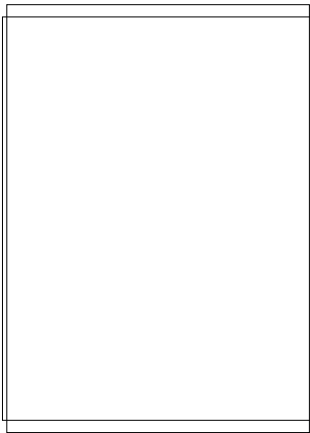
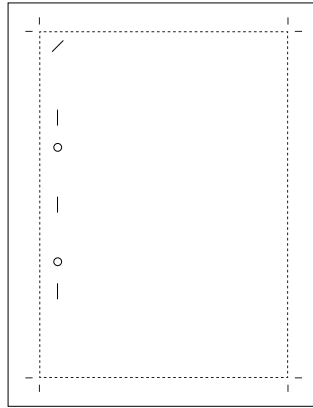


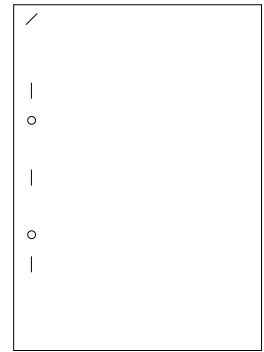
printing & assembly instructions



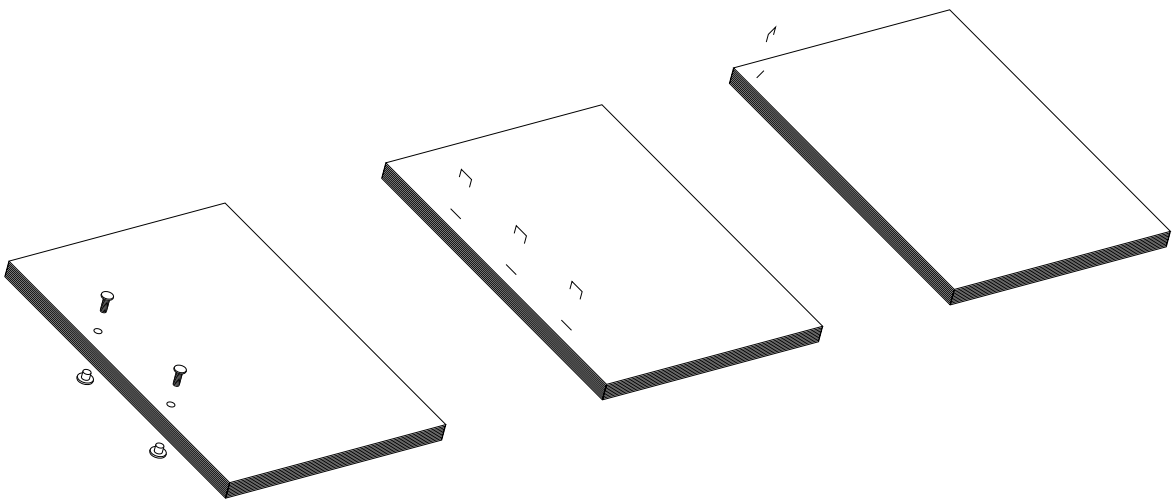
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(1) PAPER SIZE	use A4 (210 x 297 mm) or US Letter (215.9 x 279.4 mm)
(2) PRINTING AND TRIMMING	print in "actual size". choose single sided printing. use crop marks to trim the edges of the paper
(3) BOOK SIZE AND GUIDE	final size should be 240 x 172 mm (9.44 x 6.77 in). use the other marks as a guide for binding
(4) BINDING	we suggest using screws or staples. a binder can be used for collecting multiple articles

issue #001

GODOFREDO PEREIRA

EX-HUMUS:
Collective Politics
from Below

DISPATCHES JOURNAL



GASPAR MIGUEL DE BERRÍO
Fragment from "Description of Cerro Rico and Imperial Village of Potosi", 1758

1984, July, Argentina. First exhumation by the recently formed *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense* (EAAF), a team created to investigate the cases of at least 9,000 *desaparecidos* after a genocide perpetrated by the military junta that ruled from 1976–1983. The EAAF pioneered the application of forensic sciences to the documentation of human rights violations, which had an undeniable impact throughout the world. Since then, the development of technologies that allow scientists to look deeper into bones, such as advances in molecular biology, DNA analysis, and toxicological procedures, has facilitated the prosecution of human rights violations. Still, the impact of exhumations and their instrumentality extends far beyond the remit of scientific or legal forums. In many cases exhumations are performed in postcolonial contexts and in relation to histories of genocide, ecocide, and other forms of socio-environmental violence. In such contexts, to exhume is never simple; what comes from below carries an excess that is hard to define, contain, or control. Because of that, exhumations are always powerful interventions.

