



Field Notes

from **Future Commerce⁺**

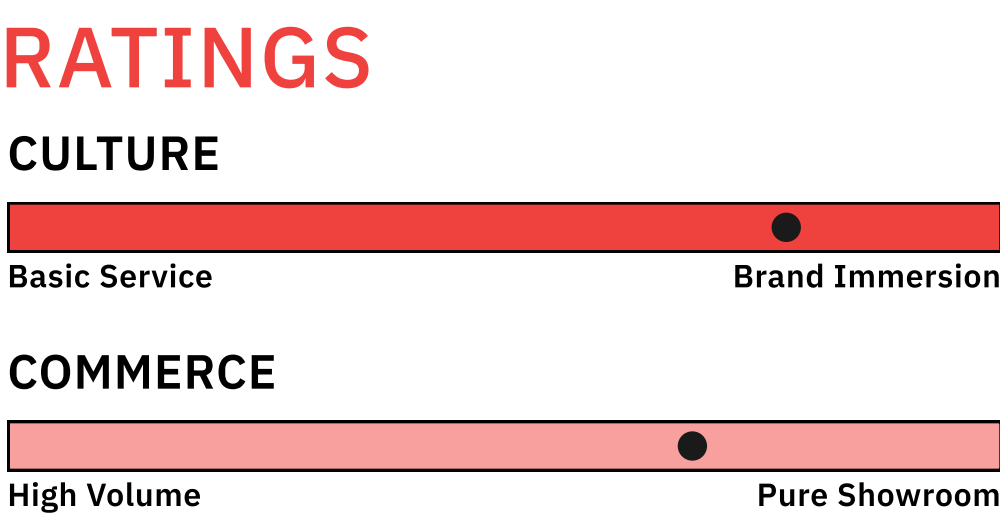


AEDES DE VENUSTAS

LOCATION: Lower East Side, NYC
VISIT DATE: Spring 2025
FORMAT: Free-standing Store
ADJACENT STORES: Bar Belly, Carlota Tapas, Le Labo
COMPETITION: Luxury Perfumeries and Shops, such as Elorea, Oswald, Olfactory, Le Labo
WEBSITE: www.aedes.com
SOCIAL: IG: @aedes_perfumery
TT: @aedes_perfumery
APP: No

About the Brand: Aedes de Venustas, which translates to "temple of beauty" in Latin, first opened in March of 1995 on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, New York, and relocated to the Lower East Side in 2018. By providing personalized service and exclusive scents that can not be found in department stores, Aedes provides a seductive fragrance sanctuary.

Store Summary: Ring the secret doorbell and step inside a secret hideout filled with luxurious elixirs that will immerse you, transport you, and hypnotize you. Don't be fooled by its urban exterior; this "temple of beauty" has ornate, gilded elements that bring the brand to life.



CULTURAL FEEL

Aedes de Venustas, which translates to "temple of beauty" in Latin, first opened in March of 1995 on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, New York, and relocated to the Lower East Side in 2018. By providing personalized service and exclusive scents that can not be found in department stores, Aedes provides a seductive fragrance sanctuary.

This store has an air of disregard to whether a purchase was made, as if they know how special the experience and selection is. But this was not in a snobbish way; it was the brand and associate simply owning the obvious expertise and curation.

Specific location was up and coming, according to the salesperson. It was somewhat "gritty" but in a cool way with fun (but limited) graffiti. Le Labo intentionally chooses locations like this and is across the street.



Somewhat felt as if they'd prefer to not complete the transaction in store, as the associate referred me to the website multiple times. Additionally, he never mentioned sizes or prices for my selected scents as he showed them to me in store (following our consultation). It felt as if the consultation was prioritized over conversion.

EXPERIENTIAL 'WOWs'

True "wow" factor upon entering, especially in such a small space with intentional design, decor, scents, and level of personal service. However, with a fragrance-focused business, the strong scents quickly overcame the small space—ironic considering the personalized service is about trying multiple scents.

Personalized service was impeccable, from determining my preferred scents and smells, to knowledge and explanation of potential fragrances matching my tastes. All options were presented on beautiful cards that were then numbered in order of preference and placed in individual translucent envelopes to take home. This process had no "hard sell" tactics, as he reiterated that scents need to be worn before buying and can be easily purchased on website (which he referred to often).



This experience raises an interesting question: what's the difference between personalized and customized service in such an intimate category like fragrance? I was expecting a custom fragrance created in-store with an associate's guidance and expertise. In reality, it was about the expert narrowing down (curating) existing fragrances to match my preferences and tastes.

