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Interviews

Marie Le Febvre Shows Us Her Urban Scents

06/02/17 04:27:59 (One comment)
by: **Miguel Matos**



Urban Scents is a niche fragrance brand based in Berlin with a Parisian heart. It embodies the idea of scent as art and art with scent. The brand's headquarters are installed inside a gallery where you can not only see but also smell the artwork. Besides creating the fragrances for Urban Scents, its owner and perfumer, **Marie Le Febvre**, also welcomes contemporary artists whose work she shows in her gallery on a regular basis, always following the concept of the visual interacting with the olfactory. I visited the gallery last month and got to meet the lovely and talented Marie.

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Marie inside her gallery with paintings by Colombian artist Daniela Elorza

"A passionate aviator, Parfumeur Créateur Marie Le Febvre is a discoverer of terrae incognitae with her plane just as much as with her senses. Like an infinity-shaped propeller blading through air, Marie pierces through olfactory terrains with her Urban Scents collection and made-to-measure perfume creations, using scent as a key to a journey into the world of the senses." - Urban Scents website



Previously, Marie lived in Paris and worked as a perfumer for Takasago where her husband Alexander Urban was creative director. They actually met at Takasago, fell in love and got married. Some years after, they decided to move to Berlin because they loved the city and had some friends there. Also, they thought that Berlin would be a nice place to raise their baby. After they moved, Marie started to understand that there was a chance that she could continue to work as a perfumer in Berlin, something that she thought was impossible to do. Nowadays, Urban Scents is a perfume brand and an art gallery where the visual artists work in collaboration with the perfumer to create special fragrances. I was curious to meet Marie Le Febvre and also to smell Urban

NEW PERFUMES

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Noir Toscane / Vanille Raisin
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Blue Oia / Vanille Muguet
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Sanguis Terrae



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Vetiver Moderno



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California Snow



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Mx.



Cristiano Ronaldo
CR7



Little Mix
Wishmaker Party Edition



Juicy Couture
Pretty in Purple



Juicy Couture
Rah Rah Rouge



Comme des Garçons
Andy Warhol's You're In



Natura
Una Artisan



O Boticário
Cuide-se Bem Morango e Leite

Scents for the first time.



Miguel Matos: Marie, why did you think that your career as a perfumer was over when you came to Berlin?

Marie Le Febvre: I was used to working in Paris in a big company, with access to many raw materials. When I came to Berlin I thought it would be difficult to continue as a perfumer. When you don't have access to a good laboratory and good materials, it's a dead end for a perfumer. Or so I thought. Me and my husband, we had the idea of creating our own brand with nice bottles and beautiful fragrances inside. We wanted to create a small family company and actually it's called Urban Scents because Urban is my husband's family name. We started to develop this little baby while we were still in Paris. Then we moved to Berlin, where in fact everything is possible. It was only after we moved that we got a phone call from the owner of **Accords et Parfums**, a small fragrance production in Grasse that used to be owned by Edmond Roudnitska. When he passed away his assistant Olivier Maure took over the company. Olivier called me and told me that the company was opening itself for independent perfumers. He asked me if I would like to become a partner of the team, supplying me with all the ingredients I need. Suddenly I had the brand and the exclusive supplier and I am still working as an independent perfumer for clients. It's a wonderful situation. I am doing bespoke perfume, fragrances for small fashion designers, musicians, room fragrances for specific spaces...





The gallery with the visual works of Daniela Elorza and the scents of Marie Le Febvre

Miguel: You work inside an art gallery. Tell me about this concept.

Marie: People who come inside know what they are looking for and they are interested in art or in fragrance. This is not situated in a central place, or in a shopping district. So it's nice to organize events here, have meetings, organizing collaborations with artists. We are always creating something but most of the times it's very experimental and not commercial. It's not a perfume shop but even in the art scene we are not considered an art gallery, also because we have here a laboratory, so we are seen more as an experimental multidisciplinary project.



Miguel: Anyone can come here and make a perfume with you?

Marie: Yes, but to make a "made-to-measure" perfume it takes time and it's quite expensive. Most of my clients for bespoke are from the Middle East. Berlin is a very international city so I meet people from everywhere. I am very happy.



Marie Le Febvre and her laboratory

Miguel: When did you officially launch Urban Scents?

Marie: Two years ago, initially with five fragrances, and the idea was to explore each main olfactory direction: citrus, floral, chypre, woody and oriental. Recently we launched a vetiver scent. Maybe we should discover them?



Miguel: Yes, please!

Marie: Let's start with **Gunpowder Cologne**. This is an interpretation of the citrus family. It's an overdose of a high-quality bergamot from Sicily. It's called Gunpowder Cologne because of gunpowder green tea with a metallic facet, a touch of lavender absolute and lots of musks. The idea was to achieve a long-lasting freshness and the trick was to add an overdose of hedione. It's classic but also very modern.

Then there is **Desert Rose** as an exploration of the floral field with rose. Frankly speaking, I don't like rose, so it was kind of challenging for me to create a rose that I would like to wear. This rose is not sweet or heavy and it goes well with ginger and cardamom on the top. There is a lot of rose and woods and a good amount of salicylates to make a sandy mineral sensation and that's why it is called Desert Rose.

