

The Beauty of Time Travel



*Officine Universelle
Buly and the work of
Ramdane Touhami*

gestalten

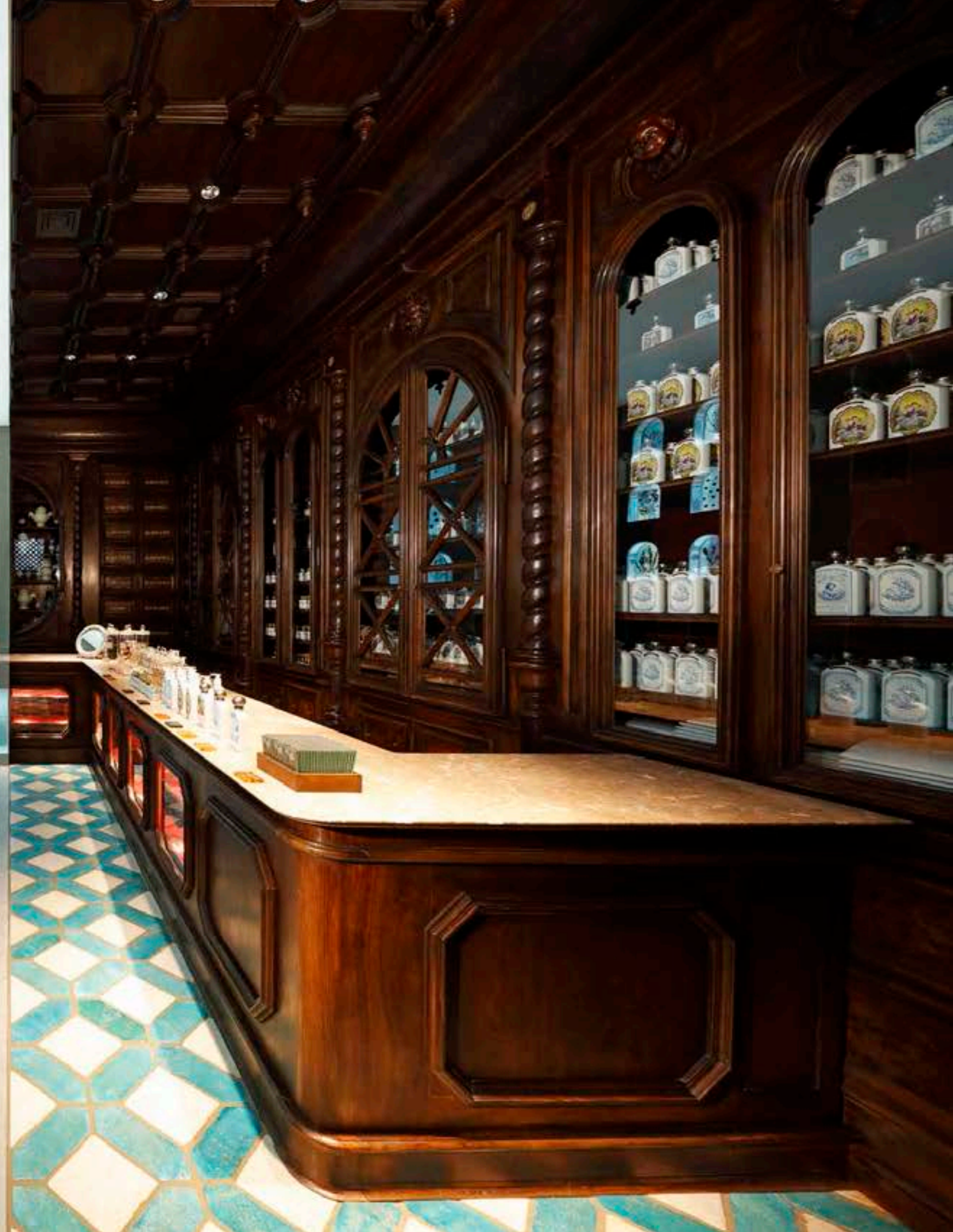
GENESIS OF AN OUTSIDER ENTREPRENEUR

There is a design mythology of how to take-over an historical brand, how to respect the brand DNA and make it attractive now. Through his creative and professional path, Ramdane Touhami will share his career adventures, the rules to respect and his sources of inspiration.

