

Culture: High & Low

With Carolina A. Miranda

What does L.A. smell like? An artist is trying to put it in a bottle



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Artist Brian Goeltzenleuchter is making a series of scents inspired by L.A. neighborhoods. Seen here: examples of a similar project undertaken at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. (Brian Goeltzenleuchter / Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego)

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Artist Brian Goeltzenleuchter got all kinds of answers when he put up an online survey asking Angelenos what their city smelled like. Respondents suggested concrete, motor oil, marijuana and bacon-wrapped hot dogs. Silver Lake, some said, smells like hipster. The harbor areas combine the ocean with the unsavory scents of heavy industry. Santa Monica is redolent of grass and the Pacific.

Downtown, where the L.A. Times is based, doesn't fare too well. Most respondents to the artist's poll said the neighborhood smells of urine and traffic. (Not untrue, though I would add day-old hooch and the antiseptic blasts of corporate air conditioning to the mix.) There was one person, however, who wrote in with a particularly poetic description.

"He or she was very articulate in describing downtown, making me wonder if they are a perfume person," Goeltzenleuchter said. "In reference to the smells, they wrote: 'Dirt, rubber, dried-up old dairy products, rotted greens and flowers. Little Tokyo is different because it's cleaner there. It has a salty soy sauce in the air.'"

Goeltzenleuchter is collecting these impressions for a one-day exhibition at the **Santa Monica Museum of Art (SMMoA)** on June 28. The show, titled "Sillage," will allow visitors to sample a series of scents that he is crafting, each inspired by a different part of Los Angeles, from downtown to the harbor to the San Fernando Valley. (The timing couldn't be better, this week saw the unveiling of the first **scent phone**.)

The idea, he said, isn't necessarily to duplicate neighborhood smells, but to create a sense of mood established by those smells. He describes these as "scentscapes." In the case of downtown, he's basing his "perfume" on the smells of hot asphalt and traffic.

"Urine is too hard to do," he explained. "But you can get ingredients such as birch tar and guaiac wood, which have very tarry scents. They play a minor role in terms of volume, but they have a big role in terms of fragrance."

"I'm very interested in these so-called ugly smells," he added. "It presents a real challenge to build something around it."

This isn't the first time that Goeltzenleuchter has toyed with the art of scent. He is an artist-in-residence at the **Institute for Art and Olfaction** in Los Angeles, a group that supports creative experimentation with scent. During graduate school at UC San Diego, he created a series of home fragrances inspired by different art movements -- from the **Cubists** to the **Fauves** -- as

part of a conceptual home decor shop.

For the Santa Monica show, he hopes to capture the smells of L.A. in perfume that viewers (or, more appropriately, smellers) will be able to wear. "It's kind of interesting to reduce an entire region to a smell," he said. Especially because the perfumes he crafts don't always smell stereotypically good. "This isn't like going to the counter at Nordstrom."

For the project, Goeltzenleuchter is still refining his scents, and, as a result, is still seeking feedback, especially from Angelenos who live in Northeast L.A. or the Valley, which he said have been underrepresented in his survey. (Fill out the online survey [here](#).)

So far, he said, the South L.A. scent is his favorite. "I've even worn it," he said. What does it contain? So far, scents that pay tribute to metallic heat and hydraulic fluid.

"I wanted to see how it would react with my skin, but it felt good and smelled good, so I just kept wearing it."

"Sillage" will be on view at SMMoA on Saturday, June 28 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 2525 Michigan Ave., Santa Monica, smmaa.org.

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Datebook: Hollywood Fringe Fest, Tony Greene and Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon



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In his deeply layered works, Tony Greene presented obscured photographic images and desires. "His Puerile Gestures," a work from 1989, is shown here. (Ray Morales / MAK Center)

JUNE 19, 2014, 12:07 PM

The Hollywood Fringe Festival gets small-scale theater going all over the city, Wikipedia gets rewritten, Tony Greene's art receives posthumous celebration and a Spalding Gray monologue receives posthumous re-creation. And who are those New Yorkers telling us about Los Angeles' art scene? A guide to what's happening all over El Lay:

The Hollywood Fringe Festival. Plays about zombies, Barbies, Craigslist and everything in between are what you'll find at this annual theater festival that features more than 300 scheduled shows at 45 venues around Hollywood. Expect interesting theater on the cheap. Don't know where to start? [Laist](#) has a rundown of six fun shows. *Through June 29, in various locations around Hollywood, hollywoodfringe.org.*

"Tony Greene: Room of Advances," at the MAK Center. Though he passed away in 1990 at the age of 35, Greene's work is enjoying a resurgence thanks to the Los Angeles artists who collected his work. Greene was the subject of a small show-within-a-show at the Whitney Biennial in New York and is now on view at the "Made in L.A." biennial at the Hammer Museum. This beautifully hung exhibition at the MAK gathers more than two dozen works from the three-year period before his death. And it couldn't be more stunning: The intimate scale of Greene's earthy pieces, painted with deep shades of brown, black and red, seem designed for Rudolf Schindler's low-slung architecture. Overall, a deeply meditative experience. *Through Sept. 7, 835 N. Kings Road, West Hollywood, makcenter.org.*

Unforgetting L.A. #4: Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon at 356 S. Mission Rd. Since last summer, online culture magazine [East of Borneo](#) has hosted Wikipedia editing sessions intended to get Los Angeles online. Volunteers help write the cultural history of our region into what has become the starting point for any and all Internet research. This includes entries on artists, curators and institutions of diverse backgrounds. Beginners are welcome, so if you haven't edited Wikipedia before, do not be shy. Bring your own laptop and power cord. *Noon to 5 p.m. Saturday at 356 S. Mission Road, downtown L.A., 356mission.com. RSVP appreciated.*

"Rumstick Road" at 356 Mission Rd. In the late 1970s, monologist and actor Spalding Gray lost his mother to suicide. To deal with her death, he created an experimental performance in collaboration with Elizabeth LeCompte. Now LeCompte, with Ken Kobland, have created a video reconstruction of that seminal work. All of it made more poignant by the fact that Gray himself committed suicide in 2004. *Screening 8 p.m. Friday at 356 S. Mission Road, downtown L.A., 356mission.com.*

"Gerard & Kelly: Reusable Parts/Endless Love," at the Hammer Museum. In 2010, conceptual artist Tino Seghal had a solo exhibition at the Guggenheim that featured several

performances (one interactive) that were not allowed to be recorded (no photography, no video). Gerard & Kelly didn't record it, but they recorded themselves describing all of the actions in one of his performances, titled "The Kiss." For the Hammer's "Made in L.A." biennial, the artists will perform aspects of the work based on instructions they recorded. *Saturday and Sunday, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood, hammer.ucla.edu.*

New York magazine's Culver City artist tour. In which the New Yorkers arrive to tell L.A. what their art is all about. New York mag is teaming with LAXART for artist events and tours in Culver City. There will be painting workshops, animation workshops and exhibitions of work. This is making me think I may have to organize my own tour, with stops at the 7-Eleven for locally sourced Slurpees and a visit to the statue of the **dancing lion** in a mumu. *The first event gets rolling at 11 a.m. Saturday at LAXART, 2640 S. La Cienega Blvd., Culver City, laxart.org.*

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