

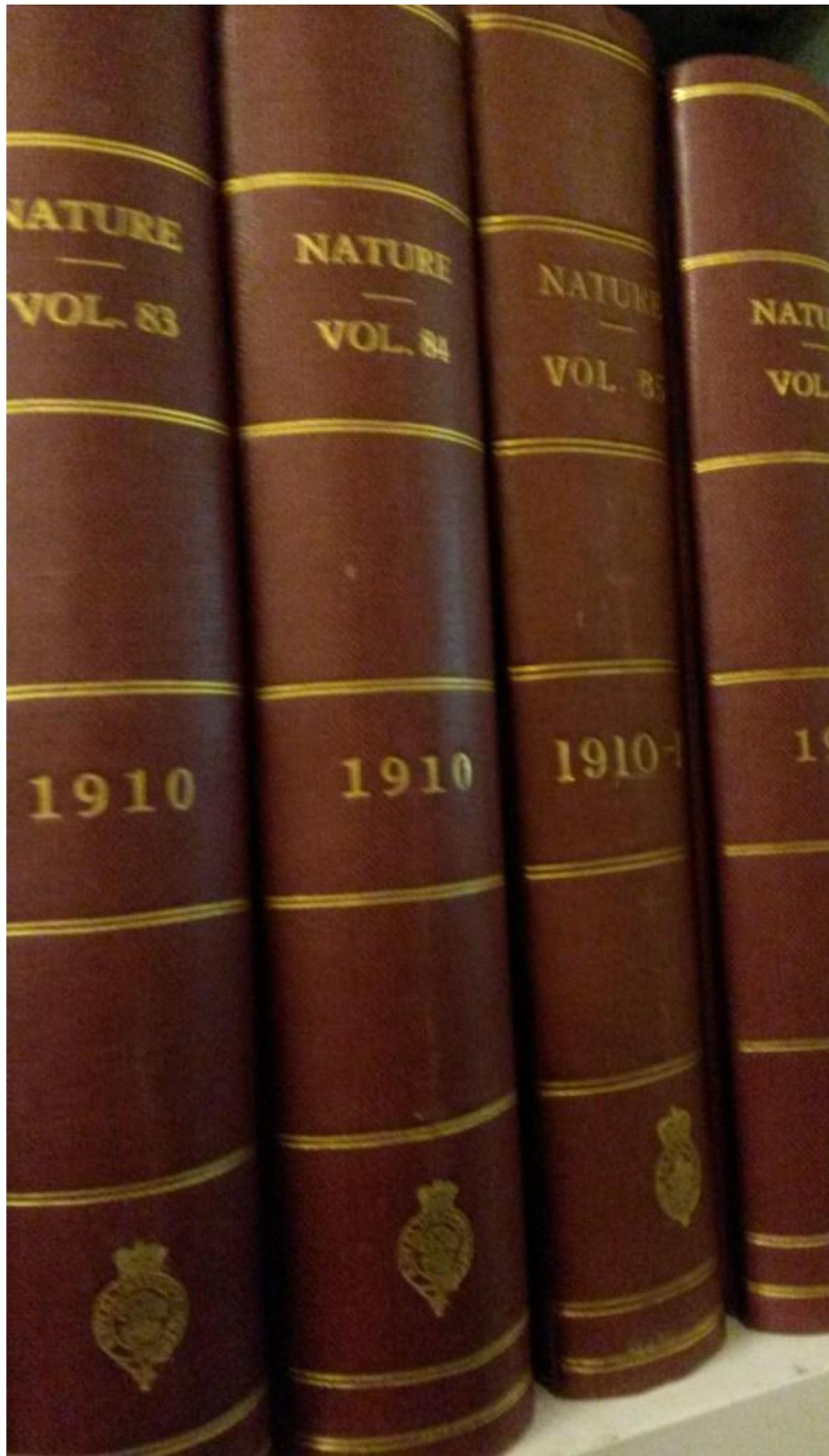
British Society of Perfumers Fine Fragrance Evening 2014

[November 18, 2014](#)



It's that time of the year again – dark days, rainy mornings (afternoons and evenings), Christmas adverts on TV, and, of course, the annual Fine Fragrance Evening by the British Society of Perfumers. The London event was held at the Royal Institution (a venue which I love, probably because the lecture is held in a library). [BSP events](#) have been fully subscribed this year and the Fine Fragrance Evening was no exception – there was standing room only by the time [Virginia](#) was ready to start.