Everything began in 1993 with an iconoclastic t-shirt where you could read “Teuchy”, his first success in the skating and hip-hop scene. In the enthusiastic hubbub, Ramdane launched “King Size”: the first French skating clothing line with the motto of “French savoir-faire finally comes to skateboarding”. In 2003, Ramdane Touhami successfully reinvented the men’s department of the London institution Liberty. In 2007, he revamped the oldest candle maker in the world, the French company Cire Trudon. Meticulous research allows him to know the history of the brand in its 200 years of existence. His first step is to rename the brand with its original name, linked to its founder, Cire Trudon and to write an official industrial history of the brand. The second step, the most important one is the creation of new products that are part of the brand legacy. The third step is to redesign “historically” the Parisian store to host the new lines of products and new customers. Cire Trudon in 2007 was sold only in France, in 2009 through the opening of wholesale account in 59 countries. Ramdane Touhami brought his knowledge and skills to bear once more with the launch of Officine Universelle Buly in 2014. Buly has been steadily reinventing French beauty products. Ramdane Touhami and his team work daily on developing the heritage of Buly, a 19th century beauty brand, drawing inspiration from the excellence of its past to offer the best possible experience in the present-day. The brand’s history is celebrated through the authentic décor of its stores: with its traditional apothecary counters of yore and the refined aura of master perfumers, all the boutiques are known for their uniqueness. As Ramdane Touhami once said: “I don’t think one can call me an art director. Let’s just say that I feel more responsible than an art director perhaps because I had industrial experience from a young age. I am not the type to make artistic «gestures». I think like an investor, like an entrepreneur (...) When I approach a brand or a new territory, I go at it with the logic of an entrepreneur, with the idea that what is beautiful and what is good isn’t a luxury or a whim, but the quickest and surest way to sell well, to sell better.” Here’s the story of the beginnings of his creative journey, in his own words...

