

Christian Dieter Sauer

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT, EICHSTÄTT, GERMANY

sauer.christian@ieloud.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-1180-1279

Smell and Taste in Art: Suggestions towards a Systematic Approach

Abstract

The reflections outlined in this paper on smell and taste in modern and contemporary art are divided into three larger chapters: an introductory literature review is followed by a general discussion of sense perception in terms of philosophy, physiology, and intellectual history; and this forms the backdrop for the main body, in which eight different approaches to olfactory and gustatory art are proposed. These categories take different levels as their starting point: for instance, they illuminate the significance of smell and taste as materialities, they address aspects of the process of perception, they posit questions concerning the affect of smell and taste, they consider spatial and temporal aspects, and they discuss the relation between perception and knowledge. The main body of the paper is concerned with these categories and their respective theoretical background, also providing concrete examples of relevant works of art.

Keywords: senses, synesthetic, smell, taste, perception, perception spatial aspect, perception – bodily aspect, perception – temporal aspect, presence, senses, physiology of the senses

Introduction

Until recently, art based on the senses of smell or taste was an art-historical blind spot. In the wake of the discipline's intense engagement with seeing, and subsequently also tactile perception and hearing, however, the phenomena of smell and taste seem now to receive an equal surge of interest.

This contribution attempts, on the one hand, to draw together and abstract the insights found to this point, while on the other hand, it proposes a set of methodologies for investigating a disparate field of heterogeneous artworks and therefore hopes to serve as a base for further study and research. Eight largely interdisciplinary

nary approaches are presented, each concerning specific aspects of art-making and contemporary debates in research. These categories, combined with especially striking examples and short background explanations, structure the main body of this essay. Only those artworks are considered that explicitly and purposefully integrate smell and taste as components, that is, that ask the recipient to actually smell or taste something. Hence representatives of Eat Art are excluded, as they are mainly concerned with reflections on an expanded concept of art and the transience of the corresponding artworks.¹ Similarly, works such as Tiravanija's *Pad Thais*, in which the artist prepares and serves food to gallery visitors, follow Beuys' *Social Sculpture* without explicit political claims; as relational settings, they are more interested in interrogating the social structures of the gallery and museum sector than in the actual perception of taste.² Consciously excluded, too, have been the cinematic examples, even though overlapping concerns should certainly be acknowledged.³

State of research

An engagement with sense perception as such in art studies is still relatively recent. It begins in the early 1990s, initially focusing on vision.⁴ With the iconic turn and its interest in the image, seeing was renegotiated in all its facets: it came to be

- 1 On Eat Art and the use of food in art, see D. Kimmich, S. Schahadat eds., "Essen", *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*, 2012, 1; H. Holzhey, E. Evers eds., *Eating the Universe. Vom Essen in der Kunst*, Köln, 2009; H. Lemke, *Die Kunst des Essens: Eine Ästhetik des kulinarischen Geschmacks*, Bielefeld, 2007; D. Spoerri, *Eat Art. Daniel Spoerris Gastronomoptikum*, Hamburg, 2006; C. Korsmeyer ed., *The Taste Culture Reader. Experiencing Food and Drink*, Oxford, New York, 2005; G. Neumann, H. J. Teuteberg, A. Wierlacher eds., *Essen und kulturelle Identität. Europäische Perspektiven*, Berlin, 1997.
- 2 See J. Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst zur Einführung*, Hamburg, 2013, v.a. pp. 58–91; S. Feldhoff, *Partizipative Kunst. Genese, Typologie und Kritik einer Kunstform zwischen Spiel und Politik*, Bielefeld, 2013, pp. 136–139, as well as catalogue entries K101/K102.
- 3 The reception of scholarship from film studies is highly relevant due to the degree of theoretical overlap, in particular the study by V. Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts. Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Berkeley, 2004. On the question of sense perception in the cinema, see also S. Marschall, F. Liptay eds., *Mit allen Sinnen. Gefühl und Empfindung im Kino*, Marburg, 2006; A. Autelitano, V. Innocenti, V. Re eds., *I cinque sensi del cinema*, Udine, 2005.
- 4 There is, by now, a significant body of literature on vision in the field of art history. An overview may be found in S. Wenk, S. Schade eds., *Studien zur visuellen Kultur. Einführung in ein transdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld*, Berlin, 2011; R. Konersmann, C. Wilson, A. v. Lühe, "Sehen", in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 9, eds. J. Ritter, K. Gründer, Basel, 1995, column 121–161, is foundational. The following engage with select aspects of vision as a phenomenon of perception and with contexts from social history and the humanities: M. F. Zimmermann, "Seeing", in: *Vision in Motion. Streams of Sensation and Configurations of Time*, ed. M. F. Zimmermann, Berlin, 2016, pp. 69–108; S. Horstkotte, K. Leonhard eds., *Seeing Perception*, Cambridge, 2007; B. Stafford, *Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images*, Chicago, 2007; N. Bryson, *Das Sehen und die Malerei: die Logik des Blickes*, Munich, 2001; R. Konersmann ed., *Kritik des Sehens*, Leipzig, 1997; J. Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*, San Diego, 1996; M. Jay, *Downcast*

understood as a conscious activity influenced by upbringing and cultural practices, processes, and rules, by media and exhibitions, that is, as more than a passive process of data reception. As part of this wave, the phenomena of hearing and the tactile sense subsequently also came to be analyzed in their respective contexts and discourses.⁵

Finally, in the 2000s, research also turned to the previously neglected senses of smell and taste, at first by including them in the larger, interdisciplinary studies of the senses or in the framework of tightly demarcated considerations from the fields of cultural history, history or sociology.⁶ Over the past ten years, there has been a striking increase of research on the subject.⁷ While it would exceed the scope of this paper to engage in detail with every title in the field, some overarching observations may be made. The field of investigation has been widened, methodological approaches have become increasingly differentiated. We have seen the emergence and sharpening of particular questions and topics. There are broadly conceived studies that provide an overview of artworks working with smell and taste, situating them in an art-historical context. Often, they span both visual representations of smell and taste and the actual use of these stimuli. These studies stand juxtaposed to those interested in a particular historical period or a tightly framed subject matter, for example surrealist exhibition practices, the use of smell in performance work or

Eyes. The denigration of vision in twentieth-century French thought, Berkeley, 1994; J. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1992.

