

# The Art of Scent

## 1889–2012

Teachers Resource Packet

# WELCOME

Dear Educator,

We are delighted that you have scheduled a visit to *The Art of Scent (1889-2012)*. When you and your students visit the Museum of Arts and Design, you will be given an informative tour of the exhibition with a museum educator, followed by an inspiring hands-on project that students can take home with them. To make your museum experience more enriching and meaningful, we strongly encourage you to use this packet as a resource, and work with your students in the classroom before and after your museum visit.

This packet includes topics for discussion and activities intended to introduce the key themes and concepts of the exhibition. We have suggested writing, storytelling, and art projects so that you can explore ideas from the exhibition in ways that relate directly to your students' lives and experiences.

Please feel free to adapt and build on these materials and to use this packet in any way that you wish.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Museum of Arts and Design.

Sincerely,

Cathleen Lewis  
Manager of School, Youth and Family Programs  
[cathleen.lewis@madmuseum.org](mailto:cathleen.lewis@madmuseum.org)

Lessons written by Petra Pankow, Museum Educator, in collaboration with the Museum of Arts and Design Education Department. Jennifer Kanyo, School, Youth, and Family Intern, developed the timelines.



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**THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN** has been functioning as an international resource center for craft, arts, and design since 1956. Through its collections, exhibitions, programs, and publications, the Museum serves as a forum for critical debate concerning the nature of craftsmanship and the engagement with the process that links materials, techniques, forms, patterns, and concepts in all creative work.

## HOW DOES A MUSEUM WORK?



**ADMINISTRATION:** This team, led by the Director of the Museum determines the programs, plans, and philosophy of the Museum. It also raises funds to realize the Museum's goals and works directly with the Board of Governors, which guides the Museum's functions.

**CURATORIAL:** This is the team, led by the Chief Curator, that works together to decide which exhibits will be shown, how they will look, what artwork is to be included, and how they are to be interpreted.

**REGISTRATION:** Led by the Registrar, this team arranges the safe handling of art to be placed in an exhibition and maintains the museum's permanent collections.

**EDUCATION:** This team provides the interactive interpretation of the objects on view through the educational programs designed for children, adults, and families who visit the Museum.

**FACILITY MAINTENANCE:** This is the team that allows the day-to-day operations of a museum to continue, from turning on the lights to ensuring the safety of all who enter the building.

**SECURITY GUARDS:** This is the team most often seen in a museum, because its main task is to protect the artwork from harm so that in the future people will be able to see the same objects we admire today. They also are helpful to visitors who have questions.



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Museums are places where we can learn about the past, present, and future of the world around us. The diversity of knowledge is endless when the habit of museum exploration is formed at an early age. We look forward to welcoming your group into our galleries.

## HELPFUL HINTS FOR YOUR MUSEUM VISIT:

*"I try, when I go to museums, to do two things. One, to appreciate what I'm looking at, just to see it, but then to isolate a few pieces that I really look at in detail. I study and I draw not with any purpose in mind. I mean, I don't go looking for specific things. I just try to be open-minded and keep my eyes open. It's interesting that every time I go back to the same place, I see something different."* Arline M. Fisch (1931- ) Brooklyn, New York

While visiting the exhibition try to use all your senses. Notice the way the pieces are displayed. *Are there any specific groupings of pieces you can distinguish? If you enjoy looking at one piece more than others, can you explain why?*

Here are some questions and suggestions to think about as you move around the exhibition:

- I. *What can be objectively observed?*
  - a. *What is the physical description of the object you are looking at? Measurement, weight, materials used, articulation of materials...*
  - b. *What iconography, if any, is used? Designs, words, diagrams...*
  - c. *What are the object's formal design characteristics? Lines, shapes, forms, color, texture...*
  
- II. *What would it be like to interact with this piece of art? How would you handle, lift, display it?*
  - a. *How would the piece of art feel, move, and sound?*
  - b. *What does the piece do? Does the piece have a function? How would the figures move if they were alive?*
  - c. *What is our emotional response to the artwork? Fear, joy, indifference, curiosity, revulsion, excitement...*
  
- III. *What is in the mind of the artist? What are the viewers thinking and feeling? Use creative imagining and free association.*
  - a. *Review all of the above information and consider what was going on in the world when the work was produced to develop possible interpretations of the piece. (Theories and hypotheses)*
  - b. *Does the piece tell a story and/or have underlying political or social meaning? (Understanding and visual thinking)*
  - c. *Develop a program to investigate the questions posed by the material evidence. (Program of research)*



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*IV. Brainstorm about an event or situation currently happening in your life that you could animate into one scene through your very own figurative drawing or poem. (Design themes)*



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# **THE ART OF SCENT (1889-2012)**

**NOVEMBER 13, 2012  
- FEBRUARY 23, 2013**



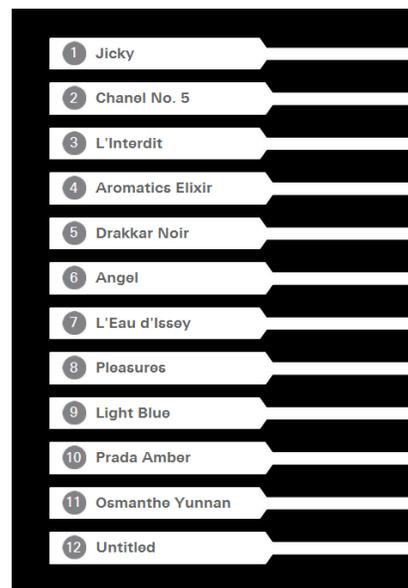
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# INTRODUCTION:

*The Art of Scent (1889-2012)* is the first major museum presentation dedicated to the design and aesthetics of **olfactory** art. Starting from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the introduction of **synthetic molecules** freed scent artists from the constraints of natural materials, the exhibition charts the major stylistic developments in **fragrance** design to the present day. *The Art of Scent* offers insights into the creative visions and intricate processes of noted perfumers by presenting 12 **fragrances** developed between 1889 and 2012.

Each scent is presented as a unique artwork, rooted in its respective cultural history and described in art-historical terms, much as we would expect a painting or piece of music to be presented to us.

