OLFAC. Sensing across Humanities, Sciences and Arts (Vienna, 3–5 Dec 25)

ifk - International Research Center for Cultural Studies, Vienna, Dec 3–05, 2025

Julia Ostwald

First international symposium of the ERC project OLFAC.
Exploring the Intervening Performativity of Smell.

Hosted by the International Research Center for Cultural Studies (IFK) in Vienna, the event brings together an international constellation of scholars and artists to explore the many ways in which smell intervenes in cultural, aesthetic, and political formations. Gathering an international group of scholars and artists, the event assembles perspectives from cultural and media studies, art history, psychology, performance and dance studies, chemistry, and the arts.

What does it mean to smell? What do odors enable us to sense, to know, to feel? How are perceptions, techniques, technologies, politics, and aesthetics of smell entangled with one another—and how might these relations be situated and theorized?

At the heart of the symposium lies an exploration of the epistemic, affective, and political dimensions of olfaction— it asks what it means to think through smell: to consider its interplay with other senses, its presence within political, technological, ecological, and aesthetic constellations, and its manifold cultural meanings and practices. In tracing these connections, the symposium also explores how smelling is bound up with social norms, with stigma and control, and with olfactory orders forged under colonial conditions—orders that continue to structure and signify unequal relations in the present.

While the OLFAC project investigates smell as a performative force at the intersection of sensory politics and aesthetics, the symposium opens an expanded field of inquiry: one that invites participants to critically engage with olfaction across disciplinary, methodological, and sensorial thresholds.

We warmly welcome all those interested in the multisensory, critical, and imaginative dimensions of smell to join us in Vienna!

Program

Wednesday, 3 December 2025
13:30 - 14:00 Welcome Address by Vice Rector Andre Zogholy and
Introduction by the Hosts and Organizers
14:00 - 15:00 Debra Riley Parr: Scent and Protection
15:00 - 16:00 Marco Tullio Liuzza: The smell of prejudice

16:15 - 17:15 Brandon Woolf: Deodorizing das K-Wort: A Lecture-Performance that Stinks
18:00 Mai Ling: Performance Sharing Notes

Thursday, 4 December 2025
10:00 - 11:00 Julia Ostwald: Odours and Motion: Reflections on the Kinetics of Smell
11:00 - 12:00 Silke Felber: Grosse Merde! Capturing the Performativity of C□H□N
12:15 - 13:15 Gwenn-Aël Lynn: Contested Space
14:45 - 15:45 Dorothée King: Current Smells of Switzerland
15:45 - 16:45 Freda Fiala: Camphor's Crossings: Extractive Histories and Memory Cultures
17:00 - 18:00 Hsuan L. Hsu: Olfactory Ecologies in the Past Conditional
18:00 Paola Bianchi and Stefano Murgia: Artistic Intervention

Friday, 5 December 2025
10:00 - 11:00 Lindsey French: Putrid Intimacies in an Interspecies Commons
11:00 - 12:00 Alanna Lynch: Sticky, Stinky, Slimy
12:15 - 13:00 Sarah Kolb and Freda Fiala: Tobacco, Tar, and Terpentine: The Universe of Fungal Scents
14:00 - 15:00 Helene Loos: Human olfactory communication: from early life experiences to adult behaviour
15:00 - 16:00 Clara Muller: Smelling against Naturalist Ontology
16:15 - 17:15 Closing Discussion: For speakers only
17:30 Ivan Fantini: Edible Performance recupero cura condivisione

Organized by Silke Felber, Freda Fiala, Julia Ostwald, and the ERC project OLFAC (University of Arts Linz, Austria).
https://olfac.kunstuni-linz.at/

Reference:
CONF: OLFAC. Sensing across Humanities, Sciences and Arts (Vienna, 3-5 Dec 25). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 10, 2025 (accessed Nov 18, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51106>.