The Art of Aroma – Niche Perfumes

By Misaki Imagawa



"You never truly know a place until you've smelled it"

Someone once said, "You can read travelogues, watch documentaries and examine photographs; but you don't really *know* a place until you've *smelled* it." The truth in these words is not just limited to places. There is an extraordinary amount of descriptive knowledge in our heads revolving around the senses – sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. Of these, smell is considered the hardest to describe simply because there are so many scents in the world that are not analagous to others. Sometimes, the subtlety of any given scent remains in our memory – completing our world of perception, heightening our experience and poignantly touching our hearts – and that is precisely why fragrance is such a significant industry worldwide.



Xerjoff creates luxury scents made from the most valuable ingredients combined with exquisite Italian craftsmanship

The history of fragrance goes back thousands of years to the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations that used crushed herbs and spices to create aromatic oils. The oldest perfume residue ever discovered came from a large perfumery in Cyprus that collapsed in an earthquake nearly 4000 years ago. The art of mixing and the prestige of wearing perfume is clearly an ancient endeavor that has continually been refined as the centuries have passed. Throughout recorded history fragrance has been used by men and women alike to enhance beauty and appeal, amplify presence, and finally, to make personal statements.



Volnay, originally founded in Paris in 1919, was recently revived when the secret formula for the original perfume base was rediscovered

Since the 18th and 19th centuries, Europe has been the epicenter of the fragrance industry; however, memorable scents have been developed all over the world. The creation of these scents is the responsibility of experts known as “Noses” in the fragrance industry. Many noses train in Grasse, France, also known as the "world's capital of perfumes." There, they learn to distinguish and identify over 2000 individual scents. Noses are masters of nuance, creating the proprietary formulas at the heart of perfume production. Historically, they have been employed by large well known perfume houses; however, some of the best among them have gone on to create what is now a trend in the fragrance industry – the rise of niche fragrance brands.



Ramon Monegal is the namesake of a master "Nose" or perfumer coming from a prestigious lineage of Spanish perfumers

Niche fragrance brands do not mass produce perfumes in large quantities nor create them for the sake of supplementing designer, fashion or celebrity brands. Instead, they present collections of exclusive scents with a focus on the highest quality raw ingredients. The best of these brands focus on developing singular formulas distinct from mainstream scents; have been developed by noses coming from long lineages of perfumers; or represent the revival of once prominent perfume houses. What all these brands – and the noses creating them – have in common is the dedication to perfumery as an art form.



Mark Buxton, the master perfumer behind countless designer brands loved by millions is now releasing fragrances under his own name

Niche fragrance brands such as Volnay, Xerjoff, Ramon Monegal, Mark Buxton and Strange Invisible Perfumes bear names destined to be memorable because they produce scents that engage the intellect. Sometimes these scents make an immediate statement. At other times they take the mind on a gradually unfolding journey. Yet, they all have a story to tell. These stories are usually contained within beautifully designed flacons hinting at the themes found inside; but the scent is always the narrator and ultimately, the star that steals the show. Like everything else found at PRIMITIVE, the scents produced by niche fragrance brands are collectible. They capture our imagination, hearts, and of course – our *noses!*



Strange Invisible Perfumes specializes in botanical perfumery, their scents made from only certified organic natural essences