

THE

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LETTER

HAVE A
FRAGRANT
FLING

+

MAKE A
PERFUMED
PILGRIMAGE

+

BE AMAZED BY
AMBERGRIS

THE NOSE HAS
TO TRAVEL



editor's LETTER

In an homage to the late Diana Vreeland (one of my style heroes), we're calling this issue 'The Nose Has to Travel' – a tongue-in-cheek reference to the utterly fascinating documentary about the *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* editor, which was titled 'The Eye Has to Travel'.



Because in our experience, travel definitely broadens the mind – and the nose. Places become inextricably linked with smells, in our memories – for me, the jasmine scrambling through an open window on the island of Lamu in Kenya, the earthiness of the spice souks of Damascus and Morocco, or that hot, slightly burned pretzel scent which to me is the smell of Manhattan's Midtown. And of course, claiming an important place in our memory banks are the defining fragrances we wear on holiday, which transport us back there with one spritz when we're home. So we asked some of our favourite bloggers and writers to share their 'holiday romance perfumes', on p.16.

For our ingredient focus in this edition, Bethan Cole looks at ambergris – definitely a much-travelled ingredient. This weird-looking whale by-product can spend decades bobbing on the ocean before turning up – entirely unpredictably – on a beach somewhere, where it's quite often first sleuthed out by a dog being walked by its owner. Once transformed into a perfume ingredient, ambergris is prized for its astonishing warmth and richness – and as a fixative, delivering staying power. See p.10 for its fascinating salty tale.

If you're headed to London in the next month or so, meanwhile, your nose is in for a treat. On p.34, we report from 'Perfume: A Sensory Journey Through Contemporary Scent', the much talked-about exhibition at Somerset House showcasing 10 iconic fragrances which shaped perfume history, 10 contemporary creations (evoked via thought-provoking 'installations') – plus, treat-of-treats, an actual lab as the finale, staffed by working perfumers from fragrance house Givaudan. (Do check out our recommendations for must-visit perfume museums and shows abroad, too.)

We also bring you news of two new fragrance names which are inextricably linked with places. Suzy Nightingale packed her bucket, space and tape recorder to talk to Dom Bridges of Haeckels – certainly Margate's only perfume house (see p.28) – while on p.20 we learn from Amy Christiansen Si-Ahmed about setting up a social enterprise for the Moroccan women who harvest the ingredients which can be enjoyed in her Sana Jardin fragrances, launching imminently in Harrods.

And will you be notching up any 'hair miles', this summer? With hair perfumes most definitely now 'a thing', our run-down of the most gorgeous and fragrant mists on p.25 is – well, not to be missed.

So it just remains for me to say: wherever your nose will be travelling – even if it's in the direction of a deckchair in the garden – may the rest of your summer be fabulously fragrant...

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The blonde AND THE BERBERS

In an age where we hear a lot about conscious consumerism, a dynamic former social worker is seeking to change the world – one bottle of perfume at a time, writes Jo Fairley...

What an exotic figure Amy Christiansen (as she then was) must have cut as a teenager, wafting a *sillage* of patchouli in her wake wherever she went in La Grange, the suburb of Chicago where she grew up. Amy still cuts a pretty exotic figure today, in London's Soho Hotel – in a traffic-stopping, pom-pom-ed yellow sundress accessorised by Grecian sandals snaking up long, tanned legs. And yes, there's definitely still a whiff of patchouli in the air – a pulsing base note from Tiger By Her Side, one of the four Sana Jardin fragrances (created by the legendary Carlos Benaim, no less) that Amy is about to launch into Harrods.

If we have anyone to thank for Amy's passion for exotic perfumes – and her social conscience, of which more in a moment – it is her grandmother. 'Grammy' (real name Mary Pomeroy) was Amy's travelling companion as she grew up, whisking her away from the ages of nine to 20 to the Middle East and North Africa, from Morocco to Abu Dhabi via Egypt. In the 1950s, her grandmother had started the US Delegation for Friendship Among Women, its goal to increase communication between American women and those in developing countries. 'She tucked me in her suitcase, took me around the world – and created a blueprint for how I would live my life,' says Amy now.

Sometimes, travel was dusty and difficult. Other times, they basked in luxurious surroundings; her grandmother had connections with royal families, where they would be guests of the sheikhas. 'I was on a magic carpet ride with a woman who I felt could do almost anything,' smiles Amy. 'My love of smell was also instilled in me then, via the souks – and by my grandmother, who wore a cloud of Opium (and still does) as she traversed the world.' Back home in her suburban bedroom, Amy would dab on a drop of patchouli

and fill her teenage bedroom with a miasma of Crabtree & Evelyn Moroccan Room Spray, 'which I thought was the most celestial 1960s scent...'