The museum installation, designed by New York-based architecture studio Diller Scofidio + Renfro, allows visitors to experience each scent individually and emphasizes the distinct combination of artistry and chemistry at the foundation of **olfactory** art.



## THIS TEACHER RESOURCE PACKET CONSISTS OF FOUR SECTIONS:

- **PART 1: EXPLORING OUR SENSE OF SMELL** encourages students and teachers to explore our sense of smell in general physical, psychological, and cultural terms.
- **PART 2: TOWARDS A LANGUAGE OF SCENT** analyzes the tools historians and critics use to describe and evaluate scents and other works of art, and works toward establishing a unique language, which will help students to discuss scent with more confidence.
- **PART 3: AN ART HISTORY OF SCENT** looks at individual **fragrances** as artistic expressions in line with contemporaneous cultural and artistic developments.
- **Part 4: DESIGNING THE ART OF SCENT** investigates the exhibition in terms of its installation design, and looks at how concepts about the **sensory** perception of scent are turned into a **spatial** experience.



# THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

- *The Art of Scent* aims to promote an understanding of designer **fragrances** as artistic expressions rather than just consumer products. Discuss the differences and similarities between **olfactory** art and other more established art forms, such as visual art and music.
- What messages do people want to send by wearing a particular scent? Do you think these messages have changed in the course of history?
- What are some of the means perfumers use to market their scents? What would be the most effective way to market a **fragrance** to you—either as an individual or as part of a demographic group defined by age, gender, income level, etc.?
- How can an intangible medium like **olfactory** art be made tangible in a museum exhibition or magazine review? Is it even possible?
- How is this exhibition different from other museum exhibitions? What sorts of thoughts/ideas might guide exhibition designers?

# RECURRING QUESTIONS

- Who makes perfume?
- Where can you buy it?
- What are perfume bottles like, and who designs them?
- How are perfumes marketed? What are their makers trying to communicate to buyers?
- Do you have personal memories that feature certain smells?
- What roles do scents play in society? Think of religious, institutional, and private settings.
- How do ideas of individual and collective perception play out in the case of experiencing fragrances?
- How can we develop a vocabulary specifically for the description and discussion of scents?
- What role does marketing and **branding** (packaging, advertisement, etc.) play in our perception of **olfactory** art?
- What are some of the geographical or cultural associations with a particular scent? How might companies use these associations to make their products attractive to buyers?



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# **PART 1: EXPLORING OUR SENSE OF SMELL**

**LIKE OUR EYES, EARS, SKIN, AND TONGUE ALLOW US TO EXPERIENCE THE WORLD AROUND US BY SEEING, HEARING, TOUCHING, AND TASTING IT, OUR NOSE AND THE SENSE OF SMELL ASSOCIATED WITH IT ARE TOOLS WITH WHICH OUR BODIES MAKE SENSE OF OUR SURROUNDINGS. THIS SECTION EXPLORES HOW OUR SENSE OF SMELL FUNCTIONS, AND WHAT WE DO WITH THE INFORMATION IT PROVIDES.**

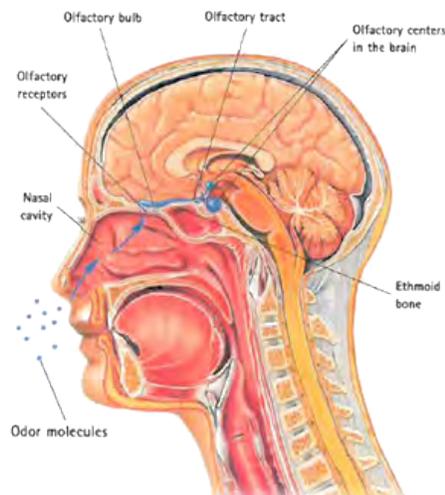


Smelling happens automatically, with each breath we take—it's something we do all the time. At the same time, it is an important survival tool: smelling dangerous substances like smoke, gas, or spoiled food sends a warning signal to our brains and helps us protect ourselves by avoiding these hazards. In addition, our nose and our taste buds are closely related. In fact, 80 percent of what we taste is actually due to our sense of smell, as you may notice on days you have a bad cold.

In the way that grandma's cooking might make us feel immediately comfortable, the smell of a place or object can be a very powerful and memorable experience, whether negative or positive. In fact, our sense of smell is processed by the same part of the brain that handles memories and emotions: the **limbic system**. As a result, smell can influence our mood, enhance learning, and have a positive impact on our life and general well-being. Researchers have found that memories evoked by our sense of smell are more emotional than those evoked by other senses.

The **physiological** steps in perceiving scents are well researched and rather straightforward:

1. Air passing a fragrant (or smelly) object picks up odor **molecules** and carries them to our nostrils.
2. By drawing in breath, these **molecules** are transported into the *nasal cavity*, an open space behind our nose and eyes, where they mix with a clear mucus called the *olfactory epithelium*.
3. Tiny hairs equipped with **receptors** stick out into this mucus and send a signal to a part of the brain specialized in the sensory perception of smell, the *olfactory bulb*.
4. From the olfactory bulb, signals are sent to the **limbic system**, a part of the brain that identifies these signals and adds them to other memories stored there.





## ACTIVITY 1.1: SCENT IN A BAG

*Note to teacher:* prepare 4-6 brown paper bags by filling them halfway with fragrant (or smelly) substances like coffee, popcorn, chocolate, spices (e.g., curry, ginger, pepper), soap, toothpaste, or soil, and arrange them on the front desk. Students should come up to the smell bags individually, their eyes covered with a sleep mask or scarf.

- Take a deep breath over each bag. What do you smell? Write down your results.
- Once everyone has had a turn, discuss the findings: did everybody get the smells right?
- Compare your initial reactions and associations with those of your classmates, and discuss possible reasons behind these responses.



## ACTIVITY 1.2: INTERVIEW

Partner with a classmate and conduct the following interview:

- Have you ever detected a dangerous situation with the help of your sense of smell? Please describe the situation.
- What's the first thing you smell in the morning?
- Describe some smells that are special for you (the smell of an object or place you like, a favorite food, etc.).
- What is your favorite smell? Why do you like it?
- What feeling do you associate with it (comfort, anticipation, happiness, giddiness)?
- Describe a smell you consider bad.
- What about it do you dislike and what feelings does it evoke (sadness, anger, fear, discomfort)?
- Describe a smell that reminds you of home.
- Describe a smell that reminds you of being younger.
- Describe a smell that makes you think of a friend or family member.



