

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2014



The Witch's Senses:

**A new body work
incorporating olfactory
elements with the visual
and performative, through
the Scottish Arts Council
Artist Award 2008 - 2009.**



Image 1

Clara Ursitti
Output No. 2

OUTPUT

A new body of work was developed for exhibition over 2008 – 2010 which included 5 new major pieces of work:

I BO OK, 2008 (Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London and Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh)

Ghost, 2010 (Tatton Park Biennial, Knutsford)

Five + One, 2010 (Glasgow International Festival of Visual Arts)

Museum of Gloves, 2010 (Vestiges Park, commissioned through Low Salt for Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art)

Birch Bitch, 2010 (Nomi's Kitchen, Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art)

Title
The Witch's Senses: A new body of work incorporating olfactory elements with the visual and performative, through the Scottish Arts Council Artist Award, 2008 - 2009

Submission No.
2

Authors/Creators
Clara Ursitti



Image 2: *Five + One*

Image 3: *Ghost*, 2010. Intervention over the duration of the Tatton Park Biennial.



A re-branding of an old, unwanted mass produced car with the scent of a luxurious Rolls Royce offered as a chauffeur driven taxi service within Tatton Park Estate. The original car for the work was stolen 8 days prior to the opening. It was a 1994 Nissan Sunny, and was replaced with a Toyota Carina from the same period. The taxi service was offered via word of mouth, and also through scented business cards advertising *Silver Cloud Taxis...the essence of Rolls Royce*. Commissioned for *Tatton Park Biennial* May - Sept 2010



Image 4: *Ghost*, 2010. Detail of chauffeur. Intervention over the duration of the Tatton Park Biennial.



Image 5: *Museum of Gloves*, 2010.

Found antique gloves, embroidered gloves with six fingers, scent, shed, cast rubber hand door handle.



Image 6: *Museum of Gloves*, 2010.

Found antique gloves, embroidered gloves with six fingers, scent, shed, cast rubber hand door handle.



Image 7: *Museum of Gloves*, 2010.
Found antique gloves, embroidered gloves with six fingers, scent, shed, cast rubber hand door handle.



Image 8: *Museum of Gloves*, 2010.

Found antique gloves, embroidered gloves with six fingers, scent, shed, cast rubber hand door handle.



Image 9: *Birch Bitch*, 2010. (Scent, robotic vacuum cleaner, old leather jackets) A witches hat, sometimes static, occasionally wakes up and moves around the room as if it has a life of its own. At times it is absolutely still, and uncannily starts to move, bumping into other artworks, the audience, furniture and walls in the gallery/domestic Space, moving from room to room. It smells like it is burning.

Shown in group show *Another Opening*, at Nomi's Kitchen, *Glasgow* Part of Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art



Image 10: *I-BO-OK?* Sound and scent piece for three laptops.

Three laptops have a conversation, using some of the texts I found in an online chatroom, about the problem of a laptop smelling of body odour. The work stinks. As the day progresses, because of the heat from the battery, the smell becomes stronger. The laptops complain of smelling human and offer each other sympathy and possible solutions. They're synchronized, and don't talk all the time, just every 10 minutes or so, and are placed very casually in the gallery so that you might not notice them, until they start talking to one another. There are two male voices (Bruce and Ralf) and one female (Vicki)

Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh, 2009 (Also shown at Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London, 2008)

CONTEXT

I have had a longstanding interest in the non-visual senses within my practice. This poses an interesting challenge in a discipline that does the opposite. We use magazines with photos to promote work, and budget flights to visit shows. This is no small thing. We are not in the age where Diderot writes descriptive reviews of exhibitions for an audience who in a sense were blind, in that they might never be able to visit the work, or see it in a photo.

Increasingly I am being recognised for my earlier work in scent which has been described as pioneering. The work fits into a new field, "olfactory art" which I am skeptical of, and describe in detail in Output 3. I have been invited to present papers at conferences focused on "Olfactory Art", but also on art and the senses, the non-visual in museums, and synaesthesia,

As a continuation of my research whilst Arts Council of England Helen Chadwick Fellow at University of Oxford and The British School at Rome, I



Image 11

Above and image 2: *Five + One*, an intervention at Glasgow International, various openings, where I wore a prosthetic sixth finger. Prosthetic made by the artist at the Maxillofacial laboratory, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow.

