

Smelling the world

by Alessandro Gandolfi





LA SPEZIA, ITALY

Members of a team from Aston Villa in the changing room at the end of a summer tournament at the Montepertico Sports Centre. Adolescence is a period of significant change that sees a notable increase in hormone production. The body's smell changes and sweat, particularly around to the parts of the body covered in hair, becomes stronger and more acidic.



DELHI, INDIA

Men fish in the malodourous Yamuna River between the Amrapali Yamuna Bridge and the Kalindi Kunj Bridge. A tributary of the Ganges, the Yamuna is one of the world's most polluted rivers. The city of Delhi pours hundreds of millions of litres of sewage into it each day.



A JOURNEY TO DISCOVER OUR MOST ENIGMATIC SENSE

Once considered a really embarrassing throwback to our past, a primitive sense to be hidden or covered, our sense of smell is actually much more important than we could imagine. This sense underpins attraction, sensuality and the connections we feel with the world around us.

Smells, perfumes and odours are always around us and condition our lives, our health and our memories often in ways that are evocative and personal. Smelling has always triggered emotions: smells make us laugh and cry, feel anxiety or appreciate what we are eating and drinking (our sense of taste is very closely linked to our sense of smell). And they also convince us to spend a lot of money: worldwide the perfume business is worth more than 30 billion dollars.

If there is one positive to come out of the tragedy of Covid-19, and the exponential increase in cases of anosmia and parosmia, it is a new focus on research into the sense of smell. Let's try to understand a bit more about how our most intimate sense works.



MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

New dad Roberto Ramirez changes the nappy of his baby, Ava, who is only a few weeks old. The smell of a newborn baby's faeces is understood to be stronger and more unpleasant if the baby is fed artificial milk.



GRASSE, FRANCE

At the Robertet perfume company, freshly picked cabbage roses are weighed on their arrival from the field.

SAVIGLIANO (CUNEO), ITALY

Múses - Accademia Europea delle Essenze
(European Academy of Essences). The
essence of a perfume is sprayed during a
visit to the museum.





LODI, ITALY

At ICR - Industrie Cosmetiche Riunite, Italy's largest perfume producer, vice president Ambra Martone cracks a smile during a smelling session to assess new perfumes.



VENICE, ITALY

The smell of fish fills the ancient Campo della Pescaria market just a few steps from the Rialto Bridge. Smell is crucial to understanding the quality and freshness of fish in a market: if it is fresh, the smell will be a delicate marine odour, if the produce is a few days old it smells of rotting.



PAVIA ITALY

Laboratory of Osmotech-Lifeanalytics. A nalophan bag containing a sample of odorous air is preliminarily analysed using a photoionization detector (PID) to determine the concentration of volatile organic compounds (VOCs).



COLORNO (PARMA), ITALY

At ALMA, the International School of Italian Cuisine, Novella Bagna, teacher of sensorial analysis, gets students to sniff various spices.

GRASSE, FRANCE

Musée International de la Parfumerie. The work entitled *Smoke Room*, created in 2010 by Belgian artist Peter De Cupere, was made using 750 thousand cigarette ends.





MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Embalmer Mario Drummer Duran, together with assistant Carlos Favila (facing away from camera) perform a treatment on the body of Ysidra Pérez, who died of intestinal problems. Corpses emit gas that has an unpleasant odour generated by a chemical compound called putrescine.



ZEMUN (BELGRADE), SERBIA

Zemun (Belgrade, Serbia), from right Zlata Ristić, Dijana Ferhatović and Silvia Sinani (on the phone) smoke a hookah at the Pacha Bar after rehearsing with their band Pretty Loud. A hookah gives off a strong smell of tobacco mixed with molasses, all of which has been strongly flavoured.



MILAN, ITALY

A perfume is prepared in the laboratory of Atelier Fragranze Milano.



AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

At the Rijksmuseum, a teacher tries to get his students to reconstruct the sensory features – including the smells – evoked in the still life painted by Dutch artist Pieter Claesz in 1627.



MILAN, ITALY

At the San Raffaele Hospital, little Audrey immediately begins to feed from her mum Anna. In the first days of their lives, newborns immediately recognise the smell of their mums that guides them towards nourishment.



DELHI, INDIA

Rice and curry are prepared during a festival, the aroma extends all around.



TURIN, ITALY

The Museum of Ancient Egypt (Museo Egizio). Andrea Carretta from SRA Instruments, together with restorer Valentina Turina and (facing away from camera) archaeologist Matilde Borla, use an innovative technique to detect volatile compounds within one of the archaeological artefacts in order to discover the source of the odour.



GRASSE, FRANCE

The cabbage rose harvest takes place in May. There is substantial demand for these roses from perfume houses around the world.



MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Owner Guillermo Perez checks the books that have just arrived in his second-hand bookshop El Hallazgo, in the Colonia Condesa neighbourhood. The smell of old books, an odour cherished by enthusiasts, is linked to the chemical breakdown of lignin and cellulose that gives off the characteristic odour.