Whether nature or nurture, meanwhile, her Minnesota-born grandmother's emphasis on the importance of giving back influenced Amy to become a social worker. Even as a young teenager, she was volunteering to work with low-income, developmentally disabled youngsters from Chicago. And after a Bachelor's and a Masters in social work, Amy found herself working in a domestic violence shelter, doing countless assessments in school and hospital settings with families in Chicago's roughest area, the West Side. 'At the end of the day, I realised that what these people needed most was access to economic opportunities and jobs.'

A move to New York beckoned – with a brief and unhappy stint at a PR agency, 'which I think I took because I thought it would impress my boyfriend.' The job didn't last – instead, she went on to work as a volunteer development advisor for the Bill Clinton Foundation and for the Robin Hood Foundation – but the relationship did. Amy married lawyer and Karim Si-Ahmed – part Algerian Berber, part Syrian, part Saudi Arabian – when she was 30. The couple now have two sons, 9-year-old Aden ('it means Eden in Arabic') and 5-year-old Zade ('which translates as growth and abundance').

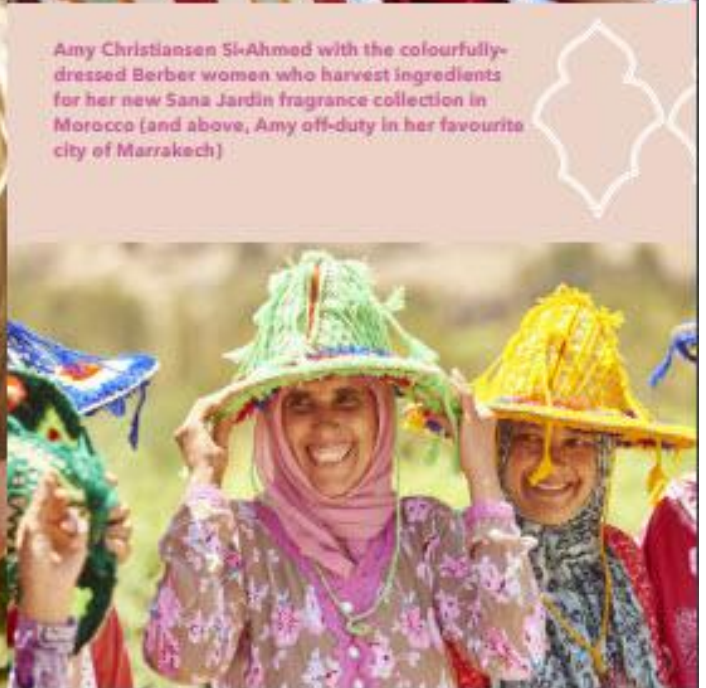
After their wedding, Karim and Amy adopted a nomadic lifestyle for his work – heading to Bahrain and Dubai, where Amy advised local charities on fund-raising. Here in London (now the couple's home), she worked for NGOs including the Arab Forum for Social Innovation, and for three years with Cherie Blair's Foundation for Women.

'But running alongside all of this,' she smiles, 'there was my love of perfume... The scents I'd encountered on

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Amy Christiansen Si-Ahmed with the colourfully-dressed Berber women who harvest ingredients for her new Sana Jardin fragrance collection in Morocco (and above, Amy off-duty in her favourite city of Marrakech)





Amy with the women of the Berber cooperative who not only pick flowers for her Sana Jardin fragrances (left), but 'repurpose' waste from the process, retaining 100% of the profits from the sales of floral waters, compost and candles themselves



my travels were enchanting to me: the pure and golden shimmer of orange blossom, the mystical, enveloping depth of sandalwood, the seduction of jasmine blooming at night.' Right after Aden was born, a friend gave Amy a copy of Celia Lyttleton's fascinating book *The Scent Trail*, in which the author embarks on a journey that takes her from the rose-growing region of Isparta in Turkey to the Tuscan hills (where iris grows wild), via Sri Lanka and Yemen, with its frankincense trail. 'That amazing book has been on my bedside ever since.'

Not long afterwards, Amy found herself on a girly weekend with a dynamic group of old friends in Miami. 'We were drinking our wine, sitting and talking, as you do, and I was wondering out loud what I was going to do with my life, now that I was a mother. They'd also heard me lamenting that I couldn't find a perfume that truly ticked the boxes for me: beautiful, exotic – but also as natural as possible, and making some kind of social impact. One of my friends said: "Amy, why don't you start your own brand?" My first instinct was to say, "I couldn't possibly do that..."'

