

The Aesthetics of Smelly Art

The remarkable increase in the number of artworks that foreground scents and odors during recent years suggests the need for an assessment of the aesthetic and artistic possibilities of smell. Because there has been so little olfactory art in the past, it is hardly surprising that this area has been largely neglected by philosophical aesthetics.¹ This essay is intended as a survey of theoretical issues raised by olfactory art and as a defense of its practice against traditional skepticism about the aesthetic and artistic relevance of scents. Although the complexity of some of the individual issues would be worthy of an entire article, we have chosen to offer an overview in the hope of attracting other philosophers, as well as critics and curators, to consider this fascinating new area for reflection. As interesting as it would be to explore the aesthetic aspects of the everyday experience of smells or the use of odors in cultural ceremonies such as Japanese Kodo or even the use of odors to accompany plays and films, we focus on contemporary olfactory art meant to be presented in galleries, museums, or as public installations/performances.² Because much of this art may be unfamiliar, we begin with several examples of artworks based on odors. Then we examine some traditional objections to smell as a legitimate object of aesthetic attention, and finally, we discuss the art status of olfactory artworks, closing with the complex issue of whether or in what sense perfume is art.

I. EXAMPLES OF SMELLY ART

Although a number of installation and performance works since the 1970s have involved odors as an ancillary factor, our primary interest is in artworks that foreground smells and make a state-

ment about our experience of smell and its associations. Such works have highly varied aims and use markedly different combinations of materials, some relying on natural and readily available scents, others employing artificial smells either constructed by chemists or by the artists themselves. An artist who has made impressive use of natural scents to create olfactory environments intended to transport the audience into a different world is the Brazilian fabric sculptor, Ernesto Neto, who once packed long, diagonal legs of women's sheer nylon stockings with the scents of spices such as cloves, cumin, and turmeric as part of the exhibition *Wonderland* at the St. Louis Art Museum in 2000. Some of the stockings stretched from floor to ceiling, others simply lay on the floor like sacks of colored powders. These nettings spread their scents throughout the museum space, creating a dreamy atmosphere that varied for each visitor depending on his or her associations with the odors.³ According to Jim Drobnick, "the enveloping presences" of artworks such as this "stem from a holistic viewpoint in which art can provide a haven for mending the fracture between mind and body."⁴

Other artists use scents in a more confrontational way, often to illustrate political or social ideas. In the project *Actual Odor*, the artist Angela Ellsworth wore a jersey cocktail dress soaked in her own urine for the duration of the opening reception for the *Token City* installation (a subway simulation) by artist Muriel Magenta at the Arizona State University Art Museum (1997). Ellsworth wanted to demonstrate how smell destroys any social boundaries existent in a subway, as it permeates the space and transcends visual barriers or experiences. While wearing the smelly dress, the artist was fanning herself and spreading

the odor with a hand fan, one side of which was lettered with the word 'actual' and the other side with the word 'odor.' Ellsworth mingled with other museum visitors and for continuous periods of time sat in the projection space of *Token City*. Most of the visitors could smell the unpleasant odor, yet did not associate the nicely dressed woman with the smell, nor could they find the source of the scent. Ellsworth's work can be grouped with a number of artists who have created site-specific installations involving smells or have taken their performance into the streets.⁵

Nobi Shioya's installation *7S* (2003) consisted of seven large ceramic bottles suspended from the ceiling, each containing one of seven scents created by one of seven of the world's top perfumers. Each perfumer was asked by Shioya to create an olfactory representation of a deadly sin: Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony, and Lust. The scents were accompanied by photos representing each sin hung on the walls of the gallery, with names of the sins in Latin. In addition to creating olfactory portraits of the seven deadly sins, the perfumers were asked by Shioya to create "self-portraits" composed of scents. Each portrait consisted of a black panel saturated with scent and hung on the wall next to a smaller panel with the list of each perfumer's most recognized commercial mass-market scents. The large "self-portrait" panel was also painted with the perfumer's initials and a web site address where the visitors could learn more about this particular perfumer's career.⁶

One of the most prolific olfactory artists today is the Belgian, Peter de Cupere, whose scent sculptures, scent installations, perfumes, and olfactory performances seek to engage audiences through all the senses, but primarily through scent. Among his scent sculptures is *Earthcar* (2002), a small car covered with earth and fake green plants, emitting the smells of thyme, anis, pine, olive, and grape. Installations have included *Blue Skies* (1999) consisting of a blue-painted room with a thousand yards of fishnet and dried fish along with synthetic fish and coconut smells. A work even more focused on odors was his *Black Beauty Smell Happening* (1999), which teased gallery visitors with a perfume he called "Black Beauty." During the exhibition, attractive male and female models dressed in black cat suits with cutout patches mingled with the audiences. De Cupere sprayed his perfume,

that itself left black traces, on the bare skin showing through the cutouts. For spectators to smell the perfume, they needed to draw their noses close to the "smell zones." Later in the essay we discuss one of his most remarkable inventions, a sort of smell piano that emits odors instead of sounds. De Cupere has created an artistic identity that is a cross between artist and olfactory chemist that may become a model for other olfactory artists in the future.⁷

Our last example is a work by Helgard Haug, a young performance artist who won a prize in support of a public art piece at the subway station Berlin Alexanderplatz, once the social center of East Berlin. Haug commissioned a distillation of the scents of Berlin Alexanderplatz and put it into little souvenir glass vials that were dispensed in the station during the year 2000. The artist collaborated with Karl-Heinz Burk, a professional from the industrial aroma-producing factory H and R in Braunschweig, to produce her *U-deur*. The perfumer designed the scent based on his own perception of the station without chemical analysis. *U-deur* included the smell of bread as one of the primary odors (because there was once a bakery stand in the subway) along with the smells of cleaning agents, oil, and electricity. The public response to the project was extraordinary. People wrote that the little sniff-bottle brought to mind memories and associations with the smells of a divided Berlin, for instance, the "dead" stations that West Berlin subway trains went through after passing the Wall, as well as thoughts about the Stasi archive with its items saturated with the body odor of East German criminals and dissidents.⁸ Other olfactory artists have done installations evoking the smell of places, such as Sissel Tolaas's simulation of the odors of Paris, including among other things, the scents of dog droppings, ashtrays, and a slaughterhouse.⁹

Many issues are raised by these works. Some are mostly practical, such as the technical and monetary difficulties of creating olfactory works; problems in finding venues for displaying them; problems of designing, documenting, and describing olfactory projects; problems in preserving them; and problems in finding support from traditional art funding sources. In addition, creating olfactory artwork may require chemical training to enable the artists to work with aromatic substances, including not only creating and storing but also

mastering such challenges as maintaining the same olfactory level throughout an exhibition. Important as these practical issues are, the focus of the remainder of our article is on two theoretical questions: In what ways are smells suitable objects of aesthetic attention, and given that olfactory works are now an accepted part of the artworld, what are their special characteristics and limitations as serious art? This second question will lead to a final one concerning the art status of the most ancient of olfactory arts, perfume.

