

## The Sig Survey No. 8: HOMMAGE CO-FOUNDER & CEO TOM WILSCAM

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TOM WILSCAM  
CEO  
HOMMAGE + HOMMAGE Atelier



*There are some brands that simply take a category to another level, and [HOMMAGE](#) is one of those stories. To appreciate their story, one must take a quick look at the multi-billion dollar worldwide men's grooming category, which is estimated to "mushroom to \$28.0 billion by 2014" according to the *Men's Grooming Products: A Global Analysis Report*.*

*However we're not talking about the likes of Gillette and Neutrogena here: The modern men's mass-luxury grooming products can be easily charted from 1965, when Baxter Finley launched his first line of grooming products created just for men, [Baxter of California](#), anchored by his masculine Super Shape moisturizer. In 1976 Clinique launched Skin Supplies for Men—these were, for all intents and purposes, the first quantum leaps in men's luxury grooming products since [Truefitt & Hill](#) came out with their own line of shave creams and aftershaves in the early nineteenth century. It should be mentioned that to stay relevant [Clinique For Men](#) launched an exceptional website in 2009.*

*After the launch of Clinique For Men the veritable floodgates were opened with new brands popping up with some regularity (and often disappearing just as quickly.) Those that made their mark: [John Allan's](#), [Anthony Logistics for Men](#), [Art of Shaving](#) (purchased by Procter & Gamble Co., in 2009 for an estimated \$60 million), [Zirh](#) (once owned by Shiseido Co) were in a gridlock for what was perceived as the higher-end of the market, but what in reality was squarely in the middle.*



*HOMMAGE came on the scene in 2003, when renowned industrial designer and HOMMAGE co-founder Wolfgang Joensson created the striking “Monaco” shave set, which is clean and minimalist in its design and incredibly masculine in its aesthetic. This is without question both the nucleus and catalyst for the brand’s very essence, influencing not only the packaging, but the underlying fragrance and formulations. Once it firmly established itself with various versions of the Monaco set, HOMMAGE launched both “shavecare” and “facecare” lines, now part of an incredibly comprehensive portfolio.*



HOMMAGE Platinum + Damascene steel straight-edge razor

*HOMMAGE has exceptional, in some cases, pharmaceutical grade (cosmeceutical) products (such as the HOMMAGE Shave Balm: Soother), but In a sea of middling sameness HOMMAGE rapidly rose to the top of the pack—their exclamation point was clearly their now conspicuous \$30,000 platinum and Damascene steel straight-edge razor (the most expensive in the world), hand-forged in Germany with 128 layers of Damascene steel (in a rose and torsion pattern) and housed in a platinum sheath (treated to*

*resist tarnishing—of course.) HOMMAGE'S brand positing is simple, and one that some refer to as the Gucci Axiom as it was coined by Gucci founder Guccio Gucci, "Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten."*



*With the shave care and face care lines prominently displayed on the shelves of high-end department and specialty stores such as Barneys New York HOMMAGE started to focus on where many start—a brick-and-mortar barbershop. While calling HOMMAGE Atelier barbershops is like calling a Ferrari FF a hatchback, it is, but it is also decidedly not. The menu of services at the Ateliers is impressive as it is expansive.*

*To date there are eight worldwide, three of those are in the U.S. New York (where they partnered with Julien Farel), Chicago and Las Vegas—we're just waiting on Miami and LA/Beverly Hills to round out the U.S.*

*In a manner of speaking, while Mr. Joensson composed the score, thus setting the tone, his partner and co-founder Tom Wilscam wrote the play. The numbers and operations guy of the business, Wilscam is an all-American kid who went to school on the west coast and now resides with his family in Paris, venturing back to New York City once every six weeks. Prior to HOMMAGE, Mr. Wilscam has held various executive management positions in start-up companies, as well as consulting firms, where he provided supply chain management and Internet retail solutions for top tier retail store chains such as Sephora, Saks Fifth Avenue and Sharper Image.*

