

Ether: Aromatic Mythologies

May 31 – September 7, 2025



LOS ANGELES- *Ether: Aromatic Mythologies* is Craft Contemporary's first scent-based art exhibition. Curated by Saskia Wilson-Brown, the exhibition presents a selection of olfactory-centric installations that explore global and personal mythology, examining the role of scent in storytelling.

Transcending geographical boundaries, mythology conveys universal truths and archetypal constructs. Smell, similarly, possesses a remarkable capacity to do away with immediate temporal constraints. Unsurprisingly, many cultures have positioned the sense of smell as a conduit to different realms of human awareness, memory and consciousness; creating an ethereal connection that underscores the profound and often mysterious impact that sensory experiences can have on selfhood.

Expanding on this, *Ether* examines the confluence of storytelling, identity, and scent by delving into ancient, modern, invented, or personal mythologies. The thirteen olfactory artworks on show seek to explore our innermost self in relation to our shared, supernatural mythos.

"The artists in this exhibition all share an interest in how scent can convey personal, and cultural histories," says curator Saskia Wilson-Brown. "The result is a rich tapestry of meaning, in part expressed in the most embodied way of all: smell."

Participating artists include Alisa Banks (USA), Andrés Cortes (USA), Cristian Marianciuc (Romania), Karola Braga (Brazil), Maki Ueda (Japan), Russell Harris (UK), Peter de Cupere (Belgium), Se Young Au (Korea/USA), M Dougherty (USA), Regina Mamou (USA), Sean Raspet (USA), Sarana Mehra (UK/USA), and Joe Merrell (USA).

Beginning in June 2025, Craft Contemporary will present a series of exhibitions interpreting the varied interactions between craft and the natural elements: air, water, earth, and fire. *Ether: Aromatic Mythologies* is the first of these exhibitions and will explore the ethereal qualities of air and its relations to scent and memory. *Ether* and the exhibitions to follow will highlight sustainability, accessibility, and connect visitors to the universal rhythms of the Earth. Significantly, these exhibitions will tell a new story of Craft in a contemporary world as we work together to heal global wounds through creativity and making.



Image Credits:

Maki Ueda, *Olfactory Labyrinth ver. 8 – The Revival of Oikaze*, 2025. Scent and solvent, glass bottle, rope, gut rope, bamboo strip, 13.12 W x 13.12 L x 11.48 H ft. Image courtesy of the artist.

Joe Merrell, *4-Logic (version 2)*, 2024-2025. 3D-printed PLA and ABS, wood, acrylic, 3 x 6 ft. Image courtesy of the artist.

Craft Contemporary

5814 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90036

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Image Credit:

Russell Harris, *Silks mask (for Mercury) (For Glynis)*, 2017.
Cotton on linen, 1.3 x 1.8 ft. Image courtesy of the artist.

SUMMER SOLSTICE OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, June 21st, 2025

12-5 PM

Celebrate the beginning of summer and the opening of our Summer/Fall exhibitions: *Ether: Aromatic Mythologies, the air we share*, *IAO Olfactory Storylab Maker-in-Residence*, and *Light Gauge*. During these uncertain times, we want to open our doors to everyone working in and supporting the arts in Los Angeles. This event is free and open to the public, and all are welcome. Enjoy the new exhibitions, drop-in crafts, summery refreshments, and the arts community!

Visit craftcontemporary.org/programs/ to learn more and register.

SCENT FAIR

May 30th – June 1st, 2025

Artists Meet and Greet: May 31, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Event Schedule

Ether will be enlivened by an on-site residency program: *IAO Olfactory Storylab* which includes the participation of twelve perfumers from Los Angeles and beyond. Each Saturday, a guest perfumer will activate this on-site creative space that is dedicated to experimental applications of scent in the context of mythology and storytelling.

SUMMER PROGRAMS 2025

May 30- Sept 7

• *Craft Youth Culture 2024-25 Celebration and Catalog Launch*

Sunday, June 8 | 1:30 – 3:30 pm | In-person, museum courtyard | Free with RSVP

Craft Youth Culture is a free after-school program designed for creative high-school students. This year a group of LA youths worked with artist Natalie Godinez to create personal archives, learn from each other and collaborate. Come meet the artists and celebrate their work! If you are a highly motivated 9th - 12th-grade student who is interested in applying for our Fall class, come to the event and visit craftcontemporary.org/teens to learn more about the program.

