

## At Canada's first artisan perfume house, scents are mixed by hand

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SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL  
PUBLISHED 2 DAYS AGO

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La Grange du Parfumeur Rêve à Paris eau de toilette, \$145, silk scarf, \$50, through alexandrabach.com.

JOSEPH SARACENO

“I’m an artist first and I want to connect,” says Alexandra Bachand, the woman behind La Grange du Parfumeur. “What’s fun with this place is that it expresses the same kind of enthusiasm you get in an art gallery.”

The place she’s referring to is The Perfumer’s Barn, Canada’s first artisan perfume house that’s open to the public in Magog, Quebec. Founded last year in a refurbished granary nestled in the Eastern Townships on the route to the majestic Saint-Benoît-du-Lac Benedictine monastery, the space feels like a rustic apothecary with its whitewashed beams and checkerboard floors. It’s here that Bachand composes, formulates, mixes, bottles and labels every La Grange du Parfumeur scent by hand, and invites visitors in to see the creative and scientific processes behind signature perfumes like her voluptuously rosy eau de toilette, *Rêve à Paris*.

While her medium today is scent, Bachand (pictured above) began her adult life as a painter. But a fateful trip to France, where she encountered the centuries-old craft of perfumery, led to a change of course. Soon, she was learning organic chemistry, graduating from England’s The Perfumery Art School, and seeking out French perfumer Nicolas de Barry as a mentor.

The Perfume Barn is open year-round, though Bachand does most of her composing during the quieter winter and spring months (at the moment, she’s tinkering with a scent called *Elsie* that she describes as a story about a garden in a bottle). Over the summer and fall, she and her partner and co-founder, Eric Delbaere, welcome curious visitors (about 100 a day), who stop by for an experience that mimics how an oenophile might visit a winery. Every drop-in includes a tour of the olfactory creative lab and a glimpse of the perfumer’s organ, the name given to the workspace where she sits to experiment and blend samples. In Bachand’s case, the laboratory is an elegant oak desk that houses about 300 raw materials, with nooks for antique perfumery books, wildflower arrangements, trays, vials and a bell jar.



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ERIC DELBAERE [PASTIS DESIGN]

The emphasis is on discovery and for most visitors, Bachand says, it's a completely new sensory experience that helps them understand the studio's slow fragrance philosophy. "I think we connect to each other because of the poetry I put in the artistic narrative expression," she says. "Smelling flowers, that's something we do as children and it opens your heart, your sense of emotion from really deep." Initial whiffs are sniffed from the ceramic "bloom," a clever diffuser of her own design.

Rêve à Paris was Bachand's very first composition but she has since added 1245, a series of six unisex colognes with heart notes like gourmand caramel apricot, delicate violet, cozy tonka bean and leather layered in sparkling citrus. "It's hard putting so much passion and effort into something so fragile as perfume," Bachand says. "But it touches people so much. What we share here is special because memories are involved – emotion is involved."

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