



© Julian Hetzel, Schuldfabrik, Self, Human Soap, (Jenny Cremer Post Production)

FESTIVAL

Adelaide Festival review 2019: Schuldfabrik

KATHERINE ARGUILE, The Advertiser
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Schuldfabrik

Installation / The Netherlands

Shop Front, 29 King William St, city

Until March 17

You might have noticed a stylish-looking shop front popping up recently at the northwestern end of King William Street.

It's called SELF, and it only sells one product: soap. And it's made with human fat.

Inside the sleek boutique, dreamy muzak plays while an elegant shop assistant talks about the product.

"This soap has many layers", she says, smiling.

Human fat, removed by liposuction, is donated by obese people in the developed world and turned into soap.

"Schuld", in German, means both "guilt", as a response to failed moral duty and "debt", as economic obligation.

Conceived as an art project by German-born performance artist Julian Hetzel, proceeds from Schuldfabrik's soap sales go toward the digging of wells in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

One bar of soap is donated to Congolese villages for every bar bought.

Bodily fat, built up as a result of having too much, is removed and made into a product that helps people who have don't have enough.

A grim-faced man issues a brusque order for six of us to follow him out of the shop and down a back alleyway.

He unlocks a padlocked grille and we are led up a dingy stairwell into a sinister waiting room.

We sit and wait.

And then the tour begins.

It's what happens next on the factory tour that reveals what the assistant means by "layers".

As Schuldfabrik is best experienced without expectations, I won't reveal what happens in the ensuing hour, except that the soap factory tour is as unsettling and confronting as it should be. At turns dreamlike, bizarre, quasi-religious and even beautiful – confess your sins, and you shall be cleansed of your guilt – Hetzel delivers an unforgettable message in this engaging, shocking and immersive art performance.

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Only 2000 bars of soap were made.

You can actually buy one for \$30 if you take the soap factory tour, or \$35 if you don't.

A bit like a butcher that offers a discount if you take a tour of the abattoir first.

- Katherine Arguile

