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SMELL: THE HYBRID ART

Olfactory art is, by necessity, a hybrid form. Even when artists seek to isolate smell as a pure aesthetic experience, its deployment depends on other factors, such as technology, architecture, installation, or performance, to name just a few. The invisibility of scents (except in the cases of aromatic mists or smoke) can lead to the belief that smells exist autonomously, especially when their source in the material world is not directly evident. For example, Katharina Fritsch's *Perfume in Hallway* (1984) simply placed a scent on a gallery's staircase, but the audience's experience of the work relied upon this specific architectural feature as a marked transitional space. Peter Hopkins' aromatic diffusions filled entire rooms, but required the embedded technology of HVAC¹ systems to circulate the air. Jana Sterbak's *Perspiration: Olfactory Portrait* (1995) replicated the sweat of her lover, but obliged individuals to rub the liquid onto their own skin, thus incorporating the body and, by extension, performance into the work (the bottle was also a significant part of the piece – it served as a surrogate sculpture-like object to cuddle in the lover's absence)². These are just a few instances that demonstrate the inherent heterogeneity of olfactory art and its intermingling with other media, even in those cases when scent would seem to be the most independent and self-sufficient³.

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- 1 HVAC refers to the technology of heating, ventilation and air conditioning that controls a building's indoor climate.
 - 2 For commentary on these works, see my "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences: Olfactory Dimensions in Contemporary Art", *Parachute* #89, Winter 1998, 10-19, "Toposmia: Art, Scent, and Interrogations of Spatiality", *Angelaki* 7(1), April 2002, 31-46, and "Airchitecture: Guarded Breaths and the [cough] Art of Ventilation", in *Art History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present*, Patrizia di Bello and Gabriel Koureas, eds., London: Ashgate 2010, 147-166.
 - 3 It should also be noted that the senses often operate in tandem with one other in acts of perception and cognition, which is another manner in which olfactory art could be considered hybrid.

The hybridity of smell is important when considering the particularity of an olfactory art or aesthetics, primarily to avoid the faulty modernist categorization that tends to marginalize the sense of smell. For it was the urge to place limits on the various art forms articulated in Gottfried Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoon* (1766), and then entrenched by Clement Greenberg's "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), whereby each art form was theorized to harbor its own set of distinct characteristics. These characteristics were then prioritized as the *raison d'être* of that art form to explore, refine, and cleanse of any impurities. The implicit corollary for the senses outlined that each sensory mode held a corresponding art form: vision with painting, hearing with music, and so forth¹. The sense of smell did not fare well within these reductive logics – the modern art of perfumery, for example, did not truly begin until a century after Lessing's essay, and even when perfumery did become established, its status as a commercial industry bound it to the worlds of fashion and advertising and compromised whatever claims it might have to be considered on par with the more established arts². Even after the collapse of modernism as the dominant aesthetic paradigm in the 1950s/1960s, the flawed directive to purify each medium to its distinct and fundamental characteristics would still undermine the attempt to establish olfactory art as one that solely involved scent. This is because any scent-based work is intertwined with the smells of the environment it is located within, the people who attend and experience it, and the atmosphere that continually breezes by. The lack of distinct borders thus inextricably connects artists' use of smells to the background smellscapes of the world and undercuts olfactory art's autonomy.

The hybridity of olfactory art is further underscored by the syncretic practices of contemporary artists and the relational dynamics of the art encounter. For the advocates of modernist ideology, mixing media heretically countered the cleansing imperative. Fortunately, artists in the contemporary postmedia era are fearless in combining visual, sonic, architectural, performative and any other elements, and this syncretic

1 See Gottfried Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. Edward Allen McCormick, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962, and Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", *Partisan Review*, 7:4, 1940, 296-310.

2 This did not stop perfumers themselves from claiming perfume to be an aesthetic pursuit. See, e.g., Septimus Piesse, *The Art of Perfumery*, Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1857.

and multisensory sensibility characterizes artworks involving scent. Whereas the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, that union of the arts championed by Richard Wagner and exemplified by his operatic spectacles, has been raised historically as the paradigm of the full participation of the arts and senses, the ambitiousness and gargantuan scale of such events are generally incompatible with the modest studio conditions of most artists. In actuality, hybrid intersensory works do not have to overwhelm the beholder to be effective; they can also be playful, questioning, mysterious. Fluxus artists, for example, were adept at disrespecting the modernist division of the senses and arts, and deliberately sought out unusual intermedia combinations, such as this exercise conceived by Ken Friedman:

Imagine... an art form that is comprised of 10 percent music, 25 percent architecture, 12 percent drawing, 18 percent shoemaking, 30 percent painting and 5 percent smell. What would it be like? How would it work?... How would the elements interact¹?

