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# CHRISTIE'S

## INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE



## THE ADVENTURE & ESCAPE ISSUE

ON THE COVER

RED GATE FARM: THE ULTIMATE MARTHA'S VINEYARD RETREAT

INSIDE

Living the high life—the joy of rooftop gardens  
*Home scented home: the finest bespoke interior fragrances*  
More than 140 exquisite properties from around the world

Words **BETHAN COLE**

*Fine-art principles: "I'm a creative. I work in an aroma studio much like an artist's studio to create my designs," says painter-turned perfumer Dawn Spencer Hurwitz, pictured exclusively for *Christie's International Real Estate* magazine by Paul Miller.*

Personal and evocative, an expertly chosen home fragrance can elevate a cherished sanctuary to new heights of comfort. We meet the alchemists perfecting the ancient art of perfumery



# Custom Scent Menu:

	1oz spray and rollerball	1 dram oil/essence	4oz. Organic lotion/wash/oil
1 Note	\$70	\$30	\$19.50
2 Notes	\$75	\$58	\$24.50
3 Notes	\$85	\$68	\$29.50

\* prices vary for pure aromatherapy essential oils  
& additional notes are \$10.00 each





*Encyclopedic knowledge:* Dawn Spencer Hurwitz's home fragrances include modern musks and ambers, sheer wood notes, exotic florals, and warm spices.



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hick, heady, and sweet-smelling smoke drifting from burning woods, resins, and spices: the very earliest use of fragrance was not for the body but for interiors. In fact, the word perfume comes from the Latin “*per fumum*” or “through smoke.” During Ancient Egyptian and Roman times these naturally aromatic materials were burnt at altars in temples to enhance worship and as offerings to the gods.

According to bespoke publisher Gestalten’s new book, *The Essence: Discovering the World of Scent, Perfume & Fragrance*, a favorite blend in Ancient Egypt was Kyphi, an intoxicating mix of 16 commonly used spices including cypress, myrrh, and saffron as well as cardamom and raisins. In Roman antiquity households are known to have used scent liberally and extravagantly, with everything from cushions to pets being perfumed. Upper-class houses had their walls and floors anointed with aromatic salves and waters, and firewood was also scented so fragrant smoke permeated throughout the entirety of the dwelling.

More than two millennia on, and an elite coterie of “super noses”—those perfumers who sometimes command fees of tens of thousands of dollars for their sought-after bespoke and off-the-peg fine fragrance creations—are also crafting home scents that give our interior spaces a sensorial sophistication, and would surely have gained the approval of our Egyptian and Roman forebears.

Dawn Spencer Hurwitz is a former painter who creates bespoke and ready-to-wear home fragrances according to fine-art principles in her studio in North Boulder, Colorado. Her unique olfactive style has been described as “encyclopedic” by her clients: Spencer Hurwitz’s home fragrances range through modern musks and ambers, sheer wood notes, exotic florals, warm spices, and wellness scents of lavender, chamomile, and geranium; although she also adds that her personal favorite notes include orris, beeswax, tuberose, oakmoss, and bergamot. “A lot of my clientele like their home

fragrances to have the same developed, nuanced design quality as their fine fragrances,” she says. Her bespoke interiors scents are translated into concentrates for electric diffusers, reed diffusers, and room sprays. Also in development is a new range of linen sprays—a favorite among her clients.

“I’m a creative,” states Spencer Hurwitz of her calling. “Imagination mixed with years of experience with my materials informs all of my designs. I work in an aroma studio much like an artist’s studio to create my designs.”

Before so much as reaching for a pipette of essence, Spencer Hurwitz researches the spaces to be fragranced by visiting a client’s home or, if it’s a long-distance commission, works with photographs of the space and swatches of fabric. As for materials, there is, she says, an increasing demand for the all-natural and botanical. “I am not only a fragrance designer and olfactive artist, but also a certified aromatherapist,” she explains. Initial consultation to completion of design can take anything from two weeks to six months, depending on how decisive the client is as the process unfolds. “Scent is storytelling,” says Spencer Hurwitz. “It can reinforce our own sense of self. And always, home fragrance adds a sense of comfort and luxury to your surroundings.”

#### SUSTAINABLE FOCUS: ALEXANDRA SOVERAL

Also preoccupied with comfort and the finer things in life, but with a natural and sustainable emphasis, is fast-rising bespoke perfumery star Alexandra Soveral. Based in West London, she also has a growing stateside customer base.

