

RACHEAL
CROWTHER

AT
CHISENHOLE

Racheal Crowther

Liquid Trust

17 April – 14 June 2026

Liquid Trust is the first institutional exhibition by London-based artist Racheal Crowther. Through the interplay of architecture, scent, and colour, Crowther's new commission explores how bodies are processed, manipulated, and soothed within institutional spaces and systems. Comprising three interconnected works, the installation moves between military infrastructure, neurochemical signalling, and histories of psychological design.

At the centre of this exhibition is a US-manufactured mobile health unit previously used by the British Armed Forces. With its operational history only partially legible, the unit is a liminal space where bodies were once assessed and categorised. Residual markings, paperwork, and signage imply a site of triage or quarantine, while its portability signals situations in which care and control occur beyond conventional frameworks.

Chemical and organic compounds are diffused into the gallery's airspace, operating at the threshold of human perception. Substances associated with the scent of powdered milk – an ultra-processed life-sustaining substance – trace its transformation from surplus dairy by-product to military provision and ubiquitous industrial filler, reflecting how lactation and nurturing have become abstracted through manufacture and distribution. Also circulating is hexadecanal, a molecule emitted by all human bodies, particularly newborns, and believed to trigger neurological and behavioural responses. These materials are linked to Crowther's interest in oxytocin, the hormone that stimulates lactation and social bonding, connecting histories of care-giving and military pharmacological use.

The entire gallery is transformed through the application of Baker-Miller pink, a colour historically used across carceral, medical, and military environments in attempts to reduce aggression. Its presence underscores the enduring belief in psychological control through design.

Moving from object to atmosphere to total enclosure, *Liquid Trust* draws attention to the material, chemical, and psychological infrastructures that quietly organise civic life. It continues Crowther's long-term examination of how governance, surveillance, and institutional power are entangled with systems of care.

Biography

Racheal Crowther lives and works in London. Selected exhibitions include: *Aria Notturna*, Galleria ZERO, Milan, 2026; *Gebrauchsmusik*, Galerie Noah Klink, Berlin, 2025; *Royal Academy Schools Show*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2024; *Managed Decline*, 243 Luz, Margate, 2023; *Qualified to Care*, Ginny on Frederick, London, 2022; *Intermission: White Noise Ballrooms*, Camden Arts Centre Off-Site Programme, Cork Street Galleries, London, 2020; *Hard Shoulder*, Peak Gallery, London, 2019.

List of Works

NSN 5411-99-219-4744

Mobile health unit

6090 × 6710 × 2420cm

Hex Code #FF91AF

Baker-Miller Pink paint

Dimensions variable

HS Code 04022911

DILUENTS (Dipropylene Glycol, Aqua (water)), LACTONES (Delta-hexalactone, Delta-decalactone, Delta-undecalactone, Cis-6-dodecen-4-olide, Delta-dodecalactone, Gamma-dodecalactone, Delta-tetradecalactone), KETONES (Pentan-2-one, Oct-1-en-3-one, Octan-2-one, Undecan-2-one), ALDEHYDES (5-Methylfurfural, Hexanal, Heptanal, Nonanal, (E)-2-Nonenal, 12-Methyltridecanal, Hexadecanal), ACIDS (Butanoic acid, Octanoic acid, 4-Methylnonanoic acid, Decanoic acid), ESTERS (Ethyl acetate, Ethyl lactate, Methyl isobutyrate, Ethyl isobutyrate, Isobutyl acetate, Propyl propionate, Ethyl hexanoate, Ethyl octanoate, Butyl butyryllactate, Decyl acetate, Ethyl decanoate, Ethyl tetradecanoate, Methyl linoleate, Ethyl linolenate), NITROGENOUS & SULFUROUS compounds (Dimethyl sulfide, 2-Methoxypyrazine, 2-Ethyl pyrazine, 2-Propionyl-2-thiazoline, Indole), MISCELLANEOUS (Maltol, Hexan-1-ol, 2-Ethylhexan-1-ol, Oryza sativa pericarp [bran] extract, Juniperus virginiana wood oil).

Developed by Racheal Crowther & Harry Sherwood

All works 2026

Exhibition Events

Chisenhale Gallery works with artists to create events that extend their exhibitions, opening up space for experimentation, reflection, and encounter.

Launch & Readings

Wednesday 29 April,
7–8:30pm

An evening to mark the launch of *Interjection Calendar 011* published by Montez Press, guest edited by Racheal Crowther, featuring readings from Crowther, Eilidh Duffy, Ethan O'Connor, Bishwadhan Rai, and Elida Silvey.

Talk

Wednesday 3 June, 7–8:30pm

A talk by scholar and writer Esther Leslie on the contemporary engineering of atmosphere and its sensory and political stakes.

Artist Walkthrough

Thursday 11 June, 7–8pm

An evening walkthrough of *Liquid Trust* led by artist Racheal Crowther and Asymmetry Curatorial and Research Fellow Zhejun Gao, exploring the ideas and processes behind her new commission.

