

GO WITH YOUR GUT

Lifestyle Futures

When it feels right, it feels right, right? In this report, we explore the phenomenon that is the gut. Say hello to your second brain.



Cesar Biojo

Cesar Biojo

OVERVIEW



- As we burrow ever deeper into the information age, we are losing our intuition. This movement is a reminder, a call to connect with our inner compass.
- Instinct and intuition are increasingly being acknowledged as a form of knowledge, a tool that guides thought. As writer and psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist affirms: "Intuition is not just some pink and fluffy feeling."
- In wellness, more of us are turning to earth-based medicine that taps into our ancestral past, while science hones in on gut health to boost our mental and emotional state.
- We have neglected our intuitive side – shielded ourselves from sensory data. But momentum is building as recognition surrounding the second brain mounts.

INSTINCT AS KNOWLEDGE



Intuition is increasingly referred to as a form of knowledge. As the late philosopher Alan Watts explained: "Working rightly, the brain is the highest form of instinctual wisdom."

Bruce Kasanoff, a ghostwriter for thought leaders, recently added to this mentality. "Intuition is the highest form of intelligence," he claimed. In psychology too, Gerd Gigerenzer, a director at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, agrees. He says intuition is instinctive understanding. During a podcast on how scientists learn to trust their gut, Christof Koch of the Allen Institute for Brain Science also spoke about the importance of emotion in science. He said intuition is crucial to science. It's the eureka moment.

Gut instinct is also making a comeback in business. A 2016 Cambridge University study revealed stock traders who follow their own gut feelings experienced greater market success. "Academic economics and finance are so focused on conscious reasoning that they completely miss the real action, which is taking place in the dialogue between brain and body," explains lead author John Coates.

Also highlighting intuitive behaviour as a form of intelligence is Ecolé 42. This is intuitive teaching. Here, students are given no direction. They have to figure things out alone. No teachers. No books. No syllabus. "There are no teachers – this is a project-based school. You get no diploma," says founder Xavier Niel. Harder to get into than Harvard, students receive tests via the intranet. The only guidance you get is a five-minute video coupled with a PDF. As Snapchat's Evan Spiegel explains: "You feel you're walking into a school from the future. It's a transformative way to learn."

In design too, instinctual knowledge is the new desirable. According to designer, artist and senior lecturer Theo Humphries, "Intuitive design is good design." Why? Because it has usability built into its core. This is instinctive design without the need for instructions. To add to that, in research circles, intuition is also being explored as a tool in the decision-making process. What this suggests? It's gut-check time. It seems gut feelings – instinct, emotion, intuition – have growing worth.



FLEXING YOUR FORESIGHT



If You Leave

Despite these machine-driven times, the human touch is still needed to interpret data. This is about having both the maths and the magic. The key is to use data analysis and intuitive insight, employing a programmatic and creative approach.

We live in a world of big data and we've lost touch with our intuition. Author Liz Funk is encouraging us to flex our gut muscle. She says we need to regain trust in the hidden power of our gut instinct. "Trusting your gut is age-old advice for a reason. Your instincts are usually right," she says.

Melody Wilding, professor of human behaviour at Hunter College, agrees. "Trusting your gut is trusting the collection of all your subconscious experiences," says Wilding. "It holds insights that aren't immediately available to your conscious mind." So in order to flex our foresight, it seems that we need to tune in to what our gut has to say. Wilding suggests doing an audit of your day and a body scan of what's going on. "Use those skills of emotional labelling to get in touch with what your gut might be saying to you."

Liz Funk adds: "Being instinctive isn't simply an innate trait. It's a quality that increases or decreases given how much we practice. With time, you can comfortably defer more and more of your decision-making to your gut instinct."

In a 2016 TED Talk, digital consultant and e-commerce specialist Katrine Kjærs spoke about the power of intuition and how it can cut through the noise to help us make the right decisions in business and life. Her advice is to strip back the layers of practicality and tune into intuitive thoughts. "Train it like a muscle. The more you use it, the stronger it becomes. The more you dare to use it, the more accurate it can become," says Kjærs.

What's changed? Intuition is now seen as an ability we not only possess but can also develop. This is the growing idea that we can cultivate intuition. Going forward, expect more emphasis on this too, on developing our intuitive skills, on identifying ways and techniques to help flex our natural foresight.

EMOTIONAL GUTS



Giulia Enders

The power of the gut is also transforming the health industry, as science now believes it has more impact on health than our DNA.

