



Kristen Michèle is one of those rare women who can pick out a particular scent across the room and break it down into specific notes. As the mastermind behind Kristen Michèle Parfum, her ready-made collection of *Épice Orientale*, *Notes Fraîches* and *Fleurs Blanches* scents that range from spicy and seductive to fresh and modern, she has gained quite the following of clients. 944 caught up with Michèle in her Newport Beach studio to discuss her creative process.

944: Can you explain what events sparked your intrigue in fragrances?

KRISTEN MICHÈLE: I remember always being so captivated by scent at a young age. It was as if I was trying to figure out what these clear, smelly liquids were and understand why they sparked an immediate physiological response upon sniffing. Probably a combination of being very artistic, curious and having an eye for all things beautiful is what paved the way for me.

944: What were the first steps toward developing your career in perfume design?

KM: Building a foundation of knowledge in all aspects of the raw materials, the fragrance industry and the packaging industry were some of the first things necessary in order to turn a passionate idea into reality and form. Travel and study went hand-in-hand for me, as well. Once I had what I felt was a pretty well-rounded background (self-study, apprenticeships and guidance from people in the industry) and had a half dozen scents created and market-tested with positive feedback, I believed that I, too, could enter this world of niche perfumers and contribute pieces of art and hold my own, so to speak. And that, of course, was just the beginning of a wild journey.



STIMULATING THE SENSES

FROM MODERN TO SOPHISTICATED, THE POWER OF SMELL IS MESMERIZING

944: What is the process for creating a specific fragrance?

KM: That is like asking an actor to give up his secrets to the stage or asking an abstract artist to explain just what he was thinking when he made a certain piece of art, but I'll do my best. At times, I will create without an intention. In other words, I sort of free-associate with my oils — I always use structure in order to have a balanced scent, although ... there always needs to be top, middle and base notes in a formula; each has its own role but ultimately plays a part in the overall final product. You can think of it in terms of music: there is a beginning, middle and end of a song. If the song suddenly ended after the middle section or on an unusual, un-flowing pitch, it would sound and feel strange. In cases where I work with clients on their custom perfume, I follow their lead. If they leave it up to me completely, which almost never really happens, I use my intuition, as well as simple questions to guide the fragrance through.

944: Why do you believe scents are such an important part of memories?

KM: Well, it is a fact that scent conjures immediate memorable experiences — it affects the limbic part of the brain. Much study has gone into this and is still studied today because of the mystery. It is quite fascinating that the olfactory sense is the only of our five senses that has such an effect on memory and that it is so instantaneous. I believe people are unconsciously creating memories through scents they come into contact with all the time. It is something that is realized only later when that scent or scents pass through their noses again that they recall the image.

Create a memory in bottle at www.kristenmicheleparfumeur.com