

SCULPTING SCENT AT THE CONRAN SHOP

Zuza Mengham turns Laboratory Perfumes into sculpture for LDF

As part of its ongoing exploration of scent's relationship with other senses, London-based fragrance maker **Laboratory Perfumes** has been working with artist **Zuza Mengham** to consider ways of translating intangible fragrances into solid sculptural forms.



Tonka, Atlas and Amber, part of **'Sculpting Scent'** by Zuza Mengham
Photography by Ilka & Franz

Taking the brand's four existing scents, Amber, Gorse, Samphire and Tonka – as well as a soon-to-be-launched fifth fragrance Atlas – Mengham created a series of resin sculptures, which will be displayed in **The Conran Shop** on Marylebone High Street for two weeks from 15 to 25 September, as part of the London Design Festival 2016.

Mengham has transformed the individual notes of the fragrances into unique combinations of colours, angles and visual effects. The ocean-reminiscent freshness of Samphire is evoked by the way the light plays through layers of translucent resin; the crisp citrus of gorse become a clear yellow hue; and the eponymous beans of Tonka are represented in speckles of slate.

The roots of the exhibition reach back to December 2015, when Laboratory Perfumes founder **Aaron Firth** was looking for artists capable of representing the nuances of scent visually. Upon discovering Mengham's unique prism sculptures, he was struck by how they were "modern, angular and with multiple facets – like a fragrance". Zuza was asked to explore the concept further, resulting in five remarkable pieces that take advantage of the full spectrum of visual and textural possibilities afforded by resin.

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"They are the perfect encapsulation of scent. Zuza has captured the resonance and register of fragrances. She understands they are not simplistic or binary".

Aaron Firth – Founder, Laboratory Perfumes

The Sculpting Scent exhibition also celebrates the launch of Laboratory Perfumes' fifth scent – **Atlas** – with a limited quantity available exclusively in The Conran Shop's London and Paris stores for four weeks before its official release at the end of October. Inspired by the scents and scenery of Morocco's Atlas Mountains, the new fragrance is built around the nostalgia-laden aroma of pipe tobacco, with layers of rum, vanilla and hay, and fresh ozone top notes. Mengham has interpreted this in a prismatic mist of amber and ochre that echoes the mountain silhouette.

The five sculptures will be presented in a special exhibition in the windows of The Conran Shop, alongside the Laboratory Perfumes range of fragrances and candles that inspired them. Four will be available for sale after the exhibition (from £1200).



Gorse and **Samphire**, part of **'Sculpting Scent'** by Zuza Mengham
Photography by Ilka & Franz

"I made a conscious decision not to read the descriptions, but to smell them all and see what I could decipher from them first directly, taking notes and ideas. After I matched them up with their descriptions I made a series of drawings with watercolour overlays, building up the colours and patterns until I was happy they translated in a way that felt appropriate."

Zuza Mengham – Artist

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

'Sculpting Scent'

The Conran Shop
55 Marylebone High Street
London
W1U 5HS

15–25 September 2016
Monday – Saturday: 10.00 – 19.00
Sunday: 11.00 – 18.00



Images courtesy of Laboratory Perfumes | Photography by Ilka & Franz

These images are **strictly embargoed** for online media publication until
Wednesday 24 August 2016.

About Laboratory Perfumes

Founded in London in 2011, Laboratory Perfumes crafts unique, natural and gender-free fragrances, scientifically formulated to react to the wearer and evolve over the course of the day. Inspired by the flowers, herbs and aromatic botanicals of Britain and beyond, the range of scent and candles is made from natural oils, selected with care and blended with precision. The brand frequently collaborates with artists across all creative disciplines to explore the sensory expression of scent.

www.laboratoryperfumes.com

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About Zuza Mengham

London-based artist and designer Zuza Mengham is fascinated by materials. She makes large-scale sculptures and installations that explore ideas of what constitutes a 'space', and objects that toy with the suggestion of function. Often incorporating traditional craft techniques into new settings and methods of making – as exemplified in her 'fictitious furniture' series of steel sculptures that seem both pointless and purposeful – Zuza creates modernist, abstract works that seem intriguingly out of sync with reality. Her current work has seen her shift from steel to resin – another material that is briefly malleable before settling into permanence – alongside a jewellery series that uses powdered copper and slate to create unique marbling effects. Zuza's resins are available to buy at **The The Store** on Hackney Road.

www.zuzamengham.com

About The Conran Shop

The Conran Shop has established itself as one of the leading lifestyle retailers in the world, offering an eclectic and handpicked collection of gifts, furniture, lighting and personal accessories from some of the world's most respected designers and emerging talents. With its dedication to providing an unbeatable shopping experience and its carefully curated products, including vintage and modern designs, expert interior advice and personal services, The Conran Shop is the go-to place for any type of gift or interiors inspiration.