2010, July, Venezuela. “El Libertador,” Simon Bolívar, is exhumed from the National Pantheon in Caracas, where a team of forensic experts is assembled to certify the cause of death. Arsenic being the most probable culprit, the question was whether Bolívar’s death had resulted from a slow process of drinking the arsenic-rich waters of Andean countries, or if he had been intentionally poisoned. The exhumation is shown on TV the following day, narrated by President Hugo Chávez. At a time in which many of the same dilemmas that Bolívar faced had re-emerged (disputes between Venezuela and Colombia; tense relations with the US; a power struggle between Venezuela’s leader and its oligarchs), a state ceremony around Bolívar’s death would be key. The ceremony would allow the Bolivarian Revolution to be contextualized in relation to the establishment of Venezuela itself.¹ While in the media the discussion revolved around the forensic process and murder mystery (Who were the experts analysing the bones? What were the procedures? Was he murdered?), very few questioned why these bones were constituted as objects of interest in the first place. In the end, as expected, no clear conclusion as to whether Bolívar was naturally or unnaturally poisoned emerged, but this ambiguity neither discredited nor reduced the effect of the performance. The point of the exhumation was not so much to provide evidence of murder, but rather to harness the renewed value that the very search for evidence invested in Bolívar’s bones. What was hidden by the attraction to forensics and the appearance of Bolívar’s remains on TV was how the practice of forensics was, from the start, being narrated by

politics.

2011, May, Chile. Salvador Allende is exhumed to investigate the cause of his death. Allende had died in the presidential palace, La Moneda, on September 11, 1973, during the bloody coup d'état that inaugurated Pinochet's dictatorship. While the military declared that Allende had committed suicide with the AK-47 given to him by Fidel Castro, many others maintained that Allende had been murdered. In 2008, a review of the original autopsy results gave ground to the latter theory. For many, the presidency of Allende between 1970 and 1973 represented the promise of social justice. The most important aspect of Allende's presidency was the underground: copper represented approximately 80 percent of Chile's total exports and its nationalization was at the heart of a broad project of territorial transformation. While the famous Chuquibambilla copper mine—compared, by Fidel Castro, to the Egyptian pyramids—was nationalized, experiments like Cybersyn were introduced to explore new forms of managing industrial production.² Bodies often embody violence *literally*. They become sites around which disputes are articulated. As noted by Oscar Guardiola-Rivera, "Chilean author Luis Klener Hernández has said that Allende's body, in its refusal to lie quiet in the ground, became a sort of cluster bomb raining upon Chileans with 'covering fire of memory.'"³ If this is so, perhaps Allende's exhumation should be seen as a gesture that would bring the memory of an alternative political and territorial project back to life.

1997, July, Bolivia. The remains of Ernesto "Che" Guevara are exhumed from a mass grave in Vallegrande after its location, unknown for thirty years, was revealed by a retired Bolivian General; 2000, Ethiopia: the remains of Haile Selassie are exhumed fifteen years after his killing and secret burial; 2002, Nigeria: the remains of Ken Saro-Wiwa are exhumed from a mass grave in Ogoniland after its location was finally discovered; 2012, West Bank: the remains of Yasser Arafat are exhumed to investigate if he was poisoned by a radioactive substance; 2013, Brazil: the remains of João Goulart are exhumed to establish whether he was poisoned as part of Operation Condor. Many more followed, all bodies of leaders, all disputes about territories. The word exhumation emerges from the medieval Latin *exhumare* (ex [remove] + humus [ground]). But to remove from the ground means equally to bring to light, especially after a period of obscurity. It is this double aspect contained within the idea of exhumation—the removal of bodies from the *ground* so as to *reveal* or to give light—that is crucial. In these cases, what is revealed is not the individual body itself, the *body*



AL JAZEERA
Dr. Patrice Mangin holding Arafat's keffiyeh

natural, but rather that which it is made to stand for, the *body political*.