All events are free to attend and open to all. To book, please visit our website or talk to a member of staff.

We are committed to ensuring our events are accessible for all. Please contact mail@chisenhale.org.uk to discuss any access needs. We will endeavour to meet all requests where possible. Please be advised that requests should be made two weeks in advance of the event.

Limited Edition

Racheal Crowther

Health Control Post Entrance (Electron Microscopy Imaging)
2026

Digital pigment print on Somerset paper
40.7 x 28.9cm
Edition of 18

With thanks to Professor Neil Young, Department of Materials,
University of Oxford, and the David Cockayne Centre for
Electron Microscopy.

Launch price: £150
Chisenhale Friends' price: £135*

Chisenhale Gallery is pleased to announce *Health Control Post Entrance (Electron Microscopy Imaging)*, 2026, a new limited edition by Racheal Crowther as part of Chisenhale Editions. Produced exclusively by the artist, the work supports Chisenhale Gallery's programme.

The work originates from a process of extraction. Material samples taken from the decommissioned US-manufactured mobile health unit at the centre of *Liquid Trust* were sent to the Department of Materials at the University of Oxford, where electron microscopy was used to render their composition visible at an atomic scale. Through this process, Crowther repositions the unit as both subject and specimen, shifting from an architectural structure of assessment and control to an object of scientific study.

Expanding out from her Chisenhale Gallery commission, the edition engages processes of analysis, classification, and exposure. It operates simultaneously as a document of institutional history and a scientific image, tracing how

systems of care and control are embedded at both material and infrastructural levels. Inverting the logics through which bodies are examined and categorised, the work turns analytical attention back onto the apparatus itself.

As with Crowther's wider practice, this new edition operates at the threshold of perception, asking what becomes legible when the structures that organise and regulate civic life are themselves subjected to close inspection.

Print displayed on a pink mount board with a metallic frame as recommended by the artist.

*Chisenhale Supporters will benefit from a 10% discount. For more information about how to support the gallery, please visit our website or ask a member of our team.

For editions the listed price is available for a limited time. As is the norm for editions, prices will increase as the work sells out.

Chisenhale Interviews: Racheal Crowther

Olivia Aherne: *Liquid Trust*, your new commission and first institutional exhibition, brings together architecture, scent, and colour, elements that have long been central to your practice. How do they coalesce in this new body of work, and what initially drew you to their intersection?

Racheal Crowther: Throughout my practice, I have been interested in the fine line between care and control, focusing on the psychological and social dimensions of buildings, objects, and spaces. I'm interested in how environments are often designed to regulate behaviour, with systems of governance and surveillance becoming embedded within everyday architecture and apparatus.

I'm particularly drawn to the sensory engineering of controlled spaces, especially spaces of confinement. Take the police interview room, for example: all the furniture is secured to the floor, and you're hyperaware that you are being recorded. The acoustics are engineered to the point that it's almost an anechoic chamber, the walls absorbing nearly all sound reflections and isolating the room from external noise. This extreme sound absorption creates a weird, submerged feeling because the brain is deprived of subtle acoustic cues that normally help us interpret what's around us. Being in one of those rooms is an unnerving experience, even if you're not the one being interviewed, as it's intentionally designed to make you feel uneasy. Throughout my installations, I draw on these spatial and material languages, bringing objects and architectural elements into the gallery that carry specific institutional and psychosocial associations. These are not neutral forms – they are loaded materials, objects manufactured within systems that manage risk, compliance, and affect.

My practice also spans immaterial forces that shape experience, with previous works including radio frequencies and other ambient signals that subtly permeate our surroundings. For several years now, I've been exploring scent as a subperceptible medium. Across built environments – retail outlets, corporate offices, military operations, carceral settings – scent has been overlooked, yet is strategically deployed to influence mood, behaviour, and perception, often operating below the threshold of conscious awareness.

OA: How have your own experiences of smell shaped the way you think about its role in perception and memory?

RC: Scent is fundamentally experiential. It cannot be mediated online or through photos. One must be physically present to inhale the air and internally process the ingested molecules. Each encounter with scent is also shaped by its environmental and architectural conditions – air circulation, humidity, proximity. All of these factors make it inseparable from its immediate site and context. On a very basic level, smell and memory are closely linked because of our brain's anatomy. When we smell something, the odours take a direct route to the limbic system, which is the part of the brain that regulates emotion, memory, behaviour, and motivation.

During the pandemic, I temporarily became anosmic – which is when you experience total or partial loss of the sense of smell – and I had a very real fear that it wouldn't come back. When it did, I felt immense gratitude for it. That's when my obsession with scent started. The pandemic instilled a fear that every breath was a risk. Then mask-wearing reconfigured everyday perception. Each inhalation was filtered, volatile compounds from our environments were held at a distance, muting a sense of each other. Our surroundings, work, education, leisure, intimacy, and entertainment migrated online, flattened into screens. The images and data of that time privileged sight and sound over smell.