- 5 C. Cox, *Sonic Flux. Sound, art, and metaphysics*, Chicago, 2018; J. Gerlach, P. Weibl eds., *Sound Art. Klang als Medium der Kunst*, Karlsruhe, 2012; R. Cosima, M. Ammer eds., *See this Sound. Versprechungen von Bild und Ton*, Köln, 2010; J. Moshenska, *Feeling Pleasures. The Sense of touch in Renaissance England*, Oxford, 2014; M. Rath, J. Trempler, I. Wenderholm eds., *Das haptische Bild. Körperhafte Bilderfahrung in der Neuzeit*, Berlin, 2013; U. Zeuch, *Umkehr der Sinneshierarchie. Herder und die Aufwertung des Tastsinns seit der frühen Neuzeit*, Tübingen, 2000; U. Brandes ed., *Tasten*, Göttingen, 1996.
- 6 P. Di Bello, G. Koureas eds., *Art, history and the senses*, Burlington, 2010; J. Drobnick, *The Smell Culture Reader*, Oxford, 2006; N. Blancardi ed., *I cinque sensi. The five senses*, Florence, 2002; C. Classen, *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, gender and the aesthetic imagination*, London, 1998; C. Neumann ed., *Der Sinn der Sinne*, Göttingen, 1998; U. Brandes, C. Neumann eds., *Geschmackssache*, Göttingen, 1996; C. Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the senses in history and across cultures*, London, 1993; A. Corbin, *Pesthauch und Blütenduft. Eine Geschichte des Geruchs*, Frankfurt a. M., 1992; D. Ackermann, *Die schöne Macht der Sinne*, Munich, 1991.
- 7 V. Henshaw, K. McLean, D. Medway et al. eds., *Designing with Smell*, London, 2017; R. Fleck, *Von allen Sinnen. Wahrnehmung in der Kunst*, Vienna, 2016; D. King, *Kunst riechen. Duftproben zur Vermittlung olfaktorisch bildender Werke*, Oberhausen, 2016; C. Jaquet ed., *L'art olfactif contemporain*, Paris, 2015; L. Ahlers, F. Bacci, M. Diaconu eds., *Belle Haleine – Der Duft der Kunst*, Basel, 2015; C. Classen ed., *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Age of Empire*, London, 2014; V. Henshaw, *Urban Smellscapes: Understanding and Designing with Smell in the City*, London, 2014; S. Banes, A. Lepecki eds., *The Senses in Performance*, Hoboken, 2012; Ch. Burr ed., *The Art of Scent*, New York Museum of Arts and Design, New York, 2012; F. Bacci, D. Melcher eds., *Art and the Senses*, Oxford, 2011; R. Curtis, M. Glöde, G. Koch eds., *Synästhesie-Effekte*, Munich, 2010; A. Gotttdang, R. Wohlfahrt eds., *Mit allen Sinnen. Sehen, Hören, Schmecken, Riechen und Fühlen in der Kunst*, Leipzig, 2010; F. Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art*, London, 2010.

the aspect of synesthesia. Finally, there are texts from inside the art world: texts by curators on the practicalities of handling the ephemeral works, and texts by artists on their pieces, the theoretical background, and the practical difficulties involved.

In terms of methodology, the studies established thus far differ greatly, ranging from image analyses to reception theories, to practical instructions for dealing with ephemeral media. Nevertheless, some narratives have emerged as central (e.g. smell and memory), and certain terminologies have been established (e.g. *smellscapes*⁸).

Furthermore, there are studies from other disciplines that provide valuable resources. In 2006, Diaconu dedicated to the secondary senses of smelling, touching, and tasting a foundational study conducted from a phenomenological perspective.⁹ McHugh's cultural-historical study *Sandalwood and Carrion* deals with the role of smell in India, opening view to some differences and peculiarities, and Reinarz' *Past Scents* presents multi-layered historical and sociological perspectives on the use and codification of smells.¹⁰ Kügler's handbook *Die Macht der Nase* (The Power of the Nose) takes a similar direction, but is grounded in the aesthetics of religion.¹¹

To be able to comprehend this ephemeral and subjective form of art in all its breadth and depth, it seems necessary at this point to consolidate the following approaches:

- increased reflection on gustatory and olfactory perception in art and their aesthetic significance, not least in relation to the other senses,
- further differentiation of the content and the development of overarching research questions,
- systematization of methodologies that would make it possible to assess all artworks working with smell or taste according to an established scheme,
- standardization and stronger contextualization of various approaches with view to making visible art-immanent discourses include the whole contemporary art and the history of art.

8 This is a neologism linking together "smell" and "landscape" to suggest that we move in environments co-determined by smells. First established in C. Classen, D. Howes, A. Synnott eds., *Aroma. The cultural history of smell*, London, 1994, p. 97.

9 M. Diaconu, *Tasten-Riechen-Schmecken. Eine Ästhetik der anästhesierten Sinne*, Würzburg, 2005; She continued to contribute to discussions, most recently with a large-scale study on sensory landscapes in public urban space using the example of Vienna: M. Diaconu, G. Buchbauer, J. Skone, K.-G. Bernhardt, E. Menasse-Wiesbauer eds., *Sensorisches Labor Wien. Urbane Haptik- und Geruchsforschung*, Vienna, 2011.

10 J. McHugh, *Sandalwood and Carrion. Smell in Indian religion and culture*, Oxford, 2012; J. Reinarz, *Past Scents. Historical perspectives on smell*, Urbana/Illinois, 2014.

11 J. Kügler ed., *Die Macht der Nase. Zur religiösen Bedeutung des Duftes. Religionsgeschichte – Bibel – Liturgie*, Stuttgart, 2000.

Smell and taste – foundational reflections

Smelling and Tasting in the Hierarchies of the Senses – Philosophical Approaches

The problems of integrating impressions of the secondary senses – whether tactile or, as in our case, olfactory or gustatory – into a coherent system are only addressed by a look into the history of philosophy. Indeed, the given epistemological hierarchy of the senses that posits seeing, followed by hearing, at the top, stems from antiquity. The senses were always considered in relation to knowledge, and studied accordingly.

In terms of this hierarchy of the senses, the advent of aesthetics in the 18th century brought little change. As a philosophical discipline, aesthetics is concerned with the meaning of sense perception and the knowledge gained from it. Baumgarten (1714–1762) defined it as a science based on the senses.¹² He perceived aesthetics – its knowledge acquired through the senses – as an extension of the philosophical system in which logic and purely rational knowledge were ranked as primary. Baumgarten's conception, however, was too comprehensive and broad to be transformed into a coherent system. While he understood aesthetic taste comprehensively as the “judgment of the senses”, Kant (1724–1804) defined it more narrowly, emphasizing the “ability to judge the beautiful”.¹³ With Hegel (1770–1831), focus shifted to a scrutiny of art theory and the beauty of art in its various aspects. Aesthetics, then, through a conceptual shortening, understood itself as the philosophy of art and as the theory of the beautiful. The senses as physical transmitters of impressions and reliable, attendant companions of knowledge were reduced to seeing and hearing. Attentiveness to active perception and actual tasting, prevalent in Baumgarten's writings, was lost. According to Hegel, taste (as one of the senses) is only concerned “with the material as such and the immediate sensuous qualities thereof”.¹⁴ The intellectual features of an artwork remain inaccessible to it.¹⁵ Therefore, taste is less suited to pass aesthetic judgments. This devaluation within the hierarchy of the senses has a long philosophical tradition.

Can taste contribute to knowledge?

Reflecting on perception and knowledge (and setting the course for later discussions), Plato and Aristotle had already contributed to a devaluation of the gustatory sense.¹⁶

12 A. Baumgarten, *Texte zur Grundlegung der Ästhetik*, Hamburg, 1983, p. 79.

13 I. Kant, *Critique of pure reason*, New York, 1965, §1.

14 G. W. Hegel, *Aesthetics. Lectures on fine art*, Oxford, 1988, vol. 1, p. 36.

15 Ibid., p. 38–39: “Consequently the sensuous aspect of art is related only to the two theoretical senses of sight and hearing, while smell, taste and touch have to do with matter as such and its immediately sensible qualities – smell with material volatility in air, taste with material liquidification of objects, touch with warmth, cold, smoothness, etc. For this reason, art cannot have to do with artistic objects, which are meant to maintain themselves in their real independence and allow of no purely sensuous relationship”.