But one of her friends happened to know someone whose mother was a 'nose'. A call was made. And a series of serendipitous events and introductions ultimately led Amy to the door in Morocco of Les Arômes de Maroc, a key supplier of orange blossom, jasmine and rose to the perfume world, and a meeting with CEO Jalal Charaf.

'I told him I wanted to start a perfume brand – but that I wanted to do something to help the women (because it is always women) who harvest the flowers. I thought he was going to laugh at me. To my astonishment, instead he explained that he used to work for the World Bank [the international financial institution which provides loans to countries around the world for development programmes] – and that he absolutely supported the idea.'

Amy's dream was to create a luxury fragrance brand with an innovative business model that could also offer the opportunity of a social enterprise for the flower harvesters. And she's made it happen. To empower them economically, a small co-operative has been set up – with 13 women (headed up by a president elected by the flower-pickers themselves) now creating products repurposed from waste created during flower harvest and distillation.

They market orange flower water, candles made from flower wax, and compost made from the waste flowers discarded by the factory. Formerly, Les Arômes de Maroc sent these by-products to landfill – but via a clever arrangement Amy made with Jamal Charaf, they are 'upcycled' by the women, with 100% of the profits earned retained by these female Berber perfume harvesters. Initially, the products were sold at local markets, 'but they're now in talks with a supermarket which is Morocco's equivalent to Waitrose,' explains Amy excitedly.

The late Anita Roddick used to talk about 'business karma' – the idea that when you're trying to do good through business, good things happen. Certainly, the heavens were aligned when Jalal introduced her to Carlos Benaim – truly a legend in the perfume world, whose list of creations would stretch to pages but includes Viktor & Rolf

Flowerbomb, Elizabeth Taylor White Diamonds, Dunhill Icon, Frédéric Malle Eau de Magnolia, Boucheron Jaipur Bracelet, Ralph Lauren Polo and more. When Amy explained her concept over Skype, 'He said something I'll never forget: "I don't know why, but something in my heart is telling me to do this..." And Carlos was so enthused, he ended up giving me the first four submissions just four weeks later.'

The debut quartet is strikingly beautiful – and most definitely offers a magic carpet ride in every bottle. Savage Jasmine swirls with – yes – night-blooming jasmine, wrapped around intoxicating musk. Sandalwood Temple takes Moroccan neroli oil (from that orange blossom), enveloping it in Atlas cedarwood, Haitian vetiver, creamy vanilla and East Indian sandalwood. The fragrances Amy finds herself wearing most often, however, are the velvety amber Tiger By Her Side (which showcases Moroccan rose alongside Somalian incense and Indonesian patchouli) on her body, and in her hair a veil of Berber Blonde, which is filled with the light of Sana Jardin's signature orange blossom, alongside Moroccan neroli oil and musk. (Its name was inspired by Amy and Karim's 'Berber blond' sons.) 'For me, Berber Blonde is the true scent and vibrancy of Morocco, that country I love so deeply, in a bottle.'

And that bottle...? It was created by Pierre Dinand, foremost designer in the flacon world – innovatively, entirely from recycled glass, with a recycled cap, in line with Sana Jardin's 'sustainable luxury' ethos. 'I've tried to make as many touchpoints as ethical as possible,' she says. What Amy hopes, through her venture, 'is that it starts a dialogue about how the fragrance world can be more environmentally responsible. We have become conscious consumers in so many areas, why not perfume? And my plan is definitely to expand the programme outside Morocco.'

In August 2017, those four initial fragrances will launch into Harrods – followed later by another trio (created this time by Pascal Gaurin, who works alongside Carlos Benaim). Ironically, building up to the launch – managing every aspect of the business herself, from liaising with suppliers to making the sales calls to fragrance buyers, taking care of social media (hashtag #flowerrevolution) and more – has temporarily clipped this nomad's wings; this summer, Amy won't even be making her usual trip home to Chicago to see her family – including, of course, the inspirational Grammy.

The bottom line, believes this strong woman – who clearly hails from a whole line of strong women like Grammy – is that 'a bottle of perfume can change lives and change the way business is done. For me, Sana Jardin is all about female empowerment. Because aside from anything else, if women had more of the power, you can bet there'd be more perfume in the world, and fewer guns...'

With that, Amy Christiansen Si-Ahmed strides back out into the concrete jungle. Trailing – as ever – a whisper of patchouli, in her wake. And most definitely set fair to change the world, one bottle of perfume at a time. ■

Sana Jardin Eaux de Parfum are priced £180 for 100ml each, launching in August exclusively in Harrods. For more information and updates, visit sanajardin.com