



STREAM

S8. Dirt/y Affects: Against Clean Living

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DESCRIPTION

Everything sucks. And we are all collectively being asked to clean it up. But what does it mean to sit in the mess? With the dirtiness? This isn't just a metaphor. This stream is invested in conversations that center the dirty atmospheres that we all share through performative representations of rubbish. In this stream, we revel in the contaminations between, through, and with each other. In a moment when purity logics dominate affective, material, and political movements across the global (e.g. eugenics, genocide, fascism), this stream invites authors to return to the dirt—both the literal and metaphorical—as a way of illuminating and imagining other worldings. As Leddy (1995) theorizes, some are primed to notice what is not dirty in ways others can not. The dichotomy between what is dirty and what is clean or neat is not simply a matter of aesthetics but rather a structure which reflects and refracts hierarchical forms of power. Those who are afforded the privilege of a clean existence move through the world with privilege many do not. Douglas' (1966) notion of dirt as “matter out of place” signals, “where there is dirt there is a system” (35). This stream asks submitters to engage in this systematic ordering of purity logics by (re)turning to the dirt. Shafiq (2025) offers us, “dirt is open-ended, there is an ambiguity of what can pollute, and what makes things dirty can be many: purity is singular but being dirty is quintessential plural: it is anything that is out of place” (p.3). We ask you to ponder where your work is with/in the dirt? Where does your work get messy? Building off the framework of palliative performance (Rowe 2024) advocates for a “palliative performance style that pushes back against the cult of wellness with a bare messiness that revels in its mistakes” (p.2) we ask to submitters to consider reveling in the mess and approach recent trans/inter/disciplinary work that centers negative affect within a specific frame - the dirtiness of it all. We invite collaborations that don't attempt repair. Rather, we/they push back against the neoliberal daydream of a futurity that is

rooted in some type of constructed purity ethic (Steulke 2021). We ask submitters to trouble the boundaries that demand our performance, our scholarship, our lifeworlds engage at the intersections of a white, nationalist ethic. The dirt/y is often disposable. Normative logics compel us to dispose of bodies, communities, excesses, waste, promiscuities, uninhabitable lands, and the shit that does not serve "us". Thus we seek proposals that dig through the trash to reclaim the disposable, that line their shelves with the treasures of refuse, that moan in pleasure at the sight of scum/SCUM.

Consider:

- What would it mean for us to desire dirt?
- To revel in/with the trash?
- What would it mean to MAKE something new out of dirt? (And really, actually, love it.)
- To contaminate the "public good?"
- To be a problem? (without looking for solutions) Without saying sorry?
- What would it mean to do dirty repair?

Dirt is the pejorative for soil. Though regimes conceptualize soil as a productive site of meaning making and growth, pejorative frames of dirtiness are rooted in our own epistemological frameworks. But we know dirt is also necessary for growth. Performative representations of dirtiness take many forms: methodological turns, death, architecture, aesthetics, religion, ecosystems.

Perhaps you can consider:

- Dust, excrement, rubbish, bacteria, soil
- Social outsiders as dirty
- Feeling dirty and normativities
- Dirty tactics and strategies
- Dirt and climate
- The politics of purity
- Contamination and pollution
- Disposability and compostability

We invite you to the dumpster. To the trash. To get dirty with us.