



Berlin - November 2012

Aoiro brings the scents of Beijing to Berlin

- Aoiro Airdesign's first Berlin installation is an olfactory portrait of Beijing
- Six photographic themes were each illustrated with an original, characteristic fragrance
- The idea also has resonance for stores, hotels and brands

Aoiro creates an olfactory exhibition out of thin air

The Kühlhaus in Berlin has just hosted one of the most unusual exhibitions of the year. Curated by Aoiro Airdesign, Smells of the City is a scent installation that presents an olfactory illustration of the Beijing.

The air design installation was shown as part of the Chinesischer Herbst (Chinese Autumn) contemporary arts festival, held in the Kühlhaus, a recently opened cultural events space in the Gleisdreieck area of Berlin.



What does a city smell like?

Kühlhaus owner and festival organiser Jochen Hahn asked Aoiro to design a scent installation to accompany one of the photography exhibitions showing modern day Beijing.

Aoiro Airdesign – Shizuko Yoshikuni from Japan and Manuel Kuschig from Austria – grouped the photographs into six thematic areas. In each area they positioned a professional diffuser which emitted a micro fine fragrance mist. The individual notes were presented in a "recipe box", a hollow brick punctuated with eleven holes. Each box was labelled with the names of the essential oils used in the blend, and a small poster explained the character of each fragrance and supplied a comprehensive description of the ingredients.



An olfactory journey

The installation, The Temple of Heaven, featured pictures of traditional Beijing landmarks. The accompanying fragrance was dominated by woods and resins, reminiscent of traditional, purifying Chinese incense mixtures. The essential oils included myrrh, camphor, katafray, tea tree leaf, amyris and guaiac wood as well as caraway and nutmeg seeds.

The Red and The Dynamics depicted photos of Beijing opera performances, New Year rituals and good luck symbols. This particular blend contained vibrant and earthy notes of flowers, woods and fiery spices, such as pink and black pepper, cypriol and jasmine, cypress, lemongrass and violet leaf and Virginian cedar.

Next in line was Culinary Traditions. Dominant notes of star anise, black pepper, ginger and clove were blended with sweet and sour flavours like orange rind, Peru balsam and celery seed to accompany pictures of Beijing's street markets and food stalls.

Then the installation moved into the modern, gritty metropolis of concrete, steel and skyscrapers. This fragrance was entitled Cityscapes, embodied by sharp herbals and spices rounded off with metallic, sour notes such as rosemary, cornmint and blue cypress, ajowan seed, celery seed, geranium and eucalyptus.

Majesty of the Imperial Power encapsulated the ancient, mystical Beijing epitomised by the Forbidden City. Here expensive and majestic notes of gurjum wood, myrrh and jatamansi were blended with tuberose flowers, rose absolute, clove, nutmeg, turmeric and saro leaf.

Continuous Tradition completed the exhibition, focusing on Chinese heritage and traditions. The composition included earthy woods like hinoki with vibrant vetiver, petitgrain, elemi and ylang ylang, accented with fresh green notes of Scotch pine, fir needle, eucalyptus and rosemary.



From Tokyo to Berlin

Aoiro Airdesign moved to Berlin from their Tokyo base a few months ago. The company creates signature scents and olfactory logos for companies, brands and retailers as well as hotels, offices and events. In Japan they developed corporate fragrances for premium retail brands like Cartier, Rolex and Diesel, luxury hotels Mandarin Oriental and Ritz Carlton in Tokyo and the Grand Hyatt in Fukuoka. Aoiro also created a signature scent for outdoor apparel brand North Face, which was used in all its Japanese stores.

Aoiro also specialises in air design, advising clubs, hotels and retailers how to create a specific olfactory atmosphere. The company also offers scent tailoring - creating scents for special occasions or events - and custom product design based on signature scents.



What's next

Scent design can be adapted to allow hotels, retailers and brands to sell signature home fragrances and to move into new spaces

For many companies, olfactory logos are already a key part of their corporate or brand communication strategy. Using signature scents to connect with customers on a deeper, more emotional level is a great way for brands to engender some serious brand loyalty.

Chain stores, for example, can diffuse fragrance blends in their outlets to create a soothing atmosphere, making customers feel relaxed and happy and much more inclined to purchase.

A store selling leather handbags and shoes, for example, could use notes of tobacco, amber and vanilla to create a scent that recalls the rich, deep fragrance of leather. An outdoor wear brand, on the other hand, could turn to leafy, fresh herbals rounded off with an aquatic note.

Many hotels use signature scents in their hotel lobbies to welcome guests the minute they walk in. Some chains use the same fragrance across all their hotels, others have individual scents calibrated to a different location. Extending this signature to ancillaries such as scented candles or home fragrances and toiletries offers an extra dimension, creating an extra revenue stream and taking the hotel into the guest's home.

However, in US cities that inhibit the use of fragrance in public spaces, hotels and stores could make a virtue of having a fragrance that doesn't contain known or suspected allergens. They might also consider a fragrance-free fragrance, where the notes are so subtle that they appear to cleanse rather than scent the air. This too, has potential for take-home purchases, where guests may use the fragrance in their kitchen or bathroom.

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