Whether or not an actual work was ever produced according to this formula matters less than the Fluxus insight that different combinations of materials lead to different combinations of senses, and will most likely activate an unconventional ratio of the sensory modes that will disrupt and challenge the audience's normative and habitual perceptual hierarchy.

The designation of olfactory art, then, does not require the elimination of the other senses. Most, if not all, artists incorporating smell utilize other artforms to support, complement, juxtapose and facilitate the olfactory dimension they seek to highlight. Though combined with other media, smell often plays the most compelling role in the work's experience, meaning, and significance. Olfactory art, then, is not an art defined as a single-sense phenomenon, it just means that the artworks being discussed have a pronounced olfactory dimension. "Olfactory art" would thus be more of a provisional term rather than a fixed category, one that bears permeable boundaries and shifting degrees of inclusiveness. The question, then, becomes not what works qualify as olfactory

1 Ken Friedman has written about this playful ratio in several texts, most recently in "Freedom? Nothingness? Time? Fluxus and the Laboratory of Ideas", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2012, 29(7/8): 390. See also Dick Higgins, "Intermedia", in Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Esthetics Contemporary*, Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1978, 186-190.

art, but what it means for artworks to possess and foreground a notable olfactory presence. This chapter will consider three examples of olfactory artists' work that recognize the heterogeneity of smell by combining it with sculpture, performance, installation and interactive components. Through such a hybrid mixing of smell with other media, each work creates charged olfactory encounters that address epistemology, memory and the holistic processes of well-being.

OSWALDO MACIÁ
Cynical Perception

The expanded range of the senses employed by artists over the past three decades confirms a "sensorial turn" in the visual arts. While the reasons for this turn are diverse – a critique of ocularcentrism, a focus on the body and its processes, a greater presence of artists unconfined by the Western sensory hierarchy, among others – the results are similar: the senses are understood to be more than mere conduits for raw data, they are the means by which identity is realized, community formed, and knowledge produced. Rather than being consigned to the margins, the senses of smell, taste, hearing and touch have gained significance as alternative means to revitalize an experiential engagement with art and to explore aesthetic and political questions in more fully embodied ways. One of the pioneers of the surge in sensory practice is Oswaldo Maciá, who has incorporated a wide range of media into his work since the early 1990s to push normalized sensory boundaries, encourage audience participation, and investigate methods of knowing through tangible, pungent, discordant encounters¹.

Many of Maciá's works involve the pairing of smell and sound². In some ways, the combination is unlikely, since smell is usually associated

1 Interview with the author, April 18, 1999.

2 This pairing goes back to the beginning of Maciá's career. For instance, a two-fold exhibition at the Museum of Installation, contrasted *Memory Skip*, a construction container filled with Pinesol, with *The Sound of Smell* (both 1994), a CD of pine needles being ground up in a blender. The overpowering aroma of cleaning fluid accompanied the crackling

with taste (they are both chemical senses), and sound with the visual (both are prominent in broadcast and recording technologies). Yet smell and hearing share several traits: they are conveyed through air, involve a binary set of organs (nostrils and ears), and have been long associated in perfume discourse through the terms "notes" and "chords"¹. Despite these similarities, for Maciá sound and smell exist in a productive tension, which is especially evident in two recent works². Even though the olfactory and the acoustic inhabit the same space, the two sensory domains act beside and against each other. The effect is more *dysaesthetic* than *synaesthetic*, where the sensory modes maintain their singular identities to challenge one another rather than merge into a unified, seamless whole³. Such dysaesthesia is intentionally self-reflexive, for the collage of smell and sound generates a perceptual incongruity that visitors are prompted to cognitively address. In the words of the artist, "The works create scenarios where perception tests the limits of knowledge"; in particular by selecting smells and sounds that resist the classification by language⁴.