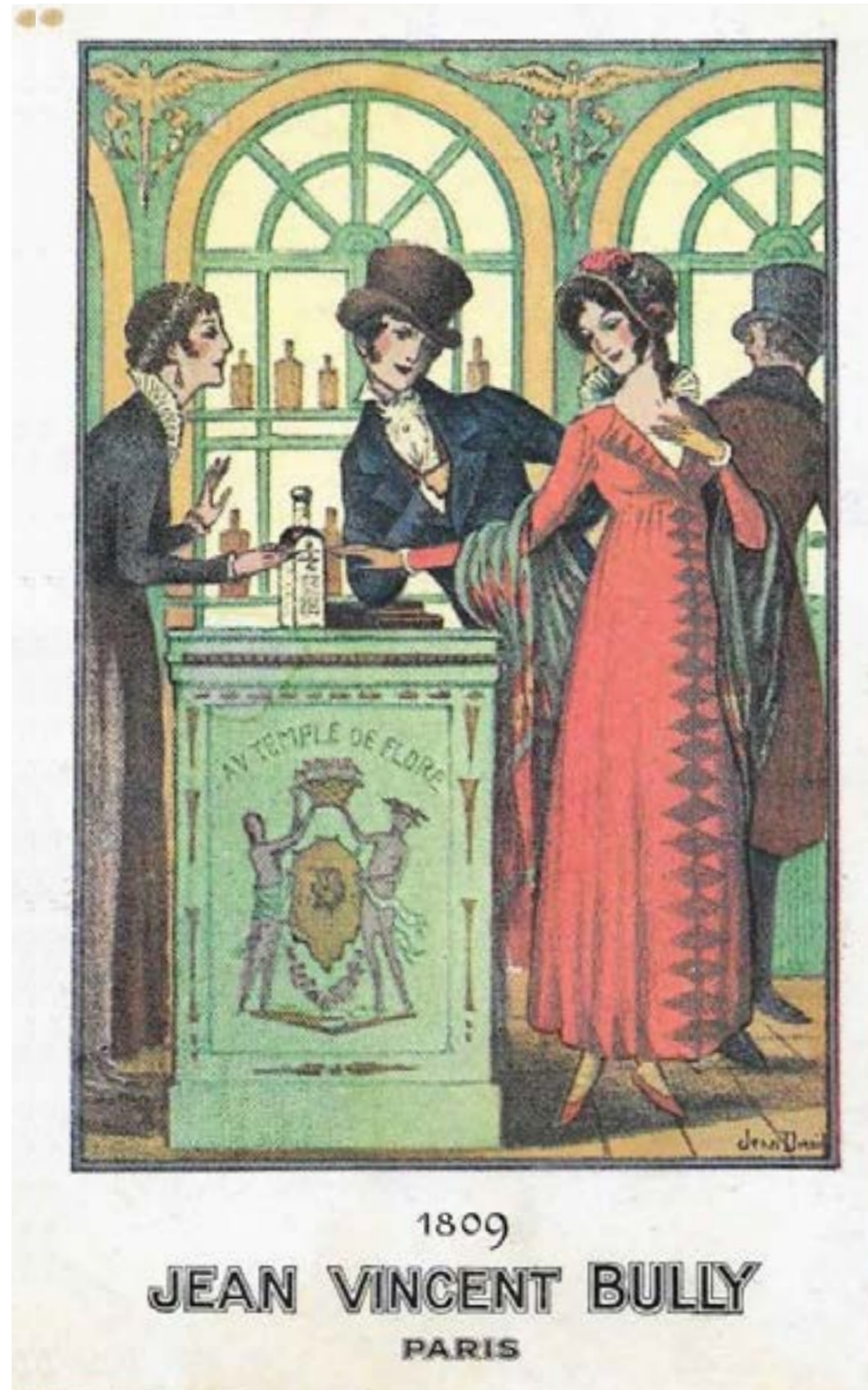
RAMDANE TOUHAMI, IN PURSUIT OF BEAUTY

“For me, beauty is not limited to things that adorn the skin. Beauty lies in lettering, furniture, space, and the enchantment of people’s manners. I was brought up in Montauban, in the southwest of France, by a Moroccan-French parents. Growing up, I felt deprived of a sense of excitement, of anything that could win over my heart. My mother worked as a maid at a late 19th century manor that belonged to a judge. My father was a farmer who took care of the manor’s farm, especially its apple orchard. The owner lived in Paris and came down to his country estate only occasionally, during his vacations. But for farmers, working with nature means that there is no day off. Nature is always changing and demanding to be tended to. The farmer’s life is all about labor, from Monday to Sunday. Even as a four-year-old child, each day involved a form of labor as I walked 6 kilometers each day to go to school. Color TV only came into our lives when I was twelve years old. Even in the late 1980s, with no internet, no social media, life in the countryside was contained within a very small radius; there was hardly any access to information about things happening outside our town. But there was one thing I always



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ADI DOLUT VOLUPTAE NIMUS DOLUP-
TA SPELIA NULPA VOLO DOLUPTAM SITIO
QUAS RE CUPIDENDITIA QUIAT QUIAS QUO



Affiche illustrative pour la première parfumerie bully, au 67 Rue Montorgueil à Paris, 1809.

Affiche publicitaire des années 1920. Même si les modes passent, le vinaigre de toilette demeure. Illustration historique d'une intemporalité conservée.

Les robes ont changé, mais
le Vinaigre de
BULLY
embellit
toujours



Société Jean Vincent **BULLY** Fondée à PARIS en 1809





Elles sont les témoins sociaux et économiques d'une époque où tout est à inventer, réguler, décloisonner et dépasser. Certaines maisons historiques ont eu une influence directe sur la façon d'appréhender les senteurs, dans une dimension culturelle — comment se parfumer, pour qui ? Quelle finalité ? — que personnelle — embellir sa présence, sa personnalité. Certaines font perdurer un triomphe constant dans l'édiction de cette norme odoriférante quand d'autres subissent l'aléa de la vie entrepreneuriale. Elles peuvent se voir entacher leur glorieux miroir par quelques surpiqûres, leur conférant un cachet surprenant. Redonner vie à une période où l'émulation n'avait d'égal que l'innovation, ne peut pleinement se mesurer que par la renaissance d'un de leur témoin : la maison de parfum d'alors. Une anodine conversation a parfois le pouvoir de tout changer et d'orienter le destin, pour joindre avec malice la superbe des temps anciens à ceux contemporains.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

En 2012, Ramdane rencontre Arnaud Montebourg, alors ministre de l'Économie et du redressement productif. À l'issue de cet échange, tous deux allaient sceller le sort d'une des plus vieilles maisons de parfum parisiennes, celle du vinaigrier-parfumeur Jean-Vincent Bully. Il n'a fallu que d'une phrase pour enchevêtrer deux siècles dont absolument tout sépare, si ce n'est l'attrait pour l'élégance, le charme et le chic parisien. « Tu es un véritable César Birotteau, Ramdane » lance-t-il à l'intéressé.