II. THE PREJUDICE AGAINST SMELL

As a first step in exploring these issues, we need to consider a longstanding philosophical prejudice against the so-called lower senses of smell, taste, and touch that has often led to the denial of their suitability for aesthetic reflection. From the ancient world into the twentieth century, majority opinion among philosophers has been that these senses are far beneath vision and hearing in dignity, intellectual power, and refinement.¹⁰ The classic philosophical application of this view to the aesthetic realm is Plato's claim in *Hippias Major* that "beauty is the pleasant which comes through the senses of hearing and sight," whereas the pleasures of the other senses should not be called beautiful.¹¹ Aristotle agreed on the superiority of sight and hearing, but also offered a more extensive and nuanced account of the senses.¹² Although human taste, touch, and smell are sources of pleasure, not just of utility, the objects of the lower senses, for Aristotle, have no connection to moral qualities as do the pleasures of vision and hearing that are involved with the arts of imitation.¹³ Over succeeding centuries, the intellectual superiority of vision and hearing became a commonplace. Aquinas, like Plato, applied the hierarchy to the question of beauty: "those senses are chiefly associated with beauty, which contribute most to our knowledge, viz. sight and hearing when ministering to reason; thus we speak of beautiful sights and beautiful sounds, but not of beautiful tastes and smells."¹⁴ The low regard for the aesthetic potential of smell and taste (touch fared a bit better) continued on into modern philosophy.¹⁵

Kant, who so persuasively articulated the concept of the aesthetic as a reflective sentiment in contrast to mere sensory satisfaction, argued that

smell and taste, unlike vision and hearing, are primarily sensory and thus make us more aware of our subjective bodily state than of their objects.¹⁶ Hegel, who dismissed smell as concerned only with what "is in the process of wasting away," argued that "smell, taste, and touch have to do with. . . purely sensuous relationships" so that "what is agreeable for these senses is not the beauty of art."¹⁷ Such contrasts between the properly "aesthetic" senses and the merely "sensuous" senses can still be found from George Santayana to Roger Scruton.¹⁸ Although a number of writers on aesthetics in recent decades have moved beyond the traditional hierarchy of the senses, especially by giving touch an important role, and although there has been important recent work on gustatory taste, smell has generally been ignored.¹⁹ It would seem appropriate, therefore, to begin our discussion of the aesthetics of olfactory art by examining some of the traditional objections to the aesthetic relevance of smell.²⁰ We group the complaints around three themes: *attention*, *discrimination*, and *judgment*.

III. SMELL AND AESTHETIC JUDGMENT

The older objection that odors do not merit our *attention* because they supposedly appeal primarily to our "animal" nature seems to have been based in idealist or moralist prejudice. It takes little reflection to realize that sight, sound, and touch are as much involved as smell in such bodily functions as eating, drinking, defecating, and sex.²¹ A more serious objection would be that odors are volatile and evanescent (Hegel's "wasting away") and do not lend themselves to the kind of concentrated and repeated attention we give visual or auditory works. This is true, but only relatively so. No doubt we can more easily return to a painting or a musical performance, especially to their reproductions in other mediums, but the sounds of a live, improvisatory musical performance also die away, as do many natural phenomena that have traditionally drawn aesthetic attention, from storms at sea to bird songs. Moreover, odors do have duration and can be re-experienced under certain conditions, and they can even be preserved for later examination.²² A related concern is the relatively low fatigue level for smelling compared with that of seeing or hearing so that a stimulus must be repeated or intensified or the nose given a rest.

This too, however, is a relative matter and an area where learning is possible so that it does not support a conclusion that smell is aesthetically unavailable.²³

The objection that odors are not susceptible to aesthetic *discrimination* is less about our ability to tell one odor from another (there are connoisseurs of perfumes, fine wines, and cigars), than about the supposed lack of complexity and structure in odors. Concern over the discrimination of form seems to be the sort of thing both Aquinas and Santayana had in mind in rejecting the use of “beauty” as a category appropriate to smells and tastes.²⁴ Yet chemists have demonstrated that even the most easily recognizable smells and fragrances, such as that of a rose, are made up of hundreds of chemical elements, some basic, most contributing only through slight traces. Naturally, even an experienced perfumer cannot distinguish more than a handful of them, but even a neophyte can be taught to distinguish several elements in a particular smell, just as one can be taught to distinguish fine color nuances in a painting; however, not only are odors complex, they often have an identifiable sequence of elements. When a perfume maker, for example, creates a new fragrance, he or she will chose elements of varying volatilities so that the smell has a pattern that changes over time. The lack of complexity and structure objection probably gets its initial plausibility from the little training most of us have had in distinguishing and analyzing odors. First-year students studying to be perfumers, for example, must work hard to learn to distinguish and name over one hundred and sixty different odors before going on to learn the analysis of structure.²⁵

Finally, we come to the most frequently expressed objection, typified by Kant and Hegel, that smells generate a primarily “sensory” or affective response instead of including a dimension of cognitive *judgment*. Roger Scruton makes this tradition his own:

Visual experience is so essentially cognitive, so “opened out,” as it were, on to the objective world, that our attention passes through and seizes on its object to the exclusion of all impression of sense. . . . Vision and hearing, unlike taste and smell, may sometimes be forms of objective contemplation. In tasting and smelling I contemplate not the object but the experience derived from it.²⁶

This line of thinking from Kant and Hegel to Scruton simply seems wrongheaded. We can see no basis in fact for the claim that a person cannot contemplate a lemon odor qua object and compare it with the odor of a pear rather than simply contemplate his or her experience of it. Conversely, to take the case of vision, it seems that a person may contemplate his or her own subjective visual experience of lemon yellowness while looking at a Claesz still life, say, rather than attend objectively to the color lemon yellow within the painting. Both smell and vision seem capable of engaging the cognitive or “objective” component of aesthetic contemplation, just as both can be marshaled in a “subjective” or “interested” fashion.²⁷ Although it is true that smell travels to the cortex via the limbic system and thus operates rapidly and can easily arouse emotionally charged memories (as did Proust’s madeleine), it obviously does not stop in the limbic system, leaving us with nothing but a sensuous buzz and altered mood. Moreover, as we have just seen in our discussion of aesthetic discrimination, smells often have important internal relationships as well as a sequential ordering of their elements, such that they do call on our cognitive powers, especially if we have learned the rudiments of olfactory analysis. Perfumers emphasize that the ability to distinguish and analyze scent elements and creatively combine them involves more thought and imagination than it does raw smelling, and the same is true in evaluating a finished perfume. In judging smells, the mind is often as important as the nose. The much admired French perfume creator Edmund Roudnitska wrote, “I do not create my perfumes with my nose but with my brain and even if I were to lose my sense of smell I could still invent and compose perfumes.”²⁸

Another aspect of the concern over whether smells are a legitimate object of aesthetic judgment derives from the restricted vocabulary we have for describing smells. Unlike colors or sounds, we have no independent terms or classification system for odors, but generally name them from their source, the smell of leather, of fish, of lilacs, and so forth. As Alfred Gell has put it, given the attachment of smells to objects, “the restricted language of smells” is located “somewhere between the stimulus and the sign.”²⁹ The paucity of terms and their ambiguous semiotic status could be considered evidence that smells lack the settled identity requisite to support critical description and analysis of the kind typical for arts

such as painting or music. Here again, some of the force of the objection derives from the lack of experience most people have had in describing and classifying odors. Nevertheless, as Frank Sibley has shown, when we examine the vocabulary for smell more carefully, it is not as limited as one might at first think, and our resort to metaphorical language also frequently occurs with colors or sounds.³⁰ Of course, perfumers have not only managed to find ways of describing hundreds of complex smells but have also developed a variety of rough, but workable, classifications, as have psychologists and chemists studying olfaction.³¹ No doubt the lack of a settled system of classification and an independent nomenclature is a serious limitation on critical discussion, but the fact that the vocabulary for discussing smells is more restricted than that for colors or sounds does not mean that smells cannot support aesthetic analysis, only that articulating their significant features will be more difficult.

