



One year of Artist's Shit, 1961-2021



In May 1961, Piero Manzoni (1933-1963) created 90 cans of *Merda d'artista*, *Künstlerscheisse*, *Merde d'artiste*, *Artist's Shit*. On the 60th anniversary of the most famous but perhaps least well known work by the artist, the **Fondazione Piero Manzoni** has organized diverse initiatives to be held between May 2021 and May 2022, celebrating and recounting the story, the legend and the meanings of that remarkable can. The new site **merdadartista.org** will be online from May 2021 and will be enriched over the following months by new ad hoc contents, including the series “**30, 20, 10 minutes of Shit**”, webinars with leading figures from the world of contemporary art discussing issues associated with *Artist's Shit*.

With the project “8PER / Tribute to Piero Manzoni's Artist's Shit”, Taplab wall covering has produced **eight new wallpapers** that will be presented from 13 to 30 May at the Casa degli Artisti in Milan. **Carlo Cambi Editore is about to publish a fascinating book** in four languages, like the *Artist's Shit* label, that will accompany us as we explore the notorious can through essays by four authors (Luca Bochicchio, Flaminio Gualdoni, Rosalia Pasqualino di Marineo and Marco Senaldi).

The prestigious periodical **Ursula**, published by Hauser & Wirth, is preparing an issue dedicated to *Artist's Shit*, with interviews, articles and more besides, in a tribute to this extraordinary work. The director Andrea Bettinetti (*Piero Manzoni, artista*, 2013) is preparing brief **documentaries** exploring specific themes including, for example, the 1971 scandal that arose when *Artist's Shit* was exhibited at the Gallery of Modern Art in Rome and provoked a parliamentary question. Work is also in progress on a **theatrical piece**, with three brief dialogues written and directed by **Filippo Soldi**.

Further details regarding all these projects will be presented in due course on the diary page of the new site: **merdadartista.org**.



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Piero Manzoni was born in Soncino in 1933.

In 1956, Manzoni exhibited paintings featuring anthropomorphic silhouettes and the impressions of objects at the *4th Fiera Mercato* contemporary art exhibition in Soncino and then at the *Premio di pittura San Fedele* in Milan. He signed manifestos with other artists and embraced the Movimento Arte Nucleare.

Between 1957 and '58 Manzoni made his first *Achromes* using a gesso-like material on creased or squared canvas. He exhibited with Bonalumi and Castellani and collaborated with artists from various European Neo-Avant-Garde groups. In 1959, together with Castellani, he founded the gallery Azimut in Milan and the magazine *Azimuth*. The gallery opened with his solo show *Le Linee (The Lines)*, while Dadamaino, Klein, Mack, Mavignier were also to exhibit there. He created the series of *Corpi d'aria (Bodies of Air)* (inflatable white balloons) and *Fiato d'artista (Artist's Breath)* (balloons inflated by him on a wooden plinth). In 1960, Manzoni travelled to Hering where he experimented with unconventional materials. He continued to produce *Achromes* in cotton wool, phosphorescent polystyrene, and cobalt chloride and presented the event *Consumazione dell'arte, dinamica del pubblico, divorare l'arte (Consumption of Art, Dynamic of the Public, Devouring Art)* in Milan, where the public ate hard-boiled eggs with his thumbprint on them. From 1961, he realized new *Achromes* (in fibreglass and synthetic fibre, plush fabric, bread, straw, wrapping paper, stones and polystyrene pellets); he also began signing people, turning them into "living sculptures" and issuing them with a certificate of authenticity and made "magic bases" and 90 tins of *Artist's Shit*. He went to Hering also in 1961 and presented the *Socle du Monde (Base of the World)*, an upside down plinth conceptually holding up the Earth as a work of art. He participated in solo and group shows both in Italy and abroad and worked with the publisher Petersen on a planned "monographic text" with transparent pages.

On 6 February 1963, Piero Manzoni suffered a fatal heart attack in his studio in Milan.



Images:

01. Piero Manzoni with some cans of *Merda d'artista (Artist's Shit)* in his apartment on Via Cernaia, Milan, 1961
02. *Merda d'artista (Artist's Shit)*, May 1961, printed paper; 4,8 × ∅ 6 cm (each one), photo by Bruno Bani
03. *Merda d'artista n. 63 (Artist's Shit No. 63)*, May 1961, tin can, printed paper; 4,8 × ∅ 6 cm, photo by Agostino Osio
04. One of the eight new wallpapers Taplab wall covering
05. Cover of the new book published by Carlo Cambi Editore

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