Two recent works demonstrate the potential of Maciá's method of mingling sensory modes to a simultaneously complementary and antithetical effect. *Cynic* (2013) includes a metal stand with a glass aquarium filled with a black liquid, a duo of speakers, and a hovering tangle of curling carbon fiber. Viewers are positioned in a dynamic confluence of the smell of "cynic" (a blend of amber, cypriol, civet, saffron and cumin, among other ingredients) amid a soundscape of mating and distress calls by species on the brink of extinction⁵. The curlicues of tape animate the volume of air in the gallery, seeming to perform as a visual symbol of the

sound of its supposedly organic source is a pithy meditation on memory, sanitization, and nature.

- 1 One might also consider the experiential similarities between smell and sound: both are temporary and evanescent, and seem to foreground memory and emotional affect.
- 2 These works were on display at the Henrique Faria Fine Art Gallery on the occasion of Maciá's exhibition "A Laboratory of Cynical Perception" in New York, September 2013. This section is a revised version of a text written for the exhibition brochure.
- 3 See Drobnick, "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences".
- 4 Oswaldo Maciá, *Manifesto for Olfactory – Acoustic Sculpture Compositions*, 2013, <http://www.oswaldomacia.com/New%20Cynics.html>.
- 5 The scents bear specific associations relevant to the practice of Cynical philosophy: amber for assertiveness, cypriol to be stimulating and probing, civet for animality, saffron and cumin for spiciness. Email from the artist, July 24, 2013.

waves of sound and scent circulating in the room¹. “Cynic” might seem like an odd choice to name such a sensorially rich configuration, for it recalls the popular sentiment of pessimism and scorn, an attitude that affords little political agency and tends to reinforce the status quo. But Maciá’s use of the term harks back to the Greek philosophical school (including such figures as Diogenes, nicknamed “the dog”, from which the name Cynic derives) that promoted intense ethical scrutiny upon individuals, beliefs and actions in order to inspire people to live more virtuously². In the context of *Cynic*, the suggestion is that one cannot rely upon a conventional approach to make sense of the unorthodox arrangement of smells, sounds and tape loops. Instead, sensory experiences must be closely examined, each component considered in its specificity and in relationship to the others, and one’s own conclusions drawn about whole assemblage. The material complexity of *Cynic*, then, presents a stimulus for sensorial thinking by forcing visitors to consider perception as a dynamic ecological field.

In the second work, *Empty Smoke* (2013), visitors confront a similar configuration of animal sounds, scents on a pedestal, and looped carbon fiber, this time vertically oriented. The title signals a conundrum: while smoke consists of innumerable minute particles that contaminate the air and cloud vision, what would it mean for it to be empty? A key may be the link to the Cynics, once again, for whom the obfuscating veil of smoke (*typhos*) was the symbol of illusion, foolishness and hypocrisy, ills that their philosophical critiques sought to dispel³. For smoke to be empty, then, it would have to be cleared of the flaws that occlude a lucid view of the true value of living a beautiful life⁴. If *Cynic* stages the practice of sensorial thinking, *Empty Smoke* alludes to the result. Both works combine to exemplify what I would call *cynical perception*, which involves three central principles. First, cynical perception compels a keen

1 For the artist, the tape loops also signify that all sensory information, despite the different pathways, ends up as electrical energy in the brain.

2 Maciá references Peter Sloterdijk’s *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. Interview with the author, July 12, 2013. It is interesting to note that a number of Diogenes’ contrarian gestures criticizing Greek social mores involved the inappropriate use of the senses. See Thomas McEvilley, “Diogenes of Sinope: Selected Performance Pieces”, *Artforum*, March 1983, 58-9.

3 See Luis E. Navia, *Classical Cynicism: A Critical Study*, Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996.

4 Maciá also refers the word “empty” to John Cage’s notion of silence, especially in 4’33” (1952). Interview with the author, July 12, 2013.

attentiveness to materials and sensations, thus avoiding pre-established perceptions. Second, it entails a reflexive approach to what is being sensed and how it is being sensed, that is, it questions the normative exercise of the senses. And third, it proposes generative action towards language and knowledge in order to produce new ways to speak about sensory phenomena and understand the world.