I also witnessed my grandmother develop dementia. There is nothing more unsettling than watching someone slowly forget who they are, where they are, and who you are. When researching this experience, I encountered the work of Dr. Jamie Knight at the Department of Psychology, University of Victoria, Canada. Her research sits at the intersection of neuropsychology and chemosensory science, focusing on olfactory health and ageing. It explores how changes in olfactory function can serve as early indicators of neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. Through olfactory testing, she has demonstrated that the ability to detect and recognise scents is closely tied to processes of memory and spatial orientation. In this framing, smell is not a peripheral sense, but a critical threshold through which early changes in brain function – and the gradual dislocation of self – may first become perceptible.

OA: You then began to train your own sensory perception through scent, developing a deeper understanding of how the body intersects with scientific research. How has this practice and research shaped the new body of work?

RC: I enrolled in Dr. Knight's online smell training course, Olfactory Reboot. The course employs structured olfactory exercises intended to strengthen neural pathways involved in memory, emotion, and perception, with the stated aim of supporting long-term cognitive resilience. During the course, I encountered participants experiencing post-viral anosmia that had significantly disrupted their everyday sensory orientation. The training used techniques of associative memory recall, using familiar odours to prompt recognition and to re-engage olfactory-memory connections. We were encouraged to keep a smell journal, which I've since continued to practice.

In 2022, I also undertook an intensive course at A Library of Olfactive Material in Glasgow, a space for

scent education and experimentation run by Clara Weale. There, I developed a foundational understanding of how to work with scent materials – how to dilute, blend, and begin composing with them. I also started to familiarise myself with individual molecules encountered in everyday life, particularly those with multiple applications across different industries. I became really interested in compounds that operate across both fragrance and pharmaceutical contexts, highly valued in perfumery while also functioning as active ingredients or intermediates in drug production. That overlap, and the tension it produces, has become really central to my thinking.

One of the first materials we encountered on the course was methyl benzoate. It has a pungent, fruity-floral scent and is widely used in perfumery, but it is also released when cocaine oxidises, so it's used to train sniffer dogs in policing contexts. That dual function, sensory and forensic, is what initially prompted my interest in olfactory surveillance.

From there, I began looking into historical precedents, including the scent archive maintained by the Stasi, who systematically collected and stored human odours to track potential dissidents. Cloth was used to gather scent traces from everyday objects, and even air samples were captured from private spaces, later used for identification with tracking dogs. This is mirrored in the contemporary uses of technology such as gas chromatography, which is widely used to analyse and reconstruct fragrances. It enables the reverse engineering of luxury scents to produce realistic counterfeits, and also underpins advanced field instruments used to identify unknown chemical substances across military, forensic, and environmental contexts, from breathalysers to airport detection systems.

I had previously written about the intangibility of scent, its ephemeral nature, and how scent operates

commercially and psychologically in an essay titled *The Eternal Pursuit of the Unattainable*, published by Montez Press in 2023. Because of its intangibility, perfume has long relied on narrative and image to evoke desire, fantasy, and transformation, even transgression. It functions not merely as ornament, but as a means of expression and mood regulation, often tied to behaviour and perception modulation.

During a residency in Paris, I visited the International Flavors & Fragrance Inc. (IFF), a company that is an example of this convergence. As well as creating some of the best-selling perfumes on the market, such as *Eternity* by Calvin Klein, *Alien* by Thierry Mugler, and *Flowerbomb* by Viktor & Rolf, they apply patented processes and technologies such as ScentEmotions™, BrainEmotions™, and Beyond Hedonics™, as well as bioscience, data analysis, and neuroscience across multiple industries. Their use of EEG to measure brain responses to scent, and to map connections between chemical compounds and emotional states, signals an increasingly instrumentalised understanding of smell, which they describe as the ‘chemistry of emotions.’

I also came across practices such as ambient fragancing and sensory engineering, where scents are diffused through built environments – from hotels and retail spaces to corporate workplaces – to shape behaviour and perception, often below the threshold of conscious awareness.

OA: Your work often focuses on environments and objects rather than the body itself, drawing on forms of psychological architecture and institutional design. How has your engagement with these spaces, both through research and lived experience, informed your practice?

RC: My work has always remained deliberately absent of the body, or of people. Instead, there's been a real focus on the object, the environment, and the architectural

and psychological boundaries of the spaces we inhabit, both publicly and privately. I've always been interested in biopolitical structures, systems of governance and surveillance, and what might be described as a 'bureaucracy of care'.

I often draw from social, commercial, and institutional environments that I've either observed or come into contact with. In previous works, I've looked closely at specific forms of psychological architecture, such as hostile furnishings, and anti-ligature fittings designed for high-risk or controlled settings. These are often found in institutions associated with care – psychiatric wards, prisons, youth detention centres, nursing homes – where the stated aim is safety, but where authority is also maintained and behaviour restricted. That tension has been a constant point of interest for me. It's something I encountered firsthand when working in social care, where many of the young people I supported were facing homelessness. I would often go with them to the town hall to speak with housing officers, and I remember waiting outside on benches fitted with anti-homeless design features.