16 Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, Oxford, 1968, vol. II *Republic*, p. 75. See also *ibid.*, vol. III *Timaios*, p. 648.

Kant, too, considers the sense of sight as the most elevated one. It is the one which remains furthest removed from physical proximity to the object and which directly contributes to knowledge, morals, and art.¹⁷ Taste, by contrast, is dismissed as follows: “To what organic sense do we owe the least and which seems to be the most dispensable? The sense of smell”, writes Kant. “It does not pay us to cultivate it or to refine it in order to gain enjoyment; this sense can pick up more objects of aversion than of pleasure (especially in crowded places) and, besides, the pleasure coming from the sense of smell cannot be other than fleeting and transitory”.¹⁸ Hegel, in his aesthetics, follows Kant in this respect and puts emphasis on the senses of sight and hearing due to their being able to deliver undistorted sense data through a “purely theoretical process”.¹⁹

Through the bodily senses the subject experiences the object in immediate proximity. This lack of physical distance is interpreted as a deficiency, since it needs the necessary reflexive distance. They are too closely associated with life-sustaining functions like eating or smelling, pleasure or pain, to be considered as channels of aesthetic experience.²⁰ Kant accordingly states that the sense of taste is basic and subjective, its experience serves “more for pleasure, than for the knowledge of the outer object”.²¹ With only few exceptions, this devaluation of smell and taste continued far into the 20th century. In *Visual Thinking* Arnheim writes: “One can indulge in smells and tastes, but one can hardly think in them”.²²

The problem of the ephemeral and synesthesia

What complicates matters is the peculiar nature of scents and flavours in and as objects: the stimuli offered are of an ephemeral kind, they cannot really be recorded and they are received impurely, synesthetically. No favourable premise can be found for the western value system, which prefers that which can be recorded, which is constant. Art is defined as something that stands above the flux of the ephemeral and that, as a result of its permanent nature, lays claim to objectivity and its portion of being.²³ Only in the course of the 20th century, stimulated by Baudelaire’s connection of the fleeting with the idea of *modernité*, did this attitude toward the ephemeral – and with it the system of aesthetic value – undergo fundamental changes. Incessantly, the artists of the 20th century pushed back the boundaries of art and widened the understanding of art with novel means of expression. Limitations in form and content came to be questioned, as were traditional genres, perceived now as too narrow. The human body, everyday objects, rubbish, light, sound, and movement: all of these became materials for artistic contemplation. This development

17 I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Carbondale, IL, 1978, §17 and § 18.

18 Ibid., p. 46.

19 G. W. Hegel, op. cit., p.36

20 Cf. Plato, op. cit., vol. III *Timaios*, 70, p. 657.

21 Kant, op. cit., § 14.

22 R. Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, Berkeley, 1969, p. 19.

23 Cf. Th. W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, Frankfurt a. M., 1970, p. 48–49.

also involved art practices shifting toward a focus on the sense perception and the human sense apparatus.

The physiology of the senses

Taste

Smell and taste are complex physiological phenomena: stimuli trigger chemical processes to send information to the brain. More than 400 taste papillae on the tongue provide the brain with information on what is being eaten, with the range of taste perceptions including salty, bitter, sweet, sour, and umami, the Japanese description for a savoury taste mainly evoked by amino acids found in meat. This range is further complemented by qualities such as piercing, spicy, tart, zesty, hot, and cold. When we chew food, fragrances reach the olfactory epithelium, which is significantly involved in receiving the sense impression and thus in forming our judgment of the a . Via afferent cranial nerves, the taste buds are connected to the medulla oblongata and the hypothalamus. This connection to the hypothalamus shared by taste and smell plays a fundamental role in the emotional impact of gustatory and olfactory sense impressions.²⁴

Smell

The perceptual process of smelling is structured similarly. Olfactory cells are found in the so-called cilia in the nasal mucosa. Via the fila olfactoria, information on smell first reaches the bulbus olfactorius, then the diencephalon, and the cerebral cortex. This is the location of the so-called limbic system, which is extremely interesting in this context as it is one of the early parts of the brain to have evolved and is closely tied to memory, emotions, and affect.²⁵ Smell-related information directly reaches this area, triggering reactions such as disgust, excitement or memories in an immediate way not rationally filtered.²⁶ Recent studies have found that the human nose may be able to recognize up to one trillion smells – which would mean that smell is the most receptive of all the senses.²⁷

Yet precisely this sense is met with a lack of sensitivity for breadth as well as with a striking conceptual poverty when it comes to verbalizing the transient sense impressions provided. What is lacking is a terminology for expressing the phenom-

24 H. Hatt, „Geschmack und Geruch“, in: *Physiologie des Menschen*, eds. R. Schmidt, F. Lang, G. Thews, Berlin, 2017, p. 318.

25 Ibid., p. 318.

26 S. Chu, J. J. Downes, “Odour-evoked autobiographical memories: Psychological investigations of Proustian phenomena”, *Chemical Senses*, 2000, 25, no. 1, pp. 111–116; D. Press, S. C. Mintz, “The Smell of Nature: Olfaction, knowledge and the environment”, *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 2000, 3, no. 3, pp. 173–186.

27 C. Bushdid, M. O. Magnasco, L. B. Vosshall, A. Keller, “Humans can Discriminate more than 1 Trillion Olfactory Stimuli”, *Science*, 2014, 343, no. 6177, pp. 1370–72.

ena of smell and taste as adequately as those of seeing or hearing, a language that would be able to record nuances, to describe these phenomena in a differentiated way, and thus, finally, to make judgments. This linguistic lacuna ultimately has effects regarding possible aesthetic theorizations: where there are no words, it is difficult to formulate a theory.

Preliminary conclusions

Several of the points made so far can form a base for the reflections to follow. Firstly, as a philosophical discipline, traditional aesthetics is primarily concerned with the theory of art and the beautiful in art. The classical hierarchy of the senses has never been questioned. Only the “theoretical senses” of seeing and hearing have been considered as imbued with aesthetic potential, and have consequently been ascribed their own artistic genres (visual arts and music). Secondly, the secondary senses have been neglected for a variety of reasons: they are thought of as unreliable, bound to the body’s vital functions, their stimuli are transient, synesthetic, and they work through affect.

Smell and taste in art

In art, we can distinguish between two foundational forms of engagement with smell and taste as phenomena: mediated representation and immediate presentation.

Smell and taste in a mediated representation

Iconographic Patterns

In the course of the centuries, certain iconographic citations and patterns have emerged for the visual representation of smell and taste (and reactions to smell and taste). In the depiction of the raising of Lazarus, for instance, the witnesses of the miraculous awakening put their hands to their nose as the deceased already “stinketh”,²⁸ as Martha says to Jesus. This is a universal gesture found in works ranging from early frescoes to Giotto, to Marcantonio Raimondi, and even to Gros’ *Bonaparte visits the Plague Stricken in Jaffa* (1804).