It is significant to note that Maciá incorporates research directly into his practice. The recorded sounds and synthesized scents arise from two of the world’s most vast sensory-specific databanks – the British Library Sound Archive’s holding of wildlife sounds, containing over 150,000 sounds by 10,000 animals, and the International Flavors & Fragrances (IFF) scent library, which has collected and created tens of thousands of smells since the nineteenth century. From these libraries, Maciá chooses sounds and scents that are unusual to a contemporary Western audience by virtue of the geographical remoteness, for example, the call of a rare Indonesian cicada, or lapsed relevance, such as scents that have not been commercially applied for fifty years. In both cases, he collaborates, implicitly with the hundreds of bioacoustic researchers collecting samples from around the world, and explicitly with Ricardo Moya, Senior Perfumer at IFF, to create enigmatic aromas. The environmentalism implied in Maciá’s reference to bioacoustics – specifically, the archiving of species’ sounds before they become extinct – could be applied also to the sense of smell. In the mediated environment in which many urban inhabitants live, olfactory encounters are often diminished by deodorizing mandates or prescribed through political and market decisionmakers¹. Could there be considered a need to protect and appreciate the animal calls and forgotten scents for their own intrinsic merit, as if they were both endangered species? In this vein, Maciá’s sensory sculptures concentrate on uncommon fragrances and sounds to challenge established perceptions and understandings². The point is

1 Regarding the regulation of scents, see the development of perfume bans in the workplace and in cities such as Halifax, Detroit and Portland. See, e.g., Christy L. De Vader and Paxson Barker, “Fragrance in the Workplace is the New Second-Hand Smoke”, *Proceedings of the American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences*, 16:1, February 2009, <http://asbbs.org/files/2009/PDF/D/De%20VaderC.pdf>.

2 It is interesting to note how Maciá refers to his works as sculptures, despite their interdisciplinary qualities, which reveals a trend towards the conventionalization of olfactory art and its greater acceptance within the art market.

not simply to guess and identify their origins, for that would merely confine them to what is already familiar. The opportunity presented in these works is to recuperate cynical perception; it is an invitation to sense, reflect on, and value unusual scents and sounds. While Maciá's works pose an epistemological query about knowledge and its process of sensorial formation, they do so through an intensely cross-modal means where different species of scents and sounds interact in the environment of the white cube.

LESLIE HILL AND HELEN PARIS
Sniff, Memory

To memorize and deliver long speeches, classical orators employed a distinctive memory technique. By imagining a large and complex building, and associating the ideas of their talk with objects situated in various rooms, speakers took a virtual walk through the structure and recounted the contents of their speech in the desired order. In *The Art of Memory*, Francis Yates describes how vivid emotional associations, those that were "beautiful or hideous, comic or obscene", strengthened their ability to recall even further¹. Such a mnemonic practice privileged the sense of vision; however, what if smell was substituted? Could one create a parallel system in which a sequence of smells served as the loci for remembering? The anatomical link between scents and the emotional center of the brain makes this technique eminently plausible². One potential hindrance, however, is smell's notorious resistance to language. Interestingly, Yates's description of the orator's method did not involve memorizing verbal cues, but implanting and retrieving *symbols*. According to anthropologist Dan Sperber, smells are the perfect embodiment of symbols, for smells operate through evocation, where they summon up a commingled field of emotion rooted in a social context.

1 Francis Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, 1-26.

2 The affective character of smells is attributed to the olfactory nerve's connection to the brain's limbic system, which controls emotions, endocrine levels, and autonomic processes. See, e.g., Warrick Brewer, David Castle and Christos Pantelis, eds., *Olfaction and the Brain*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

What the sense of smell lacks semantically is more than compensated by its adeptness in conjuring up an entire scene of personal thoughts, feelings, and relationships¹.

On the Scent (2003), by Leslie Hill and Helen Paris (in collaboration with Lois Weaver), compellingly exemplifies a scented art of memory, one that capitalizes on the poignancy and pungency of smell's symbolic nature. In this three-part series of autobiographical monologues, smells loom large in the scriptwriting process, the performance, and the audience's experience. Each scene is laden with references to smells: they provide authenticity to the private reflections, form major pivot points for character development, give flavor to past historical eras or distant geographical locales, as well as trigger the audiences' own associations. The work achieves its visceral impact by being close-up and intimate. Limited to an audience of two persons at a time, and set in a downtown one-bedroom apartment, visitors are led through a half-hour of intense confessions and interactions that infuse the space with heightened sensory potential². Traditional theatres tend to limit the effective use of scent, for the separation of performers from the audience and the size of most seating arrangements make the circulation of scents difficult to control. Here, though, in an ordinary residence, the audience experiences what could be called an olfactory memory theatre, where scents appear with striking affect right in their faces.