D'où provient cette référence littéraire ? Il s'agit d'un curieux personnage décrit dans l'une des fresques sociologiques peintes par Balzac en 1837. César est un petit parfumeur provincial qui, cependant, ne connaît pas un « iota d'histoire naturelle ni de chimie¹ ». Balzac retrace sa percée, sa gloire puis ses aventures fortuites : après de troubles placements financiers, il se voit blanchi par le roi mais meurt tragiquement avant de pouvoir savourer ses lauriers retrouvés. Il faut en convenir, le portrait est peu flatteur tout de go. Sitôt la comparaison éludée, l'oeuvre retrace une irrémédiable poursuite vers la réussite et est une ode à la résilience. À partir des cendres et des honneurs passés du parfumeur « ce personnage un peu falot acquiert l'envergure d'un héros, à partir du moment où sa vie se mue en un destin sacralisé par le malheur » précise la chercheuse Danièle Dupuis. Dans un contexte de capitalisme naissant, à la concurrence soutenue, où les innovations commencent à poindre, Auguste Popinot — le commis de Birotteau — sauve le parfumeur déchu avec une ingénieuse trouvaille et lui permet de se voir réhabilité par le roi. Cette aventure est moins une invitation littéraire à entreprendre, qu'un sésame pour l'ambition et la confiance nécessaires à la réussite.

51. Bully : un tyran, en anglais.

De cet incipit, l'aventure prend forme et l'intrigue reste entière : Ramdane prend la route des archives de la Seine ; les Nationales ; les bibliothèques spécialisées contenant catalogue de



Photographie de la première boutique
Officine universelle Bully à Paris,
au 6 rue Bonaparte, 75006.

THE BEAUTY OF TIME TRAVEL

Officine Universelle Buly and the Work of Ramdane Touhami

Editors: gestalten & Ramdane Touhami
Features: Full color, hardcover, stitch bound, 304 pages, 24 x 30 cm, 9 ½ x 11 ¾ inches
Price: € 49.90 (D) £ 45 \$ 69 (US)
ISBN: 978-3-96704-019-7



RELEASE (EUROPE & UK): AUGUST 2021
RELEASE (INTERNATIONAL): SEPTEMBER 2021

This book tells the story of how to transform a vintage brand into a global success story. The key ingredients include: integrity, attention to detail, and an insatiable curiosity for the world.

FALL 2021



SAMPLE COVER

It all started with a Balzac novel, a flea market find, and a jolt of creative inspiration. Fast-forward to the present day and Officine Universelle Buly has grown to become a true heavyweight in the beauty industry. Sold in almost every corner of the world, co-founder Ramdane Touhami infused an appreciation for all things vintage with a spirit of conquest and innovation to offer a coveted-catalogue of premium products.

So how was a forgotten brand from the 19th-century revived and transformed into one of the most loved names of today? And what exactly underpins this unprecedented retail concept? Presented by its protagonists, *The Beauty of Time Travel* looks at the meticulous work carried out by creative entrepreneur Touhami along with his agency Art Recherche Industrie. It dissects the Buly universe from A to Z, looking at it's appetite for reinventing traditions whilst revealing the stories, tricks, and (almost) all its secrets.



WHAT TO EXPECT

- The definitive look into the process of constructing a successful global brand from the bottom up
- Key insights and tips for branding, retail, product design, and much more
- Beautiful imagery that documents the creative process, the products, packaging, and holistic brand identity

RAMDANE TOUHAMI

is an internationally renowned designer, creative director, and entrepreneur. Officine Universelle Buly is known globally in the cosmetics world and also for its approach to branding. Touhami continues to head the brand alongside partner Victoire de Taillac.

