

“How does equality smell?”

This was one of many questions raised by purpleSTARS from RIX Inclusive Research at the University of East London.

purpleSTARS, founded in 2018, developed the name from the colour purple, representing the economic power of people with learning disabilities/differences, and STARS from Sensory Technology Art Resource Specialists. We employ creative art, sensory materials, and multimedia technology to make museums more inclusive and fun.

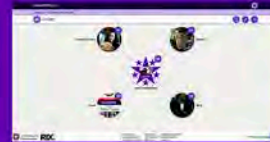
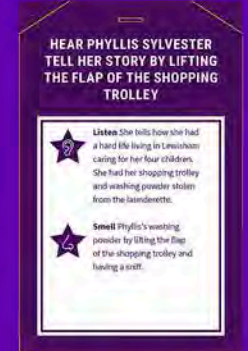
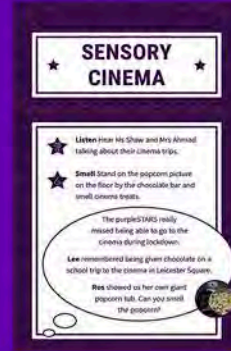
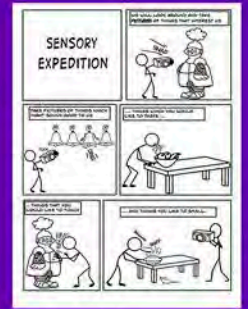
During lockdown purpleSTARS listened to recordings made over the past 80 years from the Museum of London’s oral history collection. In response to the oral history recordings, we discussed the smell of past events of the stories we were listening to, for example the smell of chocolate and popcorn at the cinema on a first date, or the soap powder smell at the launderette of a women who had her trolley stolen.

purpleSTARS methodology engages with a museum collection through a Sensory Expedition. We document, reflect and discuss ideas through an easy to use webpage called a RIX Wiki. The Wiki is a mind map for our research ideas and helped us develop a multi-sensory display at the Museum of London, in the Talking Point Gallery, *London is the Place for Me*, 2021. The Museum of London are keen to test alternative sensory and inclusive engagement for a new London Museum opens at its new site in West Smithfield in 2026.

As much of our activity was online, we also explored the potential of providing a set of scents to accompany an online 360° version of our display *London is the Place for Me*. We found ourselves discussing how we could add scent for the more abstract themes from our display which led to our question “How does equality smell?”

We explored creating a scratch and sniff postcard that visitors could opt to take with them on a museum visit or experience using our online version of the exhibition, but realised that, at this development stage we did not have the budget.

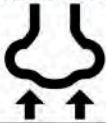
Liam Finlay, Aroma Prime consultant and Museum Scent Specialist, suggested commissioning bespoke smell cards that perfumiers use to test scents, as a more affordable, flexible and suitable alternative for our research project. We have found this approach beneficial and have added the smell cards to several projects including a sensory bag for a walking tour and a sensory map making project.



Equality



Perfume Delicious



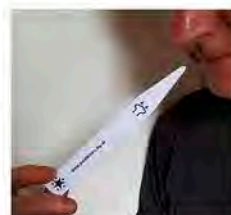
Travel



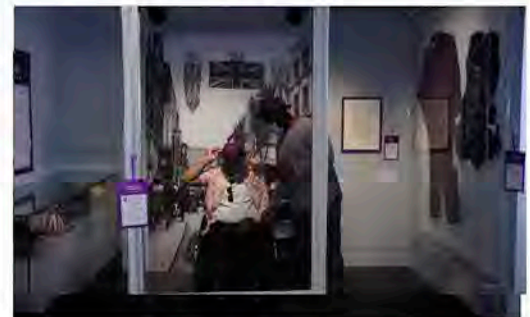
Traffic Fumes



View 360 Online Exhibition
London is the Place for me



Style



Confidence Perfume



Cinema



Chocolate and Popcorn

