

PERFUMANCES

inspired by James Joyce's Ulysses



Ambasáid na hÉireann | An Fhrainc
Embassy of Ireland | France
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Bloomsday & Beyond
Celebrating Ireland, Island of Writers

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Meabh Mc Curtin is an Irish fine fragrance perfumer, working for International Flavors & Fragrances in Paris. She grew up in Co Clare on the west coast of Ireland and studied biochemistry at the National University of Ireland, Galway. Meabh holds a master's degree in molecular biology from the Ecole Normale Supérieure, Lyon. She was trained as a perfumer by IFF's master perfumer Dominique Ropion and has worked internationally in New York, Dubai and now based in Paris. Her latest creations include Maison Margiela Under the Stars and Burberry Golden Haze.

Meabh Mc Curtin

Christine O'Neill studied at Trinity College Dublin and the University of Zurich. Her Ph.D. thesis was a stylistic study of the Eumaeus episode in *Ulysses*, and she has since been publishing on various aspects of Joyce's works. Having taught at Dublin City University and been employed by The Arts Council, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and Literature Ireland, she is currently working as an independent translator, editor and researcher.



Christine O'Neill

INTRODUCTION

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is a novel famously rich in texture – linguistic, emotional, and sensory. To celebrate Bloomsday, the Irish Embassy in Paris invited Irish perfumer Meabh McCurtin, who works for the renowned International Flavours and Fragrances in Paris, to create an interactive perfume experience exploring *Ulysses* through our sense of smell. This booklet, created to accompany the exhibition in collaboration with scholar Christine O'Neill and actor Clara Simpson, invites you to follow your nose through Joyce's Dublin.

These six original scentscapes or “*perfumances*”, as Joyce might have called them, interpret the themes of *Ulysses*, translating prose into perfume, to open a fresh sensory gateway into Joyce's masterpiece. From the narcotic hush of Lotus Eaters to the reverent swirls of church incense, these olfactory compositions summon the novel's city - its streets, chemists, bedrooms and blooming gardens. Each draws on Joyce's own language and imagery, rendering the invisible currents of the book – its musks, its violets, its sulphurs – into something you can breathe and carry with you.

What does a forgotten letter smell like? Or an afternoon at Sweny's pharmacy? Or the ghost of a lover in the folds of old linen? In *Ulysses*, smell is a trigger for memory, lust, grief, and sudden joy. These perfumes are not simply decorative. They are interpretive tools, offering a way to navigate the novel's atmosphere and emotional depth. *Ulysses* is a book to be read with the whole body. An experience to be savoured. With this project, we invite you to linger and languish in it a little differently, to move between its rooms and pages and trace Dublin through the traces it leaves behind



SHEFIEND

What miscellaneous effects of female personal wearing apparel were perceived by him?

A pair of new inodorous halvesilk black ladies' hose, a pair of new violet garters, a pair of outsize ladies' drawers of India mull, cut on generous lines, redolent of opoponax, jessamine and Muratti's Turkish cigarettes and containing a long bright steel safety pin, folded curvilinear, a camisole of batiste with thin lace border ... (17.2090–2096)

Top Notes:

Jasmin Abs Egypt LMR,
Orange Flower Water Abs Tunisia LMR

Heart Notes:

Vanilla Bean Extract CO₂ LMR, Tonka Bean LMR

Base Notes:

Ciste Abs, Ambrarome Abs, Patchouli Heart N°4



ALMOST NO SMELL FLOWER

He opened the letter within the newspaper.

*A flower. I think it's a. A yellow flower with flattened petals.
Not annoyed then? What does she say?*

Dear Henry

I got your last letter to me and thank you very much for it. (...)

Martha

(...)

