



Holy Shit

By Stefan Kaegi / Caroline Barneaud

Documentary sound- and video-installation

Are we what we eat?

How do the bacterias in our microbiome influence our decisions?

And what do volcanoes have to do with it?

For a long time, it seemed as if the brain was the only centre of our identity. Our gut was a black box like the inside of our earth. But new studies and the invention of new technologies shift the scientific focus to our belly. And neuroscientists are working on decoding the signals from our gut.

60 years after the Italian conceptual artist Piero Manzoni sold 30g of 'Merda d'Artista' for the price of gold, poo is no longer just organic waste, but also fertilizer, heating or building material - and above all: information. Doctors diagnose diseases from faecal samples and link the bacteria in our guts to our psyche. Samples from the sewage system allow conclusions about drug use in certain neighbourhoods, and residues in ancient latrines provide a new insight into life in the Roman Empire.

As our inner life becomes increasingly visible, we are living on a planet whose interior no human has ever seen. Geologists take soil samples or try to surmise what is going on inside the Earth based on lava, meteorites and earthquakes. And here, too, they come across the work of bacteria.

During their residency at the Villa Massimo in Rome, Caroline Barneaud and Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll) met experts from fields as diverse as archaeology, nutritional science, climate palaeontology and gastroenterology and set off on a journey into the Cloaca Maxima and other underworlds.

They came across a pianist who tries to control her epileptic seizures with a special diet and a geologist who analyses lava rocks as excrement from the interior of our planet. For 'Holy Shit', both swallowed a pill-sized camera under the supervision of a doctor and started a dialogue - while the cameras travelled through their bodies.

The video installation "Holy Shit" shows the two protagonists from the inside. The visitors of the installation move between medical equipment, drawings and fossils in search of the remains of this conversation about earthquakes and epileptic seizures, omnipotent microbes and geological time periods...

Concept and realisation: Caroline Barneaud and Stefan Kaegi (Rimini Protokoll)

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