## ACTIVITY 1.3: WRITE A SCENT POEM

Working individually, review your answers to the questions above and then:

- Pick one and work your **olfactory** memory into a story.
- Make a list of expressive, evocative words that bring your experience to life, and then work them into a poem.
- Can you make the smells correlate with the sounds of the words you are using?
- Write your poem out on a sheet of paper.
- Underline your story by arranging your letters in an evocative way and by using other visual components like colors and different-sized letters or fonts, which you might cut and paste from magazines and transform by photocopying, painting over, etc.

### TIP:

Research **concrete poetry** and look at some examples of **concrete poems** online for ideas (see online directory for some useful web resources).

## ACTIVITY 1.4: TRAVEL THROUGH A SCENTSCAPE

As discussed above, smells can carry information and powerful emotional messages. Discuss the social and cultural implications of smells (e.g., spices and other food smells) as cultural and geographical markers. Are there scents associated with specific demographic or economic groups? What makes a perfume smell “expensive” or “cheap,” “conservative” or “youthful”?

### GRADES K-6:

- Looking at a map of New York, imagine yourself on an **olfactory** journey through different parts of the city (the park, a school building, a department store, a farmer’s market, Little Italy, Chinatown, or any other neighborhood in the five boroughs).
- Write a postcard to the rest of your class describing what you smell and how it shapes your experience of this place.



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### **GRADES 7-12:**

- Visit, in real space or cyber space, a country, city, or neighborhood and map your response to this place through photos, drawings, or verbal descriptions that mirror a multi-sensory experience.
- What, if any, are connections between the sounds, sights, and smells of your place of choice?
- Present your findings. Discuss different viewpoints about identical or similar destinations. Did the visual component (maps) of the presentation support the findings in other areas?



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# **PART 2: TOWARDS A LANGUAGE OF SCENT**



HOW DO WE “READ” AND INTERPRET SCENTS? IS THERE A SPECIAL LANGUAGE OR LEXICON OF SCENT? IN MUSEUM EDUCATION, WE PROMOTE “VISUAL LITERACY” THROUGH CLOSE LOOKING AND THE USE OF EVOCATIVE LANGUAGE TO DESCRIBE AND DISCUSS THE OBJECT UNDER STUDY. THIS SECTION IS ABOUT EXTENDING THIS SORT OF PROBING INTERACTION FROM VISUAL ART TO THE ART OF SCENT IN ORDER TO DEVELOP AN “OLFACTORY LITERACY” AND A LANGUAGE OF SCENT.

The following activities will ask you to go beyond the **physiological** foundations of **sensory** perception and think about scents as products of certain times and places, designed to target specific audiences and tell a particular story.

## ACTIVITY 2.1: TAKE A WHIFF

*Note to teacher:* This exercise can be done with any commercial fragrance. Apply a drop of perfume to a strip of paper for each student.

Moving the paper gently below your nose, breathe in deeply, through both nostrils, and describe what you smell.

- What is your initial reaction? Is the scent soothing or stimulating, pleasing or irritating?
- Can you identify any possible ingredients/elements of this scent (lemon, vanilla, rose)?
- If this scent were a color, which one would it be? Please explain your answer.
- Does this aroma remind you of something or someone? Please explain.
- Think of interesting and evocative adjectives to describe this fragrance.



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- Compare the different reactions of your classmates. Is there a consensus, or do opinions differ widely?
- Discuss the challenges in describing this scent.

Professional perfumers or scent connoisseurs often describe scents in musical terms: as having three “notes,” which together form the harmonious chord of the scent. These notes unfold over time:

1. The *top note* is perceived first and gives a first impression of the scent, such as “fresh,” “aggressive,” or “sharp.” Citrus and ginger scents are examples of top notes.
2. More “mellow” and “rounded” *middle notes* form the heart of the scent. Rose or lavender are typical middle notes.
3. The *base notes* only appear after the first impression has wafted off. Perfumers use these musky or woody scents to give a “depth” and “solidity” to a fragrance.

Developed by scent expert Michael Edwards, author of *Fragrances of the World*, the “fragrance wheel” offers a tool for analyzing the elements that make up an individual scent, much like the color wheel helps us figure out color relationships (primary, complementary, etc.) within a painting. The categories in the fragrance wheel, like floral, citrus, oriental, woody, green, or mossy, are also a possible foundation for a common language of scent.



The Fragrance Wheel Copyright © 1992-2012 Michael Edwards

Inhale the scent of the perfume used in the first part of this activity once more. Try to capture the layering of aromas based on the idea of fragrance notes and the terminology of the fragrance wheel.

- How would you describe the **fragrance** notes of this scent?
- Each person's experience with a scent is different. Talk about individual students' experiences with detecting scent while applying this new language. Is there more of a consensus now than during the first part of this activity?

**EXTENSION:**

Research the color wheel and the fragrance wheel and compare and contrast the two.

- Why do you think Michael Edwards developed the fragrance wheel?
- How does it work like the color wheel when certain fragrances are juxtaposed or adjacent to one another?
- Develop an alternative version of a fragrance wheel and discuss with the whole class.



## ACTIVITY 2.2: SYNESTHETIC EXPLORATIONS

Scent and color are both lodged in the right hemisphere of our brain, which is why associations between the two are more direct than the connection between scents and language, for example, which is under the auspices of the left hemisphere. Perfumers use colors to explore, analyze, and describe the complex layering of different scent notes. While **synesthesia**, the intense connection between different sensory realms (sounds, smells, colors), is a relatively rare condition, establishing basic connections between color and scent is something that can be learned. Color, like scent, is elusive, changing according to light conditions or what other colors are present.

For this activity, you will need at least three different commercial scents. Spraying perfume directly on paper strips (blotters) will be the best way for everyone to get the best sense of each aroma. You will also need paper and watercolors (preferred) or colored pencils.

