

Flakon, Modell Nr. 502: Serpent, 1920  
Entwurf: René Lalique  
Material/Technik: Glas, gepresst, mattgeätzt; Kaltfarbe  
8.5 × 5.5 × 2.4 cm  
Eigentum: Museum für Gestaltung Zürich / ZHdK



The French designer René Lalique (1860–1945) is regarded as the inventor of the sculptural perfume bottle. The snake is cast here in the role of seducer in order to bring the outer form of the flacon into enchanting harmony with the fragrant contents.

Perfume as alluring accessory is embodied convincingly in this flacon through the metaphor of the sinuous snake. The highly successful bottle was made from the same plaster mold from 1920 to 1937. The snake head with wide-open jaws exudes a frisson of danger and at the same time entices the user to reach out and touch it. Lalique continued the relief ornament that adorns the front and back of the bottle onto the sculptural snake-head stopper. The decor imitates the scales of the snake's skin while providing a more secure grip. Gray paint rubbed into the recesses of the pattern lends the necessary contrast. The inexpensive colorless glass that Lalique used in the beginning almost without exception was pressed with air here in a two-part mold to make the hollow bottle. The distinctive stopper was made of solid molded glass. A renowned jewelry designer, René Lalique first turned his attention to making utilitarian glass objects for serial production

at the age of forty-seven, when he received a commission from the perfumer François Coty. Under his influence, the simple pharmacy-type bottle that had been customary for dispensing perfume took on a variety of new forms as Lalique combined the myriad motifs of the Art Nouveau style with different glass techniques. Lalique designed flacons for perfume houses including Houbigant, Guerlain, D'Orsay, and Worth. (Sabine Flaschberger)

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