That experience has stayed with me, and it shaped how I think about objects within my work. I'm interested in what happens when objects become displaced from their intended environments. There's a tension between presence and absence in that shift, where something feels simultaneously familiar and out of place. These objects carry the conditions of their original use with them, but take on a different status in the gallery. They become things to be looked at, rather than tools that structure behaviour or observation. I'm interested in that reversal, in which objects designed to observe, regulate, or contain are re-situated as the subject in a space of observation. That sense of an incongruous presence, of something not quite belonging, is something I try to hold within the work.

OA: A US-manufactured mobile health unit previously used by the British Armed Forces sits at the centre of *Liquid Trust* as both a functional object and a symbolic structure. Can you speak about how you first encountered it and what closer inspection revealed?

RC: I came across the unit through a government auction site that sells decommissioned surplus from the Ministry of Defence. In the listing, it was described simply as a 'health control post.' From the images, I could see it was some kind of office – perhaps a point of call or triage – but it wasn't clearly identifiable as a medical facility and there was no definitive explanation of its function. I'd been following these kinds of auction sites for a long time, but I hadn't come across something like this before.

When we carried out a site visit, much more information became available. We were able to properly assess the interior, and accompanying paperwork revealed that it had come from RAF Wyton, around the same time as the 2018 Salisbury Novichok poisonings. The incident incurred a massive decontamination operation that cost over £12 million and involved military personnel and specialists, who had to safely remove nerve agent residues from nine sites. I later spoke to two RAF workers who confirmed that the unit would have been deployed during this time.

That discovery felt very surreal because in the essay I'd written for Montez Press, which explores the relationship between social class, perfume, and poison, I opened with an account of the attempted assassination of former Russian agent Sergei Skripal using Novichok in the Wiltshire poisonings. Several months after the incident, a member of the public, Charlie Rowley, found what appeared to be a bottle of *Premier Jour* by Nina Ricci in a charity donation bin and gave it to his girlfriend, Dawn Sturgess. Both were living in temporary homeless accommodation at the time. When Sturgess applied the perfume, she was unknowingly exposed to the concealed

nerve agent, and died several days later. It was a tragic instance in which perfume, toxicity, and systems of circulation agglomerated.

OA: The title of the show, *Liquid Trust*, comes from a perfume developed and marketed in the 90s, which contains the hormone and neurotransmitter oxytocin...

RC: Yeah, I was already very interested in the commerciality of perfume, and how its advertising taps into a human longing for something beyond the everyday, intricately weaving psychological triggers, captivating imagery, and sensory allure to manipulate desire and to play on our innate insecurities. It was only a matter of time until its 'functionality' would be pushed further. There are now a myriad of perfume and cosmetic products that claim to contain oxytocin, with their packaging promising enhanced social relations: building trust between friends and family, enhancing positive emotions in social and sexual interactions, alleviating anxiety, reducing stress, etc.

Pheromone sprays are a good example of this. They operate largely as a marketing ploy, capitalising on the unproven yet seductive idea of a 'magic potion' that can manufacture attraction, despite limited scientific evidence supporting their efficacy in humans. While pheromones are scientifically proven to affect animal behaviour, human pheromones have not been conclusively identified.

This beauty-science crossover feels more prevalent now than ever. Online health and beauty businesses offer quasi-medical diagnostic tools: 'Hormone MOT: Test results in 6 days' from a finger-prick blood test, at-home allergy testing kits that have been proven unreliable, and weight-loss injections readily available through apps. We're in a cultural moment where scientific language is increasingly repurposed as a marketing tool.

Even on the high street, brands like The Ordinary adopt clinical packaging and a 'look of science' design philosophy, naming products after their active ingredients – 'Niacinamide 10% + Zinc 1% Serum' – rather than previously commonplace terms like 'wrinkle-erasing' or 'miracle cream'. This kind of scientific framing produces a sense of safety, trust, and efficacy. In that sense, the perfume *Liquid Trust* feels like an early iteration of something that has since become far more pervasive – more stealthy, more embedded, and more inconspicuous.

OA: While oxytocin doesn't feature in the show materially, it's signalled conceptually across all three works. In military contexts, it is used in training and detection, in the body it drives labour contractions and lactation, and it is widely considered to be the 'happy hormone' which is released to regulate stress and lower blood pressure. Where did you first discover its use in the military?

RC: I had been reading a lot of debates around 'enhanced soldiers', and military innovations augmenting human capacity through pharmaceuticals, AI, engineered exoskeletons, and so on. This is emblematic of the dehumanisation that comes with war – how humans, constrained by fatigue, stress, injury, and psychological trauma are contrasted with robotic systems that are limited only by battery life. Military sciences are continuously trying to address those human limitations, but in doing so they also expose the vulnerability of combat effectiveness.

Defence research agencies have long been developing pharmacological and neurological enhancements aimed at creating soldiers with fewer limitations. This isn't new: records show that in World War II, for example, amphetamine was widely used to keep troops alert, alongside other pharmacological interventions to manage stress, fear, and fatigue. What I found particularly interesting, though, was the military's use of oxytocin.