2010, August, Chile. The San José Mine in Atacama's village of Copiapó caved in, leaving thirty-three miners trapped underground for more than two months. Caught deep in a cave whose spiraling ramps stranded them five kilometers from the entrance, the miners' only means of communication with the outside world was a series of small boreholes drilled by the rescue teams. The case attracted global media attention that focused not only on the miners but also on the multiple rescue attempts and the various methods, technologies, and risks associated with them. Finally, a steel-coffin-like capsule, developed by the Chilean Navy, CODELCO, and NASA and christened "Fenix," was carefully lowered into the shaft. Vividly decorated in the red, white, and blue of the Chilean flag, Fenix successfully lifted the miners to the surface one-by-one. The exhumation was broadcast across the world. The French ratings agency Coface declared it a demonstration of Chile's "technology, solidarity and efficiency," providing international investors with "an image of a country where you can do safe business."⁴

1990, July 27, Chile. The bodies of sixteen workers are exhumed from a mass grave, also in Copiapó. The workers had been slaughtered in the predawn hours of October 17, 1973 by soldiers of the "Caravan of Death." Their bodies were dumped in an underground mine. The remains were recovered only in 1990, after Pinochet stepped down as president and forensic teams were allowed to search the country for *desaparecidos*. Many recalled these workers years later, when the thirty-three miners were trapped underground. The son of one of the victims compared the exhumation of the miners to that of the *desaparecidos*: "The mine rescue this week was so similar to how we rescued our relatives ... They were also down a 600-meter-deep open pit. The only difference is that we didn't use a capsule to lift their remains. We used a bucket for the few bones we could find."⁵ Thus, the heroic rescue of the thirty-three miners' bodies emerges as part of a far less heroic circulation of bodies from and into the underground, a cyclical movement symptomatic of extractivism: the millions of human bodies that end up under the ground so that millions more mineral bodies can be dug out. If exhumations sometimes allow for the reinforcement of the body politic, they can also make visible the *necropolitics* that so often come along with it.⁶

2011-2013, Puchuncavi, Chile. The bodies of twenty-eight people are exhumed by forensic teams from the Chilean Legal Medicine Service.⁷ Forensic experts have taken



Frame grab of the videocamera operating inside the mine showing the Fénix rescue capsule moments before it leaves the underground of the Copiapó mine, removing the one of the 33 trapped miners. REUTERS/Government of Chile, October 13, 2010.

bone samples of femur, fingers, and skulls to test for the presence of arsenic, copper, or lead. *Los hombres verdes* (green men), a group whose name derives from descriptions of workers in copper smelters who had a gelatinous green substance flowing from their bodies, in addition to multiple other symptoms of prolonged contamination.⁸ The case concerned a state-owned copper smelter where dozens of workers had died from contamination-related diseases and from which hundreds more claimed to be contaminated. Today, the neighboring populations still inhabit an environment whose water, soil, and air are completely saturated by the copper industry—a sacrifice zone. Currently, a collective of widows is demanding acknowledgement of responsibility and compensation from the National Copper Corporation for the deaths of their husbands. Though this process is still being contested, the massive degree of contamination suffered by the workers was already evident during the exhumations: the clothes of the deceased had become green due to the slow release of arsenic from their bodies after death. Resource extraction is about bodies, but bodies always intercept and transform each other: in the case of the *hombres verdes* (as with Bolívar), toxic metals circulated as transversal agents of contamination, flowing from the body of the earth to the bodies of people—the presence of arsenic slowly releasing itself, forcing the skin to rupture and changing its color.

2011, January, Venezuela. Heavy oil is exhumed from the depths of the Orinoco Heavy Oil Belt, placed in a flask, and brought to the Venezuelan National Assembly. Presented by Hugo Chávez, the crate of oil samples participated in a long debate over the type of hydrocarbons that lay under the Venezuelan ground.⁹ In the hands of Chávez, oil ceased to be an inanimate material of the underground and was brought to light as the soul of the revolution. It was being exhumed to fund a broad territorial project—*la nueva geometría del poder*—which included not only the well-known *misiones*, but also new development corridors across the country and a large-scale housing project which would consist of thousands of *petrocasas* produced by the oil industry, not to mention new international alliances.¹⁰ Here, a strange symmetry emerges between the exhumation of the underground in search of heavy oil and the exhumation of Bolívar performed the year before. The two exhumations present parallel movements wherein a unique kind of statecraft is performed: the soul of Bolívar migrating into oil, animating the Bolivarian revolution. In both exhumations, it was the attention given to the object by science as much as the conclusion drawn from the analysis that was important. One should notice the painting of Venezuelan oil pipelines and infrastructure with revolutionary signs: *petróleo es el pueblo*. Through

exhumations, a system of equivalences. Oil = the People; Bolívar = oil; Chávez = Bolívar; Chávez = the People; etc.