Three characters, from different eras and places, appear in *On the Scent*. All are tethered to the home and its smells, musing upon their condition and the formative periods in their lives³. Here the audience is not calmly enticed by a Proustian madeleine, but provoked by sharp, pungent, pesky intrusions that incite biting commentary on selfhood,

1 Dan Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 115-149.

2 *On the Scent* was part of an olfactory-based performance series titled *reminiSCENT* (2003) that I curated with Paul Couillard in Toronto. For more information on the works see <http://www.displaycult.com/exhibitions/reminiSCENT.html> and my article "Sense and *reminiSCENT*: Performance and the Essences of Memory", *Canadian Theatre Review* 137, Winter 2009, 6-12. *On the Scent* has also been performed in 14 countries in a wide variety of residences, including a council estate in the UK, a former communist building in China, and an apartment on New York City's upper west side, which inflected the audience's experience of "home" differently each time.

3 My description below is informed by my experience with the performance, the script generously provided by the artists, and an interview I conducted with Hill, Paris and Weaver on September 19, 2003 in Toronto.

family life, and historical events. In the first scene, Weaver greets visitors as they cross the threshold with the charm of a grand dame or a jaded movie star who never leaves her apartment. She immediately compromises their personal space, first by offering chocolates, only to snatch them away, and then by sniffing people, pretending to guess what scent they are wearing. She then sprays their startled faces with Evening in Paris. During these actions Weaver rhapsodizes about the much-cherished visits of the Avon Lady during an isolated childhood and how the traveling saleswoman inspired an addictive craving for fragrant, exotic luxuries. A decadence hangs in the air, as dreams about perfume's magical qualities corresponds to an equally unreal feminine stereotype: glamorous, yes, but also trapped in a narcissistic fantasy.

The second section occurs in the kitchen, where the aromas of home-cooked meals would normally stir soothing memories. Hill stands behind a granite counter to narrate the experience of growing up in New Mexico amidst military sites, aboriginal communities, and postwar consumerism. Danger seems to abound: a pork chop thrown onto a frying pan sizzles to the point of burning, popcorn pops and spills onto the floor. Hill snorts chili powder as if it were cocaine, and squirts Aqua Net hairspray into the air despite the nearby flame. Poignancy and conflict underscore these olfactory omens. Mom hated to cook, except making popcorn. The grandfather suffered post-traumatic stress syndrome and visitors get a whiff of his shaving lotion. The chilis grew in soil with fabled miraculous and curative powers. Piñon incense refers to the artist's aboriginal ancestry, which is recognized only at Christmas. These hints at simmering family turmoil serve as a microcosm of greater, geopolitical catastrophes. When discussing the testing of atomic bombs in her area and the tragedy of their use to end World War II, Hill cuts off and burns a lock of hair – an acrid and mournful reminder of those incinerated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A shot of tequila given to the two audience members provides some relief and a jolt back to present time.

Paris performs the third section in the bedroom, lying under the covers in her pajamas. Fittingly for a sick person's room, the air is redolent with Vicks VapoRub and Pepto-Bismol that practically induce their own version of nausea. In this uncomfortably intimate encounter, vulnerability and helplessness become palpable, not only representing

the condition of an ailing child, but also that of an older individual undergoing the indignities of aging and dying. Paris comments upon both ends of the life cycle, speaking about stealing biscuits and loving the smell of Tupperware in her youth, as well as admonishing an alcoholic uncle who failed to disguise his betraying "malty mouth", and telling of an impoverished aunt who could no longer afford Chanel #5 and was forced to use cheaply-scented discount soap. Stigma and abjection intertwine in this scenario as the inevitable failings of the human condition are exposed. The one panacea of Paris's youth – a Roger & Gallet sandalwood body lotion, the Holy Grail of Christmas presents – promises salvation but never can be found. Instead, the child is left bound to a sick bed with the festering smells of disease that will, ultimately, become her prime olfactory memory in adulthood.