Experimental use of oxytocin as a treatment for PTSD in war veterans is very well documented. Taken orally, it breaks down quickly in the digestive tract, so effective administration usually needs to be intravenous. DARPA [The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency] continues to fund research into oxytocin through specific commercial agencies, like Polestar Technologies Inc., investing millions into studies exploring its potential to boost social bonding, team cohesion, trust, and cooperation among soldiers in high-stress environments.

What fascinates me is the tension here. 'Oxytocin' comes from the Greek *oxys*, meaning 'sharp' or 'swift,' and *tokos*, meaning 'birth' or 'childbirth,' and it is primarily understood as a life-giving hormone. It's used to medically induce labour, strengthen contractions during delivery, facilitate the expulsion of the placenta after birth, and stimulate milk production for breastfeeding. It's a fundamentally nurturing, life-affirming compound, yet here it's mobilised in militarised contexts to manipulate behaviour, enhance compliance, and support operations with death as their objective. I'm very interested in the dual existence of this molecule; it lives in these two very different worlds simultaneously.

OA: With this in mind, milk – specifically powdered baby formula – features in the exhibition through a carefully developed olfactive work, rather than materially. What does this allow you to explore in relation to care, industrialisation, and abstraction? And how did your research into oxytocin lead you to powdered milk as a key component in the exhibition?

RC: When thinking about oxytocin – and how one of its primary functions is to stimulate milk production – I immediately returned to Esther Leslie's *The Meaning of Milk: Journeys of Lactic Abstraction*. She gave lectures while I was studying at the Royal Academy, and I always looked forward to hearing her speak.

This essay in particular stayed with me. In it, Leslie traces milk across its many transformations, examining how it is extracted, homogenised, skimmed, monetised, mechanised, processed, and refined. She moves between early associations of milk with infancy and nourishment, through its evolution into one of the most highly technologised liquids on the planet. It appears not only in food, but across a vast range of industrial applications: fertilisers, adhesives, methane, ethanol, cosmetics, paper coating, concrete, and cement. Milk is present in supplements, catalysts, emulsifiers and surfactants. It also re-enters the human body in other forms, as isolates and concentrates like whey protein, becoming folded back into muscle mass.

She also writes about how the cow's body is subsumed by commercial processes of optimisation – how 'yield' is maximised through the manipulation of feed, medication, living conditions, and genetics, reducing the animal to a site for extraction. In that framing, the cow is rendered as economic capital, its biological functions quantified, managed, and leveraged for maximum financial return.

When I first read the essay, I was reminded of Marcel Broodthaers' 1974 work *Les Animaux de la Ferme (The Farm Animals)*, an offset lithograph that adopts the format of a primary school educational chart, mapping cattle breeds alongside car manufacturers such as Mercedes, Renault, Maserati, and so on, tracing slippage between animal bodies and industrial production.

Thinking through this led me to powdered milk. It initially emerged as a way of preserving surplus milk and managing waste within the dairy industry, wherein byproducts caused significant environmental pollution. In the early twentieth century, it was largely rejected for human consumption and used instead for livestock feed or military rations, before later being repackaged for the mass market.

Powdered milk became widely used in military contexts due to its nutritional density, shelf stability, versatility, and transportability, and was later distributed through humanitarian and post-war aid programmes – a controversial legacy. Beyond military and humanitarian use, it has become deeply embedded in industrial food production, where it functions as a near-invisible additive and is almost omnipresent.

So for me, working with powdered milk as an olfactory reference point allows these trajectories to converge, linking the biological function of lactation, as mediated by oxytocin, with systems of industrialisation, distribution, and abstraction. It becomes a way of thinking through how something fundamentally tied to nourishment and dependency is transformed into a diffuse, infrastructural presence.

OA: Hexadecanal, a byproduct of the human metabolic system, is one of the materials laced into the olfactive work that's released into the exhibition. How has your research into neurochemistry and behavioural science informed this conceptual and material development?

RC: During my research into oxytocin, I came across a number of studies looking at other compounds with comparable behavioural effects. Hexadecanal stood out as it appears to decrease aggression in men, but increases aggressive responses in women. Hexadecanal is also ubiquitous. It's emitted by the human body – present in breath, on the skin, even in faeces – so it's something we are constantly producing and encountering. It's already in the air around us, and is found in particularly high concentrations on the scalps of newborn babies.

There are clear resonances here with oxytocin. I became interested in whether its presence on the newborn scalp might play a role in bonding between parent and child, not unlike milk. Even if we can't consciously detect these compounds, and even though humans don't

have functioning pheromone systems in the same way as other animals, they still operate as invisible forms of communication.

For the show, I wanted to create an olfactory encounter with industrialised powdered baby formula. Something that held the comforting, familial notes of milk, that's reminiscent of the lactonic bond associated with oxytocin, but also contains an overall impression of abstraction: cow to milk, milk to powder, powder to product. I wanted the scent to be layered, moving across different olfactory registers. I also wanted it to have tension built into it, which is where hexadecanal comes in – something which, like powdered milk, is everywhere, and which contributes to the smell of newborn babies, set against a milk note that smells ultra-processed and factory-made.

