

A Reflection Of My Client: Nathalie Feisthauer At The UK Launch Of Pelargonium From Aedes De Venustas



by **Persolaise**

09th June, 2017

 17 comments



Nathalie Feisthauer

I hesitate to use the word 'feisty' about someone whose name is Feisthauer, but it's the main one that keeps popping into my mind as I chat with the creator of **Eau Des Merveilles**, **Putain Des Palaces**, **Honour Man** and now, **Pelargonium**, the latest fragrance from Aedes De Venustas. **Nathalie Feisthauer** fizzes with energy. Having spent several years at Symrise and Givaudan, she decided to go independent two years ago, and perhaps some of that bravery of spirit comes through in the way she responds to my questions. She smiles. She giggles. She gesticulates. She veers off into anecdotes. And before the interview begins, she insists on taking a photo of me with Basenotes founder, Grant Osborne, who's by my side. "But I have to have a picture of Persolaise together with Basenotes!"

When I manage to turn the attention back on her, I start our conversation by asking her to tell me about her contribution to the **Aedes portfolio**.



Pelargonium

Nathalie Feisthauer: Pelargonium is the Latin name for geranium. It has a rosy part and a minty part, and also an incense part. For me it's not a floral note and this perfume isn't floral.

Persolaise: Did Karl Bradl and Robert Gerstner of Aedes insist that you include an incense note in the composition?

NF: No.

P: Because you'd already included one?

NF: Yes, because I'm not stupid. But in this one, for me, it's not only the incense note that is the Aedes signature. It could be vetivert, or a spice, but done in a way that is not rounded, but is still elegant.

P: It doesn't sound like it's going to be similar to **Malle's Geranium Pour Monsieur**.

NF: No! **Frederic Malle** went very, very far into the minty part of geranium. For me it's almost borderline toothpaste. I feel like I'm in a bathroom. Here, in Pelargonium, the suggestion of the greenness comes from the geranium and from some spice also. Elemi gives a peppery feeling, vetivert, a lot of cedar. I would say it's the comfort zone of the tastes of Robert and Karl.

P: You've just made this perfume for a brand which has so far enjoyed a fair amount of success on the independent or semi-independent scene. Do you have a view on the fact that several larger brands have been buying independent perfume houses?

NF: For me the fact that **Estée Lauder** and all the big brands are buying niche brands means they're admitting that they've failed. The way they work - which I know very well - is that they talk about creativity, but their goal is to make something that someone would like in Manila and Buenos Aires and everywhere. They have to make money. But they waste so much time saying they have to be unique or whatever. And at the end of the day they make something that smells like **La Vie Est Belle** or **Invictus** or **Fierce**. They make something that they think is creative, but actually it's not. For me, niche is about having an identity and telling a special story. The big brands buy creative brands because with their processes they cannot do that sort of work.

P: So will the bought brands suffer?

NF: That's my concern. I really wonder what's going to happen. They say that the brands have all the creative freedom, but at the end of the day, those brands are in the system. I don't know. We'll see.

Advertisement — article continues below

P: You're the first female perfumer who's made a fine fragrance for Aedes, if we don't count **Olivia Giacobetti's** candle. Do you think you can smell whether a scent has been made by a man or a woman?

NF: No. But yes, maybe, for some. Like, for example, for me **Christine Nagel** is a seductress. She's very feminine. And her perfumery is like her.

P: But do you recognise it as the work of Nagel or as the work of a woman?

NF: You know, 20 years ago I was working in New York and **Sophia Grojsman** was the biggest perfumer. She's one of the most talented perfumers in the world, but she's very

short, wears boots up to here, leather, orange hair, black eyes. She played on the witch look. She didn't fit into the blond, corporate American image. And she's made the most beautiful, feminine perfumes like **Paris**, **Eternity**, **White Linen** and all those. And once she said something to me: "As a woman who is older or fat or whatever, maybe I know more than other women about what it takes to seduce somebody." I thought that was very interesting.

P: Which perfume do you most wish you'd made?

NF: A lot. I have a list. **L'Heure Bleue**, for sure. I love **Giorgio** and **Poison**. **Feminité Du Bois**. **Eau De Bulgari**. **Light Blue** also, in a way.



Eau des Merveilles

P: So finally, speaking of classics, when you were working on **Eau Des Merveilles** with Ralf Schwieger, did you know it was going to be a hit?

NF: Truly, not at all. I was in Paris and Ralf was at Givaudan in New York. And we started with an ambergris accord. At that time, **Miracle from Lancôme** was a bestseller - a fruity, sparkling bay rose - so I kept trying to put some of those notes into the mods for **Hermès**. And one day, (Creative Director) Veronique Gautier said to me, "If you keep doing that, I'm going to kick you off the project." And I said, "Yes, but you always say you want something creative and at the end of the day you launch a stupid fruity-floral musky scent. I'm fed up of hearing this pitch about creativity." And one day Veronique said, "Oh by the way, you've won the project." I was so happy. But I would not have guessed that it would be so successful. It echoed with a lot of people who wore

it. And you're happy when something like that happens once in your life. When people compliment me on it, I always say that I'm just a reflection of my client. Veronique was the one who pressed the button to launch something without fruity or floral notes.

Pelargonium by Aedes de Venustas is available now

Share this



17 comments | Add your comment