CONTEXT

created a body of work where what I learned in the Crossmodal Laboratory continued to inform my work. In the I Laboratory, the senses are studied not in isolation as they would be traditionally, but in tandem. I applied some of this thinking to my making and developed a body of work that took into consideration and played with how the senses mingle.

In her fascinating paper *The Witch's Senses*, social anthropologist Constance Classen analyses the hierarchy of the senses in Europe from the renaissance to modernity in gendered terms. She writes about how the feminine sensory sphere consisted of the "lower, corporeal senses" of touch, taste and smell, and how these senses were used to transgress the male sphere. I think about this often. The context to a certain extent for this work is other artists and cultural theorists, who are using the senses in this way, to

re-address and transgress Western aesthetics, which traditionally separates the senses, and is dominated by the visual. So, the context touches on gender studies, but also post-colonial thinking, as well as expanded practices of sculpture/ installation/performance that employ the sensual. Some of the artists I am thinking of in this context: Ernesto Neto, Oswaldo Maciá, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Adrian Piper, Janine Antoni, Mike Nelson and and Anya Gallaccio.

With this body of work, I was interested in playing with the social, the subtly of a situation, and the psychological in relation to the senses.

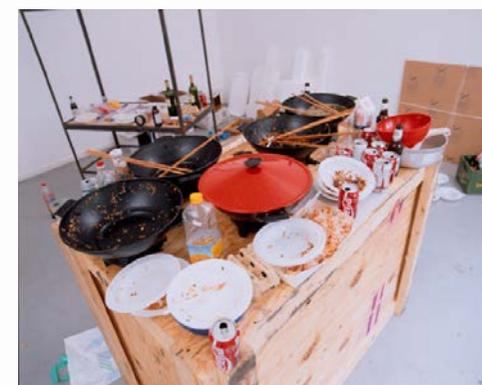


Image 12: Rirkrit Tiravanija

CONTEXT



Image 13: Ernesto Neto

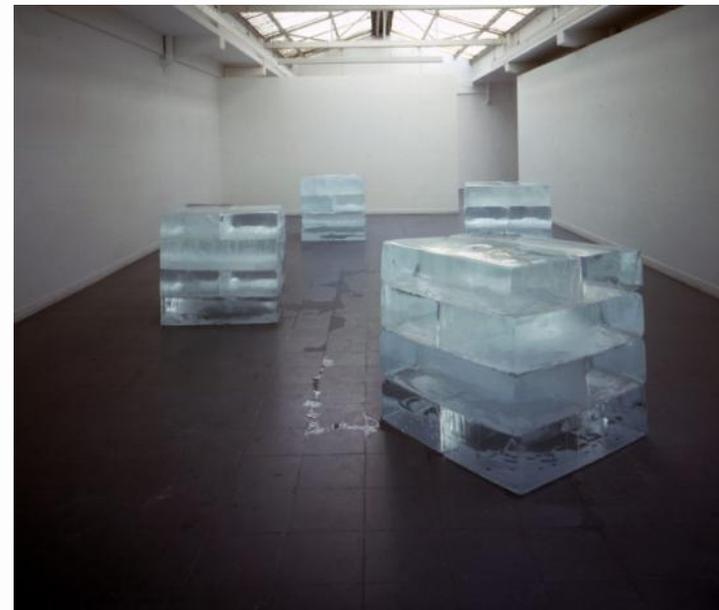


Image 14: Anya Gallaccio

METHODOLOGY

For the sake of clarity, I will outline the research for each individual piece of work .

I BO OK?

This work was a sound and scent piece for three laptops, inspired by my discovery that the model of ibook I inherited from work had a “ body odour”. The research consisted of looking on Apple chatrooms where I found many owners of the model had similar problems and were very stressed out and embarrassed by their human smelling laptops. I wrote a soundpiece for the laptop voices from the chatroom conversations.