The scent has a velvety, dry, powdery, almost talc-like texture, with subtle cupboard-air and slightly oxidised undertones. Other references include powdered creamer, baby rusks, wafer filling dust, and cereal-milk. I feel very lucky to have worked with Harry Sherwood on this. He's been my supplier of weird and wonderful scent materials for years, and I'm incredibly thankful for his expertise in bringing this to life.

OA: The gallery is drenched in Baker-Miller Pink, a colour that carries a contested history of psychological influence. Where did you first encounter this colour, and what's its significance in relation to the wider installation?

RC: I first encountered Baker-Miller Pink in the book *Drunk Tank Pink: And Other Unexpected Forces That Shape How We Think, Feel, and Behave* by Adam Alter. It's a bubblegum shade also known as Drunk Tank Pink, P-618, or Schauss Pink. In the late 1970s, Dr Alexander Schauss conducted a series of experiments to investigate how specific colours might influence physiological measures such as heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration. Schauss reported that exposure to a particular shade of

pink produced a rapid, short-term reduction in muscular strength and arousal, suggesting the colour could temporarily reduce aggressive impulses. These findings attracted the attention of Gene Baker and Ron Miller, directors of a US Naval correctional facility in Seattle. At Schauss's urging, several cells were painted pink to observe its effects on the people confined there. Schauss subsequently named the colour 'Baker-Miller Pink' after the facility's directors.

In the early years of its use, observational reports appeared to support the effects of Baker-Miller Pink. Officials noted decreases in violent incidents and claimed that newly detained individuals calmed more quickly when placed in pink cells during the initial minutes of custody. These early accounts reinforced the theory that colour could function as a subtle regulator of mood and aggression. As a result, Baker-Miller Pink was adopted by other institutions, including prisons, psychiatric wards, and, in some cases, schools and sporting environments, where it was applied to locker rooms under the belief that it could psychologically weaken visiting teams.

However, subsequent studies failed to substantiate Schauss's original claims. Later experiments were unable to reliably reproduce the reported reductions in aggression or muscular strength, and where effects were observed, they were brief, inconsistent, or statistically marginal. Researchers also noted that responses to colour were highly contingent on context, expectation, and prior association; in institutional environments, prolonged exposure to Baker-Miller Pink sometimes provoked irritation or hostility rather than calm. Methodological critiques further undermined the original findings, citing small sample sizes, limited controls, and ambiguities in measurement. By the 1980s, colour psychology had largely moved away from deterministic models, reframing Baker-Miller Pink not as a scientifically validated mechanism of behavioural regulation, but as an artefact of institutional belief in environmental control.

When researching applications of Baker-Miller Pink, I encountered a range of case studies, most prominently in penal and psychiatric institutions across the United States and Europe. At the Dallas County Detention Center in Missouri, prison cells were painted in Baker-Miller Pink under the direction of Sheriff Mike Rackley, who extended the scheme by adding blue teddy bear motifs to the walls. In an interview, he explained, 'Basically, if they are going to act like children and commit a childish act, then we'll make a childish atmosphere. And it's a calming thing; teddy bears are soothing. So we made it like a daycare – and that's kind of what it is: a day care for adults who can't control their behaviour in public.' This framing reveals how the colour's purported calming effects are entangled with disciplinary strategies that infantilise people who have been incarcerated.

More than thirty Swiss prisons adopted the colour – renamed 'Cool Down Pink' – applying it to holding cells painted in the sugary hue. In nearly every image I encountered, these cells appeared entirely windowless, producing a sense of total enclosure. I wanted to echo this condition in *Liquid Trust*. We boarded up the windows of the gallery in order to intensify the experience of immersion, creating an environment in which the viewer is completely enveloped by colour, without visual access to the outside world. It returns me to those institutional contexts that we discussed at the beginning of this conversation, which produce a similar kind of sensory isolation, stripping away environmental cues that normally anchor our perception.

Interviewed by Olivia Aherne, Curator, Chisenhale Gallery, on Thursday 2 April 2026.

Reading List

This reading list has been compiled by Racheal Crowther to accompany her new commission *Liquid Trust* at Chisenhale Gallery. The selection brings together scientific research, philosophical writing, and artistic reflection that have informed Crowther's exploration of governance, psychological design, and the social and political dimensions of olfactory. Jonathan D. Moreno's study of brain science sits alongside Mary Roach's work on human physiology and psychology, examining the complex mechanisms of neuroenhancement and chemically modulated behaviour in military contexts. Kerstin Uvnäs Moberg investigates oxytocin's role in regulating emotional dynamics, while Boris Groys examines care as a philosophical framework, interrogating the interplay between self-care and institutional control. Esther Leslie and Melanie Jackson examine the multiple dimensions of milk, assessing its influence on bodily experience, communal ties,

and cultural meaning, while Susan Schuppli's analysis of the mediating capacities of matter draws attention to the material dimensions of the exhibition. Together, this list maps a terrain where chemical, material, and psychological infrastructures intersect, providing multiple points of entry into Crowther's new commission.