Allegories and personifications

Allegories, personifications, and representations of the five senses in the form of genre scenes were also highly popular.²⁹ In Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* (1482), rose petals

²⁸ John 11:39 (KJV).

²⁹ B. Welzel has engaged with the *Five Senses* by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens in numerous publications treating aspects such as iconographic traditions, the rivalry between

surround the approaching Zephyr, filling the air with pleasant smells, while Titian's *Venus of Urbino* (1538) is resting on a mattress embroidered with roses, her right hand sensually playing with a bouquet of roses.³⁰ Louis Finson's *The Five Senses* (1600) assembles the allegories of the five senses in the form of a joyous table company. The painting certainly implies moralizing qualities, as sensual pleasure and moral decline are seen as going hand in hand. Again, we encounter philosophy's low appreciation of the more immediate senses. In these genre depictions, smell and taste appear in the form of everyday objects or attributes, and point to an allegorical reading.

Still lifes

Other image themes such as still lifes refrain from these references and enrich the representation, as it were, by means of metonymic evocations and associations. Examples of the Dutch paintings from the celebrated, unprecedented realist period impressively prompt the observer to imagine smell and taste, indeed render this process part of the image concept. Thus Cardinal Borromeo (1564–1631) praised a flower still life by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625) saying that in their splendor and richness, the painted flowers stood in competition with nature, halting the seasons. In his autobiographical notes, the patron emphasizes how much the bouquet's opulence and its colours mean to him especially in winter: "Then when winter encumbers and restricts everything with ice, I have enjoyed from sight – and even imagined odour, if not real – fake flowers [...] expressed in painting [...] and in these flowers I have wanted to see the variety of colors, not fleeting, as some of the flowers that are found (in nature), but stable and very enduring".³¹ The simulation trumps the original; in this case, the painting wins the paragone between art and nature. Significantly, Borromeo as part of his topical praise emphasizes the painter's achievement by giving the visual impression an olfactory double: the flowers are represented so convincingly that it is possible to smell them. The imagined smell of the flowers co-constitutes the quality of the still life, reinforcing the illusion. In this sense, still lifes are, not least, painted "apparatuses of knowledge"³² prompting us to reflect on sense perception and the interrelation between the senses.

art and nature, the knowledge of the senses, perception across the media, and the question of body memory. One of her final essays on the subject is, significantly, called "Sehen mit allen Sinnen" (Seeing with All Senses); summarizing many of the aspects mentioned, it also provides extensive bibliographical references: B. Welzel, "Sehen mit allen Sinnen. Die Fünf Sinne am erzherzoglichen Hof von Isabella und Albrecht in Brüssel am Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts", in: eds. A. Gott dang, R. Wohlfahrt, op. cit., pp. 11–30.

30 F. Quiviger, op. cit., pp. 125–136.

31 This is the English translation of the unpublished Italian original from P. M. Jones, "Federico Borromeo as a Patron of Landscapes and Still Lifes: Christian Optimism in Italy ca. 1600", *The Art Bulletin*, 1988, no. 70, pp. 261–272, here 269; B. Brenninkmeijer-de Rooij, *Roots of seventeenth-century flower painting. Miniatures, plant books, paintings*, Leiden, 1996, pp. 47–71 treats Brueghel's painting, its art-historical context, and its reception extensively.

32 B. Gockel ed., *Vom Objekt zum Bild*, Berlin, 2012, p. 13.

Digression: Image perception as synesthetic experience

Painting and sculpture primarily address the eye – yet, taste and smell are often implicitly included. This ambition was boosted by the discovery of the central perspective in the Renaissance. While furthering a certain rationalization and calculability, and hence the primacy of the eye, the discovery led to a shift in the status of the image as medium on the other. The illusionary space evoked now accorded with the observer's psycho-physical space. An implied claim of authenticity was extended to all aspects of what was represented, paintings being experienced synesthetically. That is to say, via the optical approach all other senses were addressed, too, just as seeing takes place in a synesthetic context in our everyday lives. Seeing stimulates the imagination in its passive (receiving an impression) and active dimension (producing images).³³ Correspondingly, the art historian Hans Belting responds to the question of whether image perception is always a synesthetic experience with a clear and unambiguous "yes".³⁴ Mieke Bal, too, emphasizes the concurrence of visual and other sense perceptions when stating that "vision is itself inherently synaesthetic"³⁵.

Smell and taste as immediate aesthetic experience

The examples given so far have presented smell and taste as mediated phenomena in the form of sense-activation or body memory. The actual use of fragrance and flavour in artistic practice, however, could only occur once certain preconditions were fulfilled.

Les Nabis and the idea of the synthesis of the arts

The first time viewers were actually provided with smells in an art context was during the theater performances of the symbolists and Les Nabis, who specifically used smells to accompany actions or images.³⁶ In this respect, symbolist theater mirrors a more fundamental paradigm shift in late-nineteenth-century literature and art.³⁷

33 This thought is borrowed from H. Wenzel's remarks on reading (in the medieval context): H. Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen. Schrift und Bild. Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter*, Munich, 1995, p. 329.

34 K. Sachs-Hombach, *Wege zur Bildwissenschaft*, Köln, 2004, p. 146.

35 M. Bal, "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture", *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2003, 2, no. 1, pp. 5–32, here 9.

36 M. Fleischer, "Incense & Decadents. Symbolist theatre's use of scent", in: S. Banes, A. Lepecki eds., op. cit., pp. 105–114; G. Aitken, "Die Nabis im Bannkreis des Theaters", in: *Die Nabis. Propheten der Moderne*, eds. C. Frèches-Thory, U. Perucchi-Petri, Munich, 1998, pp. 399–406.

37 "[I]n the time from about 1880 to 1910, significant shifts take place in olfactory perception. [...] [Smells] are no longer mere object smell, but they enter into an interactive perceptual relation with that vibratory organism the modern human has become, breaking down borders of subject and object, transgressing present and past, linking immediacy and memory".

In the stage directions for Wagner's operas, we can recognize one of the roots of the fin-de-siècle's predilection for synesthesia and the interweaving of the arts.³⁸ The idea of the synthesis of the arts, of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, finds its perhaps clearest crystallization in the Wagnerian *Klangbild* (sound-image), an amalgamate of music and visual art formed in the space and time of a performance. The individual arts are coupled to one another, sense impressions multiplied, organs expanded. Influenced by Wagner, Baudelaire only little later formulates his synesthetic concept of "correspondences": "Like prolonged echoes mingling far away, in a unity tenebrous and profound, vast as the night and as the limpid day, perfumes, sounds, and colors respond".³⁹

The expanded concept of art in the 20th century

In the course of the 20th century, the boundary lines were further shifted. The concept of art expands, genre divisions dissolve – processes which lead to an entanglement of media that Adorno described, with negative connotations, as a "fraying".⁴⁰ In further developments, we see the use of new materials, the interpenetration of art and non-art, and a shift from "image space" to "experiential space" in terms of an aesthetics of reception. The "work" and the terminologies tied to it (form, originality, autonomy, aura, duration, self-sufficiency) become obsolete. Instead, art begins to propagate the event, aspects of the performative. It seeks to trigger thought processes, to emerge in performance, to work on a sensory level, to actively include the observer, and ultimately to replace the traditional notion of a closed work by the dialogic "art experience". As P. Weibel puts it, "the object was replaced by open events, actions, processes, games, instructions, concepts. The passive observer became a co-creator, a player involved, a participant. The boundary lines between the various social actors on the field of art and between aesthetic and non-aesthetic objects and events became partly permeable and invisible".⁴¹ In line with Reben-tisch, one might add that such an aesthetic experience does not negate the object, rather, the experience only solidifies in the process between subject and object, both undergoing a process of transformation.⁴²

H. Rindisbacher, *The Smell of Books. A Cultural Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature*, Ann Arbor, 1992, p. 147.