• *Open Clay Time*

Weekly, Fridays, June 20 – September 5, 2025 | 3 – 6 pm | In-person, museum drop-in class

Museum admission + \$5 materials fee per person

Join us weekly on Fridays throughout the summer for open-ended airdry clay drop-in classes. Try your hand at a selection of clay projects using simple sculpting and joining techniques. All ages welcome!

First-come-first-served, no RSVP required. Family passholders do not need to pay a material fee.

- ***Drawing Together with Wayne Schroeder***

Sat June 7 | 1:30–3:30 PM | in-person, in gallery and in courtyard | Free with RSVP | Ages 5+

Enjoy some collaborative creativity exercises in the gallery and then make your own large-scale collaborative drawing and mark-making with teaching artist Wayne Schroeder. Drawing together brings us together! Drawing materials will be provided. Visit craftcontemporary.org/programs/ to learn more and register.

- ***Craft Lab Family Workshop: Sense and Story***

Sun July 13 | 1:30–3:30 PM | in-person, indoors
\$10 adults | \$10 children | free for members

Get inspired by Ether's smell-based art, creating plant-based "smell" collages as well as recycled flower 3D creations inspired by Karola Braga. Visit craftcontemporary.org/programs/ to learn more and register.

- ***Craft Lab Family Workshop: Sun Printing Our City***

Sun Aug 10 | 1:30–3:30 PM | in-person, indoors/outdoors
\$10 adults | \$10 children | free for members

Let's take a short walk in the neighborhood to find sidewalk treasures and make our own LA-specific cyanotype prints (with pre-treated paper) inspired by the work of Felix Quintana. We'll also learn about the power of the sun with M + A's solar panel installation. Visit craftcontemporary.org/programs/ to learn more and register.

- ***Smells Like Art: Last Saturday Multisensory Tours***

Sat June 28 | 11 – 12 pm | free with museum admission
Sat July 26 | 11-12 pm | free with museum admission
Sat Aug 30 | 11-12 pm | free with museum admission

Experience art through all of your senses by getting up close and personal with smell-based art from the Institute of Olfaction, and engaging in multisensory play with artists' work from The Air We Share. Ages 5+. Visit craftcontemporary.org/programs to learn more and register.

- ***Evening for Educators at Craft Contemporary***

Thu Jul 31 | 5 – 7 pm | free evening for educators

Visit our galleries after hours, connect with local educators and get an inside scoop on curriculum development and creating multisensory, accessible gallery tools. Enjoy open-ended art-making activities with our education team and meet new friends. Refreshments and snacks provided. Free for all educators. Visit craftcontemporary.org/programs/ to learn more and register.

- ***Community Craft Day with Raymundo Reynoso***

Sun Sept 7 | 1–4 PM | in-person, outdoors | free | drop in | RSVP recommended

Join exhibiting artist Raymundo T. Reynoso in a collaborative artmaking activity using stenciling, found images and found typography. Enjoy a gallery conversation with Reynoso and explore how text and image interact to create stories of our city. Visit craftcontemporary.org/programs/ to learn more and register.

- ***Back to School with Craft Contemporary***

Guided school visits for the 2025-26 year will be open on September 1! Guided school visits are designed for 3rd to 12th grade students and include a hands-on craft workshop as well as an interactive gallery experience. Request a visit and find out more at craftcontemporary.org/schools/

Craft Contemporary is an art museum whose purpose is to reveal the potential of craft to educate, captivate, provoke, and empower. Craft Contemporary achieves its mission by exhibiting the artists of our time who favor craft materials and processes. We give a voice to local, emerging, and mid-career artists whose works are overlooked. The museum strives to achieve equitable access through free and low-cost programs, and the inclusion of multiple teaching artists from communities throughout Los Angeles who offer unique art-making workshops, K-12 school programs, senior adult workshops, and art talks. For more information, visit www.craftcontemporary.org.

LOCATION: 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036

ADMISSION: \$9 for adults; \$7 for students, teachers, seniors; free for Craft Contemporary members; FREE admission every Sunday

HOURS: Monday - Tuesday: Closed

Wednesday - Sunday: 11 am to 5 pm

First Thu every month: 12 - 8 pm

ARTISTS BIOGRAPHIES

Alisa Banks (b. 1961, Lawton OK) is a visual artist living in Dallas, Texas who investigates connections between contemporary culture, her Louisiana Creole heritage, and the African diaspora. Alisa's interests include exploring the performative potential of the book and investigating links to the material culture of her ancestors. Her artists' books, writings, and textile collages, which often reference traditional craft, are housed in several private and public collections, including the Smithsonian Institution, the US Library of Congress, The Schomburg Center, and The British Library. Alisa holds a B.S. degree in Medical Laboratory Science from Oklahoma State University and a M.F.A. degree in Visual Art from Texas Woman's University.