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These scents were featured:

Laine de Verre – Serge Lutens – citrus, aldehydic, green
Maravilla – Bulgari – citrus, white floral, woody
Mandarino di Amalfi – Tom Ford – citrus, spicy, woody
Eau Tropicale – Sisley – floral, fruity, musk
Yellow Diamonds Intense – Versace – floral, fruity, sweet
My Burberry – Burberry – floral, fruity, woody
Karl Lagerfeld for Her – Karl Lagerfeld – floral, fruity, woody
Dolce – Dolce & Gabbana – white floral, fruity, woody
Knot – Bottega Veneta – white floral, citrus, musk
La Panthere – Cartier – white floral, fruity, chypre
Flowerhead – Byredo – white floral, tuberose, green
Narciso – Narciso Rodriguez – white floral, woody, musk
Extatic – Balmain – woody, oriental, fruity
My NY – DKNY – chypre, red fruits, patchouli
Tralala – Penhaligon's – woody, leather, floral
Reveal – Calvin Klein – oriental, white floral, woody
Sylvan Song – Grossmith – oriental, floral, incense
Black Opium – YSL – oriental, spicy, gourmand
Bayolea – Penhaligon's – citrus, woody, spicy
Eau d'Arômes – Armani – citrus, spicy, woody
Jimmy Choo Man – Jimmy Choo – aromatic, fruity, woody
Emblem – Mont Blanc – aromatic, green, spicy
Lavender On The Rocks – Atkinson – aromatic, leather, spicy
Karl Lagerfeld for Him – Lagerfeld – aromatic, fruity, woody
Nuit d'Issey – Issey Miyake – woody, spicy, leather
L'Homme Ideal – Guerlain – woody, fougere, gustative
Just Cavalli Gold For Him – Cavalli – woody, gustative, spicy
Bulgari Man in Black – Bulgari – woody, leather, spicy
Shisur – Molton Brown – leather, spicy, powdery

Virginie's presentations are so useful – with over 1400 fragrances launched this year, who could possibly keep up? (Well, I know Michael Edwards does try). Add to that, the irony of a perfumista-turned-lab rat is that when I am at work, I cannot wear perfume because it would interfere with quality control and perfumery. And – AND – fragrance factories and warehouses tend to be in the middle of nowhere (read: not within easy reach of well-curated perfumeries). I am fortunate enough to have many fragrance-loving buddies who send me samples to sniff (thank you, thank you!), and every visit to London or somewhere civilised tends to include a quick visit to a perfume counter. Nevertheless, Virginie does to fine fragrance launches what my husband does to data (he's a government statistician) – turns a lot of white noise into a meaningful narrative.

Based on the scents she had selected, it was also quite a relief to realise that despite opinions to the contrary, there really still are beautiful and noteworthy scents being launched right under our noses (sometimes it's too easy to 'Golden Age' everything).

Some scents in limited distribution were included (I struggle with the term 'niche' these days) – and the lines between what we consider mainstream and – well – not, are clearly blurring.

Now that the Estee Lauder Group has purchased Le Labo and Parfums Frederic Malle, we're clearly well on our way to the most popular niche brands becoming the new mainstream. Actually, this is as good a time as any to mention that I feel like the celebuscent-craze (which is still going strong) has created its own layer of the fragrance market and expanded it from what it would otherwise have been: scent as merchandise.

Back in the 80s, I would have bought a Hanoi Rocks Parfum or Eau de China Girl in a heartbeat. Instead, I had to make do with posters, sew-on denim jacket badges and pencil cases. I don't even think we should worry too much about the monetising of celebrities and brands in this way; as consumers, we have never had it this good – there is most certainly something for everyone out there.



