

# **Fragments of a diary on the relationship of a visual artist and an olfaction multinational company**

by Josely Carvalho

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*I receive a luminous Golden Pear - the 2019 Art and Olfaction Sadakichi Award for Experimental Work with Scent.*

Rio de Janeiro, 2007

*How can a visual artist create a smell?*

*No lab, no background in chemistry or nose training but a clear sense of a conceptual smell.*

São Paulo, 2009

*Chance takes me to Givaudan do Brasil in São Paulo.*

*I meet Mauricio Cella, director of Technology and innovation*

*My intention is to develop a smell of Nest to be a protagonist in the visual/sound installation Nidus Vítreo to be presented at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro in 2010. Nidus Vitreo, a sculpture installation consisted of 1000 branches molded in resin glass to be constructed through avian architecture .*

*What is the smell of Nest? It is our first smell - an intimate smell of safety, a mixture of sweetness and sourness, bacteria, feathers, branches, mother's milk, dirty diapers, mud, wet grass and dried branches. Perhaps this smell may take me back to the childhood I left in Brazil several years ago to study architecture. Can I still find the smells beyond my memory? Have they changed in time? Is my memory playing a volatile game against me?*

I remember Mauricio Cella saying to Maria Helena Kampen the perfumer technician when she showed surprise with my desire of making a complex smell rather than a sweet and gentle perfume. He said: "our role is to enter into Josely's mind, smell her fantasies, listen to her emotions and translate her stories into molecules". At this moment, Givaudan became the nest from where I could build smell fantasies. I didn't want to hide body odors of childhood memories but open the emotional gates of olfaction.

From the personal and intimate smell of nest, I added three other smells representing our collective shelter - our environment: Wet Earth, Hot Sun and Open Sea. Sweet and noxious smells were layered to remind us of our environmental irresponsibility.

New York, 2011

*One after another the wineglasses broke, and I collected the pieces without questioning why. Very early one morning, I arranged some of the broken goblets on the old black marble fireplace . . . right underneath a self-portrait, Upside Down. At that moment, I caught an odor of breast sour milk from one of the glasses. It was the beginning of Estilhaços/Shards.*

*I'm learning to trust my nose, my fantasies, my desires. I'm losing my shyness face their knowledge and forgetting the insecurities of plunging into a unknown territory. Givaudan personnel slowly help me to trust my nose. I mixed scents in my studio and brought them to our nose sessions. As an untrained nose, I mixed unusual molecules. In one of our sessions, the smell of Pleasure provoked an open and loud, almost uncontrollable pleasurable laugh to one of the noses.*

My 30 years old collection of broken wine glasses, shelters for smell memories, became the essence of a new project entitled Shards.

We don't have in our culture a vocabulary for olfaction. When describing a smell, we borrow words from other senses. I asked six individuals to write a short text about the moment a wine glass broke. These visual words became the source of six smells: *Affection, Absence, Emptiness, Pleasure, Illusion and Persistence*. Virginie Barbesant, Helen Augusto and Sandra Casagrande worked with me in the development of this project. It was a difficult and slow process but thanks to the understanding of my three noses, after two years we arrived to a finale.

Smells being volatile molecules makes very difficult for me to grasp the end of the process. Should I continue? Stop? Perhaps only a trained nose can grasp this fixed and yet slippery moment without retiscences.

I learned that to make a smell requires a meditative state. Focus. It is a suspended state in time and place.

Estilhaços/Shards, an artist's book. A box made up of hand made paper, the smell of Glass created by perfumer Nadege Le Galanzetec out of her family collection of crystal wine glasses and encapsulated in the fibers of cigarette butts. Inside the box, six smell memories from broken wine glasses.

Rio de Janeiro, June 2013

*From Shards to the collective street protests...*

The construction of Resilience started with the 2013 manifestations in Rio de Janeiro, mostly in Leblon where I was able to participate and in the following day retrieve a broken glass door from a bank. Its shards transported me to media images of Syria, the United States, Brazil and other areas of the world.

São Paulo, 2017

*What could /be the smell of broken glass if glass has no scent?*

*The top notes exhale gunpowder and pink pepper. They sting the nostrils. In the body they note a sensation of coarseness brought by dust. It tickles the throat – smells of white carnation and ylang ylang –smells of burning candles (Putrescine C4 H12 N2 and Cadaverine C5 H 14 N2Z), decomposition threatening odor. Could the tear gas provoke blindness? The smell of sweat and blood mix themselves with the heat of the fire that blows the glass. From deep down, in the base notes, a fragrance emanates – the smell of the Queen of the Night. Could it be a synonym of an affectionate future?*

Diante do inconformismo político presente em mim e no mundo, dos confrontos entre manifestantes e autoridades, do descaso, o cheiro do vidro se desmembrou no embate físico das manifestações político-ideológicas. Foram desenvolvidos *Poeira, Anoxia, Lacrimae, Pimenta, Barricada e Dama da Noite*.

De forma inédita, foram apresentados no Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo na exposição Diário de Cheiros: Teto de Vidro, convidando a todos a criarem mentalmente seu próprio cheiro de Resiliência. A *Dama da Noite* pode ser uma dica de como se alcança esse estado de espírito, de como se levanta após a queda do teto.

The public, through curiosity and olfactory memory creates its own Resilience, because each one of us constructs it in our individuality. Ananse encapsulated the six smells in colorful crayons, to give the public the opportunity of create their own smell of resilience physically.

Em março de 2019 foi aberta a exposição Diário de Cheiros: Affectio, dez anos depois e no mesmo local onde foi apresentado o meu primeiro trabalho olfativo, o cheiro do Ninho. No Museu Nacional de Bellas Artes que, por seu local estratégico, testemunha o palco dos grandes comícios e manifestações da cidade, a Cinelândia.

Em um momento nacional como o que estamos vivendo, outro local para apresentar esses seis novos cheiros, não faria sentido.

Ten years of a working relationship, six individual exhibits and a Art and Olfaction Sadakich Golden Pear, the only international award for experimental scent.

Rio de Janeiro, 2019

*Dez anos depois a Tracajá volta ao seu ninho carregando em sua casa a bagagem dos caminhos que percorreu.....* **The smells of Resilience, from the desire of breaking the Glass Ceiling to Affectio.**

*Now I question why I hoard glass slivers. Why save the cutting sharpness of shards? Could it be the need to have at hand a weapon to puncture or dig into the arteries? To have a penetrating instrument whose future function would be to make wrinkled skin bleed into death? Or would the shards be just a placid refuge for memory?*

*I am passionate about glass: its transparency, its fragility, its reflection, its strength when cracked and shattered.*

*The representation of endangerment.*

*Intact wineglasses hide no secrets, but their shards hold silent smell confidences.*

*I do not wish broken glasses to be metaphors for shattered moments of our lives, but rather splinters of passion, anguish, pleasure, grief, loss, perhaps even despair and resilience. Is there an existence without enchantment and activism?*

*Giving body to the memories forgotten in the shards is my desire.*

*Using the breath to sculpt them into new shapes is my obsession.*

*Archiving the odors of resilience in the blown glass nests is my delirium.*

*Revealing their scent memory is my challenge.*

*Today, the shards are a conquest*

*The transparent glass urns are shattered in metaphors*

*The power of dissent.*

*From the glass ceiling emanates an intense sensuous narcotic and affectionate smell of the Queen of the Night, an inhabitant of one of the vessels of Resilience.*