- Moving one scent at a time, smell scent #1. Referring to the categories and colors of the fragrance wheel, use watercolors to capture the different fragrance notes the scent is composed of.
- Incorporate the different aspects of color in your drawing to express scent nuances:
  - Hue (basic color name: blue, green, yellow, etc.).
  - Value (lightness or darkness of color based on nearness to white or black).
  - Intensity (saturation: brightness or dullness of color).
- Compare the results of this exercise in class. Which aspects/colors were most commonly shared? Which were more subjective?
- Other concepts used to analyze and describe the formal qualities of visual art are symmetry, balance, dominance, unity, composition, space, and depth. Try to apply some of these terms to the analysis of scent #1. Which of the categories are the most useful?
- Repeat the color exercise and formal analysis for scents #2 and #3.
- Compare the results in class. Which scent yielded most similarities, and which was the most controversial?



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# **PART 3: AN ART HISTORY OF SCENT**

**MODERN LIFE, WITH ITS PULSATING CITIES, TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS, BREAKTHROUGHS IN PSYCHOLOGY, BIOLOGY, AND PHYSICS, WHICH LED TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS, EVOLUTION, AND THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY, FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED THE WAY PEOPLE SAW THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM. ART HISTORY STUDIES THE INFLUENCE OF THESE CULTURAL FORCES ON THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REALM OF VISUAL ART. THIS SECTION TAKES A CLOSE LOOK AT HOW HISTORY HAS SHAPED THE ART OF SCENT.**



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Rust

Solvent

Plastic

Breeze

Fruit

Clay

Musk

Toxin

Concrete

Water

Flower

Leather Metal

Snow

Rubber

Cellar

Fog

Citrus

Animal

Denim

Feathers

Acid

Rain

Grass

Soap

Wool

Wood

Flesh

Breath

Mud

Soil

Root

Vegetation

Bile

Carrion

Paper

Oil

Glass

Mineral

Air

Vinegar

Leaf

Smoke

Blood

Powder

SCENT

Silk



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## JICKY, 1889

This segment investigates the cultural history surrounding the creation of *Jicky*, created by Aimé Guerlain in 1889—which makes it the earliest scent presented in the exhibition. Perfumer Aimé was the son of Pierre-François-Pascal Guerlain, who had opened a perfume shop and factory in a fashionable part of Paris, in 1828. Drawing on the contemporary fashion for light, fresh, floral scents conveying a sense of unobtrusive, natural beauty, Pierre-François-Pascal added personal touches to his compositions, which each illustrated a particular atmosphere, emotion or temperament. An almost instant success with the elegant set of the French capital, by 1842 Guerlain was the purveyor of perfumes to the courts of Europe. His illustrious clients included Queen Victoria and the Tsar of all Russia.

Aimé Guerlain, who took over the business in 1864, continued in his father's legacy by capturing the spirit of a flower or **bouquet** (an arrangement of flowers). Just like the visual arts and literature of the period celebrated the allure of faraway lands, perfumers, too, catered to a fashionable fascination with exotic places. Having travelled the globe to source raw materials for his scents, Aimé was perfectly equipped to dream up compositions with an oriental tinge, as illustrated by his creations from the 1870s with names like *Far West* and *Jasmin du Siam*.

It wasn't until 1889, however, that Aimé Guerlain created a truly revolutionary scent, which completely broke with perfumery conventions and challenged the tradition that each scent be dominated by a single floral note. By introducing synthetic **molecules** as part of the composition, *Jicky* moved away from flowers and references to nature, and was much more difficult to grasp. In fact, this abstract scent was initially rejected by women and instead adopted by men who embraced its "animalic" boldness. In addition to **vanillin** and other artificial ingredients, Aimé incorporated a substance found in an Ethiopian feline called **civet** into the composition. This substance has an almost sweaty smell, which when mixed with other ingredients creates a sensual, sexy experience. The unconventional new scent catered to the rising middle class, which was more inclined to try out a product that shattered conventions and was increasingly able to spend money on luxury goods like perfumes.

One hundred and twenty-three years after its launch, *Jicky* is still produced by Guerlain.



## ACTIVITY 3.1: LOOKING BACK

- Teaming up with a classmate, read through the list of notable events of 1889 gathered on the previous page, and try to distill from it a “spirit of the time:” a sort of general feeling that might have been shared by a lot of people at this late-19<sup>th</sup> century moment. On the word cloud on page 18, circle all the words you think best capture this feeling.
- The late 19th century was a period of radical innovation in the visual arts. Research paintings created in 1889; you can find links to some notable examples below.
  - What do you notice about these works? What are some of the issues the painters seem to be concerned with?
  - In what way do they capture some of the defining late-19<sup>th</sup>-century atmosphere the timeline communicated?
  - What sort of lifestyle do they portray?
  - In what way do they challenge traditional depictions of the world, in terms of formal innovations?

Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night*

[http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object\\_id=79802](http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=79802)

Thomas Eakins, *The Agnew Clinic*

<http://www.listal.com/viewimage/4108868h>

George Seurat, *Circus Sideshow*

<http://metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/110002107>

Paul Cezanne, *Harlequin*

[http://www.nga.gov/fcgi-bin/timage\\_f?object=66405&image=16395&c=](http://www.nga.gov/fcgi-bin/timage_f?object=66405&image=16395&c=)

- Do you see any parallels between the developments in the visual art of the time and Guerlain’s revolutionary new scent?
- The use of artificial materials is the main reason *Jicky* can be considered an artwork and not just a perfume. Do you see a similar challenge to the relationship between art and nature in the works of painters like Van Gogh and Cezanne? Please explain your position.

# 1889



**January 15**

The Coca-Cola Company, then known as the Pemberton Medicine Company, is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia

**February 2**

First important display of Paul Gauguin's work



**March 31**

300m Eiffel Tower officially opens (commemorates French Revolution)

**April 6**

George Eastman places Kodak Camera on sale for the first time



**May 1**

Bayer introduces aspirin in powder form in Germany

**June 3**

The Canadian Pacific Railway is completed from coast to coast



**October 20**

Gerhart Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* premieres in Berlin

**November 20**

Gustave Mahler's first symphony



**November 27**

Cutis P. Brady receives first permit issued to drive a car through Central Park in New York City

**January 22**

Columbia Phonograph was created in Washington, D.C.



