

January 2007

Collectors News

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This Tiffany Cobweb shade on Narcissus mosaic base was designed by Clara Driscoll; pre-1902, 20" in diameter. For more on Tiffany glass, see page 5. (Photo credit: New-York Historical Society, Gift of Dr. Egon Neustadt, N84.128)

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Everything for Some Collectors
and Something for Every Collector.

Collectors News

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SCENTual Vessels: Small Wonders

By Kym Gordon Moore

Imagine that you are participating in an experiment. You are blindfolded and instructed to use only your olfactory and tactile senses. A small glass container is placed in front of you, so you allow your hands to carefully maneuver over the curvature of the vessel. You feel a cork stopper at the top, and as you pull it out, a medley of specially blended aromas permeates the air. This familiar combination of scent and container influences your response in identifying a perfume bottle.

The reason perfume bottles are so easy to identify, even without the sense of sight, is because they have always been an important part of culture. Throughout history, fragrances and their containers have signified airs of elegance, sophistication, and aristocracy.

Miniature bottle reproductions are *objets d'art* of their full-scale prototypes. Original miniature fragrance bottles were designed by either couturiers connected with celebrities or collaborated with and commissioned to some famous masters of art and design. They are revered as fine masterpieces of exquisite glass sculpture. With the progress of perfume production, one can appreciate how the makers of fragrance vessels graduated to creating containers of great value and timeless beauty.

Beginning a miniature-fragrance-bottle collection is determined by what appeals to your individual preference. Once a novice acquires more knowledge about the history of this colossal world of collectible miniatures, the passion leads to greater diversity in his or her small bottle portfolio.

There are many different ways of finding these bottles. You might get them as a gift with a fragrance purchase, buy them separately, ask family or friends if they have any that you can acquire, buy them online from a reputable site, or exchange with others who share in your collecting passion. Avoid

Violet bottle and clear stopper, 5.7" (14.5 cm); bottle is oval-shaped and emblazoned with jewels and pearls, the stopper has a dauber and is shaped like a spider web with a jeweled spider at center, bottom is signed "Czechoslovakia." Est. \$2,000 – \$2,500.



throwing away the boxes to your mini perfumes, even if you display them. Should you decide to exchange or resell a piece in your collection, the original box in good condition could considerably increase the value of your miniature.

Expanding your collection to invest in limited edition or vintage bottles may be pricier. Many discontinued or vintage bottles are adorned with precious stones, encased in intricate metals, woven materials, or tassels, and can be obtained through auctions, dealers, or antiques shops. Among these bottles, you might discover some unique finds, like Czechoslovakian, DeVilbiss, Lalique, Egyptian, or cut and colored glass. Earlier containers used to hold perfumes were made of gold, silver, porcelain, shell, semi-precious stones, alabaster, or clay pots. Use extreme caution when looking to purchase discontinued or vintage miniature bottles; there is a continuing problem of fraudulent or authentic

Cologne set containing four bottles, 5" (12.7 cm), each one decorated with cut flowers; in a brass holder, which is stamped "France." Est. \$350 – \$450.





Unidentified bottle, looks like a hand of cards, 3" (7.6 cm); the face of the bottle is decorated with the nine and ten of clubs, ten of diamonds, and nine of hearts; label would have gone in the middle. Est. \$1,200 – \$1,500.

• *A Collector's Handbook of Miniature Perfume Bottles, Minis, Mates and More* by Jeri Lyn Ringblum

A few of the following websites could be helpful in supplementing your collection:

- Bottles and Scents – <http://www.bottlesandscents.com>
- Perfuminis.com – Vintage and Modern Perfume Miniature Bottles – <http://www.mignon.pair.com>
- Miniperfume: Parfums Miniature de Collection – <http://www.miniperfume.com>

Many fragrance vessel designs were artistically inspired by themes depicting nature, architecture, the animal kingdom, and the human body.

The International Perfume Bottle Association (IPBA) is the largest worldwide network of perfume bottle collectors and dealers. Its purpose is to provide information about the uses, history, manufacturing, and collecting of perfume and scent bottles, as well as promoting fellowship among its members. To learn more about IPBA, visit their website at www.perfumbottles.org.

The Fragrance Foundation, established in 1949, has become an international

labels applied to mismatched bottles. These items are of no value. Taking the time to investigate for legitimacy could save you an incredible amount of money.

There are some cases where miniature vessels did not come in their individual packages. Some perfumeries created presentation boxes for a designated promotional period (i.e. Christmas, Mother's Day, Fathers Day, etc.), and offered these bottles at a special price.

If you are an avid collector, it comes as no surprise that there are more resources devoted to the art of collecting miniature fragrance vessels than one might think. If you are a beginner, here's a partial listing of books that will provide some fascinating information and photographs about the extraordinary world of miniature perfume containers:

- *Monsen and Baer Perfume Bottle Auction Series* by Randall B. Monsen and Rod Baer
- *Miniature Perfume Bottles: A Schiffer Book for Collectors* by Glinda Bowman
- *Collectible Miniature Perfume Bottles* by Anne Breton



Amber and frosted clear glass bottle and frosted glass stopper with long dauber, 5.5" (14 cm); the surface acid is etched to reveal various decorations, including a bird on one side. Bottom is signed "Grant." Est. \$100 – \$200.



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source for historic, cultural, scientific, and industry-related reference material. They develop educational programs about the importance of fragrances for the American public, the largest fragrance market in the world. Visit their website at www.fragrance.org to get more information.

Be mindful about the preservation of your collection. Avoid storing your treasures near sunlight, intense artificial light, fireplaces, high humidity locations, or other areas where there is an extreme fluctuation in temperature. These environments are destructive to your fragile collectibles.

Every collector possesses a heart-driven desire and passion for their mélange of treasures. You will be compelled to admire the individual personalities and beauty of each piece while sim-

ply walking by with a casual glance. While fragrance is ethereal, distinctively designed vessels are the quintessential accessories to a consummate collection. These miniature fragrance vessels epitomize attention to detail and functionality. Regardless of your personal appetite in collecting fragrance bottles, it's easy to become addicted to these breathtaking, timeless masterpieces. The craftsmanship of miniature fragrance vessels is captivating, regal, and magnificent; they are truly works of art. ✦



Helena Rubenstein "Heaven Sent" gold, oval, solid perfume container, 1.6" (4.1 cm) long, brilliant red stone at center, label on bottom, in its original box. Est. \$75 - \$125.



Opaque turquoise glass bottle with metal cap, 5" (12.7 cm), decorated in the French 19th-century style with leaves and Greek key motifs, unsigned, probably from a French manufacturer. Est. \$300 - \$400.

Two Items, Est. \$50 - \$125. Left - Christian Dior "Miss Dior" clear glass bottle with gold cap, bottom signed CD, in its original box. Right - Christian Dior "Miss Dior" clear glass bottle and stopper, 3.7" (9.4 cm), flask-shaped, full and sealed, bottom is signed CD, in original white and gray box.

