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2025 Spring Conference of the German Society of Perfumers (DGP)

M. Protzen

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The spring conference of the German Society of Perfumers (DGP) in SEPAWA® e.V. took place in Holzminden from March 27 to 28, 2025, with 60 participants. The motto of this year's conference was "A Sensory Journey through Time" – a journey that our speakers took us on from their different perspectives, inspiring us with the scent and taste of vanilla, historical fragrances, and fragrance trends.

After the "get-together" at the Schwager conference hotel, President Dr. Maren Protzen recalled the last spring conference in Prague, the activities at the SEPAWA CONGRESS 2024, and the DGP's Presence at international events last year in her report to the board. The DGP currently has 136 members and recorded 7 new members. The advisory board and board currently comprise 12 members, four of whom are on the board. After many years of active work on the advisory board and board of the DGP, Dr. Anneliese Wilsch-Irrgang wishes to step down, and Maren Protzen once again publicly thanked her for her work. In addition to her organizational commitment, the DGP was able to rely on Wilsch-Irrgang's accurate and concise reports on conferences and events. Johann Maria Farina (Farina 1709) is then welcomed as a new member of the advisory board. The executive board looks forward to working with him and the traditional perfume house.

poser and arranger Max Knoth from Berlin has composed a piece of music especially for the perfumer award, which is intended to serve as inspiration for the young perfumers in their fragrance creations.



Dr. Protzen and Daniela Knoop (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)



Jörg Zimmermann introducing the first Speaker (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

Looking ahead to the current year, Protzen highlighted the first German Award for Young Perfumers 2025 (DGP), which has been open for entries since December of last year and is endowed with 2,000 euros. In the future, it will alternate with the Science Award as an international creative award. Com-

At the end, flowers were also presented to Daniela Knoop, who, as a member of the advisory board, contributed greatly to the organization of the event.

Vice President Jörg Zimmermann then opened the lecture series by introducing **Sean Coughlin**, project manager of the interdisciplinary project ALCHEMIES OF SCENT. Under the title "An Elusive Essence: Why we cannot recreate Ancient Perfumes and What we learn from Trying anyway," he spoke about the challenges of recreating ancient perfumes. Although recent archaeological finds have identified traces of aromatic materials such as dammar, elemi, and patchouli, three fundamental problems prevent the complete restoration of the scents of the past. Firstly, there is the "reverse engineering problem": even if the raw materials are known, it is difficult to reconstruct mixtures because the processing methods that were decisive for the final fragrance can hardly be determined by archaeometry. Secondly, there is the



Historical Scent (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

“problem of missing targets”: without preserved ancient perfumes, there is no sensory benchmark for assessing the success of historical recreation. Thirdly, there is the “distance problem”.



Dr. Sean Coughlin - Alchemies of Scent (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

How do we understand why and for what purpose the recreated fragrance was used? The Alchemies of Scent research group therefore focuses on ancient recipes from Egypt and Greece in order to experimentally recreate techniques for extracting, concentrating, and blending fragrances (e.g., myrrh, calamus, galbanum, lily). The principle is called practical exegesis and requires the collaboration of chemists, archaeologists, scriptural scholars, and historians.

With “Vanilla – The Proven Trend – Taste & Smell” presented by **Dr. Katharina Reichelt** and **Marc vom Ende** (Symrise AG), the event continued in a fragrant and tasty manner.

Connected online, Katharina Reichelt, a flavorist, and Marc vom Ende, a perfumer on site, engaged in an interesting dialogue about the use and benefits of vanilla and its extracts, as well as vanillin, which was first synthetically produced in 1874 by Wilhelm Haarmann in Holzminden and can also be obtained from vanilla pods as natural vanillin.

We were able to smell how vanillin not only shapes a fragrance as an important component of the base notes of iconic fragrances such as Jicky and Shalimar, but can also act as a “team player” in small doses. Floral notes, for example, appear softer and fruity accords get a push in the “gourmand” direction. Vanillin can also add warmth to woody and spicy notes and take the edge off other harsher fragrances.


 Dirk Linder with taste samples
 (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)


Perfumer Marc vom Ende and Jörg Zimmermann (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

The differences between a more complex vanilla extract and the monosubstance vanillin were then impressively illustrated with chocolate tastings for each listener, as was how chocolate tastes completely without vanillin. It became clear – something was missing!