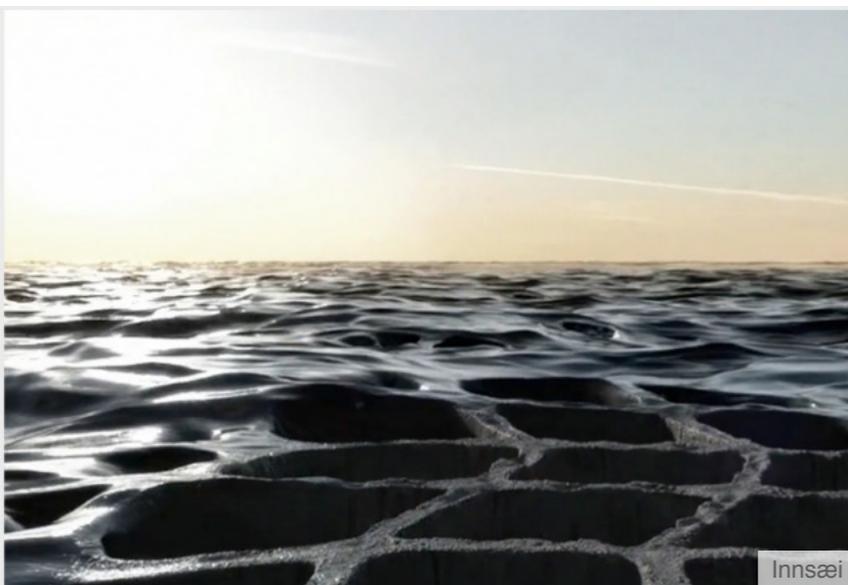
As research mounts, new markets open up. Map My Gut is a prime example of this growing field. This start-up offers personalised microbiome advice. "In five years this will be routine," claims CEO Professor Tim Spector. "You can tell more from gut microbes than you can from DNA, and I'm a geneticist." Paving the way in gut health, he feels personalised probiotics are key. "Having one strain that will help everyone is very naive." Alongside Map My Gut, Spector is also opening a new gut health food bar in London. Why? Because our microbiome is starving, he says.

With the [probiotic market](#) projected to reach \$66 billion by 2024, this market is gaining momentum. New research has also revealed the positive impact gut health has on our brain. In 2015, scientists at Üsküdar University in Turkey published a landmark paper titled *The Gut-Brain Axis: The Missing Link in Depression*, highlighting the relevance of the microbiome-gut-brain connection.

In March 2017, The School of Life in Melbourne hosted an event that explored this topic in detail. Giulia Enders discussed the idea that gut health affects our emotional wellbeing, that it is a two-way relationship. The bestselling author likened the gut to the grey matter in our heads, adding: "It is able to tell the brain things about us it would never otherwise have an inkling of."

The extent of the gut-brain relationship is only now coming to light, but it's a concept at the forefront of research. Professor Rob Knight from the UCSD feels it "offers at least as much promise as stem cell research." Prominent gastroenterologist Nick Talley calls it a paradigm shift, while Peter Cox, a nutritional therapist, also stresses we should be eating our way to wellbeing. "What we eat contributes markedly to our mental health, and it amazes me that this area of treatment is not taken more seriously," he says. "It's terribly sad that we're preoccupied with being thinner and fitter but we're ignorant to the fact that our diet has the power to make us happier."

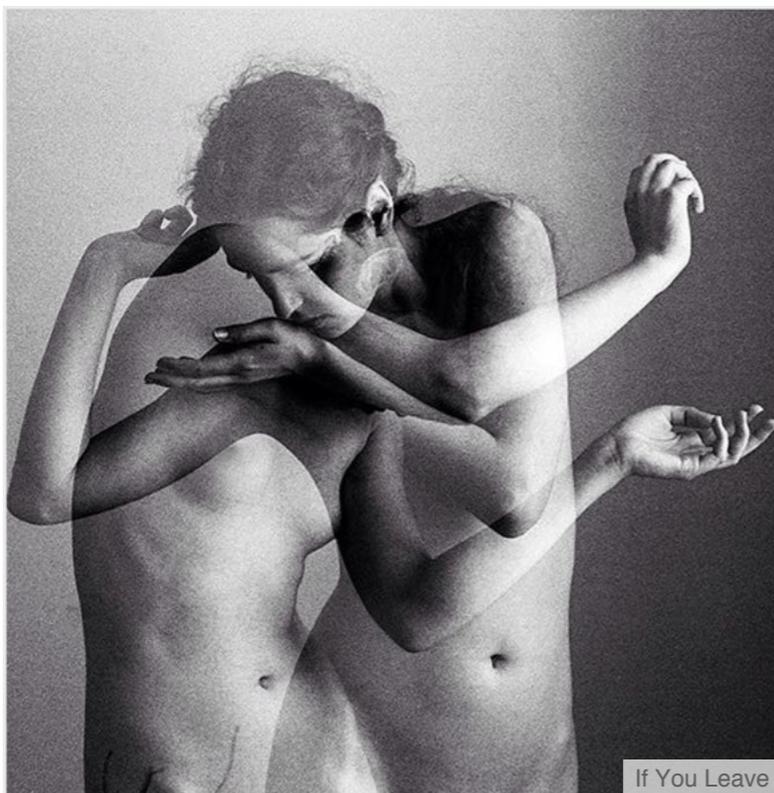
IN THE ART WORLD



The art world is also delving into the world of intuition. Gut Instinct is an exhibition that explores the influence of food on mood, based on mounting evidence surrounding the gut-brain axis.

