

Perfume Polytechnic

Exploring olfaction in perfume, art, science & life.

Art, Carnality & Consumerism: A Conversation With Angelo Orazio Pregoni of O'Driù Perfumes

Posted on May 30, 2015 by FeministConfessional

13



(https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/img_2679.jpg).

Preamble

A few months ago I interviewed Angelo Orazio Pregoni (<https://perfumepolytechnic.wordpress.com/2015/02/20/thirteen-thoughts-perfumer-interview-series-angelo-orazio-pregoni-of-odriu/>) of O'Driu Perfumes (<http://www.odriu.eu>) as part of my *Thirteen Thoughts: Perfumer Interview Series*, a series in which I interview niche and independent perfumers, asking them the same thirteen questions each time. It's a very interesting process seeing how each perfumer answers the questions, and the similarities and differences between the answers. Angelo's answers were the most unusual of all ten interviews to date, and his interview constitutes a work of conceptual art in itself. I recommend reading it with this idea in mind. Since this first interview, Angelo and I have become friends, and we regularly discuss the ideas behind his perfume, his art and what he thinks of the world of perfumery. Today, I bring you a more tailored interview with Angelo, with questions more specific to him and his artistic practice.

In my opinion, perfume *can* be considered as a product of smell-based *art*, but it cannot always be considered an artistic artefact. Is a mass-produced perfume created out of a limited range of aroma chemicals, and a very restrictive creative brief based on current trends, art? Or is it just another example of mass-produced pop culture that has little artistic merit and is designed for maximum profit? Sure, art can be profitable, artists *can* earn a fair sum of money for their work — they usually don't — but should sales drive “artistic” decisions at perfume houses? Angelo considers and fights against these notions in his work as an artist who makes perfume.

Perfume is just one type of cultural artefact that results from working with the sense of smell and scented materials. Olfactory art, which I define as installations, conceptual art, and performance art (often situated in galleries or performance spaces) that utilise the sense of smell and scented materials, is another kind of smell-based artistic practice. Smell-based art (which includes perfume, but is not limited to perfume), is in its infancy. Thinking of a perfume as an artistic artefact, a “work of art” is a relatively new idea. Perfume has been made for millenia and has long been considered by humans as an aesthetic experience, or as a fashion accessory, a way to make things smell nicer or to cover up smells, to instill and invite moods, to cleanse, to heal.

Angelo Orazio Pregoni is an interesting figure in that he is an artist who makes perfume. He is a contemporary, conceptual artist who uses scented materials (among other elements including performance, video, costume, and the visual arts) as his medium. The concepts behind his perfumes are *artistic* concepts. As an artist myself I do not find his ideas shocking, but many do. They have plenty of precedents in art history: Dada, Surrealism, Fluxus, performance art and happenings, etc. I am excited by Angelo's ideas and excited that he is translating them into perfume, or using perfume to express one aspect of a complex art project or performance. Angelo's work straddles the worlds of perfumery, olfactory art and contemporary visual and performance art. It crosses barriers and questions norms and in doing so confuses, amuses and outrages people. Many people still think perfume is something that must be beautiful, aesthetically pleasing, a wearable accessory. They might think that if conceptual ideas are

employed in the creation of a perfume, they must be similarly beautiful, pleasing, nostalgic, and understandable. Angelo bravely turns these notions on their head: the concept for a perfume, an artistic perfume, can be anything at all. The concepts behind Angelo's perfumes and performances usually seek to challenge our notion of what perfumery is and should be. He broadens the very notion of what perfume can be and does us all a favour in the process.

If perfume is to be considered as an artistic artefact, if we want to think of perfume as art, we must redefine it and create a broader definition of what perfume can be, of the sorts of smells it can include and the concepts it can express. We must allow it to be all the things that art is and has been. Art can be difficult, ugly and challenging, as well as beautiful, comprehensible and pleasing.

Keeping this in mind, please allow your curiosity to guide you and come along for the ride! Without any further introduction, let me present a conversation with Angelo Orazio Pregoni: perfumer, artist, iconoclast.



(<https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/touch-me.jpg>).

Angelo Orazio Pregoni

A Conversation With Angelo Orazio Pregoni

Your work as an artist and perfumer involves a lot of performances. I just came across the following Fluxus performance piece by Robert Bozzi that involves perfume. What are your thoughts about this piece?

