

THE SUN... THE SAND... THE SURF... THE CULTURE OF PARADISE AND OVER 18,000 SURROUNDING ISLANDS

BALI & BEYOND

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A TOKEN OF
LOVE
CRAFT YOUR
OWN PERFUME
IN NUSA DUA

PLAY WITH
SENSES
A UNIQUE DINING
EXPERIENCE AT QUILA

SWEET
TREATS
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ON THIS
VALENTINE'S DAY

COMPLIMENTARY

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LOVE NOTES FROM BALI

OUR CONTRIBUTOR MELIANA SALIM CELEBRATES HER 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF LIVING IN BALI BY CRAFTING HER OWN PERFUME...

All year round, Bali smells of incense and offerings, flowers and spices, coffee and tobacco, as well as scooter exhaust, trash burning, rice straw smoke and wet earth. It's a part of my everyday life, and it's distinctly Bali.

This year marks my 10th

anniversary of living in Bali. The island has witnessed my heartbreaks and healings, empathised with my failures and frustrations, and given me love, confidence and a sense of identity. We have a strong bond, and I would like to pay homage to Bali and celebrate our decade-long relationship. The question is: how do I capture my love affair with Bali?

Along came Nora Gasparini, a stunning Martinique native and founder of L'Atelier Parfums et Créations at The Ritz-Carlton, Bali in Nusa Dua. During a visit to Bali, the perfume connoisseur fell in love with the island and its wondrous scents, so she decided to stay and explore her obsession with perfumery and Indonesia through the establishment of her perfume studio in 2010.

SCENTS OF SELF

At L'Atelier Parfums et Créations, customers from all over the world come to create their own scents and learn about the raw materials of Indonesia. It's a brilliant idea as people are constantly looking for creative ways to express themselves. I have always been scent conscious and the thought of encapsulating my memories of Bali in a perfume bottle excites me.

Stepping into L'Atelier Parfums et Créations, I was warmly greeted by Nora and her friendly team who then led me to my workstation for the 90-minute perfume creation workshop. Nora is the epitome of a sophisticated modern woman with her timeless beauty, effortless elegance and entrepreneurial spirit.

"This is the workplace of a perfumer at a much smaller scale. Inside, you will find all the notes that we like to work with," she began. "There are three sets of notes in a perfume; top notes, middle notes and base notes. These are the layers that a perfume has to have for a harmonious scent."

The workstations consist of large teakwood tables paired with





Craft your own perfume at one of these workstations.

Phillippe Starck-inspired Louis Ghost armchairs, each personalised with the studio's logo. The space is contemporary: modern innovation combined with history and traditions with a touch of whimsy. Little amber glass vials of essential oils were neatly arranged on narrow white shelves.

"The top notes are the first scents that hit your nose sharply when you apply the perfume. They have lighter molecules, which evaporate within

15 minutes. These opening notes give freshness to the perfume and seduce people to buy it. Usually, we use citrus, sea breeze and all delicate scents," Nora elaborated.

"The middle notes are the main body of the perfume with average intensity and longevity. This is where you find pleasant smells like flowers and spices. The base notes are the dry down of the perfume. They are low in intensity but high in longevity — the longest being benzoin, which

comes from tree sap. It can last on your skin for up to four days, if you don't take a shower!" she laughed.

SCENT OF A WOMAN

There was a short questionnaire for me to fill in before I began. "This is to help me get an idea of the type of perfume that suits you," Nora said. "Name one of your favourite perfumes," read the first question. "Eternity," I muttered under my breath.

A flood of vivid memories came rushing in and transported me back to the '80s. Sitting on my parents' bed, I would watch my mother get ready for a romantic night out. She would dress to the nines but wear no make-up, except lipstick. For the final touch, she would spray her signature fragrance, "Eternity" by Calvin Klein, a gift from my father. The luxurious scent would linger, comforting my siblings and me long after she and my father left the house.

A few years later, she gave me my first perfume, "Eternity", to mark my teen hood. I wore the elegant scent into my early twenties, carrying her with me with each precious spritz as I moved from Indonesia to Singapore, Canada and back.

Is "Eternity" one of my favourite perfumes? It certainly evokes a nostalgia from my childhood. French writer Marcel Proust called it "odour-evoked autobiographical memory"

or the Proust phenomenon, where the act of dipping his madeleine cookie into a cup of tea had unlocked his forgotten childhood memories.

Upon completing the mini personality test, Nora tallied my score and categorised me as "Zen" and "Mysterious". "Zen is soft, citrusy and aquatic, like the smell of the sea. Mysterious is the complete opposite. It is woody, resinous and intense. You'll have to find the balance between the two," she smiled. An astrologer once told me that my life goal is "to seek absolute freedom and total security". I'm sensing a pattern here.

"I don't have passion in perfume," Nora claimed. "I have passion in scents. My husband has a better sense of smell but I am better at blending and training." Based on the two categories, Nora guided me through the art of perfumery and some of the 44 fragrance notes — a combination of natural and synthetic aromatics, 80 percent of which are sourced in Indonesia.

SCENTS AND SENSIBILITY

I wanted my ode-to-Bali perfume to include strong notes of frangipani, champaka and jasmine — Bali's ubiquitous flowers. During the following hour and a half, I carefully smelled, squeezed and selected the notes, adding and subtracting numbers and creating various combinations that would lead to three different perfume testers. The possibilities are infinite. I could do this all day!

"The first tester is a warm-up to



Nora Gasparini.

NORA GASPARINI PHOTO BY FABIO LORENZO, ALL OTHERS COURTESY OF L'ATELIER PARFUMS ET CREATIONS AT THE RITZ-CARLTON, BALI



Guests can use their bespoke perfume after three weeks.

see how all the aromatic components blend together. The final smell is already there but the molecules are fighting with each other, so the smell has not yet settled,” explained Nora as she gently dabbed some on the scent strips and on our forearms. It was too powdery for me; I couldn’t detect the flower notes.

For the second tester, *eau de toilette*, Nora recommended reducing the notes I wasn’t so fond of, like aldehydes, and increasing the ones I loved, highlighting fresher scents such as aquatic, lemon, frangipani and lotus. I was pleased with the blend: floral, sweet and delicate.

The final vial was for the *eau de parfum*, which emphasised heavier

base notes such as white musk and fougère. White musk is a synthetic aromatic created to ethically replace the original musk, a pungent odour derived from a rectal gland of the endangered Himalayan male musk deer. It certainly did not smell like my Bali.

A MOMENT IN TIME

It was decided – the standout formula was the *eau de toilette*. The last step was naming my new 30 ml baby. “A Moment in Time” resonated with me – a fragrance of my endearing romance with Bali. It opens with fresh lemon, oceanic breeze and dreamy lavender as top notes, unleashes sweet floral aroma encompassing frangipani, champaka

and jasmine, and slowly releases a deep rhythm of herbaceous fougère and clean white musk.

“Now, you have to wait around three weeks before you can use your perfume. This is to ensure that the maceration process is complete and the scents and essences are of the highest quality,” Nora stated as she presented my very first signature perfume, “A Moment in Time”, dedicated to my Bali with love. ■

By Meliana Salim

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