**March 14**

German Ferdinand von Zeppelin patents his "Navigable Balloon"

**April 1**

First dishwashing machine marketed (Chicago)



**April 30**

George Washington Bridge linking New York City and New Jersey opens

**May 6**

Exposition Universelle (World's Fair) opens in Paris



**October 6**

Moulin Rouge opens in Paris/  
Inventor Thomas Edison shows his first motion picture

**November 17**

Union Pacific Railroad begins daily through service, Chicago-Portland and San Francisco



**November 23**

Debut of first jukebox (Palais Royale Saloon, San Francisco)



## ACTIVITY 3.2: CONCOCT YOUR OWN SCENT!

- Working in pairs, brainstorm current events and issues important to you and your peers in 2012 New York. Once again, go through the “word cloud” on page 18 and circle any words you think might resonate with contemporary urban teenagers.
- Imagine being commissioned to create a scent for your favorite store or designer. What are some of the ideas that characterize this brand?
- Imagining a composition of different fragrance notes, create a virtual “scent” by writing out what the experience of wearing it might be like and how it furthers the brand identity you thought about above.
- What would a print or TV ad for this scent look like? Imagine and describe the colors, images, music, etc., which could be used to underline the allure of your product.





# CHANEL N° 5, 1921

*Chanel No. 5* was the first fragrance launched by fashion designer Coco Chanel in 1921. Designed by perfumer Ernest Beaux, it was the embodiment of a **modern** scent, offering an alternative to the single-flower fragrances favored by bourgeois women and the more musky, heavier scents associated with a less respectable milieu. By mixing a traditional, heavier floral scent with the lighter fragrance of synthetic **aldehydes**, Ernest Beaux achieved a brilliant, powdery smell, completely different from any other perfume of the time.

While *Chanel No. 5* is undoubtedly an achievement of **modern olfactory** art, it is also characterized by a deep link to both Chanel's persona and the fashion empire she built in the post-World War I period.

## ACTIVITY 3.3: THE SCENT OF A WOMAN

Take a good look at the image on the next page and list your observations.

- What do you notice about the person's appearance (hair, accessories, facial expression, etc.)?
- What do you notice about her posture and facial expression?
- Describe the portrait, paying close attention to how the sitter presents herself.
- In what way might the photographer have staged her appearance?
- Do you think she embodies the average 1920s woman? Please explain your answer.
- How would you describe her personal style? Come up with at least three adjectives that capture the attitude/s she embodies.
- Where does the image she projects fit in with the notable events listed on the timeline on page 26?
- What sort of scent do you think would best embody this image?

Coco Chanel, who is depicted on this photograph, was instrumental in revolutionizing women's fashion by liberating women from the constraints of the corset and popularizing a sportive, casual chic as the new standard. Her collections included not only couture and ready-to-wear clothing but also accessories like bags, jewelry, and scents. Together (and perhaps led by Chanel No. 5), these products became important pillars of Chanel's brand identity, which also involved Coco's own persona.





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Part of developing a marketable product aligned with this brand identity, Chanel opted for a simple, classic bottle design as an alternative to the overly decorative flacons used by her competitors.

- What might a bottle catering to 21<sup>st</sup>-century teenagers look like? Make a drawing and write a description of the effects you are aiming to achieve with your design.
- How is the name *Chanel No. 5* different from the names of other perfumes of the time, such as *L'Heure Blue* (Blue Hour) or “Shalimar”? What sort of message does it send?
- The latest (2012) advertisement for Chanel No. 5 features Brad Pitt. Here is a link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnwIWZQIGAA&feature=related>. Discuss the commercial and why you think the marketing executives at Chanel decided, for the first time, to feature a man (famous women who lent their face to the brand include Catherine Deneuve, Nicole Kidman, and Audrey Tautou).

#### EXTENSION:

The image below is a promotional photograph for the scent *Spice Bomb* by Viktor and Rolf. How has this campaign approached the idea of bottle design? Compare and contrast with Chanel No. 5. Whom might this ad be targeting? What is your personal response to the image?



# 1921



**January 21**  
Women's Suffrage attained in Sweden

**February 12**

Winston Churchill becomes British minister of Colonies



**February 18**  
British troops occupy Dublin

**March 17**

Dr. Marie Stopes opens Britain's first birth control clinic (London)



**April 13**  
Foundation of the Spanish Communist Workers' Party

**May 8**

Sweden abolishes capital punishment



**June 1**  
Race riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma (21 whites and 60 blacks killed)

**July 1**

Foundation of the Communist Party of China.



**July 29**  
Hitler becomes leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party

**February 6**

*The Kid*, starring Charlie Chaplin and Jackie Coogan, released



**February 14**  
Little Review faces obscenity charges for publishing *Ulysses* in New York

**February 23**

First US transcontinental air mail flight arrives in New York City from San Francisco



**April 2**  
Professor Albert Einstein lectures in New York City on his new theory of relativity

**April 24**

First municipal elections for men and women in Belgium



**May 19**  
Congress sharply curbs immigration, setting a national quota system

**June 11**

Brazil adopts women's suffrage



**July 20**  
Alice Mary Robertson became the first woman to preside over the US House of Representatives

**September 7**

First Miss America Pageant held in Atlantic City, NJ





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## UNTITLED, 2010

Perfumer Daniela Andrier's creation *Untitled*, is the most recent fragrance featured in *The Art of Scent*. In contrast to *Jicky* and *Chanel No. 5*, which were discussed earlier in this package, this scent is a product of our own moment in time, it is not only informed by an art historical perspective but by contemporary culture.

- Why do you think Andrier and the company who commissioned her decided to give her perfume the name *Untitled*?
- *Untitled* works are a common phenomenon in the world of visual art. Why might artists resist naming their work? Do you think their reasons are the same as those of Daniela Andrier?

Many artists feel that giving their work a title restricts the many different interpretations that viewers might bring it. This open-ended attitude is a relatively recent phenomenon, as more and more people have started to value individual perspective over a single, universally agreed-upon "truth."