At one point Hill's character lets slip that the scents spark "neuralgia", and then corrects herself to say the expected "nostalgia", which nods to the term's literal meaning of "home-sickness" and sums up the overall contradictory attitude toward smells and memory in the performance¹. In this claustrophobic analysis of childhood and domesticity, smells provide the key to part-real, part-imagined self-portraits amidst the broader panoramas of family biography and the play of history. Through an experiential theatre, olfactory symbols shock, entice, overwhelm, irritate, and intrigue, much like one could imagine originally occurring in the performers' lives². By experiencing these smells as both a symbol arising from the script and a physical stimulus, a representencing occurs that simultaneously recalls, relives, and actualizes the emotions being enacted. That many of the associations with the smells in *On the Scent* relate to trauma and family difficulties is borne out by the studies done by olfactory researcher Alan R. Hirsch: people reflecting on unhappy childhoods were more likely to base their recollections on what most would consider to be foul smells³. Whether or not the gripping scenarios by Weaver, Hill and Paris are true, the scents convey an

¹ Helen Paris and Leslie Hill, "On the Scent", *Performance Research*, 8(3): 66-72.

² Even as the intensity of scents implies authenticity, simulation is always possible. See my "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences", along with Helen Paris, "(Re)Confirming the Conventions – An Ontology of the Olfactory" *Tessera* #32, summer, 2002, 98-109.

³ Alan R. Hirsch, "Nostalgia, the Odors of Childhood", in Jim Drobnick, ed., *The Smell Culture Reader*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006, 188.

unanticipated and sometimes alarming intensity. The distinctions between listening and feeling, past and present, another's experience and those of one's own, are collapsed so that the trauma described seems to recur – engendering an unusual form of *communitas* through the sharing of smells¹.

The ending to *On the Scent* provides another twist and compounds the multiple roles played by the audience. After being a viewer watching a performance, a confidant listening to seemingly personal revelations, and a sharer in the experience of the scents, the audience becomes informants for the artists' ongoing research². Weaver asks each person to sit in front of a video camera and tell their own story of a smell that reminds them of home or homesickness, or just makes them sick³. They cannot get away without contributing their own olfactory performance. In return for their participation in the artists' database, Weaver awards them with the piece of chocolate previously denied.

BRIAN GOELTZENLEUCHTER
Scents of Wellbeing

Museums may be beautiful and display remarkable works of art, but are they comfortable? Are they pleasant places to visit, to linger, or even to work in? Do they make people happy? Such questions could be said to be at the heart of Brian Goeltzenleuchter's practice, especially as they relate to white cube gallery spaces that are so paradigmatic for displaying contemporary art. These white, geometric, evenly-lit, deodorized, and silent rooms may create an ideal sanctuary for visual art, but they can be alienating because of the sensory deprivation utilized

- 1 Gale Largey and Rod Watson, "The Sociology of Odors", in Jim Drobnick, ed., *The Smell Culture Reader*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006, 38.
- 2 Like Maciá, Hill and Paris's practice involves ongoing research and collaboration. For Hill and Paris, they have worked with olfactory neuroscientist Upinder Bhalla, based in Bangalore. Their research has resulted in *Essences of London* (2004), an interview project involving hundreds of residents commenting on smells connected with the city. See <http://www.placelessness.com/essences/>.
- 3 In the 400 performances of *On the Scent*, Hill and Paris have collected over 2,000 statements by audience members. See <http://www.placelessness.com/project/1121/on-the-scent/>.

to engineer a singular privileging of the optical¹. Despite the white cube's effectiveness over the past century to become the prescribed exhibition format, its flaws have been magnified by the crisis afflicting museums since the emergence of neo-liberal government policies and the restructuring of arts institutions according to corporate models of consumerism and marketability. The crisis operates both at the level of visitor experience (feeling intimidated by sterile interiors) and employee satisfaction (feeling stressed at dealing with the museum's uncertainty). For Goeltzenleuchter, the museum's crisis hinges on its neglected sensory dimension and so he formulates an olfactory cure.

