

Perfumes for Fear

Raewyn Turner ©

Researching my Perfumes for Fear project led me to the people's stories of the stench of dioxin contamination and buried toxic matter under New Plymouth's mantle of green. 2,4,5-T, manufactured at the Ivan Watkins Dow Chemical plant at Paritutu, on New Plymouth's coast., was discontinued in 1987 and the residue disposed of locally.

I collected a palette of 400 green colours from the lush but contaminated landscape of Mt Taranaki and around Paritutu. She animated these into a movie to show these in rapid succession to commercial perfumer, Louise Crouch. Louise, who synaesthetically connects colours with her catalogued perfumery materials was able to suggest a fragrance that synaesthetically matched the visual green sequence.

The project investigates the relationship between the environment and people's fear of the uncontrollable and the unknown, playing with the idea that we can influence vast forces such as weather and chance by our animistic fragrant objects. The odours and their containers are fix-it tools intended for manifesting fortifying thoughts of love and healing in an irrational communicable form.' (5)

I'm investigating the potential of smell as a source of cross-sensory information, revealing emotional and physical states and details of the environment. A stone found at the mouth of the river from the local area forms the model for the perfume's container, emulating ancient practices of healing by 'playing' found objects mimicking the shapes of internal body organs (a practice reflected in New Zealand musician Richard Nunns' work with traditional Maori instruments).