38 See, for instance, the directions for Tannhäuser or the later treatise *Religion und Kunst* (1880). On the definition of the term "Gesamtkunstwerk" and Wagner's own use of the term, see D. Borchmeyer, *Das Theater Richard Wagners. Idee – Dichtung – Wirkung*, Stuttgart, 2013.

39 C. Baudelaire, *Selected poems*, Harmondsworth, 1975, p.43.

40 Th. W. Adorno, „Die Kunst und die Künste“, in: idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 10, 1: *Prismen: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt a. M., 1977, pp. 432–453, here, concerning the term of "Verfransung", p. 433.

41 P. Weibel: „Kunst als offenes Handlungsfeld“, in: ed. P. Weibel, *Offene Handlungsfelder*, Köln, 1999, pp. 9–21, here p. 12.

42 J. Reben-tisch, „Die anti-objektivistische Wende – Kunst nach 1960“, in: *Werke im Wandel: Zeit-genössische Kunst zwischen Werk und Wirkung*, ed. L. Blunck, Munich, 2005, pp. 23–38.

After the symbolist beginnings, smell and taste appeared more and more frequently in art, but still remained rare phenomena far into the 20th century. The futurists hosted unusual dinners, Duchamp developed a perfume, the surrealists enhanced their exhibitions through smells. Only in the 1960s, smell is increasingly used as an artistic medium, showing its olfactory presence in ephemeral objects and performance art.

Preliminary conclusions

Several relevant aspects the scholarship of smell and taste needs to take into account ensue from the developments and artworks highlighted up to this point.

Materials

On the level of materiality, these include the physical characteristics of scent and flavour: to a large extent, they are bound to a carrier; they appear impurely, that is, often in nuanced combination with further scents and flavours; and they are fleeting and ephemeral. Their reception takes place via direct physical contact: it is necessary to either incorporate them (taste) or to be relatively close to the source (smell). Taste refers to a particular object. Scent, disembodied, has spatial qualities, as it expands.

Smell and taste impressions are strongly subject-dependent: it is difficult, this at least the prejudice, to objectify them. What is more, it is difficult to create artificially the non-discursive entities of taste and smell. It is hard to reproduce them identically and to limit them spatially, and they are bound to materialities.⁴³

The Recipient

Smell and taste belong to the so-called secondary senses. For them, unlike with seeing and hearing, neither is our sensory apparatus trained to perceive nuances, nor do we have a mature conceptual apparatus. The process of perception always takes place in direct contact with the object, bound to space and time. Perceptions of taste and smell are directly forwarded into the limbic system via the nerve tracts, where they can trigger physical reactions, affects, and unfiltered memories.

Aesthetic Experience

By implication, the process of reception takes place bound to space and time, the sense perception appearing not in isolation, but coupled to others. Frequently, visual, acoustic or tactile impressions accompany the process of smelling or tasting and form a network of association. The aesthetic experience unfolds in the form of

⁴³ See also Mersch on perception and technology: D. Mersch, *Ereignis und Aura*, Frankfurt a. M., 2002, pp. 90–97.

directly perceived sense experience. It can be reflected on and evaluated only after its occurrence. Artists purposefully work with scents and flavours that trigger certain affects, that are coded (religiously, socio-culturally) or that trigger certain behavioral patterns.

On the mental level, fragrances and flavours can invoke memories, inner images, and associations. On the physical level, there is a triggering of affect and physical reactions.

Scents and flavours can generate moods and atmospheres. They can open (olfactory) spaces. They can illustrate words, characters, places, and actions. They work to complement or provide a contrast to visual, acoustic or tactile information, and endow an artwork with presence. They are coded multiply, inviting semantic readings.

Eight approaches to smell- and taste-based art: A toolbox

For my engagement with scent and flavour, smelling and tasting in art, I have formulated eight different methodological approaches that will be further elucidated in the remainder of this essay:

- 1) Material and presence: scent and flavour as sensory qualities on a material level,
- 2) Illustration and representation,
- 3) Memories, inner images, association, the past present (temporal aspect),
- 4) Spaces and atmospheres (spatial aspect),
- 5) Affect and physical reactions (bodily aspect),
- 6) Synesthesias and the senses as network,
- 7) Metaphor, code, and semantics: perceiving and knowing,
- 8) Cooking and art.

These categories correspond to certain characteristics on the level of the material, the recipient or the aesthetic experience, and open a comprehensive approach to olfactory and gustatory art by covering a range of aspects. At the same time, they are not rigid but fluid categories – just like the individual works, installations, and performances cannot be assigned to precisely one category, but rather seen as setting different points of emphasis. Consequently the categories are not there to impose limitations, but, on the contrary, to open view on the wealth of aesthetic experiences in the field. They offer an apparatus for representing such experiences and opening it to scholarly investigation.

Ad 1) Material and presence: Scent and flavour as sensory qualities on a material level

This first category takes the materiality of the artwork as its starting point, examining how scent and flavour become apparent as qualities and are bound to

objects.⁴⁴ The presence of the artwork in space and the appearance of its aesthetic form is especially significant in this respect. According to Mersch, art expresses its symbolics only through sensory embodiment.⁴⁵ The material aspect that makes significance possible cannot be subtracted from the work. This is also the case for pieces working with smell and taste. What is centrally at issue in this respect is the question concerning the material form of the apparently immaterial or *invisible* phenomenon of scent (and often flavour, too) – or, to put it differently, the question of how certain things give off smell or taste. More often than not, corresponding artworks, marked by a certain literalness, are solely concentrated on the sensory aspect, staging the act of perception as a non-semantic, non-hermeneutic event.⁴⁶ In the corporeo-physical encounter with the material, the sense perception as such is emphasized; bound to material, scent and flavour are treated as sensory qualities.⁴⁷ The materials used are often everyday objects aesthetically refunctionalized.