No formal clientelling; mostly repeat customers or from word-of-mouth and customers won't be contacted directly unless they contact the store first.

EXPERIENTIAL NOTABLES

STORYTELLING

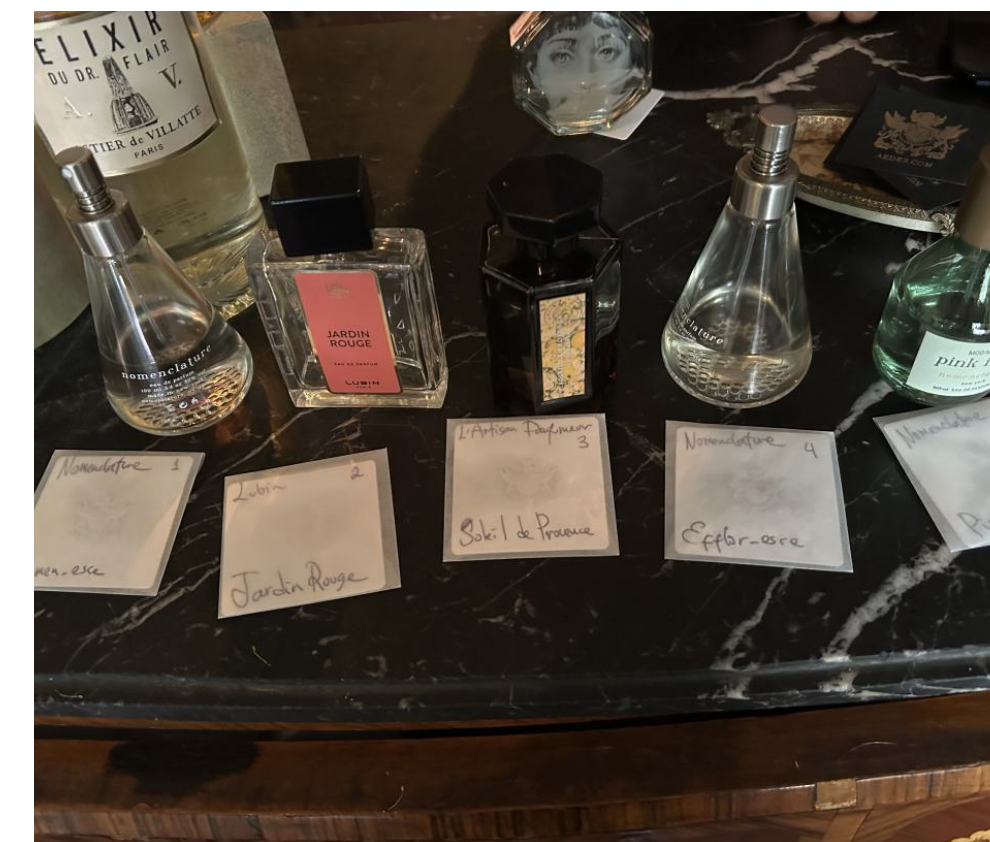
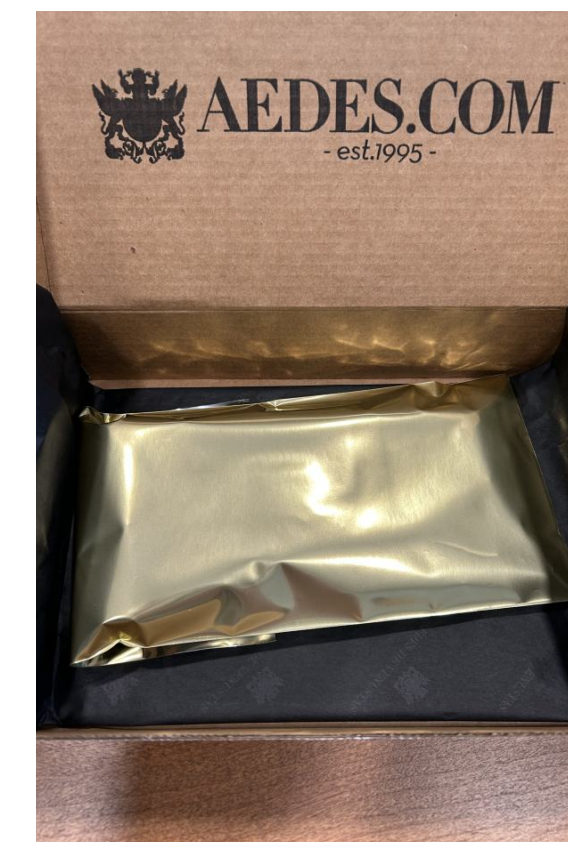
Beautiful, gold branding on business cards and matchboxes (offered to me twice during visit).