In Memoriam to George Maciunas No. 2

Performers position themselves in a semi-circle. The first performer operates a perfume nebulizer; the second, a throat nebulizer; the third, a fertilizer sprayer; the fourth, an insecticide sprayer. They operate the equipment toward the audience following a pattern determined in advance.

1966

The cultural significance of the Fluxus movement, and even before of Dada, can be considered as an integral part of the conceptual experiences of the twentieth century.

It seems to me that in this age, contamination between different phenomena of art is totally lacking: the music world does not compare itself with that of theatre art and both are more and more closed in themselves. Out of ignorance the public doesn't want to discover the avant-garde, therefore contemporary art, except rarely, is contaminated with consumerism. The production of films became the surrogate of past creative triumphs or even worse, a reworking of television programs. There is also an excess of photography that comes out like a virus from the current "internet social connection" phenomenon, even though the value of these pictures is equal to zero: the vitality of an era of cross-disciplinary artistic encounters and clashes has disappeared, the spirit of the new way of living, such as "fluxers" in the 1960s, no longer exists. So to judge that Fluxus performance today is very difficult, because you are likely to create an idea of the piece that misrepresents it! Fluxus is the art of simplicity; in those years, the cultural ferment of the young people and some social resentment erupted in various synergistic movements. People used to break the mold and in every Fluxus performance the aim was to generate a reaction from a provocation. Then the artwork was the event itself, pictures and films were only the documentation of that moment of sacred art. If I were to tell you what I think about the performance of Robert Bozzi I would answer you in a Fluxus way: "He was so far ahead that he was creating a new perfume for Narciso Rodriguez!" Perhaps geraniol, a typical smell of insecticides. In that time was not so fashionable, nobody was talking about the ozone hole, but everyone had a clear idea of the concept of social class: and for all those who splashed themselves with expensive perfumes, many others became ill with silicosis working in factories, others were poisoned by chemical agents just to earn a little money-making it possible for their children to study and grow up healthy, others were fighting with their everyday suburban life, flies against flies, in the ghettos of the big towns. You think Robert Bozzi meant this? Also this! Because his performance included that one day an Italian Nose gave his own interpretation of it. So finally Robert Bozzi has only generated a flow, or better, a fluxus...



(<https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/smlme-child.jpg>).

Angelo as a child

In your performance SPLASH II FAST POP PERFUME (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-1i5QIsILw>) you make a perfume out of junk food: a Big Mac, Coke, Nutella, etc. What did the resulting perfume smell like and how did people react to the smell?

The result was brilliant! Many of the foods we eat contain chemical fragrances that transform foods into drugs that are addictive! This “cosmetic food” is a subject that fascinates me, considering that we eat “subliminal messages” that are called aromas, indeed! People were incredulous about the resulting perfume; it didn’t have great depth, but it was absolutely pleasant. That scent is a unique piece, and it was bought by a collector for 1800 Euros. Actually he did not buy a perfume, but a two-hour performance, my signature, my videos, articles, and now your question about *Splash* too! Now that perfume has a much higher value, and it is not so unusual that some of my collectors buy some of my works from other collectors, some at tripled prices.

In a recent discussion on the fragrance database/website Basenotes (<http://www.basenotes.net>), you wrote the following:

“A Perfumer (as an artist) has the rule to dominate the raw materials, creating a performance that brings his work in contact with the nature, as a new and original creative act. People who use this perfume are a part of his performance, by the interpretation of the fragrance, they can determine the language that the Perfumer creates.”

I like the idea that people who wear your perfume are participating in a performance, a performance that you, the perfumer, started, and that they continue. Tell me more about this. How do we, as wearers of your perfumes, participate in your performances?

Many critics focus their attention only on the ingredients of a perfume. This view is frankly nonsensical, because no one would consider any other work of art based solely on the raw materials used: a painting for the quality of the colours, a sculpture for the quality of marble or wood or whatever... I think this need to focus on raw ingredients depends on a basic misunderstanding that implicitly defines perfumes as belonging to the luxury world! For this reason we continue to see the pompous super-kitsch packaging (often not intentionally kitsch) for the Russian market or for the Middle East. And if that were not enough, there are perfumers who claim to make their own creations using valuable raw materials. This is not artistic perfumery, this is a cheap business created by snob idiots for rich idiots. Perfume, if it is to be considered a work of art, cannot be considered differently from a book, which isn't valuable in itself, but in its emotional content. However, the words of a book take on meaning only if reworked intimately. And with a perfume? After you put ten drops of pee in your Peety and a man tells you: “What a magnificent scent you have!”, you will understand. When you say to your worst snob enemy (who uses only the Château de la Mer) that you are wearing Pathétique, you will make her fall into the abyss of nonsense. But there is more: just your smile after a splash [of an O'Driù perfume] while you think: “That son of a bitch who is Pregoni!” will change the history of that scent.