Although the previous paragraphs have challenged several types of objections to the aesthetic relevance of smell, we must acknowledge that there remain aesthetically relevant limitations as well. We have already mentioned the problems of volatility and repetition, the lower fatigue threshold, and the lack of a settled classification system. Moreover, even if odors are formally more complex than was once believed, studies have shown that they provide less information than vision or hearing on such things as direction and intensity.³² And smells do quickly arouse strong associative emotional responses connected to memories, which makes them suspect to more cognitively oriented aesthetic theorists.³³ Finally, there is the fact that smell and taste are “contact” senses whose receptors must be touched by molecules emitted by some object and for that reason are indeed physically intimate, whereas vision and hearing are “distance” senses and to that extent more easily fit traditional ideas of the aesthetic.³⁴ Yet some of these limitations are precisely what have made odors an attractive medium for many artists, especially those working in the area of installation and performance. By exploiting the effects of the volatility, enveloping presence, and affective charge of odors, audiences are given a particularly intense and suggestive experience. The odors of Neto’s spice-filled nettings or of Ellsworth’s urine-soaked cocktail dress invaded every corner of the museum or gallery spaces in which they were pre-

sented, generating an effect that was inescapable and unexpected. In doing so, olfactory works of this kind break the neutral, odorless, “white cube” paradigm of the modernist museum and gallery space and offer one more challenge to the old ideal of a “distanced” aesthetic appreciation.³⁵

IV. THE ART STATUS OF OLFACTORY WORKS

Our concern in this section is less with whether one can classify olfactory works as “art” (they have already been accepted in mainstream museums and galleries) than with understanding their nature and limitations as artworks. Of course, most of the olfactory art we described at the beginning of this article were actually multimedia works. For example, Angela Ellsworth, who created *Actual Odor*, does not consider herself primarily an olfactory artist, and her smell performance was only one part of a larger installation. Ernesto Neto’s *Wonderland* installation was partly fabric sculpture, partly olfactory. Nobi Shioya’s installation *7S* involved not only scents, but also photographs and informational wall panels. Peter De Cupere’s *Black Beauty Smell Happening* involved actors wearing black cat suits. Thus, even though the olfactory element may be crucial to such works, they could easily be assimilated to any concept of art that would legitimate multimedia, installation, or performance art, whether the approach is formalist, expressionist, intentional, or institutional, and certainly these works could fall under cognitive views of art like Nelson Goodman’s or fit Arthur C. Danto’s definition that emphasizes making a statement and self-referentially embodying it within the context of an historical artworld.³⁶

But what of those artworks that rely almost solely on smell, such as Haug’s vials of *U-deur*? Or what if an odor or series of odors was pumped into an empty room from hidden vents so that there was no visible container or support? In cases such as these a skeptic about olfactory art could not say that the form or meaning was due to the visual or auditory aspect, as could be said of some multimedia works involving smell. Some of the traditional criteria that have been used to understand and evaluate works of art such as artifactuality, unity, complexity, balance, for example, might appear to create special problems for more or less “pure” olfactory art.³⁷ With regard to artifactuality, concerns about evanescence resurface, often

expanded to note that smells lack “boundaries” and tend to drift and mix with neighboring works. The “lack of boundary” concern, however, would seem to apply to many conceptual and environmental artworks that also lack the kind of definite borders provided by picture frames, book covers, and symphony codas. Moreover, just as the volatility and pervasiveness of odors have appealed to artists seeking a more intense audience involvement, so the impermanence and lack of boundaries of olfactory works appeals to installation and performance artists who want to break with traditional expectations about boundedness and permanence.³⁸

A more serious difficulty facing artworks in which odors are a dominant factor is an extension of the problem that the realm of odors lacks the kind of systematically ordered elements that allows artists to form complex works from the set of colors or musical tones. D. W. Prall ruled out the possibility of artworks made from smells on the grounds that smells are incapable of “sustaining structural relations to one another, relations of contrast, balance, rhythmic sequence, form in general.”³⁹ Monroe Beardsley objected that there is “not enough order” in tastes and smells “to construct objects with balance, climax, development, or pattern,” which is why there have been no “taste-symphonies and smell-sonatas.”⁴⁰ Yet we have seen that even individual natural odors have some pattern or structure and that many artificial odors are deliberately designed to develop through a sequenced volatility. Perfume creators, moreover, are consciously concerned with balance and harmony among elements (called “accords”) and seek a kind of “climax” through their volatility sequencing, in which they employ a “top note,” that will be the first to be smelled and to evaporate, a “middle note,” and the slower, lingering “base note.” If single scents created by perfumers or by artists such as Haug can manifest internal structure, more complex olfactory artworks using several odors can obviously manifest more complex patterns, such as Neto’s arrangement of spice-filled stockings or Shioba’s series of perfume “sins.” These works perhaps lack the intricacy of great novels or the power of some paintings, but they do exhibit, on a smaller scale, characteristics of contrast, balance, and form. Moreover, Peter De Cupere has actually produced a “smell sonata” using a sort of olfactory piano or organ of his own invention. The “Olfactiano,” as he calls it, con-

sists of twenty-seven large keys arranged in three layers. Each key emits a different odor from the pipes at the back of the keyboard, and the air-power adjustment partly controls intensity. The scent composer creates a digital score based on a time line and hence can repeat the same fragrance combination in subsequent performances. De Cupere’s first piece for the Olfactiano, “Scentsonata for Brussels,” was performed nightly during Brussels’ ten-day Cordoba arts festival in 2004, “mixing in harmony the different monoscents symbolizing the unique harmony between cultures and religions in the city of Cordoba around the year 1000.”⁴¹ Obviously, De Cupere’s calling his composition a “sonata” does not raise it to the same level of complexity and multidimensional effect as a classical piano sonata, but he has taken a first step toward what might become the olfactory equivalent of small scale musical compositions. Perhaps little will come of it because of such hurdles as spreading odors evenly through a hall or training audiences to distinguish smells and their combinations and so forth, but his initial experiment suggests that the development of new technologies in the hands of creative individuals is likely to afford greater possibilities for olfactory works than many philosophers and critics have previously imagined.

