

Akim Monet Fine Arts, LLC



Piero MANZONI (1933 - 1963)

Merda d'artista

Tin can, printed paper and excrement*

Inscribed on the lid "PRODUCED BY Piero Manzoni No. 39"

In unopened clear plastic pouch with facsimile of the fingerprint of Manzoni

1 7/8 x 2 1/2 x 2 1/2 in (4.8 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm) 0.1 kg

2013 (1961)

Released by the Piero Manzoni Foundation, 50 years after the death of the artist. The edition is 9000, the original numbering (1/90) is repeated 100 times. The number offered here is number 39. This is an authorized and approved reproduction of the artist's seminal work, "Merda d'Artista," in which Manzoni packaged multiple 30gr tins of his excrement as if it was manufactured for sale. It is descriptive of Manzoni's ironic and perverse style. Calling into play his specific dialogue with the relationship between art production and human production

* Agostino Bonalumi, who worked with Manzoni, recently wrote in *Corriere della Sera*, that the 90 30-gramme tins that Manzoni filled in 1961 before his untimely death aged 29, contained not faeces but plaster. This might be one of the greatest outrages perpetrated in the history of art. Or not. Quite possibly the contents don't do exactly what they say on the tin. "I can assure everyone the contents were only plaster," writes Bonalumi. "If anyone wants to verify this, let them do so."

PROVENANCE

Rosa Pasqualino di Marineo, Fondazione Piero Manzoni, Milano

EXHIBITED

Disruptive selection, Fall 2019, Popcorn Gallery Akim Monet Fine Arts, Los Angeles
Assisted Readymade, Winter 2022, The Lone Star Gallery Akim Monet Fine Arts, Dallas

NOTES

The present work is a posthumous multiple edited in 2013 by the Manzoni Foundation, based on the original 1961 edition described below:

In May 1961, while he was living in Milan, Piero Manzoni produced ninety cans of *Artist's Shit*. Each was numbered on the lid 001 to 090. Tate's work is number 004. A label on each can, printed in Italian, English, French and German, identified the contents as "Artist's Shit", contents 30gr net freshly preserved, produced and tinned in May 1961.¹ In December 1961 Manzoni wrote in a letter to the artist Ben Vautier: 'I should like all artists to sell their fingerprints, or else stage competitions to see who can draw the longest line or sell their shit in tins. The fingerprint is the only sign of the personality that can be accepted: if collectors want something intimate, really personal to the artist, there's the artist's own shit, that is really his.' (Letter reprinted in Battino and Palazzoli p.144.)

It is not known exactly how many cans of *Artist's Shit* were sold within Manzoni's lifetime, but a receipt dated 23 August 1962 certifies that Manzoni sold one to Alberto Lúcia for 30 grams of 18-carat gold (reproduced in Battino and Palazzoli p.154). Manzoni's decision to value his excrement on a par with the price of gold made clear reference to the tradition of the artist as alchemist already forged by Marcel Duchamp and Yves Klein among others. As the artist and critic Jon Thompson has written:

Manzoni's critical and metaphorical reification of the artist's body, its processes and products, pointed the way towards an understanding of the persona of the artist and the product of the artist's body as a consumable object. The *Merda d'artista*, the artist's shit, dried naturally and canned 'with no added preservatives', was the perfect metaphor for the bodied and disembodied nature of artistic labour: the work of art as fully incorporated raw material, and its violent expulsion as commodity. Manzoni understood the creative act as part of the cycle of consumption: as a constant reprocessing, packaging, marketing, consuming, reprocessing, packaging, *ad infinitum*. (Piero Manzoni, 1998, p.45)

Artist's Shit was made at a time when Manzoni was producing a variety of works involving the fetishization and commodification of his own body substances. These included marking eggs with his thumbprints before eating them, and selling balloons filled with his own breath (see Tate [T07589](#)). Of these works, the cans of *Artist's Shit* have become the most notorious, in part because of a lingering uncertainty about whether they do indeed contain Manzoni's faeces. At times when Manzoni's reputation has seen the market value of these works increase, such uncertainties have imbued them with an additional level of irony.

Source <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/manzoni-artists-shit-t07667>