This is especially true of the non-representational works by Dieter Roth, Wolfgang Laib, and Ernesto Neto, artists exhibiting everyday materials emitting intense smells. In 1970, Roth filled the rooms of the Butler Gallery in Los Angeles with different varieties of German cheese, which quickly began to smell bad in the California heat.⁴⁸ Around the same time, Laib began with the production of his *Milestones*, pouring fresh milk onto prepared stones and rubbing it across until a scented layer would cover the stone. The initially fresh, sweet smell of milk would gradually turn into a sour, pungent odour.⁴⁹ Neto, thirdly, creates gigantic installations whereby strong nylon tubes and sacks filled with strongly fragrant herbs, such as cloves or

44 H. Henning, *Der Geruch*, Leipzig, 1916, pp. 29–34, distinguishes between “object smell” and “situational smell” to suggest that smells are often first perceived in a general way (situational smell) and are only subsequently identified as belonging to particular objects with the aid of other senses. For a critical response, see M. Hauskeller, *Atmosphären erleben. Philosophische Untersuchungen zur Sinneswahrnehmung*, Berlin, 1995, p. 91; W. Welsch, *Aisthesis. Grundzüge und Perspektiven der Aristotelischen Sinneslehre*, Stuttgart, 1987, p. 404.

45 D. Mersch, *Was sich zeigt. Materialität, Präsenz, Ereignis*, Munich, 2002, p. 83.

46 Cf. H. U. Gumbrecht, *Diesseits der Hermeneutik. Die Produktion von Präsenz*, Frankfurt a. M., 2010, pp. 44–46.

47 A special type of this category is constituted by those works that approach it, as it were, along the *via negativa* by presenting materials that, against expectations, do *not* smell or smell *differently* than expected. One might think of Marc Quinn’s odorless flower installations presented in liquid gas tanks or of futurist artist Fedele Azari’s idea of spraying fragrances on artificial flowers. Cf. C. Verbeek, “Inhaling Futurism. On the Use of Olfaction in Futurism and Olfactory (Re)constructions”, in: eds. V. Henshaw, K. McLean, D. Medway et. al., op. cit., pp. 201–210.

48 D. Dobke, D. Roth, T. Vischer, B. Walter, G. Garrels eds., *Roth time: A Dieter Roth retrospective*, New York, 2003, p. 130; B. Söntgen: “Der Rhein, die Schokolade, das Exkrement. Dieter Roths Figuren des Ich”, in: *Ähnlichkeit und Entstellung*, eds. W. Busch, O. Jehle, B. Maaz, S. Slanina, Berlin, 2010, pp. 195–209; D. Dobke, “Von der Schönheit des Zerfalls. Dieter Roths Schimmel-museum in Hamburg”, *Kunst + Architektur in der Schweiz*, 2001, no. 52, pp. 54–57.

49 For an extensive engagement, see N. Sönmez, *Milch, Blütenstaub, Reis und Wachs. Das Werk von Wolfgang Laib*, Frankfurt a. M., 2003.

curcuma, are hung from the ceiling.⁵⁰ The three approaches showcased are markedly different: if they share the olfactory confrontation with materials in order to dissolve the border between art and reality, their work ranges from contemplative reception to immersion. Finally, the spatialization of smell as well as the bodily reaction to smell already point to two categories to be illuminated further.

Ad 2) Illustration and representation

This category engages with the special function of smells and taste as being able to illustrate and re-present words, characters, places, and actions. One example might be the use of scent in the theater of the symbolists and Les Nabis. In the staging of Ronaïrd's *Song of Songs* (1891), for instance, no less than nine different scents were released into the audience to accompany the story.⁵¹ Later, so-called perfume concerts offered interested viewers theatrical journeys: the places visited were illustrated through their characteristic fragrances.⁵²

Such an illustration-based employment of perfumes (and, less strongly so, flavours) is text-bound. It is found primarily in the theater and in contemporary cinema, where scents accompany and intensify action. What can be observed in this respect is the close – and ideally synchronous – coupling of action and smell.⁵³ Finally, the earlier concept of perfume concerts has evolved into the practice of “smell mapping”, conducted by Kate McLean, among others. This means that olfactory representations of a city, an area in a city or a particular trajectory are represented in an exhibition room via fragrances.

Ad 3 – 6) Aisthesis and the modalities of smell and taste

Categories three to six represent different aspects of a mostly phenomenological approach to smelling and tasting in art. Those modalities of scents and flavours are central as they can be apprehended via the senses. The *neue Ästhetik* – or aisthesis – may serve as a methodological reference and starting point, as it concerns theorizations negotiating issues such as sensuality, perception as bound to the body, and nature. Welsch defines the aesthetic as concerned with “perceptions of

50 On Neto and the aspect of smell, see recently R. Diez, „Forme morbide da esplorare con tutti i sensi“, *Arte*, 2014, no. 488, pp. 78–83.

51 M. Fleischer, “Incense & Decadents. Symbolist theatre's use of scent”, in: S. Banes, A. Lepecki eds., op. cit., pp. 105–114; K. Kuenzli, “Intimate Modernism: The Nabis, Symbolist Theatre and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*”, in: *Art, History and the Senses. 1830 to the Present*, eds. P. Di Bello, G. Koureas, Farnham, 2010, pp. 67–82; K. Shephard-Barr, “‘Mise en Scent’: the Théâtre d'Arts *Cantique des cantiques* and the use of smell as a theatrical device”, *Theatre Research International*, 1999, 24, no. 2, pp. 152–159.

52 C. Bradstreet, “A trip to Japan in sixteen minutes: Sadakichi Hartmann's Perfume Concerts and the Aesthetics of Scent”, in: P. Di Bello, G. Koureas eds., op. cit., pp. 51–65.

53 Due to the low availability of sources, the question of the use of incense or the scent of roses in front of respective illustrations in the religious context remains unanswered. What is the relation between the olfactory image space, and real space? Were these seen as connected or is the fragrance used less for purposes of illustration than for showing reverence?

all kinds, sensory and cognitive, quotidian and sublime, in the midst of our lives and artistic⁵⁴. The subjective level that traditional aesthetics had criticized as hard to theorize is now taken into account as an important component of perception. In place of the previous concentration on the aesthetic object, aesthetics posits an interest in the perceiving subject in its corporeal presence and affective involvement. Such a methodological approach is rooted in Husserl's phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty's body theory, according to which corporeality and world condition one another. Thus human existence finds its expression in the body – the body's situated spatiality, its movements, and perceptions. In an aisthetical approach, this does not involve only one's perception of self and the other (subjects and objects) but also the imagination and atmospheres.

All perception refers to an object in space and constitutes a process of a particular duration. Artworks can touch on aisthetic questions in a variety of ways. The categories that follow refer in each case to one selected aspect. There is the temporal and the spatial layer, respectively, that referring to the body, and a synesthetic layer analyzing the relation between the sense impressions.

Ad 3) Memories, inner images, association, the past present (temporal aspect)

There are two different forms of time that can be experienced via olfactory and gustatory works of art.