2005, Lago Agrio, Ecuadorian Amazon. Soil and sediment samples are exhumed by scientists to confirm that oil contamination resulted from decades of negligence by Chevron/Texaco during the company's extraction activities.¹¹ This investigation was part of a lawsuit initiated by local peasants and indigenous communities in 1993, and which grew to international attention throughout the years. President Rafael Correa himself was compelled to visit. Contamination comes hand-in-hand with harnessing the underground. While the case has been unsuccessful thus far, soil core samples became the point of articulation between the historical and contemporary extractive politics of Ecuador, particularly in relation to indigenous peoples within the emerging jurisprudence on the rights of nature.¹² But while bones have to be cleaned out of the underground's soil, here it is the soil itself that is brought to the fore. Bruno Latour has famously argued that "without the instruments of science, the body politic will never know how many strange entities it has to take into account."¹³ But here, as in Venezuela, it is more the case that exhumation's capacity to establish equivalences between bodies implies that the body political is indiscernible from the body natural.

2010, Yasuní National Park, Ecuador. Samples of soil are exhumed from the Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini oil fields (ITT) in the Yasuní National Park. The sampling was planned as part of a campaign to evidence the park's immense biodiversity in the face of the dangers posed by planned oil extraction. In 2007, Ecuador announced its commitment to preventing exploration of the oil reserves in the Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini oil fields. The effort to leave the oil underground had three main objectives: to protect indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation; to conserve the unique biodiversity of Yasuní National Park; and to avert the CO₂ emissions that would result from the extraction of hydrocarbons in order to protect the rights of future generations. Devised by Carlos Larrea, the project was eventually cancelled in 2016 by President Rafael Correa despite his initial support of the initiative. Uniquely, the project attempted to support indigenous conceptions and practices of nature via the mobilization of biodiversity classifications and an engagement with carbon trading calculations. Even the site of dispute itself was defined by the boundaries of an oil bloc (ITT) as opposed to the demarcation of an indigenous territory. Indigenous perspectives, environmental protection, oil extraction, biodiversity, or carbon trading, all of these approaches are mutually excluding perspectives (or world-making

practices) that were nonetheless brought into alliance toward the shared goal of keeping oil underground. Here, exhumations spoke not of a body politic, but rather of alliances between very different bodies. A monster that alas was not to be.¹⁴

2017, Argentina. Samples of water and brine are exhumed for analysis from the *Salar de Salinas Grandes*, a site that the region's locals consider part of their family. The samples were meant to provide evidence regarding the underground appropriation of water for the extraction of brine. Lithium, which present in brine, is a key component of batteries, and is therefore immensely valuable to the global energy transition and the combatting of climate change. Lithium extraction has led to large-scale protests against the granting of concession rights, but it has future generations' right to a decarbonised planet on its side. Exhumations are always of bodies of course, but bodies exist across different systems of equivalences and world-making. If, within one system, lithium appears as a component of a decarbonised planetary body, within another its extraction is equivalent to depleting a living being. Andean societies are characterized by extended relations of kinship—the *ayllu*. Mountains, peoples, and environments are all part of the same kin, all living bodies. The *ayllu* itself is another kind of body, a collective one. This is crucial, for we have no reason to restrict our account of bodies to individuals or to humans (nor do we have any reason to limit our account of the human to the Western one).¹⁵ Many other “earth beings” are increasingly exhumed—lagoons, glaciers and forests are in the process of disappearing, as are the corresponding modes of coexistence of which they are a central component.¹⁶

2013, Ixtupil, Guatemala. Anthropologists continue the decades-long process of exhuming mass graves of indigenous peoples. The graves belong mostly to Ixil Mayans who were killed by the Guatemalan government under the leadership of Efraín Ríos Montt. According to the Commission for Historical Clarification, an estimated 200,000 people were killed during the “scorched earth” counterinsurgency campaigns that characterized Ríos Montt's presidency.¹⁷ Unlike other cases, here exhumations had to be performed in collaboration with local indigenous peoples who were taught forensic procedures, as there were important rituals to observe so as to care for the afterlives of the dead. This a context wherein the dead are very much alive as a central part of extended kinship structures, wherein afterlives are to be cared for and a proper burial is a matter of reproductive justice. And despite the introduction of Catholicism and its project of disempowering the dead,¹⁸ for many Mayans, the ancestors are still “the true owners of the land, an ownership signalled by small stone altars in many corn



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2013
Photo: Sonia Perez Diaz

fields and larger ones at important sites in the landscape where the living were invited to pay the dead their due.”¹⁹ In this context, then, exhumations are both a mechanism of reparative justice and important sites of dispute over intertemporal forms of coexistence.

