

FROM MOLECULE TO MEMORY

Maria Nitulescu | Room installation, 2026

From Molecule to Memory brings together three works exploring smell as a pathway between the body, emotion, memory and belonging. Olfactory Pathway I-III begins with the neurological journey of smell, tracing how olfactory information reaches brain regions involved in emotion and memory. From there, Heimat and Love is Blind move into two intimate forms of recognition: home and love.

Both can exist before they are fully articulated. A familiar smell can make a place feel like home, just as the smell of another person can participate in attraction before we consciously understand why we are drawn to them. In this sense, home is not necessarily a geographical place. It can be a memory, a sensory familiarity, or even another person. Across the room, scent becomes an invisible thread connecting biological perception with some of our most personal experiences of attachment and belonging.



Heimat, 2026

Fabric, acrylic glass, scent, ultrasonic nebulizer, light and video projection
Approx. 150 x 65 x 36 cm, dimensions variable

What is the smell of home when home has existed in more than one country? Heimat emerged at a particular moment in my life: after living between countries and making Germany my home for many years, I became a German citizen in 2026 while retaining my Romanian citizenship. The German word Heimat, difficult to translate without losing some of its meaning, became a way of thinking about belonging not as a fixed place, but as something shaped by memory, familiarity and sensory experience.

Every home has its own smellscape, formed through the way we inhabit it: bodies, materials, food, air, objects and everyday rituals. Over time, these smells become part of our recognition of a place as home, and a familiar scent can return us to it years later. The house itself has a fragile, almost ghostlike presence. Translucent fabric gives its structure a fluid, ephemeral form while scent emerges through the roof as visible mist and projected images appear and dissolve across its surface. Heimat becomes a fluid sculpture of belonging, asking what remains of home as places, identities and memories continue to shift.



Olfactory Pathway I-III, 2026

Cyanotype on paper

I: 28 x 21 cm | II: 29 x 21 cm | III: 28 x 21 cm

Olfactory Pathway I-III uses MRI images of my own brain to trace the neurological journey of smell, informed by current research into the neural pathways of olfaction. The series follows how an odor moves from perception toward interconnected brain regions involved in emotion, memory and conscious evaluation.

The cyanotype process transforms the medical images into light-sensitive blue impressions, shifting them from clinical documentation toward a personal mapping of perception and memory. The work reflects on how smell can evoke emotional and autobiographical memories before we consciously identify their source. The imagery also forms the basis of the video projection in *Heimat*.

Love is Blind, 2024-2025

Hand-blown glass enclosing an artist-created scent

16 x 9 cm



Love is Blind takes its title literally: what if falling in love begins, in part, before we consciously “see” the other person? Smell is processed rapidly and can influence attraction before we have consciously evaluated why someone draws us in. Research into body odor and biological compatibility provides a scientific point of departure for a scent I composed from my own memory of falling in love: warm skin, a trace of perfume, summer air and the salt of the sea.

The scent is encountered by leaning closer to the sculpture, where it escapes through small openings in the hand-blown glass. The gesture brings the viewer physically close to the work, echoing the intimacy of smelling another person and the way the body can recognize attraction before the conscious mind has found words for it.