Professor John Cryan, a leader in the world of psychobiotic research and one of the curators of the exhibition explains, "We're conditioned to think of only what is happening above the neck in terms of the regulation of our emotions." This exhibition challenges that assertion. "Gut Instinct is a very novel collaboration, which challenges us to think differently about how we respond emotionally at a sensory and visceral level and reminds us that our state of gut will affect our state of mind," adds Cryan.

Dazed and Confused described If You Leave as an art exhibition that explores "the gut feeling you get from a photo". This is art based on feeling, first impressions, instinct and intuition. On his curatorial approach, founder Laurence Von Thomas explains: "I look for an initial and unbiased impact of an image." In experiential design, WHIST is the VR production encouraging us to find our



own path. The website says: "Inspired by Sigmund Freud's dream theory, WHIST invites audiences on a journey into the unconscious mind, where instincts will be the guide." Here instinct and intuition guides you.

In film, Innsæi is a documentary that explores the power of intuition. "We're totally disconnected from the brain and the body. So many people live in their heads and not with emotions," says one of the film's participants, Marina Abramović. From world-renowned scientist Marti Spiegelman, an expert in indigenous consciousness who believes we are only using a fraction of our capacity, to an education system that nurtures intuitive behaviour, Innsæi journeys into the realm of instinct and intuition. It explores a growing movement in neuroscience towards understanding and measuring intuition, and covers fields from psychology to spirituality and art.

The take-home is that we have forgotten how to use our senses, we are out of touch with our intuition. The film addresses this issue. It's about learning to see from the inside out, to reconnect in a disconnected world.

INTUITIVE HEALING



Wind Spirit - Braziers Park

We are also seeking new ways to heal ourselves and our psyches. For this reason, we're seeing a more spiritual, more intuitive wellness movement emerge. Lindsay Mack is an intuitive healer who offers intuitive counsel. As one client explains, "Calculator is to math as Lindsay's Tarot is to intuition." Based in New York, she combines intuitive channelling and energy work to help patients treat old traumas, to bring clarity and clear energy blockages. This is intuitive healing that looks to reconnect people from within, helping with mental, emotional and physical suffering.

In the UK, a shamanic revival is underway. Think sacred fires, shallow pits, smoke baths and womb-like darkness. This is the revival of the Blackfoot tradition, and we're describing The Sweat Lodge at Wind Spirit. These monthly gatherings at Belsize Park speak to those in search of something primitive and primordial. To note, a sweat lodge is an ancient purification ceremony handed down from Native American tradition. Described as place to be reborn, Matthew Green explains: "There is no rule book, and the emphasis is on trusting your own unseen guides."

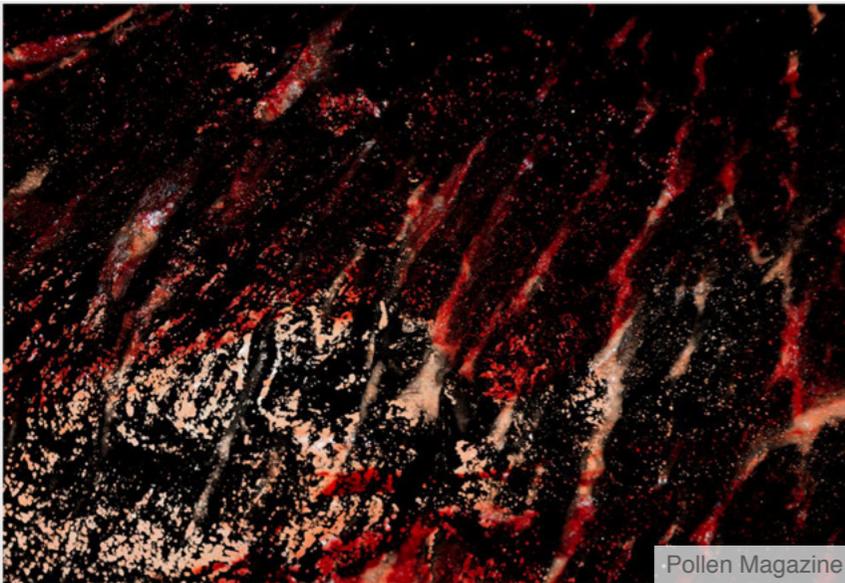


Lindsay Mack - Wild Soul Healing

Until now, shamanism has remained on the fringes. As acceptance grows, Green adds, "Some shamanic practitioners are using their skills to help corporate executives tune into their intuition and trust their instincts, while a small but growing number of psychotherapists are also harnessing shamanic-style techniques. In Scotland, for example, a number of highly qualified NHS psychiatrists have embraced a new approach to trauma called the Comprehensive Resource Model, developed by US psychologist Lisa Schwarz, who draws on Native American and other indigenous healing traditions."