On the one hand, this is the experience of objectively measured time that may, for instance, find a mirror in incense used in a performance or in the transformation of smells (for instance, if an initially pleasant smell turns disagreeable). In these cases, time is experienced as a period, an interval in which the perception (impression) continually oscillates between primary memory (retention) and expectation (protention).⁵⁵

On the other hand, fragrances and flavours are capable of suddenly evoking memories or associations, of rendering present the past. In literature, this is also called the "Proustian phenomenon" in reference to the author of *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*.⁵⁶ Specifically, it refers to the passage in which the author describes how the taste of a *madeleine* instantaneously triggers vivid childhood memories.⁵⁷ This is a further aspect of temporality linked to smell and taste. While memories and associations are deeply subjective and differ from recipient to recipient, artists such as Victoria Jones or Gwenn-Ael Lynn make use for their installations of biographically

54 W. Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken*, Stuttgart 1995, p. 9.

55 Cf. E. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zweitebewusstseins (1893–1917)*, Den Haag, 1966, p. 38.

56 F. Schab, R. Crowder, *Memory for Odors*, Hoboken, 2014; W. Brewer, D. Castle, C. Pantelis, *Olfaction and the Brain*, Cambridge, 2006; S. Chu, J. J. Downes, „Odour-evoked autobiographical memories. Psychological investigations of Proustian phenomena“, *Chemical Senses*, 2000/1, no. 25, pp. 111–116; S. Chu, „Proust Reinterpreted. Can Proust's Account of Odour-cued Autobiographical Memory Recall Really be Investigated? A Reply to Jellinek“, *Chemical Senses*, 2004/5, no. 29, pp. 459–461.

57 M. Proust, *Swann's Way*, London, 2002, pp. 47–50.

“contaminated” scents, such as the smell of fresh bread, mown grass, laundry, curry spices, etc. These are, as it were, the lowest common denominators that may trigger specific memories in the recipient.

Ad 4) Spaces and atmospheres (spatial aspect)

In addition to the temporal dimension, there is also a spatial dimension to perfumes. They diffuse, occupy a room, define it in an olfactory manner. The olfactory space simultaneously forms part of a site that is seen and markedly differs from the objective, abstract-geometrical space of physics in its dynamism and affective impact. With only few exceptions, phenomenological analyses of space have thus far neglected the olfactory element. Most authors occupy themselves with space experienced visually, in a tactile manner or kinesthetically, with fresh impetus introduced recently through increased engagement with acoustic space.

A space can be experienced as deep not only in a visual, but also in an olfactory or an acoustic sense. Schmitz assigns a non-visual “voluminosity” to the olfactory space.⁵⁸ Olfactory space is anchored in local reality, yet more than visual space it is experienced subjectively and as influencing the emotions. While visual depth goes hand-in-hand with a rational measuring of space, smell in its “unstructured breadth”⁵⁹ directly appeals to the emotions. The intensity of the impression influences the quality of feeling and exerts direct influence on the palpable quality of a space. This corresponds to Böhme’s concept of the emotional atmosphere of spaces, a phenomenon felt corporeally in the encounter between a subject receptive to a particular environment and an object.⁶⁰ What is relevant in our context is that a spatial atmosphere can be affected significantly by scent, so that the emotional aspect is, to an extent, externalized.

Installations working with smell necessarily create olfactory spaces and atmospheres. While in these cases the olfactory space and action space tend to coalesce, there are also aesthetic experiences in which the olfactory space becomes apparent first. Michael Sailstorfer’s works are a good example: long before one can see them, in pieces such as “1:43 – 47” from 2008 one can smell the sweetly smell of fresh popcorn wafting through a gallery space, in “Zeit is keine Autobahn” (Time is Not a Motorway) from 2008 one is repelled by the stink of burnt rubber coming from a spinning, rubbing car tire. Depending on the material used, Sailstorfer’s pieces create a variety of olfactory spaces of different densities and intensities.

Ad 5) Affect and physical reactions (bodily aspect)

As the physiological analysis above has shown, the perception of smell and taste occurs with immediacy – due to the connection with the area of the brain directly responsible for memory and emotion. A physical reaction to smell or taste cannot be controlled by volition, but occurs instantaneously. The Viennese Actionists, Sissel

58 H. Schmitz, *System der Philosophie*, vol. III/1, Bonn, 1967, p. 49.

59 M. Hauskeller, op. cit., p. 89.

60 Cf. G. Böhme, *Atmosphäre*, Berlin, 2013.

Tolas, Bill Viola, Cildo Meireles, and Valeska Soares, among others, have consciously worked with triggering such physical schemata in their performances. The recipient's body and consciousness are to be directly affected, with the body's possible responses spanning a wide range: pleasure, disgust, fear, the feeling of being overwhelmed. In the moment of perception, the reflective level is evaded, the recipients themselves becoming artistic material. Depending on artist, the frame of reference as well as intentions may vary. In Abramovic's performance *Balkan Baroque* (1997), the smell of blood and putrefaction emitted by cattle bones is of existential significance as referring to the Yugoslav Wars. In his large-scale, synesthetic *Orgien-Mysterien-Theater*, on the other hand, Nitsch evokes a Christian frame of reference, and looks to achieve the "immediate perception of certain sensations".⁶¹ The performances that often last several days attempt to create synesthetic situations overwhelming audiences through the sheer volume of sensory input. Accompanied by music, ritualized actions take place: with the slaughtering and evisceration of animals and the subsequent use of flesh and blood as aesthetic materials, the boundaries of disgust are consciously transgressed. Action and perception merge, so that what is happening can no longer be reflected from the safe distances of observation.⁶² Smell and taste work to affect consciousness, with the recipients themselves becoming the artistic materials of aesthetic experience.

Ad 6) Synesthesias and the senses as network

This category emphasizes intermodal links and synesthesias, that is, the question of the relation between individual sense impressions. In art (as in life), smelling and tasting never occur in isolation. Thus, visual stimuli may be purposefully combined with olfactory or gustatory ones, and the information given may either accord with or contradict one another. For the Dutch exhibition *Shelter* (2004), Dexin Gu created a flower installation consisting of a multitude of red flowers. As you approached, however, the idyll the visuals had communicated turned: meat buried underneath the flowers emitted the smell of putrefaction. The flowers themselves were plastic roses sprayed with Dior's perfume *Poison*.⁶³

Olafur Eliasson's *Scent Tunnel* (2004) similarly emphasizes the intermodal links that structure our perception by tying vision to other senses. The installation presents a corridor of several meters' length that connects two promontories. Eliasson has designed an open pipe made of metal, the iron beams of which feature

61 H. Nitsch, „Zum Konzept des O. M. Theaters“, *protokolle*, 1973, no. 2, pp. 98–2125, here p. 98.

62 See esp. O. Jahraus, *Die Aktion des Wiener Aktionismus. Subversion der Kultur und Dispositionierung des Bewußtseins*, Munich, 2001; Cf. M. Karrer ed., *Hermann Nitsch. Das Gesamtkunstwerk des Orgien Mysterien Theaters*, Köln, 2015, v.a. 64–75; H. Nitsch, *Zur Theorie des Orgien Mysterien Theaters. Zweiter Versuch*, Salzburg, 1995.

63 For more extensive notes, see Ch. Sauer, „Dexin Gus 'Shelter'“, in: *Geisteswissenschaftliche Spaziergänge*, eds. T. Hinterholz, R. Sammern, Regensburg, 2019, pp. 110–115, 126; see also K. Smith, *Nine Lives. The Birth of Avant-Garde Art in New China*, Zürich, 2005, pp. 180–219; Ph. Tinari, „Gu Dexin“, in: *Art of Change. New Directions from China*, ed. S. Rosenthal, London, 2012, pp. 40–53.

thousands of plant pots placed at regular intervals. Due to an inbuilt mechanical system, the three parts of the pipe rotate around their own long axis at different speeds. Entering the pipe induces a change in perception. The movement of the flower pots both closes off the view into distance and prohibits the viewer from finding a resting point close by. The intensity of the smell of the flowers rotating around the viewers enveloping them in a cloud of fragrance dominates the senses, at least initially making any other impressions secondary. But this is not all. The *Scent Tunnel* exceeds the mere spatialization of ephemeral phenomena. As in his other works, Eliasson plays with the primacy of vision. In this case, he is concerned with how it can be affected intermodally.

