

# The Odor of Repression: Fascist Smellscapes

Colloquium with Hans-Jürg Rindisbacher

The Nazi regime was keenly aware of its smellscapes, at both extremes of the spectrum: the pleasant space of perfumes, toiletry, and cosmetics and the horrid space of dirt, death, and putrefaction. This lecture explores the atmosphere of the Nazi period. It provides a reasoned collage of olfactory snapshots of personal spaces, the public sphere and political decision-making. It assembles statements by Nazis and their victims, comments by contemporary observers and visitors, and analyses by historians, cultural critics, and researchers in retrospect.

In doing so the lecture addresses topics from femininity and gender roles to consumer culture, rationing, the stench of war, and the Holocaust.

The olfactory rarely has a direct causative function in history but the revelatory power of smellscapes and their ability to characterize things as they really are, accompany and reflect historical events as their indelible pneumatic trace.



Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup>  
2 – 4 PM

Humanities Gateway 1010

Hans J. Rindisbacher was born in Switzerland. MA in English and German from the University of Bern, 1983; PhD from Stanford University, 1989, in German Studies. Professor of German Studies at Pomona College in Claremont, CA, since 1995. Research focus on the intersection of perception, notably the sense of smell, and its textual encodings; and on the representation and communication of sensory experience/embodiment in general. He published *The Smell of Books: A Cultural-Historical Study of Olfactory Perception in Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), a groundbreaking study of literary olfactory representations, followed by articles on Wilhelm Raabe, Patrick Süskind, and others. He is also interested in the role of Swiss literature within German studies. "Smells of Switzerland," published in *Approaches in Teaching Modern Switzerland: From Multiculturalism to Cultural Hybridity*, ed. Margrit Zinggeler and Karin Baumgartner (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2010), combines these main research interests. He is currently researching the roles of perfumery and cosmetics in the Nazi era, and important neglected sources for Süskind's *Perfume*.

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