

SCENT SCULPTURES AND CONCEPTS for US Pavilion at VENICE ARCHITECTURE
BIENNALE June--Nov 2014

OfficeUS Scents

June 4 – November 21, 2014

By Christophe Laudamiel

OfficeUS Scents is a project by Christophe Laudamiel at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia as part of the U.S. Pavilion project *OfficeUS*. The project constructs olfactory spaces for the five rooms in the *OfficeUS* as a sensorial historiography and critique of the projects and offices contained in the Repository and as a spatial materialization of the functions contained in each room.

Biennale head--curator: Rem Koolas

US PAVILION official curators: Eva Franch i Gilabert, Ana Miljacki, Ashley Schafer of www.storefrontnews.org

for a concept called OFFICEUS www.officeus.org

Air Sculpture® scent atmospheres created by Christophe Laudamiel and Christoph Hornetz.

Air Sculpture® is a trademark of the two perfumers working at DreamAir's studio, based in New York City: www.dreamair.mobi



Scents at OfficeUS are displayed by microprecise scent players from AirQ, a Prolitec brand, based in Milwaukee, WI, USA: www.airq.com



The term Scent Sculpture was coined by them but is left free to use. Public and professionals alike are encouraged to use new terms to describe new developments and new designs in the olfactory arena.

The nose is now proven to be as important as the eyes for the brain: to gather information from your environment or from objects inside a space, to appreciate their quality, to feel, to draw conclusions, and of course to remember.

In fact olfactory memory is shown to be much more efficient than visual or auditory memory. And as Patricia de Nicolai the President of the International Fragrance Repository, the Osmothèque, (which is applying this year to become World Olfactory Heritage at UNESCO), says: “What would intelligence be without memory?”

Olfaction is a fundamental sense of human beings. In fact it is our oldest sense, it was the first sense to be present on earth, when bacteria starting colonizing the planet. Nature has had time to work on that sense for millions more years, meaning this sense is much more sophisticated/precise and complex than other senses. It is the largest occupant of our human DNA (larger than our entire immune system) and is several order of magnitude more complex than our eyes for instance. (1)(2) Olfactory exercises are good aerobics for the brain. They create new and healthy connections between neurons in the brain. They are now used to delay the damage of Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s disease or to help autistic children talk and bloom.

Scents and fragrances have been created for thousands of years using elements from around the world, across religion, across geopolitical conflicts, across climates. A fragrance formula, designed a bit like a building –we use many architectural terms in perfume creation– contains often 20 to 80 ingredients coming from many different regions and sources, in one single fragrance. Some ingredients, such as Jasmine have a thousand year old history, others, such as Gardenia extract or modern molecules are less than 100 years old. Because they come from many poor regions in the world and yet have high value and are precious, perfumery plants are often school book examples of sustainability programs to help biotopes and families in those regions.

Perfume chemistry also has had to be sustainable for a very long time. Excesses cannot be hidden: the pollution they would create would be visible, and in fact, smellable, right away.

Room 1: 1914–1960: **AIR SCULPTURE® THE BOOK THIEF #5**, the old office.

You are in an old office, the shelves, the desks, the panels are made of wood. The shelves are loaded with books; maybe you smell the leather covers. The desks and working tables are covered with papers, some older with a parchemin or old cotton fiber feeling, some with the ink still wafting from the pages. The shades, made of fabric, are half way down. You might be transported to the office of an architect before WWII, or maybe to one of the buildings he or she was designing, such as a school, a bank, a library or a corporate office of that time.

Room 2: 1961–2000: **AIR SCULPTURE® NEROLITO #2**, infusing a fresh lively and friendly soul into buildings.

Eclectic styles of architectures characterize this period. Many have the commonality of being quite strict in their lines. The structures are very imposing and dramatic. The

oil boom and the 60's boom created pompous but quite commercial or secretive buildings.

