

Memory - STREET GALLERY (Room overview)

At the top of the ramp that runs down to the Street Gallery is a standing sign which reads '*Scent. The exhibit ahead features scented elements. If you are sensitive to fragrances, please proceed with caution or speak with moderator staff for assistance.*' High on the end wall is a provocation for this gallery space, large white text asks, '*Can you time travel with scent?*'

At the end of the ramp is a **DIGITAL SIGNAGE BOX** Yellow text on black reads: *Can you time travel with scent?*

Beneath is an image of the lower circles of the exhibition logo, which are predominately greens, blues and yellow.

Below the image, white text on black: *What's that smell? Could it be...memory?*

Scent is a powerful memory retrieval cue. Use your nose to explore the databank of scents and see what you are prompted to recall.

But be wary, memories are vulnerable to manipulation. By recalling the past, you might be embedding your memories with the present moment.

Warning:

A variety of scents are in this gallery. Should you have scent sensitivities, please talk to a moderator or review the list of scents at the accessibility station at the entrance to the exhibition.

Credits:

Elizabeth Willing - Artist

Dirk Yates - Exhibit Architecture

Hayley Caldwell – Researcher

Lachlan Turner – Lighting

This angular narrow gallery is an airy, open space with floor to ceiling windows between large concrete columns which jut into the room, together they form the south facing or street wall. Along the street windows a narrow horizontal panel of decals display the swirling ribbon-like orange, blue and purple lines of the MOD. logo. To the west a short half wall completes the angular space and opens back into the atrium entrance of MOD.

The exhibits in this scented database are enclosed in plastic envelopes positioned on industrial shelving that dominates this wedge-shaped gallery, running from east to west. Occupying the middle floor space is a long 10metre row of shelving. Made of 4 banks approximately 2.5metres long placed end to end, with a width of approximately half a metre. The shelves are 10-12cms apart and are lined with an open metal mesh. The shelves are painted a variety of colours, ranging from grey and cream to shades of pink and dark red or maroon.

Small mobile stools are available in the space, some are placed by the database others are pushed into the space between the windows along the street. From the top the stools are petal shaped with three overlapping ovals forming the flat upper surface, the name 'Kik-Step Cramer' is in the centre circle. These black stools are 45cms high and 38cms wide.

Natural light is supplemented by seven fluorescent tubes suspended from the high ceiling; they hang separately forming a row of lights above the shelves. This gives an additional factory like feeling to the bank of shelves beneath, on which the exhibits are presented.

At the end of the Street Gallery are two text panels, an Artist statement from Elizabeth Willing, and a Researcher statement from PhD candidate Hayley Caldwell. The red panels are against the partial wall that backs onto the ramp. The first panel reads, white text on red:

SMBD

Elizabeth Willing, Artist

Dirk Yates, Speculative Architecture

If you think of memory storage in our current time, a database may come to mind, the intangible cloud which we have started to dump our life work and memories into. Somewhere in the world there are machines which are storing this information, data storage and servers in enormous rooms, shelves and cabinets full, like a huge communal brain. This artwork might be a simple brain, or even just a day in a single brain, scent experience stored in horizontal shelving like precious archival objects.

These are evocative connections between scent and memory that are readily shared amongst friends and family - cut grass, a teacher's perfume, sunscreen at the beach - along with recent studies to understand the neural pathways associated with memory and their potential benefits. For individuals the experience of scent triggering memories can be slippery, the feeling abstract. There is a playfulness in this that can excite reflective thought and prompt scientific inquiry into how we think our minds are thinking.

This is the Scent Memory Data Base, storing various scents to be periodically released during the exhibition. Rather than being accessed by ethernet cables or an instruction to tell you what to think, you are encouraged to allow your nose to make the connections with your mind and memories. It is a place to consider how are scent memories have been formed in the past and how new triggers may be created.

The second panel contains the following statement:

The strength of a vulnerable memory

Hayley Caldwell, Ph D Candidate at the Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory, UniSA

If these smells made you think of a specific time in your life, then that means they acted as retrieval cues, which help us to access our memories in a process called memory reactivation. Smells are the most effective retrieval cues as they are processed more closely than any other sense to the hippocampus, our brain's memory hub.

