

Strange Invisible PERFUMES

WRITTEN by: *Jolene Hart*

PHOTOGRAPHY Provided by: *Strange Invisible Perfumes*

What's the best way to capture a treasured memory or moment? Is it with a photograph, a journal entry or a story told and retold? For perfumer Alexandra Balahoutis, founder of Strange Invisible Perfumes, memories, visions and pure imagination come alive in fragrance.

"Some formulas seem to design themselves. Others elude me for months or years," says Balahoutis of the visions behind her hand-blended, fragrant creations.

Balahoutis identified her gift for perfumery at a young age and trained under master botanical perfumer John Steele, rejecting the traditional French aromatic chemistry education, before establishing the Strange Invisible Perfumes brand in 2000. Both the complexity and the challenge of working with botanicals attracted Balahoutis, and her choice to craft luxury perfumes from purely botanical essences quickly set her apart. Her early commitment to using natural essences made a significant contribution to the resurgence in botanical perfumery that we see today. And with the creation Strange Invisible Perfumes, natural fragrance became exceptional and unexpected.

With names like Fair Verona, Tour D'Ivoire, Persica, Moon Garden and Arunima, Balahoutis' perfumes conjure exotic exploits rather than familiar memories. But once worn, they easily take on the personal moods and memories of their wearer. Of course the com-



plexity of each fragrance blend means that every wear can be a new experience; nothing about Strange Invisible fragrances feels routine. If there is one constant about perfumes from Strange Invisible, it's that each is a work of art, strikingly sophisticated and evocative.

What sets Strange Invisible perfumes apart from the creations of conventional fragrance houses? Each of the brand's fragrances is a blend of certified organic, biodynamic, wildcrafted and hydro-distilled essences. Balahoutis' discerning nose ensures that each essence is of the highest purity and quality. To meet that rigorous standard, the brand extracts fragrances in-house at a laboratory that is currently undergoing organic certification, and sources from distillers around the world who produce only the finest botanical essences from plants, flowers, seeds, woods and resins.

"The art of perfumery begins with the art of distilling essences. The perfumer then arranges these distillates into gorgeous, olfactory narratives. Making perfume without real essences is like writing a book without real words," says Balahoutis. The result? Every note of Strange Invisible fragrance comes from nature, without so much as a drop of synthetic scent. The depth and intricacy of nature is clearly at the core of the Strange Invisible Perfumes brand.

"Botanicals have complexity lacking in artificial scents...I really like authenticity. It is a big theme in my life," says Balahoutis.

What can one expect from a Strange Invisible perfume or eau de parfum? To be truthful, expectation is a near impossibility when it comes to Balahoutis' fragrances. It's essential to get to know Strange Invisible perfumes by surrendering to the experience. "Let them be what they are. Do not expect them to remind of you of the com-

mercial fragrances you've worn in the past," says Balahoutis of her natural blends. Take in the orange blossom, sandalwood, tuberose, lavender and patchouli of Fire and Cream and you'll get lost in its smoky, creamy warmth. The leather, African roses, spearmint and black tea of Black Rosette lend a nighttime edge to traditional florals, while the magnolia, vanilla and vetiver of Magazine Street feel both romantic and wild. Still haven't found the ideal blend for you? Balahoutis offers A Portrait in Perfume, a premium service for clients who wish to have a custom-blended scent created to suit their aromatic preferences.

The latest scent from Strange Invisible Perfumes, released this fall, is the brand's first eau de parfum tailored to men: Peloponnesian. The scent, inspired by the Aegean Sea and the Greek peninsula, hints of citrus groves, vineyards, mountain honey and sea air, blended to produce a clean, crisp fragrance. What's next for Strange Invisible Perfumes?

"There are a few exciting collaborations on the horizon that I can't talk about quite yet. I would also love to open a shop in London," says Balahoutis. We can only assume that her talent and imagination will quickly take here there.**

STRANGE INVISIBLE PERFUMES
available online at
www.futurenatural.com



Alexandra Balahoutis of Strange Invisible Perfumes takes natural perfumery to new heights