Despite De Cupere’s achievement, there remains a final concern about olfactory works, a worry we can better understand if we have yet another example of relatively pure olfactory art before us. Although most olfactory artists work with natural odors, the invention of the gas chromatograph and mass spectrometer (GC/MS), which together can chart the hundreds of chemical components of any odor, has meant that artists can either use the GC/MS themselves or hire a perfumer or chemist to analyze and reproduce or reshape an existing smell in concentrate. One artist who has taken the latter route is Clara Ursitti, whose electronically dispensed *Eau Claire* was based on her own body odor and was released when gallery visitors closed the door of a special booth containing it.⁴² In another work, *Bill*, the reconstituted scent was dispensed from a small burner in the center of an empty room. The lack of ancillary media make these two works more or less “pure” olfactory art, but like most installations and performances, or even painting and sculpture these days, Ursitti’s works were accompanied by an “artist’s statement” that explained her interest in

exploring people's reactions to scents, and noting, in the case of *Eau Claire*, that the scent was vaginal, and in the case of *Bill*, that it was sperm (one should add that *Bill* was first presented during the Bill Clinton–Monica Lewinsky affair). Thus, both these works required the artist's statement in order to be understood and interpreted. Without the artist's statement, many gallery visitors may not have been able to identify even the type of smells offered and mistaken it for a weird perfume.⁴³

Examples such as *Eau Claire* and *Bill* thus raise perhaps the most serious problem for "pure" smell artworks: can they represent or express ideas or feelings, and can they embody meanings? Even Frank Sibley, who rejected most of the traditional criticisms of odors as aesthetic objects, drew the line at using them for artistic expression, writing that perfumes (apparently the only olfactory art he considered) and flavors "are necessarily limited: unlike the major arts, they have no expressive connections with emotions, love or hate, grief, joy, terror, suffering, yearning, pity or sorrow."⁴⁴ But such limitations as evanescence, the paucity of descriptive terms, or the public's lack of experience in discriminating odors do not merit a flat-out conclusion that odors cannot bear meanings or express feelings. With respect to the related area of gustatory taste, for example, Carolyn Korsmeyer has made the case for the expressive and symbolic use of foods by showing that many foods or their combinations in meals, from chicken soup to Thanksgiving dinner, are the bearers of both emotional and symbolic meanings.⁴⁵ Similarly, in the case of smells, there are associations of comfort with the aroma of morning coffee and symbolic associations with the odors of incense in temples or churches. In fact, a little reflection can turn up many common cultural associations with particular smells that could be exploited expressively and symbolically, whether the smell of lilacs, of vinegar, of sea air, of gasoline, of burning leaves in fall, not to mention many artificial scents that have become familiar, from Johnson's Baby Powder to Coco Puffs.⁴⁶ Clearly, links of these kinds were exploited in Helgard Haug's little vial of *U-deur* that used a combination of scents such as oil, electricity, and baking bread to evoke significant memories and associations with an important place in Berlin history. Moreover, the fact that anthropologists have come across cultures that not only have extensive smell classifications, but also

use smells in organizing their cosmological beliefs and social structure, suggests that odors have a greater potential for signification than has been realized so far in our culture and that artists may contribute to expanding the role of smell.⁴⁷

Because serious experiments with olfactory art are so new, it is not surprising that most of them include other media or offer verbal clues to engage their audience intellectually. This is a limitation, although perhaps no greater than the need for notes to appreciate nineteenth-century program music fully or the need to read an accompanying artist's statement in order to understand fully many installation and performance works today. Over time, both artists and audiences should become more adept at both identifying smells and at interpreting their patterns and associations. One can imagine an improved "olfactiano" that could play a kind of olfactory "program music," for which the audience is given a written program or poetic "score" to follow in helping them with identifying and associating scents, or one can imagine a future olfactory artist of genius constructing an elaborate installation over a series of rooms that not only presents a chain of complex odors, but also connects them in a program of associations that makes a significant social statement. Given the existence of museums such as Mass MoCA, dedicated to preserving installations, such a "masterpiece" of olfactory art could even be made available for future generations to experience and reflect on.

One of the greatest problems for olfactory artists, of course, is that smell art has so little history compared with the arts we associate with vision and hearing, but if olfactory art lacks that advantage, it also lacks that burden, which is no doubt another reason some artists find it an exciting medium; however, there is one kind of olfactory art that does have a long history, the art of perfume. Perfume has kept cropping up throughout our discussion, whether to illustrate points about the complexity or cognitive nature of smells or as a component of olfactory artworks, like the seven sins commissioned by Shioya for *7S* or De Cuper's *Black Beauty* perfume or the perfume-like scents of Haug's *U-deur* and Ursitti's *Eau Claire*. Although perfume has traditionally not been included among the higher arts (despite the claims of some modern perfumers), these recent uses of perfumes and perfume-like scents in olfactory artworks raise some interesting questions about the art status of commercial perfume.

V. WHAT SORT OF ART PERFUME?

Although morally condemned for its sensuality by Plato and the Church Fathers and often derided in the modern period for its erotic and commercial associations, perfume is one of the oldest arts and was held in high esteem in ancient cultures, especially in Rome, where men were as likely to wear fragrances as women.⁴⁸ Many perfumers view their work not simply as “an art,” but as “art proper.” They speak of themselves as composers, stress that perfumes are a creation of the intellect and imagination, and point to the complexity of their compositions, with their “accords” and their “top,” “middle,” and “base” notes. To be able to create a great fragrance requires that a perfumer undergo years of preparatory study and experimentation, and in the past, a single perfume could take not just months but years to complete. This applies especially to the great independent creators such as Edmond Roudnitska who wrote a passionately argued book on perfume as art in the 1970s.⁴⁹ But as many of these independent composers and family firms have disappeared and been replaced by corporate subsidiaries, the pressure on perfume creators to come up with new scents at an ever quickening pace has changed the character of the profession. As one respected perfumer says of a field increasingly driven by marketing and the bottom line, “This is craft, not art.”⁵⁰ If we were to accept the traditional division of fine art from craft based on the autonomy versus utility criterion, perfume would inevitably be classed with the crafts or applied arts. It is part of the fashion industry and, like fashion design, its practical and commercial aims conventionally disqualify it as fine art, although that has not prevented museums like the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts from devoting an exhibition to Pierre Cardin designs or the Guggenheim from featuring Giorgio Armani. Certainly, perfume’s creative aspect means that it at least deserves a place in applied art museums or museum departments of design and decorative art.⁵¹

Yet, we should not be so quick to apply the conventional art versus craft division to perfume or put it with design and the decorative arts without a closer look. Our analysis will follow the example of Arthur C. Danto, who has encouraged us to think through the implications of two outwardly identical objects, one of which is accepted as a work of art and the other not.⁵² A comparison of a

commercial perfume with an apparently identical scent created by/for a conceptual or installation artist may clarify some issues about the art status of both. Suppose someone such as Clara Ursitti, finally bored with sticking the scents of vaginas or sperm under our noses, decides to go against artworld fashion and had a perfumer distill a composite of her favorite garden flowers, with appropriate top, middle, and base notes, enriched with other trace elements for assuring proper accords. The perfumer comes up with seven or eight variations, and Claire, as we will call her, chooses the fifth one. Claire places this distillation in a handsomely shaped glass bottle purchased from a perfume supply house, pastes a label on the front, and exhibits it as *Claire No. 5* in an art gallery where visitors are invited to open and sniff. Her artist’s statement speaks of the need to recover a sense of pleasure in an artworld too fixated on sexual politics, citing a recent book by Christopher Butler.⁵³ Even if such a work as *Claire No. 5* were dismissed by critics as retrograde, it is unlikely they would deny that it falls into the category of fine art at all.