Vetiver Reunion is a vetiver fragrance and it is very special. This is the new one that we have just launched and it's called that way because it uses a quality of vetiver from the Reunion Island. It used to be the main production center for vetiver in the past but actually, they stopped the production two years ago. Since I made my case study around that vetiver as a young perfumer, when I knew about that I went to the distillery and asked if it was possible to keep it. They still have a tiny field there and there is only one person there who knows how to make the distillation. We use that vetiver in this perfume. This one is very important for me. I didn't plan to launch a vetiver fragrance so soon but if I waited two years maybe they wouldn't have that small field left and there would be no more vetiver from Reunion anymore. Regarding the composition, it's very simple and based on vetiver and musks.



Miguel: The one that you are holding now I smelled as soon as I entered the gallery and saw the bottles. I love that! It is green and floral, fresh and warm and it goes from past to future with something salty in the middle. I'm in love...

Marie: This is Lost Paradise and it's a chypre. I grew up in the 80's and at that time sillage was a very important thing in perfume. This was the idea, I was working on how they used to build chypre fragrances in the 80's and then tried to modernize it. It starts fruity because of osmanthus with apricot facets. Then, instead of the typical rose I used magnolia. It's a classic chypre structure with a fruity opening, a floral heart and an aromatic element that makes it a bit masculine. A lot of men like this. The base is classic also, with a high-quality vintage patchouli and oak moss and also a tiny touch of ethyl maltol to make it a bit sweet and push the fruity side. After this we can explore

Singular Oud. I wanted to create a different oud scent. I use a specific quality of agarwood which doesn't have this cheese/fecal quality that I dislike. It has a typical structure with saffron and rose, lots of oud, incense and I disturbed the balance with a green fig top note that is something unexpected. I also put a lot of iso e super and vertofix as modern molecules to make it lighter.

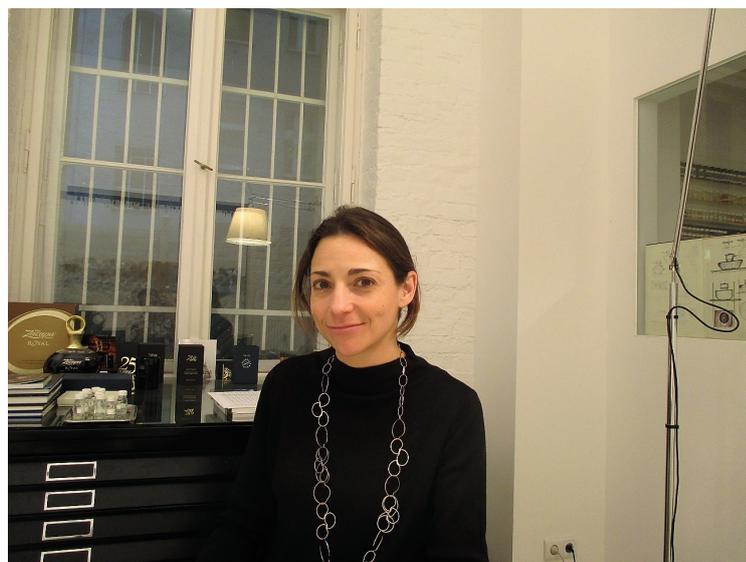


Miguel: I think it's the first time that I see oud mixed with fig...

Marie: And last we have an oriental scent called Sensual Blend. I wanted to do a modern, leathery ambery note with ambrox, ambroxan, sandalwood, cinnamon and vanilla. It is really warm on the skin and it's mostly base notes.

Miguel: How would you define your composition style?

Marie: I use a lot of natural materials but also synthetics because I think they bring some colors to the palette and also some novelties which is great. I am French, I have this touch of old perfumery but I like to make this ping pong between past and today.



The following hour, Marie and I were lost in the laboratory. She showed me everything I wanted to smell, of natural and synthetic raw materials. We spoke about art projects, scent art and the love for vintage perfumery. I could have stayed all day long talking with Marie. She is talented, grounded and passionate. I am sure we will smell a lot of wonderful Urban Scents in the future and witness the brand grow. In Urban Scents, even the bottles are simple but very special. They are all hand made in France in small quantities. The caps are hand made in a small factory in Italy.

Urban Scents is a modest company and the philosophy is to grow with consistency even if that means to go slow and small. Some ingredients in the perfumes come from very limited sources and even the bottles take time to manufacture. That's why the brand is very limited in terms of quantities. Urban Scents is now distributed in 15 shops in Germany and Austria. The gallery and laboratory is located in 57 Eisenacher Straße, Berlin. You can also see more information and buy their products on the brand's [Official Website](#).



Miguel Matos joined Fragrantica in 2013 and edits the Portuguese version Fragrantica.com.br. Miguel also writes for [Beautyalmanac.com](#).

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Angela Agiannidou



This is such an enjoyable article Miguel! I like the concept and ethos of Marie Lefebvre's creations. For me the connection between Art and the olfactory has long been overdue given the effect perfume can have in one's senses apart from the known use as a means of personal grooming. The nearest I came to it was years ago in an exhibition at the Tate Modern when an artist's installation art was linked to particular kinds of smells/odours. The philosophy of growing slow and small using quality ingredients is a breath of fresh air in a sea of bland, generic mass production and the whole experimental idea is very appealing and it can open many other unexplored venues. Of course, it will come as a total surprise my interest in Desert Rose but I can't get the combo fig/Oud out of my mind either. Great things ahead from Urban scents.

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