

generation next

Blending scent and sensibility results in the perfect infusion for boutique perfumer *Renée Griffith*.

Text by Annemarie Kiely. Photography by Earl Carter.



This page Presenting her fragrances in a form and style (with packaging designed by graphics guru Garry Emery) that nods to the monochrome understatement of such chic standard-bearers as Chanel No. 5, Renée Griffith has discreetly put her name up front but left the packaging "blind" enough for women to imprint their own signature.

personal effects



This page clockwise from bottom "I wanted to speak to women that desire something personal, unique and definitively them," says Renée Griffith, of her simple, yet striking fragrance range, titled Renée; Griffith at work; packaging is kept to a minimum.



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"Scent and memory are deeply connected," declares Renée Griffith brushing her hair back with a lace-cuffed hand that wafts the aroma of freshly picked snow peaches into the air. "Sometimes, before the source of a smell reveals itself you are transported to another time, another place. I'm interested in the power perfume has to evoke feelings and emotions."

No, she's never read Marcel Proust's *The Remembrance of Things Past*, but this young perfumer nods knowingly at the mention of a tea-soaked madeleine cake so provocatively invading the French novelist's senses that an entire town and its people sprang into being. "I was on holiday with my fiancé in Bali. Every night we would walk home to our room and there was a sculpted tuberose plant right at the entry," she says of her own Proustian memory trigger. "I would pick a flower and sit it by my bed, the humidity would fill the air with its scent. Now, whenever I smell a tuberose, that time crystallises."

Wishing to share her own "perfect moment" with her wedding party, Griffith later chose this memory-laden bloom as the basis of a scent that she custom-blended, then decanted into antique vials and presented in hand-made boxes to her entourage. "It gained momentum from there," says the 30 year old whose dream of owning a fragrance company began on the table top of her mother's boudoir. "Suddenly, people were asking me to custom-make all sorts of scented products. But turning it into a real concern? Everyone tried to dissuade me." Ignoring the caution she visited the boutique perfumeries of Annick Goutal in Paris and Jo Malone in London and researched the distillation of essential oils – a study that led Griffith to the French town of Grasse in Provence, the centre of flower and herb growing for the perfume industry.

The result is Renée – a range of fragrances that conjure forgotten times and wonderful places, laced with the subtleties of nature. Mediterranean Lily "is reminiscent of walking through a Mediterranean garden on a sunny day where the warm summer wind carries the scent of wild flowers through the air," while Snowpeach captures every aspect of the plant "from the freshness of its green leaves...to the fuzziness of its pink skin". And there's a "contemporary, urban" range on the way – simply named 'you, me, I' – which further pushes the notion of taking ownership of a scent. "The beautiful thing about fragrance is that it might be of a time," she reflects, "but can remain forever timeless." □

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