Now suppose that the exhibition *Claire No. 5* is a hit; word of mouth spreads, and people are clamoring to buy her work of art. Claire sees an opportunity, has a hundred bottles filled, sells all of them over the Internet, and considers doing more.⁵⁴ Are these subsequent bottles also works of art? If we say “no” because they are not experienced in the context of the gallery, would we be able to say “yes” if each came wrapped in a copy of the original artist’s statement? I do not see how we can claim that only the first instance can be a work of art unless we are prepared to deny that only one of the two versions of *Virgin of the Rocks* that Leonardo painted can be a work of art or that only the first print of Rembrandt’s etching, *Return of the Prodigal Son*, can be a work of art. Of course, there are other ways Claire might further guarantee the subsequent bottles’ art status, such as numbering and signing each label and setting some upper limit. Notice that Claire herself, who did not produce the original scent, but simply suggested a source and then chose one of the fragrances she had commissioned, may eventually be far removed from the making, marketing, and distribution of the instances, but no more so than some graphic or conceptual artists.⁵⁵

We can easily imagine one more twist to our story of *Claire No. 5*. Claire has done well from the few hundred instances of her scent sold over

the Internet, but when a major cosmetics firm approaches her with a proposal to buy exclusive rights to *Claire No. 5*, she decides to take the money and focus on a new smell project. The bottles of *Claire No. 5* produced by the cosmetic company use the identical container and label, each with her printed signature and each accompanied by her original artist's statement (the marketing department saw this as a competitive edge). Are these subsequent bottles of *Claire No. 5* art? If we are inclined to say "no," why? Surely it cannot be because her signature is now printed rather than personally applied. What more certain sign of "craft" could there be than trumpeting "hand made," "personally signed by the artist," and so forth? The issue, rather, turns on the meaning of 'artist's statement.' Although the bottles sold by the cosmetic company include a copy of the identical words, they do not "make a statement," as both the original bottle and Claire's subsequent instances did. The original "statement" and its subsequent instances issued by Claire were *acts*, not just sequences of words; the "statement" was *embodied* in the work and would have been "made" whether there was a printed articulation of it or not. Even the subsequent one hundred or one thousand instances issued by Claire herself continued to "make a statement," repetitive and boring as it might be.⁵⁶ The cosmetics company, on the other hand, cannot "make" an artistic statement. It can only produce a perfume named *Claire No. 5* that happens to include a reproduction of Claire's words.

Perhaps, however, we should not leave the issue of perfume as art without taking a brief look at an actual commercial perfume. In fact, we have based our thought experiment on the process Coco Chanel used to create the famous *Chanel No. 5*. Already a well-known fashion designer in 1920, Chanel asked the perfumer Ernest Beaux to create a scent for her to market. Beaux came up with eight or ten fragrances, and she chose number five.⁵⁷ Is a bottle of *Chanel No. 5* art? Some perfumers think so and consider it one of the masterpieces in the history of perfume. If so, who is the artist, Beaux or Coco Chanel? From the point of view of design, Ernest Beaux is clearly the designer-creator of the prototype of *Chanel No. 5*, but Beaux did not himself single out the fifth scent and name it *Chanel No. 5*. Hence, the fifth scent was simply one of several possibilities until Coco Chanel chose it, but as Marcel Duchamp said of the celebrated

urinal, *Fountain*, an artist need not make anything, only choose something. In that sense, Coco Chanel could be said to be the artist who created *Chanel No. 5*, but did Coco Chanel choose scent number five *as a work of art*? Was she making a statement in the context of the artworld of her time?⁵⁸ Here, the answer is likely no. She seems to have chosen it simply because she wanted to sell a perfume along with her fashion creations.⁵⁹

If Coco Chanel was not making an artistic statement with the introduction of *Chanel No. 5* in 1920, we can easily imagine an art museum in our time creating an exhibition honoring her design work and lining up five bottles of *Chanel No. 5* on a table for visitors to sniff.⁶⁰ Would these five bottles be "art"? They might be art according to some crude institutional definition, although even the act of declaring these five a work of art would not necessarily render any other bottles of *Chanel No. 5* art; however, suppose our artist, Claire, had herself included a bottle of *Chanel No. 5* in her original exhibition along with *Claire No. 5* and had remarked in her artist's statement that the scents were surprisingly similar and that it was high time the creation of perfume got a little respect in the artworld. That would still not have made even that particular bottle of *Chanel No. 5*, in and of itself, a work of art, but only an element in a larger work. Of course, Claire's placing a bottle of *Chanel No. 5* beside *Claire No. 5* in her original work would have meant the bottle of *Claire No. 5* would also cease to be an artwork in and of itself and become only an element in a larger work.⁶¹

What conclusion about the art status of commercial perfumes is suggested by our comparison of *Claire No. 5* and *Chanel No. 5*? We have argued that the second or hundredth or thousandth editions of *Claire No. 5* are still works of art. Following Danto, we could say that they continue to make a statement in an artworld context and to embody it in a way that calls attention to the mode of embodiment, but *Chanel No. 5*, despite surface similarities, does not belong to the category of art proper. Whereas *Claire No. 5* was an artist's statement about what counts as cutting edge art using the medium of a perfume to embody her statement, *Chanel No. 5* is simply a commercial product, although meant to provide aesthetic pleasure to those who wear it and those who smell it. If it makes a statement at all, it is something like "wear me and become more attractive" or "show your good taste in perfume by wearing the best." That

our imaginary artist, Claire, made many instances of her perfume as artworks and sold them in a rather commercial fashion does not remove them from the category of art, even if we might consider her commercialism bad art manners. Conversely, Ernest Beau's and Coco Chanel's *Chanel No. 5*, although not a work of art in the way that *Claire No. 5* is art, does not fall entirely outside the larger realm of the arts, but surely belongs among the classics of modern design alongside Sikorsky's helicopter and Breuer's chair.⁶²

VI. CONCLUSION

Even if one accepts the aesthetic legitimacy and the serious art status of more or less "pure" olfactory works such as Haug's *U-deur*, Ursitti's *Bill*, or De Cupere's "Scentsonata" and grants the inclusion of perfumes such as *Chanel No. 5* among the classics of modern design, there are two major practical problems facing the expansion of all smell arts, whether pure or mixed media, one related to the problem of exhibition, the other to the problem of criticism. Because of the intrusiveness of odors, galleries and museums that have focused on visual art may be reluctant to make the physical changes needed to accommodate olfactory works. Some of this reluctance is understandable. Ellsworth's *Actual Odor*, for example, left traces of an unpleasant urine smell in the gallery for days, causing numerous complaints. Even less repellant odors, such as those produced by Neto's spice-filled nettings, will pervade a large area of the museum where they are shown, forcing their presence on visitors in a way that most visual works do not. On the other hand, if odors can lead to problems of intrusiveness and lingering, they can also present curators with serious problems in dealing with volatility and evanescence. With respect to evanescence, curators face a difficulty even greater than that of dealing with environmental works of artists such as Andy Goldsworthy that can at least be documented with photographs, drawings, maps, and other similar objects. Yet, just as the "aggressiveness" and "ephemerality" of odors is not simply a problem but also an opportunity for artists, so it is an opportunity for museums and galleries to find ways of exhibiting works that engage their audiences differently and more intensely.