Birch Bitch

Playing with the character of the witch, the main research for this work was more of a research and design question. How to get the hat/leather jackets to move, and how to scent the object. Through trial and error, after using several mechanisms I found a domestic robotic vacuum that worked

well with the weight of the hat and then scented both the leather and the dust storage area of the vacuum cleaner to create a burning smell in the room.

Museum of Gloves

I was asked to respond to the writing of Robert Chambers for an off-site exhibition as part of Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art. The research for this consisted mostly of site visits and reading his biography and writing , where I discovered that he had six fingers, and that this inspired his version of the theory of evolution, pre-Darwin. The group exhibition theme was *Vestiges Park*, and within it I created a Museum of Gloves, including scented gloves which were available by request, antique gloves, and gloves that I handmade, including some with six fingers.

METHODOLOGY

Five + One

As an extension of the *Museum of Gloves*, keeping in mind some other famous figures with six fingers, including Gemma Arterton, Hound Dog Taylor, and Anne Boleyn with Catherine of Aragon who were both said to have six fingers and therefore accused of being witches, I made a prosthetic sixth finger to wear at various opening for the festival. The technical research involved me observing and working with the maxillofacial team at Southern General Hospital, Glasgow, in order to get a finger that was convincing and that would fit my hand.

Ghost

I was asked to respond to the theme “*Framing Identities*” for the Tatton Park Biennial. The research consisted of several site visits to the park and the village of Knutsford, where I tried to learn more about the history of the area and the park, as well as tried to get a sense of what it is like now, how it is used, through being there. That is, through the physicality of my senses.



Image 15: Research image from Rolls Royce drive

METHODOLOGY

From these visits I discovered that there were a plethora of luxury car dealerships in the area, and that Knutsford was a pocket of England with a high percentage of mansions and millionaires, which was also home to a Rolls Royce factory that went bust in the 1980s. I responded to this, visited the former mansion of Henry Royce in the village, the co-founder of Rolls Royce. I also arranged to visit several dealerships, the former Rolls Royce factory in Crewe which is now owned by Bentley, and decided to try and capture the scent of a Rolls Royce.

In my research I discovered that Rolls Royce was one of the first companies to use sensory marketing techniques in the 80s. They had adverts with the scent of Rolls Royce in magazines, and made an aerosol that they would spray into their newer models in response to complaints that newer models did not smell as good as the original. The newer models did not use the same luxury materials (Connolly leather – another British company that is no longer, wool carpets, rosewood, for example). The smell was associated with the quality of the luxury brand.



Image 16: Research image.



Image 17: Recce/research for the work: The Nissan parked outside the former home of the late Henry Royce, co-founder of Rolls Royce, Knutsford

METHODOLOGY

For the Biennial I arranged a free chauffeur driven taxi service on the grounds of the 2000 acre National Trust Estate. A recreation of the scent of a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud was dispersed in an old beat up 1996 Toyota Carina, the complete antithesis to the hand crafted, leather lined interior of a Rolls Royce.



Image 18: Research image from inside a Rolls Royce.

DISSEMINATION

I BO OK?

Exhibited in:

- *Machinic Alliances*, Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London, 2008
- *Grey Matter*, Talbot Rice gallery, Edinburgh, 2009

Publications:

- *Machinic Alliances* (with essay by Rosi Braidotti and curator Maria Walsh)
- *Grey Matter*

Birch Bitch

Exhibited at:

Another Opening, Nomi's Kitchen, Glasgow, as part of Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art

See:

http://nomiskitchen.com/another_opening.html

http://nomiskitchen.com/clara_ursitti_images.html

Museum of Gloves

Exhibited in:

Vestiges Park, a Low Salt off site project and commission for Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art, 2010

Reviews:

My Glasgow International top tips, Charlotte Higgins, Guardian.co.uk

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2010/apr/20/glasgow/print>

Five + One

Intervention, Glasgow Project Room and various openings as part of Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art, 2010

Ghost

Tatton Park Biennial , Knutsford, England May - September 2010 (site specific intervention)

Reviews/Publications:

- *Tatton Park Biennial* Catalogue, Parabola
- Review, *Art Monthly*, June 2010, p.24 - 25
- *Pick of the Week*: Guardian Guide, Framing Identity, Tatton Park Biennial, May 8, 2010