

A Perfume Heaven in Barcelona

By Inka Piegas-Quischoffe

Perfumes in Basilica Gallery

BELOW
Objets d'art

Barcelona's Gothic Quarter is a maze of small squares and narrow, sometimes cobbled, streets. Stretching between the Ramblas de Catalunya and Via Laetana, dominated by the cathedral and a basilica, the Gothic Quarter is a treasure trove for any visitor who seeks extraordinary shops, exquisitely designed clothes, bespoke wicker furniture, colorful costume jewelry and just about everything else that smells of individuality and luxury.

And talking about smells: On my recent week-long trip to Barcelona, I was rather aimlessly ambling around Plaza del Pi, looking at the paintings of artists who exhibit their works there at weekends. Turning into a narrow street called Calle Sant Sever, I caught a whiff of exquisite perfume. As it turned out, the enticing scent emanated from the open door of a shop called La Basilica Galeria Perfume.

As the name indicates, it's an art gallery cum perfume shop close to the Basilica del Pi. My nose had already led me there and now my eyes were caught by the stunning display of a nearly life size sculpture in the window, with a dress made entirely from rose petals. Art and perfume combined demanded further investigation.

I was lucky as there were only two other customers when I entered, so I seized the opportunity to talk to the charming assistant and asked her to explain the nature of this fabulous shop.

There appear to be three owners, each one an artist with a different specialty. One is a sculptor and the creator of not only the 'rose lady,' but also several other works of art in the same vein. The assistant proudly explained that these sculptures play a prominent part in the famous flower festival which is



held in the third week of May each year in the city of Girona on Spain's Costa Brava.

Of course flowers and perfume go hand in hand, so it's no surprise that another owner is a perfume specialist. Rows upon rows of tiny, pretty perfume bottles wrestle for space next to the sculptures and on



glass shelves throughout the shop.

The assistant was happy to let me sniff to my heart's content. "You can of course buy the ones we already have here, but what we like to do most is to create individual scents for our customers. There are so many factors which need to be taken into consideration to make a truly special scent for a person. Do they want fruity, fresh, musky, light or heavy, for day use or for the night? What is their taste in clothes, which flowers do they prefer and, very important, what is their skin condition? You may admire a scent on one person and when you try it out, it smells very different on you and you may not like it at all. We ask our customers for whom we create an individual scent to wear a sample for a day and then come back for fine-tuning, so to speak," he adds with a laugh.

Perfume making is an art and, like all works of art, the final product does not come cheap. On the other hand, you can be sure that nobody else in the world will have exactly the same



Flower sculpture

BELOW
Designer dress
Gothic Quarter/
Barcelona



Plaza del Pi/
Barcelona

ABOVE
White lady made
from leaves

scent as you, and that is truly the height of luxury.

The third owner looks after the commercial side. "You see," said the assistant, "perfume and the sculptures are only one aspect of our enterprise. If you go across the road, you'll find our second shop, which sells antiques and objets d'art from Asia and Morocco."

After acquiring a small bottle of ready-made perfume because I didn't have the time to indulge in the process of individual creation, I went into the second shop, as sweet-smelling as the first.

There I met with an equally pleasant assistant who was happy to show me around. If ever you need a special gift or a piece to decorate your home, this is the place to come. In addition to the aforementioned antiques, there is a vast collection of ceramics, vases, plates and much more. Perhaps one day I will return with a more relaxed agenda and indulge in the luxury of choosing an individual perfume.