If galleries and museums often face unique problems in exhibiting olfactory art, art critics also

face difficulties, partly because of the limitations of olfactory vocabulary and the absence of a historical tradition, but also due to the fact that most art critics, like the public, have little experience of specifically olfactory art. As a result, many critical reviews of multimedia projects involving smells often focus on the visual aspects, providing only minimal accounts of the olfactory elements, but as Helen Keller remarked long ago, "The sensations of smell which cheer, inform, and broaden my life are not less pleasant merely because some critic who treads the wide pathways of the eye has not cultivated his olfactive sense."⁶³ In addition to critics cultivating their olfactive sense, they will need to know the theory and technique of olfactory art just as they have needed to know the history and theory of arts addressed to the eye and ear.

Our survey of the aesthetic issues surrounding the sense of smell and the olfactory arts has aimed at opening these topics to greater philosophical and critical exploration. Of course, one way to answer the rejection of both the aesthetic and artistic possibilities of smell would simply be to point to the fact that olfactory works are now accepted by many art institutions. Rather than adopting an institutional solution, we have tried to provide a theoretical basis for that acceptance by beginning to answer arguments against the aesthetic and artistic standing of smell. First, we showed that the traditional depreciation of the aesthetic capacity of smell was based on exaggerated or erroneous intuitions about evanescence, simplicity, and the supposedly purely sensuous, noncognitive character of scents. Of course, each of these issues is worthy of a more detailed philosophical inquiry than we could give in a survey, as are the more specific topics we set aside at the beginning of our essay, for example the aesthetics of smells in everyday life, in ceremonies such as Kodo, or in theater and film.⁶⁴

Second, we looked at the nature and limitations of olfactory artworks, noting that a number of twentieth-century philosophers have claimed that odors could not provide the complex form and expressiveness we consider essential to the major arts. In reply to these arguments, we examined examples of more or less "pure" olfactory works in order to buffer the claim that it is only the visual or auditory aspects of multimedia smell works that are the bearers of meaning. We showed that although olfactory works currently have a greater

need to rely on written programs or statements than works in traditional media, the need is one of degree not of kind and is also based in part on the unfamiliarity of olfactory art. Finally, with respect to the oldest olfactory art, perfume, we tried to locate the line between scents that belong to the category of high art and those that belong to the category of the design arts.⁶⁵

The relative newness of most olfactory art means that smell works are bound to seem rather elementary when set beside the great historical achievements of music and painting. Nevertheless, although olfactory art is still in its infancy, it has already produced works of moderate complexity and expressiveness. In the past, many philosophers believed that they could clearly discern the outer limits of what was aesthetically and artistically possible with smell. Today, such speculation seems less fruitful than exploring what olfactory artists have achieved and are achieving.

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1. Apart from the occasional use of odors to accompany theater productions, smells only began to turn up in installation and performance art with some frequency in the 1970s. See Jim Drobnick's key essay surveying recent olfactory art and issues in its criticism, "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences: Olfactory Dimensions in Contemporary Art," *Parachute* 89 (1998): 10–19. The most careful philosophical analysis of the issue of smell and its aesthetic significance is found in Frank Sibley's essay, "Tastes, Smells, and Aesthetics," published in his posthumous *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 207–255. Unfortunately, Sibley does not discuss actual olfactory works of the kind we take as our subject. A brief but excellent recent treatment of the aesthetics of everyday smells can be found in Emily Brady, "Sniffing and Savoring: The Aesthetics of Smells and Tastes," in Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith, eds. *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 177–193. Much of Carolyn Korsmeyer's *Making Sense of Taste: Food and Philosophy*

(Cornell University Press, 1999) is also useful in thinking about the aesthetics of smell because much of what she has to say about gustatory taste and the issue of food as art is relevant to olfactory art and perfumes.

2. For the aesthetic issues surrounding the everyday experience of smell, there is Brady, "Sniffing and Savoring." On the aesthetics of Kodo, which involves the ritual passing around of incense, see Yoko Iwasaki, "Art and the Sense of Smell: The Traditional Japanese Art of Scents (*ko*)," *Aesthetics* 11 (2004): 62–67; and Aileen Gatten, "A Wisp of Smoke: Scent and Character in *The Tale of Genji*," in Jim Drobnick, ed., *The Smell Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), pp. 331–341. For a good overview of the use of odors in the theater see Sally Banes, "Olfactory Performances," *The Drama Review* 45 (2001): 68–76, especially p. 73. On the attempts to use odors to accompany films and computer messages, see Mark W. D. Paterson, "Digital Scratch and Virtual Sniff: Simulating Scents," in *The Smell Culture Reader*, pp. 358–370. At the beginning of the twentieth century, some Futurists and Surrealists talked of using smell in artwork, but as Constance Classen points out, few actual works were ever produced; see her *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender and the Aesthetic Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 110–128.

3. One can see photos of Neto's installation and read an interview with him in Rochelle Steiner, *Wonderland* (St. Louis: St. Louis Art Museum, 2000), pp. 84–89. See also the review by Jan Garden Castro, "'Wonderland': St. Louis Art Museum," *Sculpture* 20 (2001): 56–57.

4. Jim Drobnick, "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences," p. 15. The example Drobnick gives is Gretchen Faustus's moss and velvet cabinet *Sachet: Luxury* (1989) that used fragrance to create an atmosphere of comfort and reassurance.

5. For a description and photos of *Actual Odor*, see the Arizona State University Art Museum website at <http://asuartmuseum.asu.edu/disfunctional/r19.htm>. A much earlier conceptual work, Adrian Piper's politically charged *Catalysis* (1970–1971), involved walking in the street wearing clothes soaked in vinegar, eggs, milk, and cod-liver oil in order to appear in "deliberately confrontational out-cast states"; Drobnick, "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences," p. 18. A more recent political work, *Rise* (2001), by Michael Rakowitz, commented on New York real estate speculation and gentrification by rigging a ventilation duct 125 feet upward to bring the smell of an adjacent Chinese bakery into an exhibition held in a building that had just evicted its Chinese residents and shops; see Jim Drobnick, "Eating Nothing: Cooking Aromas in Art and Culture," in *The Smell Culture Reader*, pp. 349–350.

6. Koan-Jeff Baysa, "Cleveland Calling," *NY Arts Magazine* 8, no. 3 (2003). Also see Amy Bracken Sparks, "Scents and Sensibility: The Seven Deadly Sins bottled at CSU Gallery," *Angle: A Journal of Arts + Culture* (2003), available online only, at www.csuohio.edu/art/gallery/2003.htm.

7. De Cupere has documented his works on his web site www.peterdecupere.com. For a video image of *Black Beauty Smell Happening*, see www.smartprojectspace.net/works/181.xml. A review of several of his olfactory works by Jos Van den Bergh appeared under the title "PETER DE CUPERE. (Van Laere Contemporary Art, New York City, New York)," *Artforum International* 38 (1999): 152–153.