After the coffee break, the event continued with “Your Scent Journey – Unveiling Fragrance Trends Shaped by Consumer Desires,” a presentation by **Dag Piper**, who describes himself as an “innovation enthusiast.” In his presentation, he vividly painted a picture of a future in which consumption and consulting will change completely. Marketing will no longer take place in print media and TV, but via social media and influencers. Generation Z and Alpha have, of course, already arrived here.

A future in which artificial intelligence will take over analysis and consulting, and where self-care and beauty will become a much more personalized market. Using the example of electromobility, he shows how Europe is being overtaken by China in this area, which has already reached a mass market, while here the debate continues and e-mobility is still consid-

ered a luxury good. Even though some of the theses presented in the space were certainly very provocative and simplistic at times, the lecture provided plenty of brain food, motivating us to continue looking to the future with curiosity and openness, while still reflecting critically on developments.



Speaker Dag Piper (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

Dr. Matthias Vey (IFRA) then gave a personal review entitled "Three Decades Working in and for the Fragrance Industry - a Personal Perspective," highlighting current and future challenges in the fragrance industry. Allergies and skin sensitization remain an ongoing and complex issue. IFRA introduced the Quantitative Risk Assessment (QRA2) tool for the perfume industry to prevent the induction of skin sensitization, while the legal labeling of fragrance allergens is intended to counteract the increase in cases of allergic contact dermatitis. The 2012 SCCS opinion, which claimed over 100 potential allergens, triggered the IDEA (International Dialogue for the Evaluation of Allergens) project at IFRA. The aim of IDEA is to create a transparent framework for the evaluation of fragrance sensitizers in a global dialogue.



Maren Protzen and Matthias Vey (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

Natural complex substances (NCS), such as essential oils and extracts, are essential to the creative fragrance industry but

face challenges in terms of safety and sustainability. Dr. Vey emphasized that not all natural materials are automatically safe and that understanding the potential risk is crucial. Vey also pointed out the relevance of IFRA's sustainability efforts in connection with the Nagoya Protocol and the CITES Convention, in which IFRA is an official observer.

Finally, Dr. Vey considered the topic of artificial intelligence (AI), which offers great potential in the areas of data mining and toxicology, where it can develop predictive models that are in some cases more reproducible than repeated animal studies. Vey concluded with a quote from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, which encourages us to explore the explorable and to quietly revere the unexplorable.



Dr. Anneliese Wilsch-Irrgang presides over the elections (Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

The subsequent elections were conducted swiftly and unanimously under the direction of Anneliese Wilsch-Irrgang, as Silke Weyland (BASF) had agreed to fill the vacant position of secretary/press officer. The positions of President (Dr. Maren Protzen), Vice President (Jörg Zimmermann), and Head of Budget (Lars Schlüter) were confirmed, as all three had thankfully agreed to serve another term with the DGP.



(Picture © Dr. Maren Protzen)

In the evening, a bus transfer took the attendees to Polle Castle, where a festive dinner awaited them at the Graf Everstein



Fragrance Museum Sensoria (Picture © Dr. Maren Protzen)

Impressions from the Sensoria Museum
(Picture © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

Impressions from the Sensoria Museum (Pictures © Sarah Ajumi Brajic)

restaurant, which offered plenty of opportunity for networking and personal conversations.

One of the main reasons for choosing Holzminden as the venue for 2025 was the opening of the interactive **fragrance museum "Sensoria"** to mark the 150th anniversary of van-

illin synthesis. It was therefore essential to offer a visit to the museum on Friday morning, as well as a fragrant city tour.

All visitors were impressed by the content and spatial design of the modern museum, which spirals upwards and ends in a room with a virtual fragrance organ.

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Group Picture Spring Conference DGP 2025 (Picture © Sensoria Museum)

After everyone had gathered on the roof terrace for a group photo, a vanilla-themed menu at the Hotel Schwager brought the conference to a culinary close.

Picture Credits: © Sarah Ajumi Brajic, Dr. Maren Protzen and Sensoria Duftmuseum

Holzminden – well worth a visit!

**Register* for the next DGP Spring Conference
from 19 to 20 March 2026 in Cologne!**

(* Limited number of participants)



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