Andrés Cortes (b. 1985, Los Angeles) is a first-generation Mexican/California Native. He earned a BFA in Drawing and Painting, with a minor in Comparative World Literature from California State University, Long Beach. Solo exhibitions include Maple St. Construct, Omaha, NE; The Brewery Artists Lofts, Los Angeles, CA, and 1700Naud, Los Angeles, CA. Recent group shows in California include Guerrero Gallery, DDLA, Brand Library Museum; Permanent Storage Projects; Durden & Ray; Bombay Beach Biennale; Other Places Art Fair; Huntington Library, and many more. He is the founder of ARVIA Projects, an artist-run and community-based space for alternative forms of building and living through the creative lens, started in 2016.

Cristian Marianciuc (b. 1989, Romania) is a paper artist whose work revolves around the traditional origami crane. Since 2014 he has been perfecting his very personal style which sees the humble yet beautifully symbolic traditional model of the crane come alive with the help of intricately cut wings, flowers, folkloric motifs, and other decorative paper elements. In 2020 Cristian turned his attention to the world of perfume in his constant search for sources of inspiration, aiming to give physical shapes to fragrances. Each is assigned colors, a "body", stories and music. Each of these paper sculptures is meant to serve as a travel companion on the multilayered and multi-sensory experience of smell.

Joe Merrell (b. Olympia, Washington) studied philosophy, literature, and history and The Evergreen State College, in Olympia. He went on to earn an MFA in film at CalArts in Valencia, California. Based in Los Angeles, he makes video, installation, print, sculpture and scent for exhibition in galleries, festivals and museums. In addition, he has a line of fine fragrances sold under the brand "The Eyes Are Always There" that he sells online and in several perfume boutiques.

Karola Braga (b. 1988, São Caetano do Sul, Brazil) is an artist and olfactory researcher. She holds a Master's degree in Visual Poetics from ECA/USP and a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from FAAP. By intertwining culture, chemistry, anthropology, and sensory science, her research focuses on the concepts of presence/absence and memory/forgetting. Since 2015, she has participated in national and international exhibitions. Recently, she participated in Desert X AIUla, was nominated for the Pipa Prize 2024, selected for the 27th Project Season at Paço das Artes, and exhibited at the 13th Mercosur Biennial. She was a finalist in the Sadakichi category for Experimental Work with Scents at the Art and Olfaction Awards, and has participated in residencies such as the Cité Internationale des Arts (Paris) and Kooshk (Tehran), where she won the Kooshk Artist Residency Award (KARA 2018).

M Dougherty (b. Los Angeles, CA) is a nonbinary, multidisciplinary artist and researcher from Los Angeles who uses scent as a medium to explore the intersection of technology, humanity, and the natural world. Their work combines scientific inquiry with personal introspection, focusing on communication, memory, and interaction through olfactory art. Dougherty has received notable accolades, including the Innovation Award from NYC Media Lab and Chanel, and has served on the Board of Directors for OSMOCOSM, advancing scent technology and art. They hold degrees in Fine Arts from USC and Interactive Media Arts from NYU Shanghai, blending artistic creativity with scientific rigor. Through their practice, Dougherty challenges perceptions of scent as a communication tool, inviting deeper engagement with the olfactory dimension of life.

Maki Ueda (b. 1974, Tokyo) is an olfactory artist who focuses the spectator's attention on her fragrant gestures by minimizing the influence of the other senses. Her current research explores olfaction in relation to space and movement resulting in strong, often universal, approaches. She focuses on the pure experience of a smell instead of a more contextual or narrative approach. The results are often intuitive olfactory installations. She teaches regularly at art academies over the world. The Art and Olfaction Award Winner 2022 (Sadakichi Award for Experimental Use of Smell). She majored in media art: B.A. in Environmental Information Studies and M.A. in Media and Governance, Keio University, Japan.

Peter de Cupere (born 1970 in Leuven, Belgium) is a renowned olfactory artist based in Antwerp. For over 25 years, he has been a leading figure in olfactory art, creating works that explore social, cultural, and environmental contexts through scent. His artworks have been showcased in more than 200 exhibitions worldwide, and he has lectured from Berlin to New York. Dr. de Cupere is a lecturer and researcher at the PXL-MAD School of Arts in Hasselt, where he teaches the use of smell, taste, and tactility in art. He received the Art and Olfaction Award in 2018 for his lifetime contribution to scent in art and the Sadakichi Art and Olfaction Award in 2023. Additionally, he is a member of the Odeuropa Advisory Board, focusing on sensory heritage in Europe.