Goeltzenleuchter is an artist who adopts the combined persona of an entrepreneurial capitalist / new age healer. As one might expect of such a persona, the predicament of the museum serves as an opportunity. The answer to the museum's (and contemporary culture's) troubles revolves around a key tenet – sensory wholeness. To cultivate a renewed and energized sensorium, the artist established a functioning commercial business / artwork with three main branches to promote optimal comfort and wellness: Contraposto Home Décor, a manufacturer and distributor of home furnishings, interior design, and hygiene products such as scented soaps in the shape of the Venus of Willendorf or air fresheners representing the iconic art movements of Cubism, Expressionism and Impressionism; *c* (*pronounced /k/*), a combination boutique and spa that features specially-designed equipment and environments to rejuvenate the full spectrum of the senses; and Institutional Wellbeing, a consulting service whereby a custom-made environmental fragrance is created to assist institutions experiencing disquieting transitions². Goeltzenleuchter's company manifests itself in several ways to cater to various publics: a website for individuals to order online, temporary interactive installations

- 1 For more on the anosmia of the white cube, see my "Volatile Architectures", in *Crime and Ornament: In the Shadow of Adolf Loos*, Bernie Miller and Melony Ward, eds., Toronto: YYZ Books, 2002, 263-282, and "The Museum as Smellscape", in *The Multisensory Museum*, Nina Levent and Alvaro Pascual-Leone, eds., Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014, 177-196.
- 2 Contraposto was formed in 1998 and its product line and services can be found at <http://www.cphomedecor.com/>. For more information on Goeltzenleuchter's work, see <http://www.bgprojects.com/>. The deliberate omission of a "p" in Contraposto and the hopelessly awkward name *c* (*pronounced /k/*) point to the quirky contrivances of advertising culture and the artists' amiable humor.

in street-level storefronts for walk-ins, and museum and gallery interventions for the art crowd¹.

Undergirding these various appearances and product lines is an emphasis on scent. Drawing from the popular use of aromatherapy for pleasure and revitalization, the domestic indulgences proffered by Martha Stewart and *Wallpaper*, and the burgeoning use of sensory marketing to add aura and value to consumer items, Goeltzenleuchter's fragrances pose critique through the disarming conceit of "living well". Smell is more than just a decorative element, however. All aspects of architecture exert an influence upon individuals' actions and moods, but smell is perhaps the most efficient way to alter the character of a room. Estrangement can be converted into enchantment with just a few sniffs. The use of a fragrance treatment by Goeltzenleuchter's company in home, work and leisure spaces may seem like a one-size-fits-all business rationalization, but it recognizes that similar problems of disaffection and stress plague most types of architecture built without due consideration given to the comfort, health and sensory stimulation of its occupants². The museum is a special case, for it is a home to art, a workplace for employees, and a leisure destination for visitors, making it a key site to remedy. Not coincidentally, museums and galleries are the primary patrons of the artist's Institutional Wellbeing service.

In 2010, the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (SAAG) was in the midst of finalizing a \$3.5 million dollar renovation and commissioned Goeltzenleuchter to assist in the transition to the new facility and implementation of the institution's rebranded identity³. Anxiety often accompanies change, and Institutional Wellbeing was engaged

as a preventative action to support the acclimatization of visitors and staff. For the artist, managing such a change depended on restoring a "personal and collective equilibrium" thrown akilter by the different architectural layout and shift in strategic plan. Contraposto would develop a customized wellness scent that would "exploit the precognitive sense of smell" to expedite employee adjustment and "cleanse the environmental ambiance, thereby stimulating consistent degrees of positive energy and creativity, and encouraging high levels of productivity and enthusiasm"¹. After interviewing the SAAG's staff, curators, board and volunteers about the performance of their duties, levels of satisfaction, and bodily tensions they might be experiencing, Goeltzenleuchter submitted them to a diagnostic test to discover unconscious feelings about the gallery's new design and preferences among an array of essential oils². The product launch of the resulting scent – SAAG Environmental Fragrance, which gave off a spicy, plum-like deodorant aroma³ – coincided with the opening of a storefront *c* (*pronounced /k/*) wellness center where employees and gallerygoers could improve their perceptual awareness and repair psycho-energetic imbalances. Interactive components included a Sonic Massage to vibrate parts of the body and release blockages, a Light Corridor to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of color, and a Scent Station to imbibe the SAAG fragrance⁴. In Goeltzenleuchter's multi-sensory training room, wellbeing is considered a holistic goal involving both healing and empowerment, where equilibrium accomplished at an individual level will naturally suffuse outwards to enhance the wellness of the entire institution and the public at large.

