

EDITORIAL

Tereza Kuldova & Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty

Editor-in-Chief & Art Director

Theses on Faeces: Encounters with the Abject emerged out of Lill-Ann Chepstow-Lusty's art photography project and in particular the responses to it - typically those of enormous disgust, revulsion and *hathos*, a paradoxical attraction towards something one cannot stand. These reactions came as a surprise to us, especially given that art has had a long history of engaging with shit and other bodily fluids, with the disgusting, and the abject. It appeared that irrespective of the established use of shit in the art world, none of its power to disgust, offend, and arouse passions has been lost. Even photography of shit, the very representation which does not smell, still contained its original power. Hence, we decided to explore this power of excrements and its limits. This special issue offers a series of different perspectives on excrement, from the possibilities and limitations of its very materiality, to its more metaphorical critical capacities. The philosopher and cultural theorist, Robert Pfaller, explores the ability of the excrement to function as a kind of universal equivalent for understanding; a kind of perfectly convertible currency or primordial gift. The social anthropologist, Jojada Verrips, argues that we cannot understand the remarkable blossoming of shit in the arts without placing it within the context of neoliberalism. Rina Arya revisits Kristeva's theory of the abject in order to think through the distinction between abjection and disgust in relation to fear. Florian Werner explores the role of shit in popular culture, art, history and society at large, as well as the limits of its power to challenge established social structures. Slavoj Žižek contributes his famous piece on toilets and ideology, and Fred Luks takes another look at the proliferation of 'bullshit' in contemporary discourses on sustainability. And finally, Laura Korčulanin discusses her activist and academic work on western sanitation in a dialogue with Tereza Kuldova. We hope you enjoy these theses on faeces!