Watch the video conversation with Daniela Andrier on the MAD website at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KX76Nyr\\_Gs&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KX76Nyr_Gs&feature=player_embedded)



Andrier talks about how scent shapes the perfumer's relationship to the outer world. "It's where you have communication to what's surrounding you," she says.

- What do you think she means by this? Please give an example.
- Have you ever experienced a moment where scent has played this role as a key to your surroundings? Please describe it to the rest of the class.

Andrier also talks about time. She describes scent as existing outside of time, as a timeless phenomenon: "The past is as present as the present...it's just a matter of inviting it," she says. "Smell and perfume is a very beautiful way of making you understand that you can go back, that nothing is lost".

- Can you think of an example of how a scent might bring back the past?
- How would you describe the relationship of scents and time?
- What is the relationship between scent and memory?
- Do you think this relationship is always personal, or could there also be a connection between a smell and a collective memory?

#### Extension:

*The Art of Scent* suggests that the time context in which a scent is created matters, just like the art-historical moment in which a work of visual art is made does. Curator Chandler Burr compares Andrier's *Untitled* to the architecture of Tadao Ando. Both artists are interested in what Andrier calls a "spiritual encounter of nature and humanity." Research Ando's work, then think about the following points:

- Discuss how Ando's building projects embody such an encounter.
- How does he manage to reconcile landscape and building?
- How might a perfumer be able to achieve a similar effect, a smell that is raw and sophisticated at the same time?



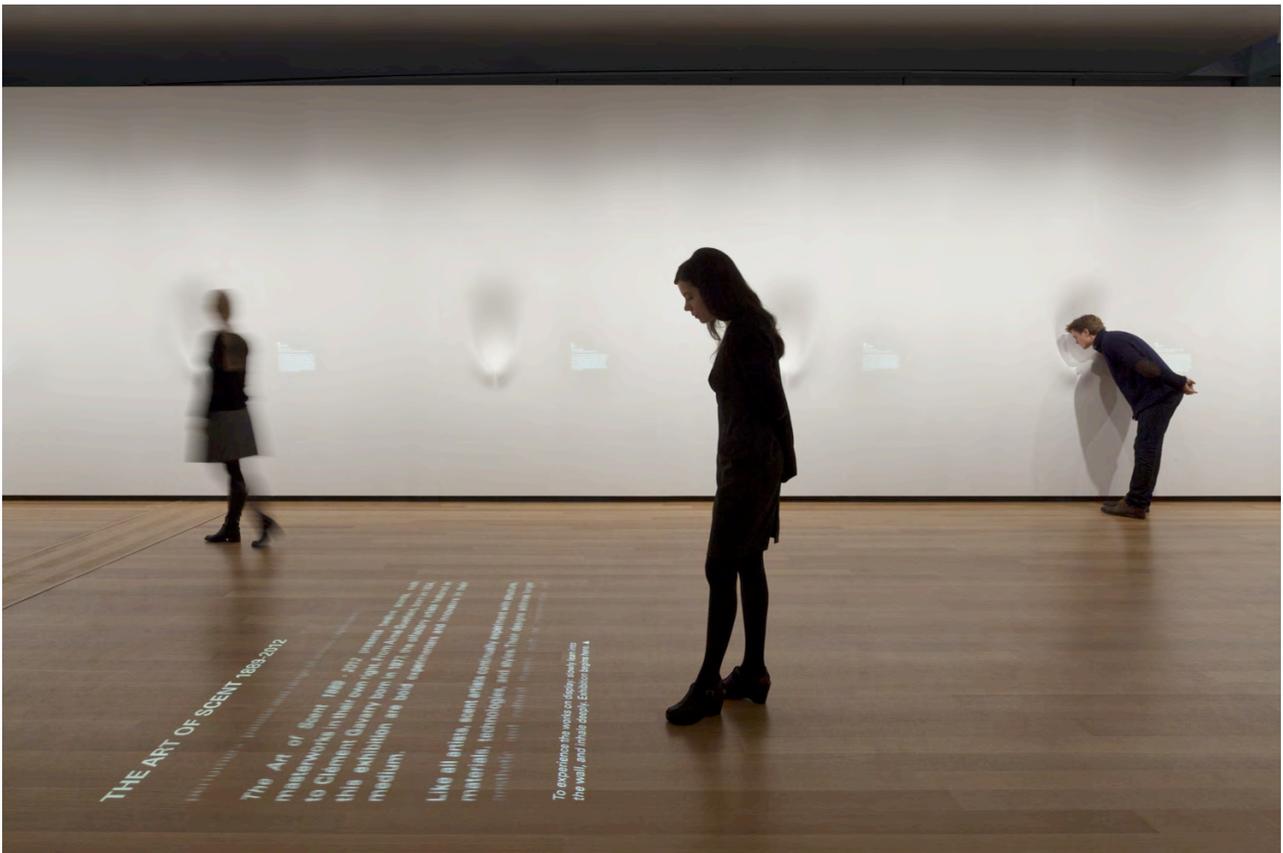
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# **PART 4:** **EXHIBITING** ***THE ART OF SCENT***

**MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS ARE USUALLY EXPERIENCES THAT PRIVILEGE THE SENSE OF VISION ABOVE ALL OTHERS. WHAT, THEN, DO YOU DO WITH AN EXHIBITION WHERE THERE IS NOTHING TO SEE? THIS SECTION OFFERS A LOOK AT SOME OF THE IDEAS BEHIND THE EXHIBITION DESIGN FOR *THE ART OF SCENT*.**



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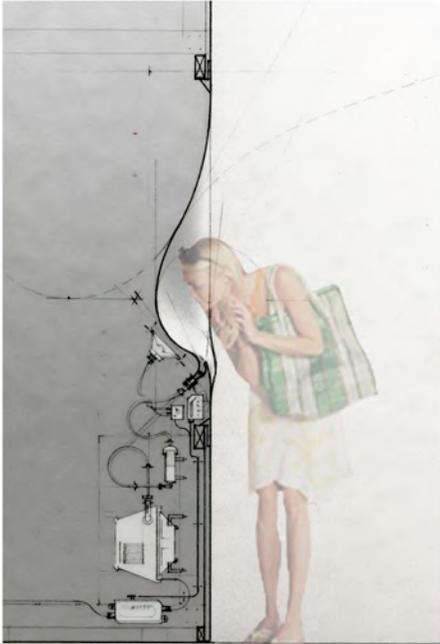
*The Art of Scent*, Main Gallery of the exhibition.