While wellness centers are temporary installations, the fragrance of wellbeing can persist long afterwards through the purchase of a bottle from the museum store. Besides addressing the notion of wellbeing,

- 1 Appropriating the discourse and practices of business has been an effective strategy of conceptual art. See Alex Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003.
- 2 For recent thinking about how architecture can better care for the sensory needs of its users, see Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini, eds., *Imperfect Health: The Medicalization of Architecture*, Montreal and Zurich: Canadian Centre for Architecture and Lars Müller Publishers, 2012; Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka, *Sensory Design*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004; and Karen A. Franck and R. Bianca Lepore, *Architecture from the Inside Out*, West Sussex: Wiley-Academy, 2007.
- 3 The installation, *Institutional Wellbeing: An Olfactory Plan for the Southern Alberta Art Gallery* (2010), was curated by Ryan Doherty and more information can be found at <http://www.saag.ca/art/exhibition-archive/0225-institutional-wellbeing:-an-olfactory-plan-for-the-southern-alberta-art-gallery>.

- 1 Brian Goeltzenleuchter, lecture given at the product launch of the SAAG environmental scent, May 1, 2010, courtesy of the artist.
- 2 Applied kinesiology is a diagnostic technique popularly used by aromatherapy and alternative healing practitioners though discounted by the traditional medical profession.
- 3 Technically, the scent is based on a combination of rhodinol and dimethyl benzyl carbonyl butyrate. Brian Goeltzenleuchter, email to the author, September 13, 2013.
- 4 Other wellness centers have incorporated yoga mats and postural exercises to address the kinaesthetics of art viewing and to develop the proprioceptive sense, as well as an Art Courage Program to redress the cliquishness and elitism some people experience with contemporary art.

Contraposto's intervention also reinvests the sensory deprived white cube with a more fully embodied awareness, and reworks the aesthetic encounter into one that is a potentially transformative and beneficial experience. Despite adopting the discourse of neo-liberal management and the opportunism of business culture, along with aestheticizing and commodifying new age therapeutic practices, Institutional Wellbeing couches its serious goals within humor and satire. Altruism can be subversive in an artworld that distrusts good intentions. Interestingly, the motivational speeches Goeltzenleuchter gives to promote Contraposto's activities parallel some of the proselytizing manifestoes of the traditional avant-garde. The difference, however, is that rather than aiming to force utopian ideals upon society from the top down, Goeltzenleuchter aspires to allow them to emerge organically from the bottom up by consulting with and empowering individuals. Whereas the avant-garde generally failed in their efforts to transform society, one can at least see the possibility of success with Institutional Wellbeing, not the least because of the ratcheting down of expectations to more modest goals. Goeltzenleuchter's strategy may relate more to institutional conversion than institutional critique, yet ameliorating sensory impoverishment does subtly engage a critical position. It just places more emphasis on remediation, that is, improving comfort, focusing on health, and creating an olfactory-positive environment.

My discussion of hybridity began with an analysis of the various media comprising olfactory art. As odd as Ken Friedman's conceptual experiment of an artwork comprised by percentages of music, architecture, drawing, shoemaking, painting and smell no doubt sounds to some readers, after considering the works of Maciá, Hill and Paris, and Goeltzenleuchter, such a diverse mix is not unusual for artists working with scent. In many ways olfactory art bears affinities to the postmedia forms of installation and performance – it requires the audience to move, engages their bodies, extends into space, displays temporality. Hybridity, however, extends beyond the material and sensory constitution of the works to the artists themselves. All three artists presented in this chapter are, effectively, artist-researchers. They conduct research, work collaboratively, and construct situations to test or draw out responses from visitors. Ultimately, the audience for olfactory art is also affected. Just as the disembodied eye is no longer solely relevant for postmedia

art, so too the disembodied nose can not provide a complete experience of olfactory art. Breathing is corporeal and participatory; in sniffing, one activates an exchange between what is inside and outside the body. Such an exchange inevitably alters one's sense of self in subtle physical, emotional or conceptual ways. Through the experience of inhaling, the audience becomes one more aspect of olfactory art's hybridity.

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