Online order arrived in subtle black box, branded inside with black envelope and tissue, and samples in a sleek gold envelope.

MERCHANDISE ASSORTMENT

Many different brands, including its own house brand, but several extremely unique and/or exclusive.

Salesperson shared voluntarily that the average price is \$250, although there is no indication of range; he was slightly assumptive regarding my intent to purchase at this level, especially since many scents are in the \$125-\$200 range. Surprised he didn't state the sizes and prices after I selected my five favorites from what he presented.



Aedes was the first store to sell Diptyque, Frederic Malle, and Killian, and is still only retailer that sells Malle (in dedicated cabinet); many collaborations in the past but not anymore.

Rarely sell via call-in and do not ship from store; a customer is encouraged to buy online if they do not make a purchase in-store.

Samples are only available online for \$5 (not in store); free shipping worldwide with \$50+ purchase, and USPS First Class only offered with sample order (full-size products require Priority+).

HUMAN INTERACTIONS

Only two people were working in the store: one in front area greeting customers and the other in the back, who came up front when another customer entered.

Front salesperson was initially slightly stand-offish (did not introduce himself or ask my name), but became more engaging as I asked more questions.

Once we started the personal consultation, he was very conversational as he assessed my preferences and brought over several options, explaining each and how they may appeal to my tastes..."That's very strong, I'm not sure you'd like it..." said in a helpful way indicating he'd quickly learned my detailed preferences.

TECHNOLOGY ELEMENTS

None except the POS. This is a case where the technology would not have aligned with the ethos and would completely disrupt the personal experience.



STORE BASICS

STORE DESIGN & NAVIGATION

Very subtle, almost hard-to-see outdoor sign, and doorbell to request entry.

Front of shop is all home scents, while the back of the shop is for personal consultations that are held at a consultation table (main counter). No customers are allowed beyond that point.

AESTHETICS

Very intentional and curated decor and merchandising, including antique lamps, vintage furniture, dried flowers, faux taxidermy, feathers, and greenery.

Music didn't match store feel at all (pop music), but he noted it changes often depending on who's working. It felt very misaligned and oddly acceptable for store dynamic.

CUSTOMER DATA CAPTURE, FOLLOW-UP, LOYALTY/REWARDS PROGRAM

Extremely protective of customer privacy and not sharing other customers' preferences.

Shopify site and opt-in for newsletter; emails sent approximately 2x/week.



THE SENSES MATRIX

SIGHT

- Very subtle, almost hard-to-see outdoor sign, and doorbell to request entry, creates an air of mystery and exclusivity, which ties to the product category and price point.
- Curated decor, including antique lamps, vintage furniture, dried flowers, faux taxidermy, feathers, and greenery, bring the essence of the brand to life, creating a richness around the customer.

SOUND

- The song choices did not match the visual aesthetic or vibe of the store. Giving associates complete control over such a critical environmental attribute can create a disruptive experience.

TOUCH

- Curated service and consultation is central to this experience. Knowledgeable associates ensure that customers are directed to the right fragrances given their high price point.
- Tactile elements, such as the cards that allow customers to rank their favorite scents, makes the experience more interactive.
- Online orders remain consistent with the brand vibe, arriving with a black envelope and tissue

PALATE

- With such a small space, the various scents quickly became too overpowering.

SIXTH SENSE

- The Point of Sale (POS) is the only in-store tech, which is clearly an intentional choice. Just like brands need to be thoughtful of how they use technology, brands must also be intentional in when they decide not to use technology.

FIELD TEST

Ask these questions to benchmark key learnings against your branded environments.

1

How do you envision the decision-making journey shaking out? How can associates facilitate the process through thoughtful conversation?

2

What tactile elements can support the service experience and empower customers to make the best decisions? Are there any features that can add to the aesthetic and vibe you want to create in-store?

3

How are you connecting the in-store experience to your online one? How are you ensuring everything from product packaging to samples to post-purchase engagement is on brand?

About the Analyst: Kate Fannin is a strategic Retail Realist passionate about customer-first, immersive experiences that engage shoppers (or don't!). With her strong focus on ROE (Return on Experience) and "connecting the dots" between customers and brands, she reinforces the mantra "People Buy Things. They Pay for Experiences." Kate has 18+ years of expertise in Marketing, Retail, and Consumer Behavior at The Estee Lauder Company, Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus, and Gap.