Similarly, The School of Intuition and Healing is also nurturing our intuitive side. Based in London, with a branch in Cape Town, the aim is to educate in healing, medical intuition, spiritual release and psychic development. This is evidence that people are looking to reconnect on a more visceral, elemental level, as they turn to the traditions and wisdom of indigenous rituals to soothe modern ills.

VISCERAL PRINT



Visceral print is also on the rise. In his 2016 book *Being a Beast*, author Charles Foster goes underground. The Oxford academic, along with his eight-year-old son, studied badgers by eating worms to discover what life is really like for animals. Why? To better understand ourselves and our animal cousins.

He says the experience brought him closer to the wilderness within himself. The blurb notes, "Charles Foster wanted to know what it was like to be a beast: a badger, an otter, a deer, a fox, a swift. What is was really like. And through knowing what it was like he wanted to get down and grapple with the beast in us all." So, he lived as a badger for six weeks, sleeping in dirt holes by day and foraging on all-fours by night. Taking a primitive step back, this was about reawakening his senses, to experience the world in a more visceral, more intense way.

Slices of Life by Elia Romanelli is visceral on another level. The anthropologist explains, "This cookbook consists of life stories and photo portraits where each recipe becomes a blind date – a culinary encounter." The idea is to get a deeper, more intimate glimpse of

the strangers through these recipes. "The book's aim is achieved when – by cooking and eating the suggested dish – the reader ingests the other in an unusual and unexpected transubstantion." This is urban anthropology, she says, allowing people to enter you through their food.

The ethos behind *Gut Magazine* is that it is "a space to celebrate the instinctual, clumsy and raw". *Pollen Magazine's* 2016 issue centred on the concept of creaturely life. It studied the closeness between humans and animals, and brought into focus ideas around embodiment and flesh; inner and outer nature; between humanisation and dehumanisation.

Interestingly, the publication was intended to be seen as a living organism. "The magazine is designed to feel as though you are holding a wounded chunk of flesh: something human, animal and insect," explains editor and creative director Ezekiel Morgan. Raw, intuitive and intense, this is the start of gutsy, physical print.



INTUITIVE TECH



Spirit



Spirit

Visceral tech is another emerging field. In an article titled *Come On Feel The Data (And Smell It)*, Luke Stark of NYU predicted "Digital interaction will engage all of the senses simultaneously, including smell and taste to help us feel the impact of information in our guts." This is the dawn of data "visceralisations". "Data visceralisations are representations of information that don't rely solely and primarily on sight or sound, but on multiple senses including touch, smell, and even taste, working together to stimulate our feelings as well as our thoughts," says Stark.

Smell of Data is a scent diffuser that releases a warning puff when it detects a threat to its users' online security. This is visceral design that introduces smell into the digital space.

As well as visceral tech, we're also seeing the start of intuitive tech. DeepMind's AlphaGo developed the intuition needed to beat the world's best human at Go.

The Peugeot Instinct is a self-driving car designed to know how its passenger is feeling and change how it drives to suit their mood and needs.

The emotionally intelligent digital companion from Yves Béhar is another example of intuitive tech. Designed in collaboration with Intuition Robotics, "the gizmo that gets you" is intended to help ageing adults stay socially connected, active and engaged. Nudging you in the right direction, this is instinctive and intuitive tech.

Similarly, IDEO has created a digital assistant that guides and drives you. The company asks, "What if your instincts could be objectively right? What if they could act in your physical, mental and emotional best interests, supercharged by powerfully accurate AI?" Enter Spirit. A great piece of design fiction, this is the AI assistant designed to help you make the right choices in life. A "digital consigliere", Spirit can predict who will make a great friend and will alert you through a feeling in your tummy. How? Through nanobots nestled in your brain, muscles and organs. This is an algorithmic oracle. This is choice driven by AI and it highlights the emergence of intuitive tech, as it develops an instinct all of its own.

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

THEORETICAL PHYSICIST



RELATED REPORTS



A/W 16/17 CONSUMER FORECAST: ELEMENTAL – BELIEFISTS



WILD



DATA AND DNA: PERSONALISED WELLNESS



SPIRITUAL BEAUTY



NEW FORTUNE TELLING



SPIRITUAL SPENDING