Soveral’s signature creations for many homes in the United States are clean and fresh with lots of citrus scents, though she also notes that some from her considerable client list—among them the movers and shakers of the New York art world, for example—are far more adventurous, preferring woody, earthy scents such as vetiver, cedarwood, and musky notes.

Soveral’s bespoke home fragrances not only come in the forms of room sprays, oil for diffusers, and candles, but she will also create bespoke cleaning materials and multifunctioning fabric sprays as a means of introducing an ambient level of olfactive artistry.

Creation is a ruminative, non-linear process for the Londoner; after visiting a property or engaging with a brand she’ll reflect on the objective of the scent, or what she and her client are trying to achieve with it. “My most efficient perfume lab exists in my imagination,” she explains, referring to how she’ll often go on long walks to subliminally cogitate on her projects. “By the time I get to my lab to start trialing blends I already have a very good idea of the scent.” »

**“A lot of my clientele like their home fragrances to have the same developed, nuanced design quality as their fine fragrances.”**  
*Dawn Spencer Hurwitz*

Her raw materials are always all-natural and she is zealous about sustainability. Conceiving and developing a fragrance can take anything from mere days to several months. “I have been able to visit a home with my travel lab kit and design a scent there and then,” she says. Not surprisingly, she views home fragrance as a means of fostering holistic mental and physical health and happiness. “Home fragrance is much more than a smell. It is linked to our well-being, it can influence our mood, and encourage our relationships to become more amicable.”

#### MAYFAIR'S FINEST: ROJA DOVE

This emotional enhancement and indulgence is a priority for U.K.-based Roja Dove, one of the world's more rarefied bespoke super noses. Dove's home fragrances are as sought-after as his prized fine fragrance, available from his Mayfair atelier, their inspirations including rare ingredients, “destinations you want to escape to,” and the rich exoticism of the Middle East. Typical of his style is the New York-scented candle, recently launched in Bergdorf Goodman, which conflates dynamic depth-charged woods and sweet, petal-soft florals. Candles and reed diffusers are the scent maestro's mediums of choice for the home.

Dove's bespoke home fragrance commissions are a detailed process of art and craft, and can take two to three years to come to fruition. “Many of the oils used in the candles are so rare and costly that they are scarcely used in perfumery, let alone candle-making,” he explains. Each candle is handmade in England using traditional artisanal skills. The oil blends, designed by Dove, are stirred by hand into the candle wax to ensure the perfume disperses evenly when the candle is burnt. “The scent of a room and the ambience of a home should be



chosen with as much care, and be as personal and inviting, as the fragrance on your skin,” he believes. “It's a very personal statement of owning your surroundings.”

So it is entirely appropriate that Long & Foster Real Estate, Inc., the largest privately owned real estate concern in the United States, and an exclusive affiliate of Christie's International Real Estate, has joined the home fragrance market. LF68, its signature scent, is a delicate dance of champagne rose, lavender leaves, and jungle essence crowned with sparkling citrus, designed to enhance a property's attractiveness to potential buyers.

“Sophisticated buyers appreciate how staging lets them see the full potential of a property,” says Elena Solovyov, marketing director at Long & Foster. “Done right, it helps them envision their own life in the homes they visit. The presence of evocative scent enhances such an experience, adding an element of surprise and wonder we find in fine art.”

Meanwhile other *recherché* off-the-peg home fragrance brands have transformed the humble votive into an *objet d'art*, making the scented candle almost as collectible and aspirational a purchase as a sculpture or painting. Take the Baobab collection, for example. Not only is each receptacle a handcrafted object in itself, with hand-poured wax in hand-blown glass created in Poland by artisans, the company also works with one of the top noses in the world—based in Grasse, South of France—to create flight-of-fancy evocations in scent. Equally design conscious, Fornasetti Profumi candles, diffusers, and room sprays are created with famed Chanel in-house nose Olivier Polge. Olfactory offerings range from smoky woods to lush garden flora.

It is all further proof that—as two millennia ago—the way we fragrance our homes today is as much of, if not more of, a style statement than the way we perfume our bodies. ●

Bethan Cole has written about beauty and fashion for British Vogue, Vogue Japan, the FT and Sunday Times Style



HELEN CATHCART

*Mind's eye:* "My most efficient perfume lab exists in my imagination," says London-based Alexandra Soveral, whose output includes bespoke eau de parfum (opposite, bottom), as well as room sprays, oil for diffusers, and candles. Left: Super nose Roja Dove.

ALEXANDRA SOVERAL WAS PHOTOGRAPHED EXCLUSIVELY FOR CHRISTIE'S INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE MAGAZINE BY HELEN CATHCART

