

# Perfume Notes

Luca Turin on perfume and other things

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## S-perfumes



Let me say right from the outset that everything about the public image of [S-perfumes](#) felt purposely made to jangle my nerves. The silly name, the little spermatozoon figures everywhere, the website patter “*Inspired by the intoxicating, whirlwind, absolute feeling of love*”, the tiresome harping on sex, in short the whole art-school flimsy-whimsy look-at-me mind-fuck attitude that is taking over so much of niche perfumery to so little avail. Two things didn't fit, however: the letter written by owner Sacré Nobi that came with the samples was thoughtful, humorous and articulate; and the fact that he had managed to get some of the very best to compose perfumes for him: Sophia Grojsman, one of the greatest perfumers of the last 30 years (her *Kashâya* was, I swear, the only fragrance ever to come out of a bottle smelling in stripes like Signal toothpaste); Christophe Laudamiel and Alberto Morillas, no slouches themselves; and my heroine Annick Ménardo.

To get this crew to work for you is not easy, and I started thinking this might be a sur-fucking version of Frédéric Malle. Well, it is, and it isn't. The Morillas fragrance is a salty musk that didn't do much for me. Grojsman's *100% Love* is a deceptively quiet rose-and-chocolate accord that feels remote and tender like a love letter written on feather-light airmail paper reaching you three weeks after it was written. It has the affecting, ghostly quality of the backstage orchestras sometimes used for operatic effect. Laudamiel's *S-eX* (aargh) is a remarkable leather-animalic-metal accord that convincingly modernizes, in a jaunty and elegant way, a style of fragrance that had become overburdened by heavy-lidded sensuality. This one I could wear every day.

All the fragrances are reminiscent of the futuristic artist's impressions posted at car shows: deliberately sketchy things designed to demonstrate the creativity of designers without committing to the full windshield-wipers, cup holders and seatbelts thing. Most perfumers pooh-pooh these demos because they are not fully working products. *S-perfume's* great merit is to have fleshed out the ideas to the point where they move under their own power without in the process losing that fresh less-is-more shock.

Two more remarkable things were in the box: a small sample of Annick Ménardo's depiction of anger (*Ira*) in Nobi's *seven deadly sins* series. This weird fragrance contains all the alarming emergency-sign bright yellow shades of the citrus aldehydes and ethers and achieves a waxy, plastic rain-gear heady luminance that I have never encountered before. Lastly, and most fascinating, a tiny decant of a Ménardo *self portrait*, an extraordinarily rich, dark and intelligent vetiver that struck me as a convincing likeness of what I imagine to be her passionate, nostalgic genius. Neither seems to be for sale.

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