(<https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/nc3a9-carne-nc3a9-pesce-2.jpg>).
Angelo's performance "Né carne né pesce" at Esxence 2015

You wear some very interesting clothing/costumes in your performances. Who makes them and what role do they play in your performances?

To dress differently, or if you prefer, with an individual style, is something that I have developed since I was a child. My mother was a seamstress and all my clothes were made by her. But my family was poor and unfortunately I had an older sister! So many of her sweaters, pants and coats were passed onto me after a bit of time. No one paid much attention in the 70s, but perhaps this has affected my taste! So in the 80s, I continued to wear recycled clothes that I stole from my

father and I cut them and painted them in pure punk style. Indeed, it seems that the freedom to dress oneself with originality is something only women are allowed to do! An exquisitely macist constriction imposes a rigid and conventional standard for men, which ultimately amounts to a “castration” of the psyche and consequently to a weakening of its own charism. Consider that most of my clothes are made by me, and are unique pieces: antique kimono, cut jackets, skirts used as T-shirts! Obviously when I go to the lab I dress very comfortably, but during my performances I have a different need. The people involved in my artistic performances do not know what will happen, and I can not even imagine their reaction. Suppose a Dutchman who yells at me: “You’re a jerk! Do not make us lose time with your art of cock!” It may happen, in the end I do not know the participants... Many people may laugh while I would not have understood a word. When I go into a room with a hundred people ready to judge my work, the first thing that I offer them is my image as a little clown. This intrigues them and distracts them, for the seconds that I need to begin interacting with them. They tend to underestimate me and their defenses begin to disappear. At this point, I embrace someone, I kiss a woman cutting a lock of her hair, I unbuttoned the shirt of another man, and no one can react, they are all kidnapped by that clown who now becomes a mystic ominous man! However, ultimately this belief “that I am eccentric” has become commonplace amongst some of my competitors, and is used by them to put a barrier between me and the audience. Surely they do this in order to emphasise my narcissistic side, which fortunately exists, otherwise, instead of creating perfumes, I would just make little farts under the covers and I would appreciate them all alone convincing myself of their deep goodness. “Eccentric” is a word that has its roots in a geometric figure: it means “outside the centre”. So there is no egocentric vision in the way I dress, but only an identification of myself outside the “circle” of fashion and fashion brands. The truth is that when you stay outside of the circle, soon you will have another circle around you and you could become egocentric, then you have to be ready to change, if you do not want to identify yourself anymore in that circle. I do not know why people are not interested in Kilian’s dressing [perfumer Kilian Hennessy of By Kilian], who, in the most genuine idea of marketing, has adopted a uniform as many designers do! In every photo he always has a black jacket and a white shirt with a French cuff. In my opinion this can mean three things: he has no money to buy other clothes, no ideas, or he hasn’t got an older sister!



<https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/smlme-and-my-sister.jpg>

Angelo and his sister

Does religion influence your work?

Religion does not influence my work, but it influences the perception that people have of my work!

Your perfume Peety is supposed to have the wearer's urine (pee) added to it to "complete" it. A lot of people wear Peety but refuse to add their own pee. Is it still Peety if there is no pee in it?

No, it is not! I'll tell you two short stories. A boy had just given Peety to his girlfriend, who is pregnant, to celebrate the impending arrival of their child. They opened it and decided to add ten drops of pee of the expectant mother! Then they forget it for a while. After a month she had a

miscarriage. You have no idea what that bottle of perfume is worth to them! A man on his deathbed (a close friend of mine) asked me for three bottles of Peety to which he added his pee and left them to his three sons!

Peety is a fetish: the fetish is considered by anthropologists as a key element of the most primitive human religiosity. Without valuing the magic that a human instills in an object, that object will never be a fetish. This is the only magic value intrinsically unique to humans and not God. Peety is not the defeat of a taboo, is the affirmation of the individual in a world where identity is no longer important.