*He tore the flower gravely from its pinhold smelt its almost no smell
and placed it in his heart pocket. Language of flowers.
They like it because no-one can hear. (5.237–262)*

Top Notes:

Pink Pepper CO² LMR

Heart Notes:

Orris Concrete LMR, Rose Essential LMR, Paper Accord

Base Notes:

Sinfonide™, Cashmeran, Saffiano™



OPOPONAX

Wait. Hm. Hm. Yes. That's her perfume. Why she waved her hand. I leave you this to think of me when I'm far away on the pillow. What is it? Heliotrope? No. Hyacinth? Hm. Roses, I think. She'd like scent of that kind. Sweet and cheap: soon sour. Why Molly likes opoponax. Suits her, with a little jessamine mixed. Her high notes and her low notes. At the dance night she met him, dance of the hours. Heat brought it out. She was wearing her black and it had the perfume of the time before. (...) Why did I smell it only now? Took its time in coming like herself, slow but sure. (13.1007–1016)

Top Notes:

Bergamot Oil, Lemon Heart LMR,
Lavander Oil Fance LMR

Heart Notes:

Myrrh Resinoid, Opoponax LMR

Base Notes:

Castoreum Resinoid LMR, Tonka Bean LMR,
Sandalwood Oil New Caledonia LMR, Vanilla



PEAU D'ESPAGNE

Dear Henry

I got your last letter to me and thank you very much for it. I am sorry you did not like my last letter. (...) So now you know what I will do to you, you naughty boy, if you do not wrote. O how I long to meet you. (...) Goodbye now, naughty darling, I have such a bad headache. today. and write by return to your longing

Martha

P. S. Do tell me what kind of perfume does your wife use. I want to know. (5.241–258)

Top Notes:

Neroli Oil Tunisia LMR, Bergamot Oil,
Lavander Oil France LMR

Heart Notes:

Rose Oil Turkish LMR, Ylang Extra LMR,
Orris Concrete LMR

Base Notes:

Civet Abs Nazareth LMR, Styrax Resinoid LMR,
Sandalwood Oil New Caledonia LMR



DREAMHUSBAND

Gerty was dressed simply but with the instinctive taste of a votary of Dame Fashion (...). A neat blouse of electric blue selftinted by dolly dyes ... with a smart vee opening down to the division and kerchief pocket (in which she always kept a piece of cottonwool scented with her favourite perfume because the handkerchief spoiled the sit) (...). Here was that of which she had so often dreamed. It was he who mattered (...). The very heart of the girlwoman went out to him, her dreamhusband, because she knew on the instant it was him.

(13.148–154; 13.427–431)

Top Notes:

Poligonum Oil LMR, Lemon Heart LMR,
Geranium Oil Madagascar LMR

Heart Notes:

Rose Oil Turkish LMR, Rose Abs MD Isparta LMR For Life,
Mimosa Abs

Base Notes:

Musk, Ambroxan, Ambrette Abs



SWENY'S PHARMACY

The chemist turned back page after page. Sandy shrivelled smell he seems to have. Shrunken skull. And old. (...) Living all the day among herbs, ointments, disinfectants. All his alabaster lily pots. Mortar and pestle. Aq. Dist. Fol. Laur. Te Virid. Smell almost cure you like the dentist's doorbell. (...) Chloroform. Overdose of laudanum. Sleeping draughts. Lovephiltres. Paragoric poppysyrup bad for cough. (...)

He waited by the counter, inhaling slowly the keen reek of drugs, the dusty dry smell of sponges and loofahs. Lot of time taken up telling your aches and pains. (5.472–489)

Top Notes:

Gentian Abs MD LMR, Saffran

Heart Notes:

Cinnamon Bark Essential LMR, Laudanum Accord

Base Notes:

Saffiano™



INCENSE

Through the open window of the church the fragrant incense was wafted and with it the fragrant names of her who was conceived without stain of original sin, spiritual vessel, pray for us, honourable vessel, pray for us, vessel of singular devotion, pray for us, mystical rose. (...) She gazed out towards the distant sea. (...) to hear the music like that and the perfume of those incense they burned in the church like a kind of waft. And while she gazed her heart went pitapat. Yes, it was her he was looking at, and there was meaning in his look. (...) Queen of angels, queen of patriarchs, queen of prophets, of all saints, they prayed, queen of the most holy rosary and then Father Conroy handed the thurible to Canon O'Hanlon and he put in the incense and censed the Blessed Sacrament ...