Regina Mamou is a research-based installation artist whose work explores ideological systems, influenced by her multiethnic upbringing with a Polish-American mother and a Christian Chaldean father from Iraq. Her father, a former priest, fled Iraq due to persecution, shaping her interest in the intersection of political ideology and religion. Since 2020, Mamou has been the first artist-in-residence at The Wende Museum of the Cold War, where she investigates Iraqi-Soviet relations and develops immersive installations on Cold War history. She holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design, and completed a Fulbright project in Amman, Jordan. In addition to her solo practice, she collaborates with Lara Salmon under the name Research for the Bermuda Triangle.

Russell James Redwood Harris (b. 1983, Kent, England) is a Berlin-based, self-taught multidisciplinary artist working with textiles, leather, sculptural objects, and installation. He was born on Romney Marsh—an area known for its sparsely populated wetlands, woodlands, and coastal marshes—and this environment, along with a family culture of making and mending, left a lasting impression on his relationship to materials, process, and care. Harris's practice explores themes of transformation, ritual, and myth. He often integrates sensory elements to evoke complex personal, visceral, and universal narratives. Since 2015, he has worked as a production assistant to Mark Krayenhoff van de Leur and his husband, the artist A.A. Bronson—a long-standing collaboration that continues to inform his approach to craft, collaboration, and queer lineage.

Sarana Mehra (b. England) is a bi-racial British-American multidisciplinary artist based in Los Angeles whose work explores the relationship between the body, body-politic, and cycles of disintegration and renewal in human-made systems like art, language, and technology. Drawing on Eastern and Western mythologies and artifacts from past civilizations, Mehra examines the concept of "future relics," creating pieces that leave symbolic clues while obscuring their contemporary use. Her work highlights humanity's enduring desire to be remembered despite inevitable decay, likening modern technological advancements to primordial expressions like cave handprints. Mehra holds a BFA from the University of Oxford and an MFA from Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design in London. She is also a co-founder and media director of Artists 4 Democracy and a member of the Binder of Womxn artist collective, advocating for healthcare justice and feminist representation.

Se Young Au (b. 1984, Seoul) is a multi-disciplinary artist based in Los Angeles who works at the intersection of digital collage, installation, photography, and olfaction. Their art transforms loss into alternative worlds, exploring themes of survival, possibility, and personal mythology through vivid imagery and atmospheric color. Au's practice spans both commercial and fine art, with clients including Broccoli Magazine and EJ Hill Studios, and their work has been featured in exhibitions such as blue/s at ESMoA. They aim to reclaim agency over their narrative and spirit, creating immersive experiences that defy space and time. Au holds a BA in photography from Columbia College Chicago and continues to push boundaries in contemporary art.

Sean Raspet (b. 1981, United States) is an artist based in New York. Raspet is known for his artworks that consist of liquid chemical formulations, often involving flavor and fragrance molecules. Recently, his work has explored food and human metabolism. Raspet is also the co-founder of the algae-based food company Nonfood. In 2018 Raspet was one of seven artists invited to headline the Rhizome Seven on Seven digital conference. The same year, Raspet exhibited an installation of ten scent-diffusing machines at Bridget Donahue gallery in New York City. Also in 2018, Raspet exhibited three new fragrance molecules at The Artist's Institute in New York. The molecules were designed by Raspet and synthesized in collaboration with chemists at Hunter College. Each molecule had a distinct, new scent that had not existed previously.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Saskia Wilson-Brown (b. 1978, San Francisco) was born to Cuban and British parents, and raised between the U.S. and France. In 2012, Wilson-Brown created The Institute for Art and Olfaction (IAO), a social art practice devoted to facilitating access and experimentation in creative work with scent. Through the IAO, she has led and collaborated on projects that place emphasis on the senses with institutions such as Pulitzer Foundation, Getty Institute, Wallace Collection, Jet Propulsion Lab, and Craft Contemporary. In 2019/20 she served as a visiting lecturer in the MA Fashion program at the Royal College of Art in London, and in 2020/21 she was as a Ballen Scholar at New Mexico Highlands University. Saskia received her MA in fine art at Central Saint Martins College in London, and her BA in fine art at University of California Berkeley, and is currently working towards her PhD at University College Dublin's SmartLab. Her current projects include a book, to be released by Artbook | D.A.P. in 2026.