8. Margaret Morse, "Burnt Offerings (Incense): Body Odors and the Olfactory Arts in Digital Culture," conference paper, 2000. We are grateful to Margaret Morse for sending a copy of her full paper. A briefer version is available at <http://www.thing.net/~jmarketo/textsby/incense.shtml>.

9. The Paris simulation was installed at the Fondation Cartier in 2003. Tolaas has created an archive of thousands of pungent smells and has a special interest in body odor, although she has also simulated the smell of money and has a commercial client list that includes Volvo and Ikea, for whom she created "Swedish" smells; see Susie Rushton, "The Sweat Hog," *The New York Times Magazine*, Sunday, August 27, 2006, 150–152.

10. For an excellent discussion of the hierarchy of the senses with an emphasis on Plato and Aristotle, see Korsmeyer's chapter on the hierarchy of the senses in her *Making Sense of Taste*, pp. 11–37.

11. Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. I, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), pp. 586–587 [*Hippias Major*, 298a and 298d].

12. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 573–575 [*De Anima* 421a6–422a8]. Aristotle, *Parva Naturalia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 210 [*De Sensu* 443b.26]. For a recent general discussion see Thomas K. Johansen, "Aristotle on the Sense of Smell," *Phronesis* 41 (1996): 1–19.

13. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1985), pp. 80–81, 279. [*Ethica Nicomachea*, 1118a10–1118b1 and 1176a1 ff]. See also David Summers, *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance Naturalism and the Rise of Aesthetics* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 59–60, and Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, pp. 18–24.

14. Donald McQueen, "Aquinas on the Aesthetic Relevance of Tastes and Smells," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 33 (1993): 346–357, quote from p. 349. See also, Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 57–58.

15. There are, of course, differences throughout the tradition on how far the lower senses are from the higher, why they are lower, and on the ranking among the lower senses. Sometimes smell is in the middle above taste and touch (Aquinas) and sometimes on the bottom (Kant). Although John Baillie declared that taste and smell have nothing to do with the sublime, Edmund Burke gave them at least a minor role, a description of "intolerable stench" might produce a sublime effect. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp. liv and 85. Condillac endowed his famous statue with smell first because it "seems to contribute the least to the operations of the human mind," but he then showed how smell, like each of the other senses, can lead his statue to all the higher operations; see Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations* (Paris: Fayard, 1984), p. 11. Herder gave a significant role to touch, particularly in relationship to sculpture; see Robert E. Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* (Cornell University Press, 1991). A brief and rather uncritical discussion of other eighteenth-century thinkers can be found in Annick Le Guérer, *Scent: The Mysterious and Essential Powers of Smell* (New York: Random House, 1992), pp. 164–178.

16. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. 41–46.

17. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), quotes from pp. 39, 138, respectively. It is perhaps no accident that Kant and Hegel were writing during a period historians have described as the beginning of the "de-odorization" of Western society in the name of hygiene; see Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Harvard University Press, 1986). Moreover, smell's low cognitive status came to be reinforced by its low social status because hygienic de-odorization and perfuming were primarily available to the middle and upper classes. As Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno noted, "Smell is a sign of lower social strata, lesser races, and base animals"; *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1987), p. 184.

18. George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Random House, 1955 [1896]), pp. 68–69. Edward Bullough, "Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," in *Art and Its Significance*, ed. Stephen David Ross (SUNY Press, 1994), p. 465. Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 114.

19. On the topic of touch see, for example, David Appelbaum, *The Interpenetrating Reality: Bringing the Body to Touch* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988); Stephen David Ross, *The Gift of Touch: Embodying the Good* (SUNY Press, 1998); Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses* (Stanford University Press, 1996); and Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford University Press, 2005). On gustatory taste, there is Korsmeyer's *Making Sense of Taste*, mentioned previously here, and Elizabeth Telfer, *Food for Thought: Philosophy and Food* (London: Routledge, 1996). The exception to the general neglect of smell in philosophy are the essays by Frank Sibley, "Tastes, Smells, and Aesthetics," and Emily Brady, "Sniffing and Savoring"; see note 1.

20. There is a detailed critique of objections to smell as an appropriate aesthetic object in Sibley, "Tastes, Smells, and Aesthetics," and relevant discussions in Korsmeyer's *Making Sense of Taste*, chapters 1 and 2. Other useful critiques of traditional objections include the pages on smell and taste in D. W. Prall, *Aesthetic Judgment* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1929), pp. 60–68, and the articles by Harold Osborne, "Odors and Appreciation," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 17 (1977): 37–48, and John Harris, "Oral and Olfactory Art," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 13 (1979): 5–15.

21. Brady, "Sniffing and Savoring," p. 180. A typical example of the moralist view is Santayana's claim that "the pleasures we call physical and regard as law... are those which call attention to some part of our own body.... There is here, then, a very marked distinction between physical and aesthetic pleasure"; Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty*, p. 39.

22. Cathy Newman, *Perfume: The Art and Science of Fragrance* (National Geographic Society, 1998), pp. 35–38.

23. In his summary of the characteristics of smell, Egon Köster points out that the fatigue threshold for smell is quite low. He is at pains to distinguish between "adaptation," the loss of sensitivity as a result of prolonged stimulation, and "habituation," the drop-off of attention due to the monotony of the stimuli. Egon Köster, "The Specific Characteristics of

the Sense of Smell," in *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, ed. Catherine Rouby et al (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 31.

24. There is some controversy over Aquinas's reasons for claiming that taste and smell are aesthetically irrelevant. Donald McQueen claims it is because the lower senses are not cognitively complex or able to embrace so great an array of objects as vision and hearing, in his "Aquinas on the Aesthetic Relevance of Tastes and Smells," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 33 (1993): 346–357. In a spirited reply, Neil Campbell argues that Aquinas' reasons concern a distinction between natural immutation (the body undergoes a physical alteration in receiving the form of a thing) and spiritual immutation (the body remains unchanged as one receives the form of a thing); see his "Aquinas' Reasons for the Aesthetic Irrelevance of Tastes and Smells," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36 (1996): 166–182. Santayana claims that the absence of complexity and structure in smells and tastes does "not allow such nice and stable discriminations as does the ear" in *Sense of Beauty*, p. 69.

25. Robert R. Calkin and J. Stephan Jellinek, *Perfumery: Practices and Principles* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), p. 25.

26. Scruton, *Aesthetics of Architecture*, p. 114.

27. Frank Sibley makes a similar point in "Tastes, Smells, and Aesthetics," pp. 224–225.

28. On the intellectual dimension of perfume creation, see Calkin and Jellinek, *Perfumery*, pp. 4–10. The Edmond Roudnitska quotation is from, *L'Esthétique en question: Introduction à une esthétique de l'odorat* (Paris: PUF, 1977), p. 70.

29. Alfred Gell, "Magic, Perfume, Dream. . ." in *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism*, ed. Ioan Lewis (London: Academic Press, 1977), p. 26.

30. Sibley, "Tastes, Smells and Aesthetics," p. 234–235.

31. For a review of recent research on the language and classification issue, see *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, pp. 45–116.

