out a natural skin care and treatment line that has an emphasis on healing and boosting the immune system. "We see ourselves as a global company because I think that's where things are headed," said Olivia. "I think we're all so connected now. It's no longer about an Asian woman or a black woman. Our line translates well over the different cultures."