Even vintage-lovers will find brands brave enough to create divisive, retro-styled scents ([Bogue Profumo](#), [Vero Profumo](#), [Slumberhouse](#) if you want an indie edge, or [Ruth Mastenbroek's glorious chypre](#), Grossmith's retro formulas and [retro-styled new scents](#) if you want conventionally created fragrances. We also still have many classics knocking around, albeit, reformulated, but still wonderful – the most popular classic Guerlains and Chanel's can still be yours).

It is perfectly possible to create an aesthetically retro fragrance in today's regulatory landscape, even if the tools aren't quite the same. The reason we don't smell so many of them around these days isn't regulation (though regulation may occasionally drive a stake through the heart of a particular formula) – the reason we don't see so many of these fragrances, is that they just don't sell as well as a shooting-fish-in-a-barrel fruity florals and nose-hair-burning synth woods do. Since bigger brands still dominate the typical distribution channels (Duty Free and department stores), and because we're still somewhat relying on traditional

ways in which to get the fragrance under consumers' noses, risk-taking is still a rare thing in mainstream. Doesn't mean it's not happening, but it's not what dominates the market.

There's already a new postmodern perfume culture (you heard it here first) – with indie/artisan perfumers and fragrance lovers/bloggers together doing their own thing and ignoring how Things Are Supposed To Be Done.



According to Virginie, there is a new fruit trend in fine fragrance, away from straight-up-apple (we've had quite a few years of perfumes with a fruity shampoo accord) – and into apple-like notes of pear, quince and fig.

Freesia, sweet pea, orange flower, jasmine and tuberose dominated the floral scene – though tuberose was not of the shoulderpad-variety in any of the featured scents, but treated in a modern way. Even though I felt **Dolce by D&G** was a little too predictably safe (but still pretty), I did find the story behind its creation quite endearing. Apparently the designers fell in love with a white amaryllis accord based on a headspace capture of a South African species, even though their original plan had been to launch a fragrance with another, Mediterranean theme.

Coffee notes kept popping up in masculine launches, and were particularly prominent in **Just Cavalli Gold For Him**. The aroma was that of dark roast coffee. **Bulgari Man in Black** seemed to me a little out of step with its name and imagery (a hot man in hot lava); the opening was juniper-like, green, and not the smoky, tar-type accord one might have expected. There has been much discussion about **Guerlain's L'Homme Ideal**, and to me it reads as La Petite Robe Noire Pour Homme. Some bloggers love it; others wring their wrists that it's a 'pointless' launch – well, I think it will be popular. It smells good on a man, and is very

trendy, and done with style. Guerlain already has a back catalogue of scents in a certain style, so let's allow them to create a couple of hit records so we get to keep buying our Mitsy.

Cashmeran was everywhere, and generally, many fragrances used a skin-scent musk accord; powdery and dry notes were also prevalent. Orris-notes were featured in several fragrances, and a few had a marine theme with a hint of a coconut note.

There appears to be a little bit of a chypre revival, and **Bogue's Maai** (not featured on the night) is Kouros x Aromatics Elixir x Youth Dew (Or Kouros Pour Elle); a wonderful, retro-styled, unapologetic animalic chypre. A tamer (ironically) option would be **Cartier's La Panthere** (featured on the night) – with a deceptively fruity notes listing, but being definitely of good chypre character. The bottle is innovative, too, using new kind of glass-moulding technology.

My favourites from the evening were **Penhaligon's Tralala** (a bonkers whisky-aromatic-leather-floral thing, which I fear will get discontinued if all of its fans don't rush to buy it soon), Grossmith's **Sylvan Song** (such a beautiful classic-style fragrance that it almost made me melancholy), **Mandarino di Amalfi** (a bitter, grapefruit eau de cologne-type scent with amazing longevity; staying just on the right side of too-bitter. This will be a new summer favourite), **Narciso** (a woody musk sans fruit; an intoxicating skin-scent), and the surprise find, **Extatic by Balmain** (surprise because it opens with a nearly too sweet fruit accord, but quickly transforms to a gorgeous woody oriental, albeit still quite sweet).

It was a thoroughly enjoyable event, and I am already looking forward to next year's! (I also now have several new fragrances to buy...).