32. Köster, "The Specific Characteristics of Smell," p. 28.

33. So far, research has not justified the claim that emotional processing for smell differs radically from processing for other senses, although there is some evidence that olfactory memory may be more sensitive than other sense memories. There is still a great deal to be done in this area despite the 2004 Nobel prize awarded Linda Buck and Richard Axel for discovering the way receptor proteins respond to specific molecules. See the articles on recent studies of smell and emotion and smell and memory in *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, pp. 117–291.

34. These kinds of limitations on smell may be what led D. W. Prall, in an otherwise sympathetic discussion of smell and taste, to conclude that odors give aesthetic pleasure, but pleasures of the simplest sort. In the last analysis, Prall remains with the old tradition running from Plato through Aquinas to Hegel: "it is clear that smells and tastes and vital feelings are not the materials of beauty in the sense that colors are, or sounds . . . for they are obviously not the contents of typical aesthetic judgments"; Prall, *Aesthetic Judgment*, p. 61.

35. See Drobnick's reflections on olfactory arts and the museum in "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences," pp. 18–19.

36. Nelson Goodman's classic statement is in *Languages of Art* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976) and Arthur C. Danto's is in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Harvard University Press, 1981), although Danto has continued to refine his position down to the present. See, for example, Arthur C. Danto: *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (Columbia University Press, 1986), *Embodied Meanings: Critical Essays and Aesthetic Meditations* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), and most recently, *Unnatural Wonders: Essays from the Gap Between Art and Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

37. There has been a prize-winning installation work that consisted of an empty room with the lights going on and off every five seconds (Martin Creed's *Work 227: The Lights Going On and Off* won the prestigious Turner Prize in Britain in 2001). Would we call this a "pure" light work? It is difficult to make "pure" works in any medium, such as in painting, because a single color, even a monochrome white, usually needs some sort of support or boundary.

38. Jim Drobnick puts it dramatically: "the artistic use of aromatic objects corrupts the definition of art as autonomous, eternal, self enclosed and bounded, and instead asserts the contingency, ephemerality, interactivity and amorphousness of the art object"; Drobnick, "Reveries, Assaults and Evaporating Presences," p. 16. Although the challenge to art as "autonomous, eternal, self-enclosed," and so forth is hardly new (this was one point of much early installation and performance art not to mention Dada), the medium of odors does offer a particularly potent vehicle for creating ephemeral and amorphous art.

39. Prall, *Aesthetic Judgment*, p. 66.

40. Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), p. 99.

41. Quoted from De Cupere's website for the Olfactiano: www.peterdecupere.com/olfactiano.html.

42. Ursitti initially worked with George Dodd in 1994 on a project for creating an olfactory self-portrait that became part of an installation called Chemical Portraits. Ursitti's actual formula for one of her self-portraits in smell can be found in *The Smell Culture Reader*, p. 357.

43. This should come as no surprise given the fact that, in the absence of an actual flower, some people are unable to identify even such common smells as that of a rose. Classen, *The Color of Angels*, pp. 154–155.

44. Sibley, "Tastes, Smells, and Aesthetics," p. 249.

45. Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*, pp. 131–140.

46. Classen, Howes, and Synnott, *Aroma: the Cultural History of Smell*, pp. 202–203.

47. Classen, Howes, and Synnott, *Aroma*, pp. 100–135. See also David Howes, "Nose-wise: Olfactory Metaphors in Mind," in *Olfaction, Taste, and Cognition*, pp. 67–81.

48. Moreover, perfumes are highly regarded in some Arab cultures where, rather than wearing scents, fragrance boxes are passed around among groups of women as part of a social ritual. Classen, Howes, and Synnott, *Aroma*, p. 124.

49. Roudnitska's *L'esthétique en question* draws on ideas of the philosopher Etienne Souriau.

50. Sentiments of the respected perfumer Annie Buzantian quoted in Newman, *Perfume*, p. 116.

51. As we have seen, Frank Sibley puts perfumes and flavors among the minor arts; see his "Tastes, Smells and Aesthetics," p. 249.

52. Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, chapter 1.

53. Christopher Butler, *Pleasure and the Arts: Enjoying Literature, Painting, and Music* (Oxford University Press), 2005.

54. As a matter of fact, there are several sites on the Internet that do sell independent-label perfumes, and some of the sellers identify themselves as artists and their product as “olfactory art.” See, for example, Lynne M. Zaun’s site at www.FragranceBySesso.com.

55. Nobu Shioya, by the way, sells some of the fragrances from his *7S* on the website of the small fragrance company he co-founded in Brooklyn, New York, called S-Perfume. The home page of this perfume house is titled “Mind-blowing scents and Olfactory Art” and features old and new works by several of the perfumers who worked on Shioya’s *7S*.

56. Graphic artists and art photographers face the problem of deciding on an upper limit to instances, and Duchamp warned against overdoing readymades.

57. Newman, *Perfume*, p. 132.

58. The centrality of the idea of a statement in Danto’s definition inevitably raises the issue of artistic intention, which in turn, raises the issue of historical circumstance, for example, how far the concept of art has developed at any given moment.

59. It is highly unlikely that Chanel knew anything of Duchamp’s readymades of the period 1914–1917, gestures that were barely known in the larger artworld and were not widely discussed until after 1950. Interestingly enough, just a year after *Chanel No. 5* appeared, Duchamp created an assisted readymade through his *Rrose Sélavy* persona by pasting a fictitious label with his or her picture on a Rigaud perfume bottle, but Duchamp seems to have had little interest in what was *inside* the bottle. See Amelia Jones, *Post-modernism and the En-gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 172–175.

60. After we came up with this thought experiment, we

were pleasantly surprised to discover that the Metropolitan Museum of Art had opened an exhibition devoted to Coco Chanel’s fashion designs (May 5 to August 7, 2005). As far as we can tell from the announcements and the catalogue, *Chanel No. 5* was not offered for visitors to smell, a regrettable omission.

61. Obviously, after *Claire No. 5* became only one element in a larger work, this would compromise the art status of any subsequently issued bottles of it. In order for subsequent bottles of *Claire No. 5* to be art on their own, Claire would have to intend and make a new artistic statement in the context of the artworld. We are obviously in a gray area here, rife with possibilities for deception and self-deception, something I fear may be true of some of those selling perfumes over the Internet as works of art.

62. It is symptomatic of the new possibilities for olfactory art that another Roudnitska, Michel, who is also an independent perfumer, has created a multimedia work featuring scent. It premiered in Paris in 1998. Based on Octavio Paz’s poem “Sun Stone,” Roudnitska’s work involved the integration of words, music, video images, dance, and continuously changing olfactory atmospheres. If our imaginary artist, Claire, came close to crossing the boundary between art and commerce in marketing instances of *Claire No. 5*, Roudnitska seems to have clearly crossed the boundary between design and art with his multimedia work.

63. Helen Keller, *The World I Live In* (New York: Century, 1909), p. 76.

64. In addition to the works listed in note 2, see the forthcoming book by Yuriko Saito from Oxford University Press, *Everyday Aesthetics*.

65. Our thought experiment only began to explore this complex issue. Obviously, the question of how the “higher” or “fine” arts are related to categories like “design,” “decorative art,” “applied art,” and “craft” is itself a complicated issue and worthy of further reflection.