The Conran Shop currently has eleven stores across the world, three in London, one in Paris and seven in Japan.

www.conranshop.co.uk

Sculpting Scent is on display at **The Conran Shop**, Marylebone High Street, 15–25 September. For more information or interviews, contact Zetteler at sabine@zetteler.co.uk or on 07791 568890.

INTERVIEW WITH 'SCULPTING SCENT' ARTIST **ZUZA MENGHAM**

>> How did you translate scent into form and colour? Was it a rational process or purely intuitive?

I started with the scents themselves. I made a conscious decision not to read the descriptions, but to smell them all and see what I could decipher from them first directly, taking notes and ideas. After I matched them up with their descriptions I made a series of drawings with watercolour overlays, building up the colours and patterns until I was happy they translated in a way that felt appropriate. Because of the size of the pieces, a certain degree of planning was necessary as they are each around 7kg of liquid resin. Having said that, they served more as a guide to refer to. Sometimes I find the volume or shape of one tone doesn't work with another any more, and I have to use a degree of intuition with what feels right to balance it out again. If an area feels too intense it may need leveling out with a gentler saturation and level of detail, or vice versa.

>> Would you say the sculptures were representations of the scents or more reactions to them?

Both – as smell is one of the senses that seems so neglected when it comes to interpreting into language. It would be impossible to make a fixed representation of a fragrance, but that's why I think it's interesting to try! I've attempted to embody them to a degree, but different ingredients will be more or less influential to different people and their own visceral associations. Generally, I would guess that fragrance fits into the categories of known and unknown, and then there's a whole catalogue of various narratives and nostalgias, which are attached for any individual.

Knowing the scents and looking at the sculptures, the artworks instantly feel like they're 'appropriate' to the scent they reference – did you set out to create something that would 'make sense' to everyone or did you focus on expressing something personal?

All of the Lab Perfumes scents have a level of complexity, which meant I was pretty spoiled for options. Most perfumes have three distinctive 'notes', which describe the fundamental blueprint that comprises the scent. Amber is a good example; it has top notes that are fresh and grassy, developing into centre notes of rich woodiness. The base notes are the richer, deeper elements, which bind the scent, and Amber's base note matures with a balmy ambergris. So I wanted to try and represent this development through the junctures as it felt important to the visual description. I used a clear green tint with pale chalky marbling at the top for the lighter leafy notes and, as I moved down, the green became more of a brownly burnt red to accent the deeper components.

>> Does each colour reflect a specific fragrance note, or is it more complex than that?

Yes, the colours certainly tie to the major elements of each scent. Colour plays such a vital part in people's visual recognition. Gorse was an interesting one in this respect as it smells like zesty coconut from the gorse flowers infused, but using a white-and-brown coconut colour scheme wouldn't describe the character of the scent effectively, so I decided to focus on clear yellow for the citrus part and soften it out with pastels in pink, grey and milky white to try to characterise its qualities without going too literal. Others are slightly more direct; Tonka has pink pepper and

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tonka beans, and I felt like it needed to be energetic and exotic. Various hues of orange and pink describe the mandarin and pepper, and by keeping the majority of the sculpture clear, it enables the light to pass through and keep the orange fiery and luminous.

>> How do you create the colours?

Colours can be a little tricky, as the resin I use comes tinted until it cures and sets clear. There is a little practice involved to predict the eventual hue as it changes with catalysis, so you need to have some basic colour theory to offset hues against each other to obtain the desired outcome. I use resin colour tints and essentially mix them as you would paint, working with primary colours and slowly creating the right tones. Sometimes I also use fillers to play around with opacity or to block light from certain parts.

>> What makes resin a good material for a project like this?

Generally I try to curb the natural characteristics of resin to my advantage. The fact it's liquid and sets solid was pretty important in this project as capturing movement and lightness in the material seemed essential in translating a scent. There needed to be a level of gesture to suggest the scent's transition through the notes. Blocks of colours were also useful to create definitive edges and punctuation for the bolder ingredients.

Samphire, which is hugely reminiscent of the sea, was a wonderful opportunity to show what the effects of what layers of clear resin can create. Building up these tinted clear layers gives a sense of depth while allowing the light to pass through, creating a water-like effect. With Tonka, whose name comes from one of its ingredients, tonka bean, I wanted to represent the beans and peppercorns. To do this I made a big shallow sheet of dark resin and put plenty of slate powder in it. Once cured and broken into pieces, the natural weight and density of the slate meant it would sink to the bottom and reveal itself as a speckled surface.

>> What's your favourite of the Laboratory Perfumes fragrances?

I've been wearing all of them in rotation! But my favourite is Samphire, it starts out really fresh and zesty and then deepens over time. For me, it's crisp and contemporary but somehow also comforting.