(https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/img_2681.jpg).

O'Driù perfumes

Why are some people so afraid of O'Driù perfumes?

My perfumes bring to light false dogmas, my fragrances unmask the unfounded beliefs that the world of niche perfumery accepts as the status quo; we should instead consider these beliefs as a set of views, as opinions only! People who paid attention to the world of niche perfumes were dumbed down for years with meaningless words and concepts such as: olfactory pyramids, Chypre, fragrance families, allure, charm... After spending a lot of money finally you realise you do not have anything different from commercial perfumery; sometimes it's even worse.

Undermining your own beliefs is not so easy! For example, now perfumery is experiencing a neo-classical wave which is actually the sewer of perfumery, but people who buy those little shits feel satisfied in themselves, because they are only able to understand those fragrances!

Some of your perfumes and performances deal with carnal and sexual themes, for example, the names you choose for your perfumes, like Peety. There is also nudity in some of your performances. Tell me about the significance of carnality and sexuality in your work.

I prefer to say that I regenerated the imagery of sex in perfumery. Too many designers were (all) riding the most vulgar wave of sensuality to sell perfumes. Peety is: pee more pity! It is a link between creativity and compassion that unites the Nose to the user through the urine. During my performances the nude has been helpful to reach the idea that the smell could be art. In fact if you can quickly accustom yourself to the nakedness of a person who has just stripped him/herself in front of you, crossing your moral and ethical boundaries, it is not so easy to smell his/her underwear just abandoned. So if the nose is a vehicle rather than the eye of moral or ethical codes, then there exists a kind of aesthetic art also for the sense of smell. In fact, I pour drops of essences on the underpants of the naked subjects and people go to smell these. It is a shamanic experience that frees the participants, at least, this is what they confess after my performances!



<https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/pregonis-parents.jpg>

Pregoni's Parents

Your latest perfume is called Kiss My Ass. Can you explain why?

To kiss my ass can be a very exciting experience. I prefer to dedicate a perfume to my ass rather than to pimps' references such as Russian tea, under the moon, the day of celebration, Cuban leather... However, I made Kiss My Ass [in a limited series of 16 pieces] to bring back a touch more craft to perfumery and to avoid mass-production. I also imagine my ass covered with the beautiful shapes of red lips. Obviously, always different lips!

Are you kissing my ass in this interview?

We could kiss each other's asses! But this assumes only one possible interpretation of your question. It [kissing each other's asses] might be a performance for a man and a woman to get to know each other in the near future, when both will be deprived of their genitals at birth, because of population control!



<https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/ogma.jpg>

Angelo and Ogma

You have a beautiful dog called Ogma. What does he think of your perfumes?

He prefers the Tango! He dances very well. He has a favorite smell: it's called food! Among all the perfumes that I created, the only one which seriously interested him was Linfedele 1004.

You have a perfume school called Wet Dream – Coming Perfume Academy. Tell me more about that.

It's not a real school. It is a state of mind! I was sick of seeing the organisers of courses "about how to become a Nose" [perfumer] robbing money from poor, naive dreamers! So I created a course for free, with the aim of making a perfume. Only three boys were selected after the first step, and they worked on the Satyricon project with me! Only the formula is exclusively mine, and it could not be any other way. But the concept and the subsequent choice of the ingredients were created out

of collective work. I think I have nothing to learn in the perfumery world, except from those who are pure and unconditioned by silly dogmas or mediocrity, and for me they have been a breath of creative enthusiasm.



(<https://perfumepolytechnic.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/nc3a9-carne-nc3a9-pesce.jpg>).

Angelo's "Né carne né pesce" at Esxence 2015

My final question is not a question, but a request: I want you to write one question that you've always wanted to be asked by an interviewer, but have never been asked. Type the question below and then answer it.

Angelo's question is: What do you think of competitions and awards in the world of perfumery? And why do bloggers give their vote to perfumes?