Adleff-Genot, Yan. "Enhanced Soldiers and the Dehumanisation of War." *Action on Armed Violence*, January 31, 2025. Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://aoav.org.uk/2025/enhanced-soldiers-and-the-dehumanisation-of-war/>.

Alleyne, Richard. "Love Hormone Oxytocin Helps Soldiers Like Each Other and Hate the Enemy." *The Daily Telegraph*, June 11, 2010. Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/7818276/Love-hormone-Oxytocin-helps-soldiers-like-each-other-and-hate-the-enemy.html>.

Balez, Suzel. "Characterisation of an

Existing Building According to Olfactory Parameters.” Paper presented at the First International Workshop: Architectural and Urban Ambient Environment, February 6–8, 2002, Nantes, France, 1–11. Accessed July 17, 2025. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228481880_Characterisation_of_an_existing_building_according_to_olfactory_parameters.

Barbara, Anna, and Anthony Perliiss. *Invisible Architecture: Experiencing Places through the Sense of Smell*. Milan: Skira Editore, 2006.

Choudhury, Athia N. “Milky Appetites: The Foods that Make Us Human.” *Disability Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2023).

Classen, Constance, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott. *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Corbin, Alain. *The Foul and the Fragrant*. London: Picador, 1994.

Crowther, Racheal. “The Eternal Pursuit of the

Unattainable.” 2023. Commissioned essay for *Interjection Calendar 009*, published by Montez Press. Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://qualifiedtocare.com/the-eternal-pursuit-of-the-unattainable>.

de Boisboissel, Gérard, and Magdalena Revue, eds. *Enhancing Soldiers: A European Ethical Approach*. Paris: International Society for Military Ethics in Europe (Euro ISME) & CREC Saint Cyr Military Academy Research Centre, 2020.

Dethlefs, David R. *Chemically Enhanced Trust: Potential Law Enforcement and Military Applications for Oxytocin*. Master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2007.

Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger*. New York: Routledge, 1966.

Drobnick, Jim, ed. *The Smell Culture Reader*. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2006.

Genschow, Oliver, Thomas Noll, Michaela Wänke, and Robert Gersbach. “Does Baker Miller Pink Reduce

Aggression in Prison Detention Cells? A Critical Empirical Examination.” *Psychology, Crime & Law* 21, no. 5 (2015): 482–489.

Groys, Boris. *Philosophy of Care*. London: Verso, 2022.

Hsu, Hsuan L. *The Smell of Risk: Environmental Disparities and Olfactory Aesthetics*. New York: New York University Press, 2020.

Jazani, Berjanet. *The Perfume of Soul from Freud to Lacan: A Critical Reading of Smelling, Breathing and Subjectivity*. London: Routledge, 2025.

Keller, Andreas, and Benjamin D. Young, eds. *Theoretical Perspectives on Smell*. New York: Routledge, 2023.

Leslie, Esther. *Chemical City*. Middlesbrough: Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA), 2022.

—, and Melanie Jackson. *The Meaning of Milk*. Birkbeck Institutional Research Online, Birkbeck, University of London and University of Reading, November 2016.

Love Scent. “Liquid Trust (Unisex Spray).” Love Scent (online product page). Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://love-scent.com/liquid-trust-pheromones-p-108.html>.

Lynn, Gwenn-Aël, and Debra Riley Parr, eds. *Olfactory Art and the Political in an Age of Resistance*. New York: Routledge, 2021.

Moreno, Jonathan D. *Mind Wars: Brain Science and the Military in the 21st Century*. New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2012.

Neuroscience News. “Scent of Newborn Infants Blocks Aggression in Men but Stimulates Aggression in Women.” *Neuroscience News*, November 22, 2021. Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://neurosciencenews.com/newborn-smell-adult-aggression-19689/>.

Pick, Daniel. *Brainwashed: A New History of Thought Control*. London: Profile Books, 2023.

Roach, Mary. *Grunt: The Curious Science of Humans at War*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016.

Rodway, Paul. *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense, Place*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Royal Air Force. "Force Protection Commander Meets the Task Force Cleaning Up Salisbury after Nerve Agent Attack." *Royal Air Force — News Articles*, November 20, 2018. Accessed January 27, 2026. <https://www.raf.mod.uk/news/articles/force-protection-commander-meets-the-task-force-cleaning-up-salisbury-after-nerve-agent-attack/>.

Sattler, S., E. Jacobs, I. Singh, et al. "Neuroenhancements in the Military: A Mixed-Method Pilot Study on Attitudes of Staff Officers to Ethics and Rules." *Neuroethics* 15, 11 (2022).

Schmeisser, E., K. A. Pollard, and T. Letowski. *Olfaction Warfare: Odor as Sword and Shield*. ARL-SR 242, DTIC ADA577342. Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD: U.S. Army Research Laboratory, 2013. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA577342.pdf>.