*While we started the process of this “Sig Survey” a trip or two ago for Mr. Wilscam, the answers below were garnered through a lengthy and ongoing email exchange. In this, the eighth “Sig Survey”, I saw something in this Q&A that I hadn’t seen in others (which was part of the exercise of why I always ask the same seven questions each Survey), and that was Mr. Wilscam unabashed confidence in answering the last question, “What’s the ‘next big thing’?” His answer exuded the confidence I referenced above. It is the kind of answer that is given by one who is bent on creating, controlling and redefining a market category. HOMMAGE is a brand to watch, as Mr. Wilscam is a CEO to watch.*

**How would you describe HOMMAGE style?** The HOMMAGE brand signifies discerning style for the confident, successful, global businessman. Because shaving and grooming are such nostalgic rituals for men, the HOMMAGE line and the concept behind the HOMMAGE Atelier are designed to evoke a lifestyle that is classic yet modern, fundamental yet luxuriously rewarding at the same time. Masculinity is a key to the brand as well – the equipment is designed to appeal to our innate attraction to objects with functionality, high performance and sleek design.

**What’s your definition of luxury?** True luxury creates a sense of intimate comfort that feels exclusive. It can only be experienced by having a service or product that perfectly caters to your intuitive needs or basic desires. Luxury is results-driven, reliable and provides an experience that exceeds initial expectations every time.

**What’s your assessment of the luxury market today?** The definition of luxury is changing in the marketplace as well as in the consumer mindset. No longer are luxury goods aspirational, because they’ve become more attainable to the mass market. People are now realizing that true luxury is not associated with objects or financial means but instead can be found in the intimate, tailored nature of how a brand interacts with you. The more that companies understand and utilize their knowledge to interact with each client, the more luxurious it feels to the individual. In that way, the luxury market and service industry are becoming what they used to be – more personal.

**Is the US still a market driver for your business?** The US still defines the market for my business for the rest of the world. We launched the first full-fledged Atelier concept in New York on Madison Avenue in April. Despite the economic climate and our very private location – nestled on the penthouse level of a town house– appropriate media and our discerning clientele have found us and made themselves at home in our catered environment, a proof of concept that hotel groups such as the St.Regis, Mandarin Oriental, The Wynn have realized now and will be incorporating into their amenities with HOMMAGE Gentlemen’s Grooming Ateliers. The U.S. still sets the standard for the global market.

**What has been your most challenging project to date?** Men's grooming has hit the mainstream in the U.S. and product-driven brands have become a trend in the mass market. Though we were one of the first prestige brands to approach grooming as a lifestyle choice and position shaving and grooming as a masculine experience to be savored, mass-market brands quickly became so visible and accessible that had to re-educate our client base.

[So] once again, we had to differentiate ourselves from competing brands in what has become an overcrowded market. A big part of that involves expanding upon the unique concept that HOMMAGE offers – and that's where the Atelier came in. I wanted to take the men's grooming "space" to a new level. Instead of just making a personal bathroom or a room in a hotel spa comfortable for men, I wanted to build a full-fledged lounge and grooming "Atelier" that catered to men just as they would want in their own home.

The first Atelier opened in New York City this spring. Because of the economy, finding the right partner was a challenge but we got there in the end and I think that's because of how driven and passionate we were to make it happen.

**Describe the ideal HOMMAGE client...** The HOMMAGE client is a Renaissance man – successful, determined and sought-after. He's conscious of his appearance and the effect it has on his performance – in business and in his personal life. He also enjoys taking time out of his busy schedule to indulge in something that recharges, revives and most importantly, rewards him.

**What's the 'next big thing'?** In the world of men's grooming, the next best thing is bespoke barbering where your own, personal barber comes to you wherever you are. As the business world becomes even more demanding, men are finding it harder and harder to keep up with the changing trends and demands in grooming. In the future, HOMMAGE will offer personal butlers who travel to your home or office and service you with a cut or shave, all in the comfort of your personal space.