Let's say that after collecting tens of insults from affable operators I can no longer feel bound to highlight the aberrations of Niche. First, when I hear about artistic perfumery I always wonder why this adjective does not result in treating perfumes as "products of art." I do not mean of course the single bottle, but the work of the nose, which is intellectual and sensitive work, even before a perfume is placed on the shelf. Well if we're talking about art, why then are there contests? Let's start with the information that to participate in a contest usually you pay a few thousand Euros and (in absolute terms) by participating, you are not representing anything, no style, no membership, no poetry or bullshit often attributable to perfumes, much less any nation. Being part of the competition brings you onto the stage, it is only a mere selfish ambition that has little to do with art! One perfume? Five thousand Euros please! You have two?! Enjoy your discount, it's seven thousand Euros. [By paying to enter] you are increasing your chances of being among the winners: they do not hurt anyone, they include various categories and finalists, so everyone has a place on the stage! But there are also online juries! One vote for every each avatar! Secret ballot... Wow! With regard to algebraic voting, I always wondered why bloggers vote for their favourite perfumes! What is that? Maybe a teacher judges a student? Or rather, the intent of the bloggers is to insert a perfume in a context of value? The Guernica by Picasso, 8.5! Masaccio's Trinity 7.5/8.

John Holmes had a penis longer than Rocco Siffredi? Wikipedia's answer is yes! And if the penis could be considered art just for simple apotropaic superstitions, here! The truth would be that Holmes would have had higher ratings, he would win all the competitions and would be considered more of an artist than Siffredi! What about making love?

If you'd like to find out more about O'Driù and Angelo's perfumes, visit [O'Driù's website](http://www.odriu.eu/store/) (<http://www.odriu.eu/store/>). If you're interested, you can also read a [previous blog post of mine](https://perfumepolytechnic.wordpress.com/2014/11/03/odriu-blind-sniff-challenge/) (<https://perfumepolytechnic.wordpress.com/2014/11/03/odriu-blind-sniff-challenge/>) in which Olly Technic and I blind-tested and reviewed a sample set of O'Driù perfumes. O'Driù's fragrances are listed on [Fragrantica](http://www.fragrantica.com/designers/O%60Driu.html) (<http://www.fragrantica.com/designers/O%60Driu.html>) and [Basenotes](http://www.basenotes.net/brand/odriu) (<http://www.basenotes.net/brand/odriu>).

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13 thoughts on “Art, Carnality & Consumerism: A Conversation With Angelo Orazio Pregoni of O’Driù Perfumes”

1. *bgirlrhapsody*

MAY 31, 2015 AT 10:28 PM

That was such a brilliant and thought provoking interview.

Reply

◦ *pollytechnic*

MAY 31, 2015 AT 10:41 PM

Thank you so much! I’m really glad you got so much out of it 😊

Reply

◦ *bgirlrhapsody*

JUNE 1, 2015 AT 12:15 AM

I had written so much more but my bloody cat somehow managed to refresh the page when he walked on my keyboard. Then I had a tantrum and got told off by my husband. 😞

◦ ANNALISA

MAY 31, 2015 AT 10:42 PM

GENIUS! Thank you Melita for such unusual interview!

Reply

◦ *pollytechnic*

MAY 31, 2015 AT 11:04 PM

Thank you Annalisa! We must thank Angelo mostly 😊

2. ANNALISA

JUNE 1, 2015 AT 12:22 AM

Angelo is a genius! But this interview let us know his sensibility and his feelings! Nobody has his artistic personality, and nobody has ever make him such as deep and original questions.

Reply

◦ *pollytechnic*

JUNE 1, 2015 AT 9:52 AM

Thank you very much!

Reply

3. *pollytechnic*

JUNE 1, 2015 AT 9:51 AM

Bgirlrhapsody, funny to hear about your cat. I love cats, that is such typical behaviour! They must always get in the way of what one is doing... 😊 As for the cat erasing it, plus your tantrum and your husband telling you off, it sounds like a comedy of errors 😊

Reply

4. Pingback: RE_VELACIÓN: To Reveal or to Re-veil. What will you choose? A new artistic performance by Angelo Orazio Pregoni | Perfume Polytechnic
5. Pingback: Perfume Polytechnic's Christmas Gift List & Olfactory Experience Ideas | Perfume Polytechnic
6. Pingback: Perfume Polytechnic's Favourite Olfactory Moments of 2015 | Perfume Polytechnic

7. juliehrrose

DECEMBER 29, 2015 AT 4:01 PM

Fantastic interview. Lots to chew on. Much has been illuminated. Thank you!!

Reply

◦ pollytechnic

DECEMBER 29, 2015 AT 8:09 PM

So glad it's helped somewhat! 😊

Reply

Blog at WordPress.com.