Every time a retrieval cue reactivates a memory, that memory has to be rewritten to our brain's long-term storage again. This rewriting of memories makes them vulnerable, so that new information can be incorporated, and the less relevant details can be lost. Therefore, your memories that were just triggered by our smell catalogue may become a little more fuzzy, and may have a little bit of MOD in them!

While a lot of us treat memory changes like this as a bad thing, this process of merging new and old memories together is actually a major strength of our memory system. This adaptive "forgetting" often leads to the lessons we learn from our memories becoming generalisable to more situations. More generalisable memories help us build overarching rules and knowledge, which we can quickly and effectively use to navigate the world.

Access seating

In addition to the 8 Kik-Step stools, a long mobile bench with black cushions, half a metre wide by 3.4 metres long is situated against the southern wall of windows, opposite the two text panels.

Artwork highlight (Complex artwork)

The Scent Memory Database is organised across 4 banks of shelving that form a long line down the centre of the gallery. The shelves are painted in various colours to indicate their categorisation: skin care, medicinal, perfume, taints, and foods.

Each scent has been captured in a piece of cloth, that has been folded into a neat rectangle and stored in an A4 size pink plastic folder or envelope. Each scent envelope or packet is tied to the open mesh shelf on which it sits by a coloured cord. There are 4 on each shelf, with 14 shelves in a stand, this makes for a total database of 224 exhibits.

The scented packets are also grouped according to season, so the first vertical line of envelopes in each bank are summer scents and they will be opened in the first 3 months of the year. The cloth is taken from the envelope and then re-tied to the shelf, now open to the currents of air in the building. Other enclosed scents will be opened in Autumn, Winter and Spring. In this way the scents in the database will correspond to the season we are currently experiencing. While also ensuring longevity of scent for visitors throughout the year.

Along the front of the shelving banks, on the street side are pink and white labels for each envelope which indicate an abstract evocative name, the retrieval date of the scent (e.g., cricket season), the shelving unit position the season it will be opened and the production date.

The names of the scent prompts are poetic and often funny, referencing the time of year and its activities, assisting us to awaken our memories of scents and smells. A sample batch are "O-Week Shenanigans, Road Trip Aircon Blasts, Aromatic Roast Potatoes, Sun Fun Gleaming Bum, Birthday Cupcakes, School Term 4, Cricket Bat Care, An Archie Moore House Exhibition, Spice Rack Cleanout".

Website Text:

Memory connects our brains to time, blending past, present, and future. We pull past experiences into the present, form new memories, and research suggests we use the same pathways to recall the past that we do to imagine the future. Our perception of time is shaped by memory.

Some memories need cues to be triggered. You've likely experienced the "tip of the tongue" moment when a memory won't come to mind but eventually surfaces with a prompt. This process, known as ephory, is often triggered by familiar cues like sounds or smells. Smells, in particular, are powerful memory cues. A familiar scent can instantly bring back vivid memories and emotions.

For this gallery, artist Elizabeth Willing explored the idea of scent memory. Her artwork, the "Scent Memory Database," invites visitors to smell scents stored on shelves, each layer holding different aromas that mix to create new combinations. The chosen scents have been borrowed from the body. For the artist, 'The breath of the work reminds me of an aunt's linens, a lovers hair, her hands after cooking their

signature dish, his clothes after camping. The artwork gives clues to the scent's origins, but the content of the memory comes from me, my history, my scent memory database.' Although curated by the artists, the scents prompt visitors to recall their own scent memories, creating a personal journey through time.

Access note

If you would like to interact with the scent database and are visiting solo, please ask a moderator staff member for assistance. They will be happy to read you further labels, help you navigate with the stool and discuss this exhibit further.

WHERE TO NEXT?

This concludes the audio description track for "Memory" in the Street Gallery, by Access2Arts for MOD. Exit back up the ramp to the foyer and then take the stairs or lift to Level 1. To the left of the lift, or directly ahead of the stairs and then to the left, is the entrance to the ARCADE Gallery where you will find the "Change" exhibit. Turning right will take you to the FOYER Walkway Gallery.