(13.371–374; 13.406–412; 13.489–492)

Top Notes:

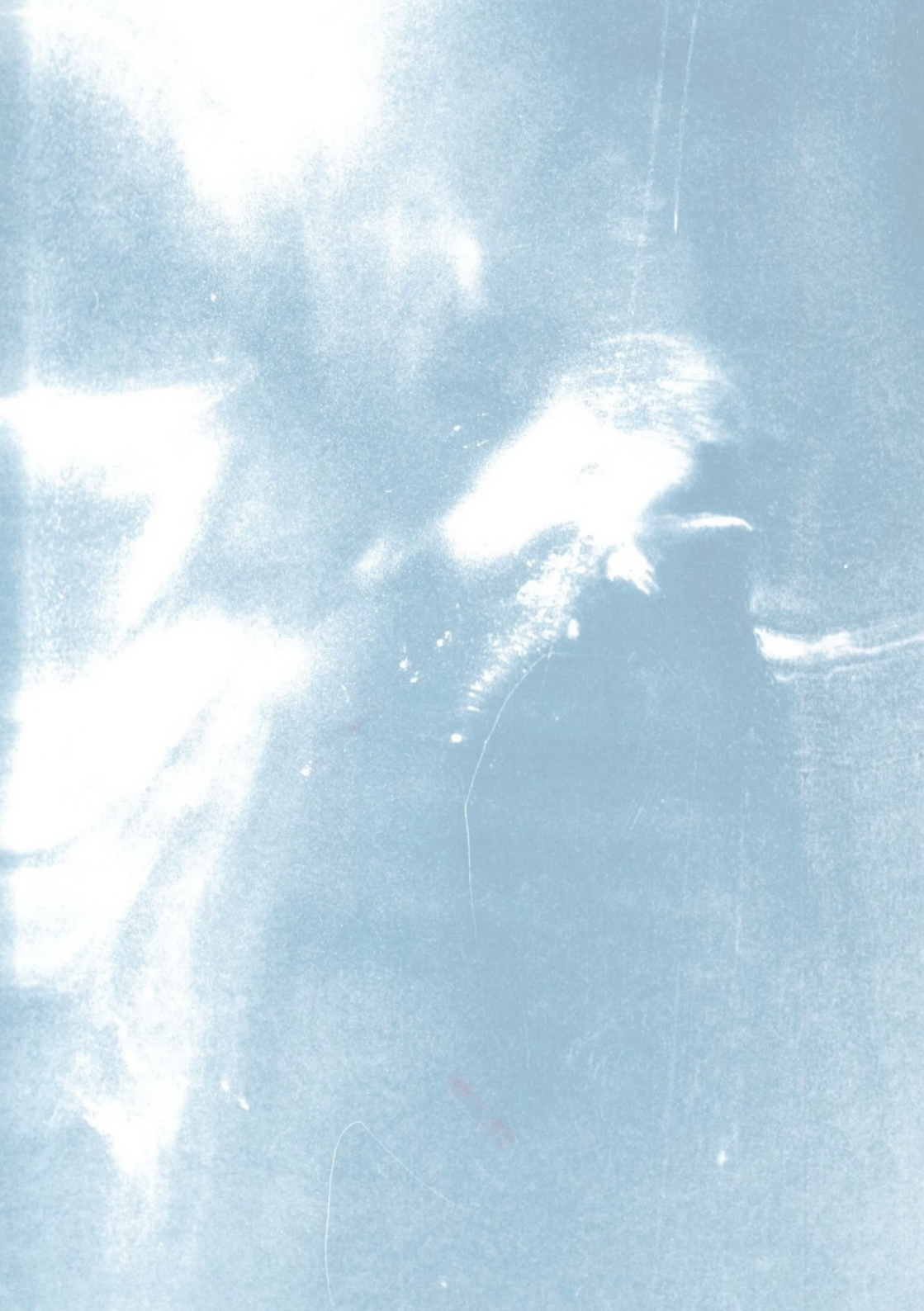
**Black Pepper Oil Madagascar LMR,
Pink Pepper Oil CO₂ LMR, Elemi Oil**

Heart Notes:

Olibanum Oil Organic LMR, Clove Bud Oil

Base Notes:

Vetiver Oil MD LMR, Olibanum Resinoid LMR, Musk



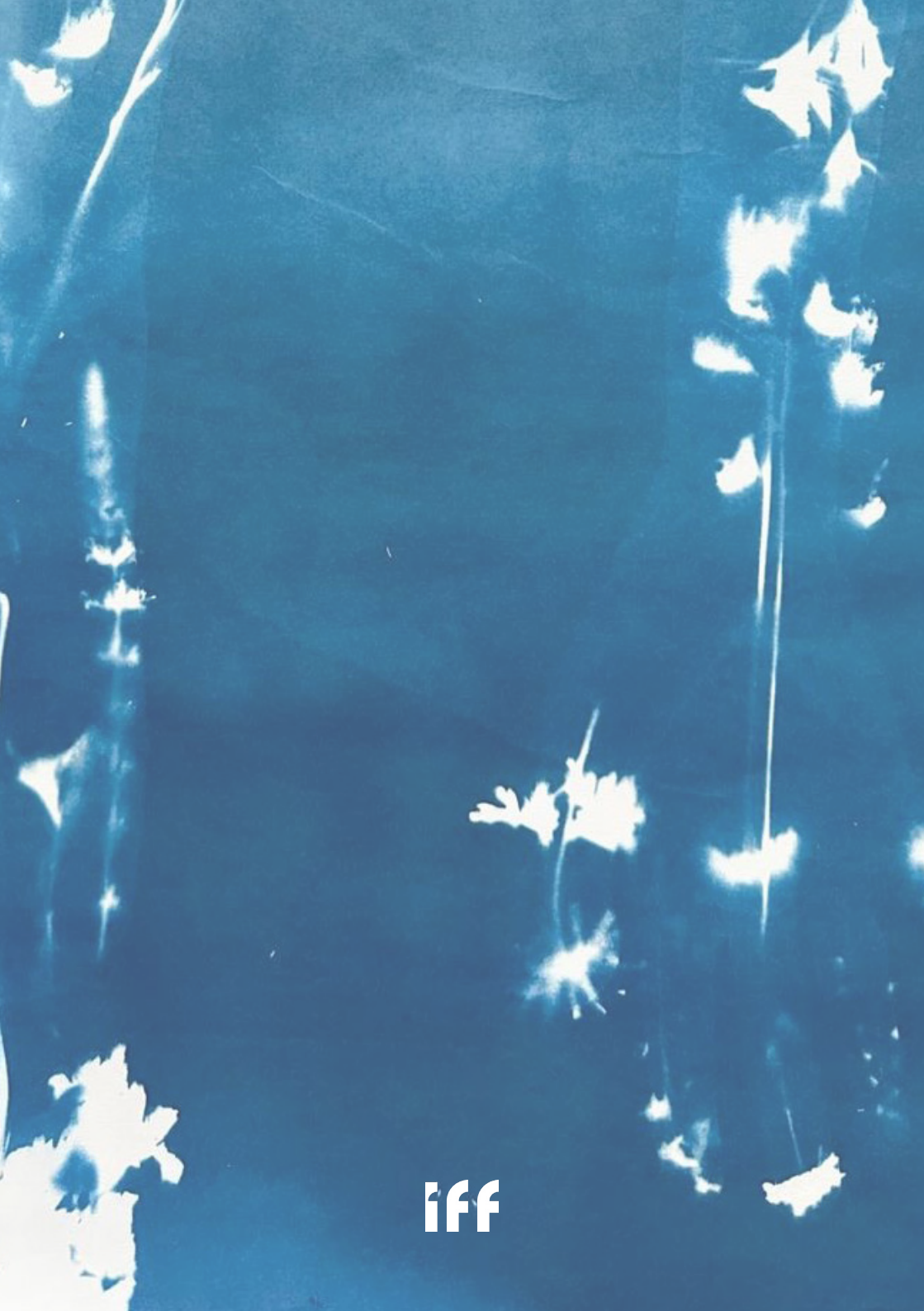
*This project was supported by The Irish Embassy in France.
An olfactive and literary project created by the perfumer
Meabh Mc Curtin and Christine O'Neill
that combines two beautiful universes, **perfumery and literature***



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