*The Art of Scent, Social Space of the exhibition.*

## ACTIVITY 4.1: CASE STUDY

- Take a close look at the images below. Please describe what you see in terms of color and form.
- Based on your observations, what do you think you are looking at?
- List the objects that make up the design of the space.
- Imagine someone moving around in, experiencing, and using this space.
- How are the people below interacting with the space?
- What do you think is the function of this room?



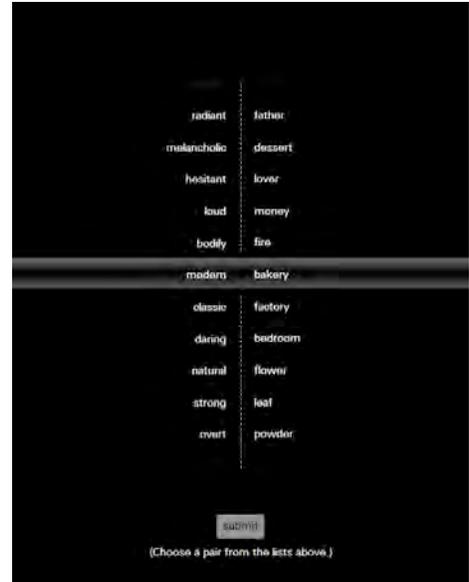
The images above are depictions of visitor interaction with part of the exhibition design for MAD's 2012 exhibition *The Art of Scent (1889-2012)*, which is devoted to the presentation of scents as artworks comparable to objects we are used to seeing in museums, such as paintings or sculptures. Visitors are invited to approach indentations ("dimples") in the gallery walls. A scent diffusion machine hidden in the wall then releases a burst of fragrance, which hovers for four seconds and disappears. Informational text about each fragrance is projected onto the otherwise bare walls, rather than on fixed wall labels.

- While visual art and music can provide profound **sensory** experiences, we commonly use language to describe and evaluate these art forms. What sort of language is required for this purpose? Think of words or phrases that could be used to describe a painting or a jazz performance.
- Do you think sounds, smells, and sights are equally suited for verbal description? Please explain your answer.
- Diller Scofidio + Renfro's design aims to highlight the ephemeral, fleeting nature of scent. Do you see anything in the design that implies these ideas?
- According to Liz Diller, principal at DS+R, the team "really wanted to suck everything out of that place except the scent." Do you think this is possible? Explain your answer.



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In addition to a minimalist gallery design featuring 12 “dimples” showcasing the developments of scent over the course of the past 120 years, the exhibition features a communal space where visitors can follow the steps involved in the conception and creation of a single fragrance. There is also a social media component allowing guests to directly respond to their experience of the featured scents by using gallery-provided iPads to choose evocative adjectives to describe individual scents. Their input is immediately contributed to a word-cloud projected on the gallery wall. See an illustration of the iPad app to the right.



## ACTIVITY 4.2: YOUR TURN

*Note to teacher:* Form design teams of two to four students, and discuss some initial concepts central to the idea of fragrance and the sense of smell (smell is invisible and time-based, etc.).

- Imagine you were asked to design a space to house an exhibition focusing on the art of scent.
- How might the concepts you discussed inform your design?
- Make a drawing of your exhibition design, sketching out its various components.
- What are possible uses of technology in your design?
- Write a brief piece describing the transformation of ideas into features of your design, and how the space might lead visitors to experience these ideas.



Social space includes ipad, table, stools, scent containers, blotters and journal, which invite viewer participation.



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## ACTIVITY 4.3: ABOVE AND BEYOND

Diller, Scofidio + Renfro, an interdisciplinary architecture firm based in New York, has a history of creating buildings and structures based on political, **sensory**, and philosophical concepts rather than just functional needs. Their work on the Highline in New York transformed overgrown train tracks that had become a politically contested guerilla garden into a vibrant public park. In 2003, they created Blur building, a seemingly immaterial structure lodged in a misty cloud above Swiss Lake Neuchatel, described on their website as “an architecture of atmosphere—a fog mass resulting from natural and manmade forces.”<sup>1</sup>

Upon entering this building, visitors experience an erasure of visual and acoustic references. “There is only an optical ‘white-out’ and the ‘white-noise’ of pulsing nozzles ... There is nothing to see but our dependence on vision itself. [Blur] is an experiment in de-emphasis on an environmental scale.”<sup>2</sup>

- Research Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s past projects. Choose one and describe how the architects manage to engage (or disengage) the senses.

## ACTIVITY 4.4: THE SOUND OF SILENCE

In 1952, American Composer John Cage wrote *4’33*, the score of which instructs the musicians (a pianist or an entire orchestra, depending on the version) not to play their instrument/s for the entire duration of the piece, 4 minutes and 33 seconds. This period of time is then filled with the silence, coughs, rustles, and other ambient sounds in the concert hall, which in turn become the piece.

In what way are John Cage’s conception of music—he is recorded to have said that “everything is music”—and DS + R’s design for the Blur Building connected? What are crucial differences between the two works?