We have known for some time that there are combined cognitive reactions whereby non-visual stimuli affect visual processes.⁶⁴ Studies suggest that strong acoustic or olfactory stimuli lead to a heightening of the visual threshold, while simultaneously there is a drop in the relative perception of brightness. Conversely, bad smells or quiet noise leads to a decrease in the sharpness of vision. Consequently, the *Scent Tunnel* can be seen as a zone of synesthetic experience illustrating the conditions of a form of seeing that is changeable in the intermodal flurry of stimuli.

The actual artwork remains invisible: as an aesthetic experience it finds its site in the body of the observing subject. Its primary interest lies in the visualization of consciousness. "You see something that you normally don't see", Eliasson remarks. "[My interest lies] in how we see and how we sense. [...] Sensing one-self sensing is our [...] ability to see oneself in a situation".⁶⁵ Experiencing a situation as situation, however, can only work if seeing is understood as a process that is situated in the body as a whole and that emphasizes and reflects all stages involved in perception. Seeing becomes more than a subject's retinal self-assuring. It emerges in the interplay of all senses and in the conscious focalization of consciousness on the intermodal processes of perception. Eliasson's pieces create space for moving outside of oneself, observing one's own observation.⁶⁶ In this, he can be said to stand representative of most artists emphatically using sense perception in their works.

Ad 7) Metaphor, code and semantics: Perceiving and knowing

This category shifts the emphasis from sense perception as aesthetic experience to the fact that smells and tastes often carry cultural, social or religious meaning, a semantics of their own. Perception is tied to knowledge, knowledge can be communicated through the sense impressions.

64 H. Werner, „Intermodale Qualitäten (Synästhesien)“, in: *Handbuch der Psychologie*, vol. 1, *Allgemeine Psychologie: I. Der Aufbau des Erkennens*, eds. K. Gottschaldt, P. Lersch, W. Metzger, Göttingen, 1965, pp. 283–84; A. Wohler, *Synästhesie als ein strukturbildendes Moment in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Münster, 2010, pp. 120–122.

65 Olafur Eliasson: *The mediated motion*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 2001, pp. 17, 23.

66 "This is why it is so important to see ourselves sensing things or to sense ourselves seeing – to survey our experiences from a sort of third-person point of view – from a double perspective". O. Eliasson, H. U. Obrist: *The Conversation Series*, Köln, 2008, p. 25.

Tolaas' work may serve as an example. In her so-called *City SmellScapes*, the artistic researcher develops olfactory profiles of cities by tracing the local history of smells – on the one hand with the help of highly developed analytical instruments, on the other hand by taking into account the experiences of locals. These data represent a form of knowledge gained through the senses. They record the variability and volatility of *smellscapes* as much as their being bound to a particular place or particular cultural practices. Places are thus endowed with olfactory coordinates that go far beyond a geographical position and form part of their inhabitants' individual personality.⁶⁷

Ad 8) Cooking and art: A culinary aesthetics

If not before, then certainly since Ferran Adrià's much-discussed participation at the *documenta*, however, the relation between cooking and art has come to the forefront. How might this phenomenon be approached without resorting to commonplaces such as emphasizing the aspect of creativity in a search for analogies?

One possible response against the backdrop of aisthesis and with reference to Lemke would involve reference to a culinary aesthetics as an expansion of traditional aesthetics, concerned with the sensual experience of eating and its aesthetic meaning.⁶⁸ Taste is here conceptualized as of heightened significance insofar as it is seen as a cognitive faculty that can be cultivated and become increasingly nuanced.⁶⁹ It is endowed with the capacity for practical judgment, capable of differentiating critically and of reflecting sense perception as bound to the body. The degree to which such considerations are reflected in contemporary cuisine becomes evident not least in Adrià's theorizations, the chef reflecting not only on food and dishes, but also on customers, their capacities in terms of taste, and the meal as a whole – as a sensory experience.⁷⁰ In the framework of culinary aesthetics, later processes of perception are regulated in a fundamental manner – with taste as the linking point. In this respect, Adrià has used the figure of the “mental palate” the chef works to acquire over years as a cognitive database.⁷¹ The ideal customer is described by

67 See also J. Drobnick, “Toposmia: Art, scent, and interrogations of spatiality”, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 2010, 7, no. 1, pp. 31–47; V. Henshaw, op. cit.; D. Quercia, L. M. Aiello, K. McLean; R. Schifanella eds., *Smelly Maps: The digital life of urban smellscapes*, Oxford, 2015.

68 H. Lemke, *Die Kunst des Essens. Eine Ästhetik des kulinarischen Geschmacks*, Bielefeld, 2007.

69 Ibid., p. 14: “In that a gastrosophic aesthetics critically reflects one of the central terms of all philosophical aesthetics, that of taste, it presents itself as a necessary self-critique of aesthetic thought. For while the philosophical field of aesthetics frequently speaks of ‘taste’ – aesthetic taste – and while since Kant the theoretical reflection and perception of art has generally been equated with an ‘aesthetic judgment of taste’, actual *culinary questions of taste* – for instance, the question of what makes possible a judgment of taste, and the question of whether gustatory taste is cognitive faculty that can be cultivated – has never really become the object of aesthetic thinking” (Lemke's emphasis).

70 F. Adrià, M. de Ruiz Erenchun, L. Heilig eds., *Ein Tag im elBulli. Einblicke in die Ideenwelt, Methoden und Kreativität von Ferran Adrià*, Berlin, 2009, insert between pp. 320–321.

71 Ibid., p. 72.

Adrià in similar terms: he or she should have gastronomic knowledge of ingredients, meals, restaurants, chefs, and styles, and enjoy the food using all senses. Thus fully attentive to the culinary experience, a sixth sense will ensue that Adrià describes as “the ability to consume food intellectually”⁷². This context allows for the relation between cooking and art to be reassessed – it is more than an overstretched analogy. Art and cooking consider the sensory as central to an aesthetic experience conceived of as uniting physical perception and theoretical reflection.

Conclusion

The eight categories introduced in this article propose different methodological approaches to olfactory and gustatory art. They find a starting point in materials, they are interested in the process of perception, they examine the affect of smell and taste, they take into consideration spatial and temporal aspects, and they posit questions concerning the relation between perceiving and knowing. On the one hand, they can illustrate the wide range of the aesthetics of smell and taste, and, on the other, form a foundation for urgently needed further investigations in the field.

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⁷² Ibid., insert between p. 320–321, insert between pp. 464–465: “The development of dishes, which appeal to the sixth sense, is a process that incorporates various creative methods and builds upon the other five senses, to create a dialogue between the cook and the guest. Here different techniques can be applied, for example irony, recalling childhood memories, playfulness, provocation or the separation of a dish from its original context”.

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