The scent sculpture ***Nerolito #2*** was designed to bring some freshness inside those big walls, to bring a human feeling behind the imposing facades, to describe better the actual soul of buildings, the light and peaceful breathing of those intimidating constructions. Its name, "small Neroli" in Italian, comes from "Neroli", the jargon term used by perfumers worldwide to describe Orange Flower Essence. The diminutive Nerolito makes it even more friendly and cozy. The period 1961--2000 saw a lot of developments of American architecture in the Gulf and Mediterranean regions, all very Orange Flower friendly. In fact, Orange Flower is one of the best accepted scents worldwide, common to many cultures, evoking a positive mood around the world, from infancy to adulthood. ***Nerolito #2*** contains also the woody-- frankincense molecule found naturally at small levels in orange peel (3), elegant Bergamot oil from Italy, Sicilian Mandarins, a brushstroke of moss and blond vetiver soft notes. Citrus smells in offices help people relax and make them more helpful, polite or positive, and more assiduous, less tired: just by being pleasant, working in a nice environment creates a positive constructive mood. So scientific studies say.

Room 3: Rotunda: **AIR SCULPTURE® *USOFFICE DRAPE #20***, bed, phone and computer.

To recreate the feeling of working from your bed, comes complete with the electrical and electronic equipment around it. Not only do some architects like to work from their beds, it symbolizes the fact that thanks to technology, the borders between working time and leisure time have become more and more blurred. We still work at midnight once the whole family is in bed, or we take a day off to enjoy family events without disrupting clients, thanks to being online and operational, as needed, on the go.

Room 4: 2001--2008: **AIR SCULPTURE® *SPACEWOOD #40SUS***, trampling into the future; a homage to sustainability.

SpaceWood #40SUS was created to show that scent is not only about memory: a scent can also be abstract, to help create forward--thinking ideas or to help project into the future.

Even more surprising, some natural extracts can be used for that purpose beside safe molecules. All naturals do not smell natural or aromatherapeutic. For instance Violet Leaves, a precious and extremely expensive ingredient extracted in Egypt, which helps farmers raise families and send children to school, smells quite fresh and cucumber; Blue Chamomille smells of plastic and rubber, Polygonum essence and Cilantro molecules smell quite electric. The neon--green and yellow feelings in the scent also come from Bergamot coupled with anise, hawthorn, acacia flower notes

and of course some interesting molecules like the composite materials that are used in a sky scraper to create new effects. Bergamot, this elegant very Italian ingredient, is at the moment subject of a case study showing how fragrance ingredients, even if used in very modern ways, are so respectful of their environment. They foster the fauna, flora and protect landscapes and biotopes. They are very specifically regionally produced, and help the local populations in areas usually forgotten by the public, tourism or otherwise struck by geographical or political difficulties.

Room 5: 2009–2014: **AIR SCULPTURE® SQUEEZE ME B FULL 2**, or how to project a freshly squeezed lemon onto the walls.

This also aims at attracting the attention of architects regarding food related environments. Commonly avoided for scent design, yet apart from the preparation table of a kitchen, food places (restaurants, big or large, bars etc...) often contain smells not appropriate for their elegance, or for the activity inside. So many high–end restaurants smell uber–clean, or cold and electric, or worse: smell of the fried food being prepared behind the kitchen doors. Not the best environment to feel comfortable, to feel homey or sensual, or to enjoy a gorgeous wine or dessert.

Just like architecture, scents envelop the users, and are experienced in 3D in the brain. They always influence the perception of a place. Usually, if not designed properly or not designed at all, a place will not smell as intended. Just like white paint, even fresh air should be attended to and designed. White is not the color of nothing, or the absence of color, white is a precisely designed combination of colors. Similarly scent designers design the feel–clean, or feel–good, or feel–small or feel–-vast sensations.

Hoping to have inspired you,
Your scent designers.

Acknowledgement: display made possible by a contribution from AirQ and DreamAir and by weekly local support from Nicola Pozzani.

To view scent sculptures:

1. Close your eyes.
2. Breathe naturally do not sniff or change your breathing.
3. Your nose habituates to a scent in minutes but does not get tired.
4. To refresh: breathe your own skin, no coffee beans please.
5. Your brain is learning a new language, it will not explode.

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(1): Nobel prize awarded in 2004 for the olfactory genes, 100 times more numerous than visual genes.

(2): Human can discriminate more than 1 trillion olfactory stimuli, C. Bushdid et al., Science 343, 1370 (2014), a study by Rockefeller University in New York City.

(3): Frankincense is often used in vernacular perfumery to scent houses and cleanse them of bad spirits. The fact of the matter is that frankincense, like myrrh, is an excellent antibacterial agent. Vanilla and clove, and molecules vanillin and eugenol too. Egyptians, who used a lot of myrrh and cinnamon to preserve mummies, knew all that.