Schuppli, Susan. *Material Witness: Media, Forensics,*

Evidence. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020.

Shiner, Larry. *Art Scents: Exploring the Aesthetics of Smell and the Olfactory Arts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Sloterdijk, Peter. *Terror from the Air*. Translated by Amy Patton and Steve Corcoran. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009.

Synnott, Anthony. *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self and Society*. London: Routledge, 1993.

Uvnäs Moberg, Kerstin. *The Oxytocin Factor: Tapping the Hormone of Calm, Love, and Healing*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003.

Warrenburg, Stephen. "Effects of Fragrance on Emotions: Moods and Physiology." *Chemical Senses* 30, suppl. 1 (January 2005): i248–i249.

Warrener, Corinne D., Edward M. Valentin, Camilla Gallin, Lynnet Richey, Deanna B. Ross, Chelsea J. Hood, Adriana Lori, Joseph Cubells, Sheila A. M. Rauch, and James K. Rilling. "The

Role of Oxytocin Signaling in Depression and Suicidality in Returning War Veterans.” *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 126 (2021): 105085.

Zak, Paul J. “The Neuroscience of Customer Experience.” *MIT Sloan Management Review* 63, no. 4 (Summer 2022): 85–90.

Acknowledgements

Olivia Aherne, you've been my rock throughout this process – thank you for your hard work, insight, and for seeing something in me and giving me this opportunity. I'm forever grateful. Zhejun Gao, thank you for your honesty and diligence – your brilliance made this commission feel far more manageable. Edward Gillman, thank you for pushing the commission to its full potential and for supporting me and backing my ideas every step of the way. Oscar Abdulla, thank you for curating the live programme – it's been a joy to work with you on this. Caoimhe Rogan, Giorgio Mattia, and Charlotte Cole, thank you for keeping everything moving and for creating stability and possibility, all with true kindness. Lucy Woodhouse and the formidable technical team – this has been a huge undertaking, and none of it would have been possible without you. Thank you for bringing it to life. Thank you to Cobra Lifting for what felt like an impossible job in bringing the unit into the gallery. Jon Tuplin and the team at Ramco.

Michael Hill and Clíodhna Shaffrey at Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, thank you for your generous support and encouragement. Vincent Enjalbert and Émilie Renard at Bétonsalon and the Fluxus Magnetic Residency, Paris. Vincent, thank you for connecting me with brilliant writers, theorists, practitioners, and the IFF whilst I was in Paris; those conversations were instrumental in shaping the work. Isabelle Nowak and Torsten Winkler, thank you for the life-changing studio bursary. I'm deeply grateful for the space – this show wouldn't have been possible without it. Gasworks family – Robert Leckie, Rosa Tyhurst, Rosa Harvest, Helena Lyrstakis and Rachel Be-Yun Wang – there's nowhere else I'd rather be! Harry Sherwood – you are a genius, thank you for sharing your expertise with me.

Thank you to Clara Muller, Erika Wicky, Dr. Jamie Knight, and Fahad Mayet for the invaluable scent conversations. Cherry Cheng, thank you for your support and our smelling sessions. Working with you was and continues to be a dream. Juli

Crocombe, thank you for your unwavering support from the Royal Academy Schools to now – I'm deeply grateful for your compassion and commitment. Bonnie Camplin, for truly seeing me and planting those seeds as my tutor in 2013 – I believe you changed my life for the better. My friends who supported me during the development of the commission: Hannah McLoughlin, Jane McLoughlin, Jess Maybury, Georgia Kemball, Dexter Lander, James Theseus Buck, Luke Brooks, Luisa Le Voguer Couyet, Liv Preston, Arthur Frédérick Carroll, Ben Gomes, Charlie Audsley, Benjamin Slinger, Rosie Woodhouse, Sam Cottington, Aidan Duffy, Eilidh Duffy, Ben Broome, James Sibley, Jame "PAUL" St. Findlay, Bishwadhan Rai, and Jacob Harris. To Denise Crowther and Zane Crowther. To my cats Jessy and Woody. To my partner, Oliver Hyde-Mobbs – I love you.

Liquid Trust is commissioned and produced by Chisenhale Gallery, London in partnership with Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Dublin, and Bétonsalon, Paris.

This project is supported by an Arts Council of Ireland Project Award.

Lead Supporters: The Ampersand Foundation and Dr Juli Crocombe.

Headline Supporters: Henry Moore Foundation and Cherry Cheng.

With additional support from The Elephant Trust and the Chisenhale Gallery Commissions Circle.

The 2025-26 Asymmetry Curatorial Research Fellow is hosted by Chisenhale Gallery.

Chisenhale Gallery's Social Practice Programme is supported by Freelands Foundation and The National Lottery Community Fund.

Chisenhale Gallery

**Temple Bar
Gallery + Studios**



THE eLePHANT TRUST



Asymmetry

Chisenhale Gallery
64 Chisenhale Road, London E3 5QZ