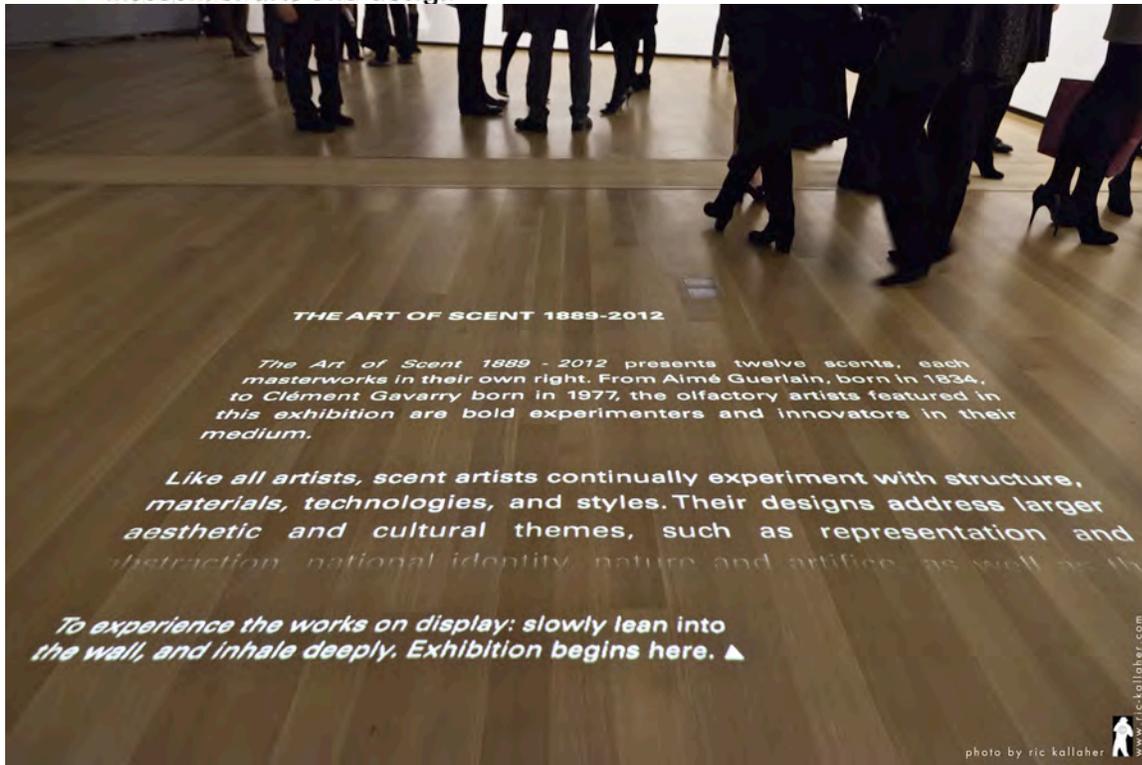
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<sup>1</sup> [www.dsny.com](http://www.dsny.com)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



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**THE ART OF SCENT 1889-2012**

*The Art of Scent 1889 - 2012 presents twelve scents, each masterworks in their own right. From Aimé Guerlain, born in 1834, to Clément Gavarry born in 1977, the olfactory artists featured in this exhibition are bold experimenters and innovators in their medium.*

*Like all artists, scent artists continually experiment with structure, materials, technologies, and styles. Their designs address larger aesthetic and cultural themes, such as representation and abstraction, national identity, nature and artifice, as well as the*

*To experience the works on display: slowly lean into the wall, and inhale deeply. Exhibition begins here. ▲*

photo by ric kallaher



www.ric-kallaher.com



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## ONLINE RESOURCES

### THE ART OF SCENT

<http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/author/chandler-burr/>

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/11/02/chandler-burr-at-the-museum-of-arts-and-design-is-the-daily-pic-by-blake-gopnik.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/16/arts/design/the-art-of-scent-at-the-museum-of-arts-and-design.html?pagewanted=all>

<http://madmuseum.org/media/video?t=The%20Art%20of%20Scent>

### THE WORLD OF SCENT:

<http://www.fragrance.org/>

<http://www.fragrantica.com>

<http://www.fragrancedirectory.info/>

<http://www.iff.com/fragrances.aspx>

<http://www.senseofsmell.org/>

### CONCRETE POETRY

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15402>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L\(a](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L(a)

<http://wordandimage.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2009/tangledalphabets/home.html>

### COCO CHANEL

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chnl/hd\\_chnl.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chnl/hd_chnl.htm)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chanel\\_No.\\_5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chanel_No._5)

### DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO

<http://www.dsry.com/>

<http://www.thehighline.org/>

<http://www.designboom.com/eng/club/dillerscofidio.html>

[http://www.arcspace.com/architects/DillerScofidio/blur\\_building/](http://www.arcspace.com/architects/DillerScofidio/blur_building/)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/23/arts/architects-building-castles-in-the-clouds.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

### JOHN CAGE

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUJagb7hL0E>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTEFKFiXSx4>

### MODERN ART RESOURCES:

<http://www.moma.org>

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah>

[http://www.theartstory.org/section\\_movements.htm](http://www.theartstory.org/section_movements.htm)



## GLOSSARY

### **ABSTRACT**

Visual language of form, color, and line that exists independently from visible reality.

### **ALDEHYDE**

Any of a class of highly reactive organic chemical compounds obtained by oxidation of primary alcohols. Often used in the manufacture of resins, dyes, and organic acids.

### **BOUQUET**

Flower arrangement. A composition of scents to form a complex fragrance.

### **BRANDING**

Process of developing a brand identity, including a distinctive name or packaging for a product or a manufacturer.

### **CIVET**

Ethiopian feline used as a resource for a substance used by perfumers.

### **CONCRETE POETRY**

Poetry in which the meaning or effect is conveyed partly or wholly by visual means, using patterns of words or letters and other typographical devices.

### **FRAGRANCE**

Pleasant smell, scent.

### **LIMBIC SYSTEM**

Part of the human brain involved in emotion, motivation, and emotional association with memory.

### **MODERNISM**

The deliberate departure from tradition and the use of innovative forms of expression that distinguish many styles in the arts of the 20th century.

### **MOLECULE**

A tiny particle, the simplest possible unit of a chemical compound, consisting of two or more atoms held together by chemical bonds.

### **OLFACTORY**

Concerning the sense of smell.

### **PHYSIOLOGICAL**

Part of the normal functioning of a living organism.

### **RECEPTORS**

A specialized cell or group of nerve endings that responds to sensory stimuli.

### **SENSORY**

Perceived with the senses.

### **SPATIAL**

Concerning space.

### **SYNESTHESIA**

A condition in which one type of stimulation evokes the sensation of another, as when hearing a sound produces the visualization of a color.

### **SYNTHETIC**

Manmade, not natural.

### **VANILLIN**

A synthetic scent molecule found in vanilla beans and certain balsams and resins and used in perfumes, flavorings, and pharmaceuticals.



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