DELHI, INDIA

At the SKK Ayurveda & Panchakarma centre, a patient undergoes a respiratory detox treatment. This is just one way that people try to combat Delhi's high pollution levels and pervasive smell.



LA SPEZIA, ITALY

The San Giuseppe Fair. The Fabrizzi family have been selling porchetta and roast meat at the fair for decades. In Italy the smell of porchetta is an odour often associated with the fair, along with the smells of frying chips, candy floss and pop corn.



TURIN, ITALY

The Museum of Ancient Egypt (Museo Egizio). A wooden box depicting Kha and Merit while they receive an offering from their son Nekhetef. Kha holds in his hand the "seshen", the lotus flower that closes at night and reopens at dawn, a symbol of rebirth: for this reason the dead were said to sniff it and breath in its fragrance.



PAVIA, ITALY

At the Osmotech-Lifeanalytics laboratory, a group of qualified odour analysts sniff the air emitted from the duct of an olfactometer, a tool for detecting and measuring the odour dilution in an air sample.



CASEI GEROLA (PAVIA), ITALY

Members of the Constantinian Order of San Giorgio at the Collegiate of San Giovanni Battista. During the feast of Santa Croce it is customary to disperse incense all around the church, reciting a prayer that begins "Oh Lord, thou hast created resins and the odorous essences that, by burning, spread pleasant fragrances..."



POZZUOLI (NAPLES), ITALY

People who live near the solfataro – an ancient volcanic crater that is still active with sulphur dioxide fumaroles – are surrounded each day by a sulphuric smell reminiscent of rotten eggs.



MILAN, ITALY

Dr. Roberta La Vela, a speech therapist, together with professor Matteo Trimarchi, an ENT consultant at San Raffaele Hospital, discuss the condition of Vito Salinaro, who is trying to identify a particular odour. Mr Salinaro, months after having recovered from Covid, has not recovered his sense of smell: in such cases patients undergo tailored treatments to help them regain this lost sense.

Ripporto

Chitropina	25
Muschio Solene	37.5
" Chelone	25
Alcol Benzilico	24.5
	1000

Violetta "Parmol" (Camp. & Musi):

25.-	Essenza Bergamotto decapitato	
25.-	" Sandalo esba	
50.-	" Ylang ylang "	
5.-	Absolute gelaminio pura	
137.5	Bare " C ³²	
7.5	Alcol Laurinico puro Procc	
125.-	Schrosicromellale	
62.5	Tonone alfa	
37.5	Metilindol	
37.5	Indolime	
25.-	Corno Ieros	
25.-	Chitropina	
25.-	Chitropina	
45.-	Muschio Umbetta	
12.5	Soluz. 10% Ald. C ⁴¹ Undecilica	
12.5	" " " C ¹² Laurinica	
225.-	Alcolato	
1250.-		

per portare ad 1 kg. pari moltiplicare
 il detto per 4.8

Calicanthus Creme/Brill. (S. Musi):

Essenza Patchouly	12.5
" Sandalo Playman	12.5
" Patchouly	25
" Ylang ylang	12.5
Alcol Benzilico	50.-
" Cedre Procc	25
" Linalile	25
Aldide α Amilcinnamica	12.5
Alcol Fenilchilico	75
Geraniolo cuore	12.5
Schrosicromellale	25
Tonone 100%	37.5
Leo Cingolato	12.5
Salicilato d'Anile	25
Terpineolo	75
Linalolo Lanera	12.5
Bare Gelaminio gran. C ²⁰⁹	75
" Rosa " C ⁹³²	50
Absolute Muschio Guineica	12.5
Soluz. 10% Ald. C ⁴¹ Persa	12.5
" " " C ¹⁰ Decilica	12.5
" " " C ¹² Laurinica	25
" " " C ¹² Indil Nonit Acet.	25
Amorina	37.5
	1000.-

MILAN, ITALY

An old ingredient list of fragrances from the 1960s belonging to the Maffei family and conserved at the premises of their company, Atelier Fragranze Milano.



MILAN, ITALY

At the French patisserie L'Île Douce, Fabrizio Barbato sniffs a freshly baked Madeleine. This cake has become a symbol of the link between the sense of smell and memory thanks to Marcel Proust, who mentions it in his *Recherche du Temps Perdu*.



DELHI, INDIA

A woman walks in front of an enormous and foul-smelling waste dump in Ghazipur to the east of the centre. Thousands of people live nearby. The waste dump contributes to the city's pollution, its smell extends for miles and it constantly emits large quantities of methane gas. In the summer months, fires frequently break out.



MILAN, ITALY

In a stand at the Esxence perfume fair, in order to better appreciate the quality of a fragrance new experiments are being conducted to find associations between perfumes and images in virtual reality.



VENICE, ITALY

Palazzo Mocenigo contains a museum dedicated to perfume, with more than two hundred small flacons of essential oils from the 1800s that were used to create perfumes.

