

The Scent Mystique

Scents tap into our deepest fears and desires with our sense of smell triggering unconscious memories and stirring up emotions more than any other sense we have. Which begs the question: what exactly do our deepest fears and desires smell like? From money and global warming to nightclubs and sex, it turns out that some of the fears, desires, and compulsions that wake us up in the middle of the night—or keep us up all night—have a very distinctive (and not always entirely pleasant) scent.



The Scent of Celebrity

What do the hallowed halls of Hollywood smell like? Don't believe the celebrity fragrance hype—many of the poster boys for male cologne are notorious for their insufferable BO.

"It's character actors like Matthew McConaughey, Willem Dafoe, and Robert Pattinson who really get into their roles, who have more of an...odor about them," says Trey Taylor, the U.S. editor of *The Face* who has written on the scent of celebrity. He cites a *GQ* story of Pattinson's clothes having a "smell like he has recently purchased them off the back of someone less fortunate than he," with the actor proclaiming that his body odor gets to the point "where even I can't stand the air around me."

McConaughey unabashedly says he hasn't worn deodorant in 20 years, and when his co-star Kate Hudson brought deodorant to the set of *Fool's Gold* and asked the actor to wear some, he refused. "His justification is bizarre," Taylor says. "He said his mom told him that his natural smell was better than any deodorant that would mask that scent, so that only the people who could stand to be around him would stay."

Johnny Depp, Cameron Diaz, Adrian Grenier, and Bradley Cooper have also embraced the anti-deodorant lifestyle. "There's this bizarre dichotomy with luxury fragrance brands that want to capture the bad boy persona of certain actors," Taylor says, pointing to actors like Depp. "What lends to that bad boy persona is the idea that they don't wash, in order to give the impression that they're careless and risk taking," Taylor says, laughing. "Which is ironic because they're trying to hawk fragrances they definitely don't wear."



The Scent of Prison

Freedom smells different to everyone, but if you want to know what captivity smells like, look to a prison. For inmates serving time in one of Brazil's notoriously crowded and violent prisons, an acrid medley of sweat, urine, and fungus reportedly clouds the air. It's a similar story in the United States—with the war on drugs and increasingly strict sentencing, the number of inmates has increased and former single cells now house two people.

Inmates often sleep crowded onto mattresses right next to shared toilets, and the smell of urine and sweat prevail. For those on death row, the electric chair creates an odor dubbed the "smell of death," adding to an atmosphere of dread. The smell of cannabis pervades many jails around the world, with guards turning a blind eye to its widespread use compared to alcohol, cocaine, and other drugs. According to Aarhus University's Center for Alcohol and Drug Research in Denmark, smoking cannabis helps inmates behave and prevents violent outbursts, with many prisoners also using it to self-medicate.

Conversely, in one of Norway's maximum-security jails, Halden Fengsel, which verges on a members' club complete with jogging trails and a sound studio, you'll smell a whiff of orange sorbet, waffles, and carefully prepared dishes emanating from the kitchen, where inmates prepare multi-course meals for each other. Perhaps in some places, the smell of freedom and captivity are not so different after all.