1545, Potosí, Bolivia. Exhumation of the Sumaq Urqu (*Cerro Potosí* or *Cerro Rico* in Spanish), a crucial moment in the dramatic exchange that had just started, the blood of the earth for the blood of the people. El Dorado, black gold, red gold, white gold. A delirious attraction for the underground unleashing of a collective death drive. Exhumations are always paranoid, always aiming to reveal what is not visible, and resource extraction is the quintessential paranoid machine at the core of capitalism’s very particular delirium.²⁰ This delirium has left behind an immense necropolis of humans, other-than-humans, ecosystems, and environments. In this context—what I have elsewhere called the *underground frontier*—exhumations have become paradigmatic.²¹ They are both an epistemic tool used to investigate, understand, verify, or confirm *and* a key device through which territorial, environmental, and political disputes are conducted. From Chávez to the families of *desaparecidos*, from environmentalists to indigenous peoples, from mining corporations to progressive nation-states, in gathering attention around bodies, exhumations constitute a unique form for disputing the types of collectives, compositions, or environments that should be accounted for in the Anthropocene.

1 Godofredo Pereira, “Dead Commodities,” *Cabinet* 43 (Fall 2011): 90–94.

2 Project Cybersyn was a venture related to a real-time data analysis and exchange network that would allow industry performance to be monitored and disruptions (e.g. accidents or strikes) to be adapted to. Cybersyn’s purpose was to coordinate a wide-ranging attempt by the government to raise production levels, particularly in the state-run sector. See Eden Medina, *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende’s Chile* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2011).

3 As quoted in Oscar Guardiola-Rivera, *Story of a Death Foretold: The Coup Against Salvador Allende, September 11, 1973* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 353.

4 Andrew Clark, “Mining rescue lifts Chile’s credit rating up into the light,” *The Guardian*, October 17, 2010,, London, <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2010/oct/17/mining-rescue-chile-credit-rating>.

5 Simon Romero, “Rescue May Redeem a Troubled Past for Chilean City,” *New York Times*, October 14, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/15/world/americas/15copiapo.html?_r=0.

- 6 Godofredo Pereira, "Geoforensics: Underground Conflicts in the Atacama Desert," in *Forensis, the Architecture of Public Truth*, eds. Forensic Architecture (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 591–603.
- 7 According to Mauricio Dunner, from Quintero's public prosecutor's office, of these twenty-eight, twenty-one have now been exhumed. "Exhuman nueve cuerpos más de ex funcionarios Enami-Codelco para determinar su causa de muerte," *La Tercera*, June 10, 2013, <https://www.latercera.com/noticia/exhuman-nueve-cuerpos-mas-de-ex-funcionarios-enami-codelco-para-determinar-su-causa-de-muerte/>
- 8 Luis Miranda, "El drama de los mineros contaminados de la Fundición Ventanas," *Soy Chile*, July 1, 2011, <https://www.soychile.cl/Santiago/Sociedad/2011/07/01/24409/Exclusiva-El-drama-de-los-mineros-contaminados-de-la-Fundicion-Ventanas.aspx>.
- 9 Pereira, "Territorial Evidence," London: Forensic Architecture Press, 2013.
- 10 Pereira, "Underground: Venezuela's Territorial Fetishism," in *Savage Objects*, ed. Godofredo Pereira (Lisbon: INCM, 2012), 223–248 and Pereira, "The Project of a Collective Line," *Volume 47* (April 2016), <http://volumeproject.org/the-project-of-a-collective-line/>.
- 11 Clean Up Ecuador, *100 Percent of Inspected Well Sites Show Contamination*, October 18, 2005, <https://chevrontoxico.com/news-and-multimedia/2005/1018-100-percent-of-inspected-well-sites-show-contamination>.
- 12 See Paulo Tavares, "Nonhuman Rights," in *Forensis, the Architecture of Public Truth*, eds. Forensic Architecture (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 553–572.
- 13 Bruno Latour, "Telling Friends from Foes in the Time of the Anthropocene," (lecture, *Thinking the Anthropocene*, EHSS – Centre Koyré-Sciences Po., Paris, November 14–15, 2013).
- 14 Pereira, "Anomalous Alliances: Nature and Politics in the Yasuní Proposa," in *Axiomatic Earth – Anthropocene Curriculum & Campus* (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2017), <https://www.anthropocene-curriculum.org/pages/root/campus-2016/axiomatic-earth/>.
- 15 For a more nuanced discussion of other concepts of the human and their implications to environmental disputes, see: Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The ends of the world* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).
- 16 I am using the term "earth being" in reference to Marisol de La Cadena's work on Andean practices. See Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).
- 17 CEH stands for Commission for Historical Clarification (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico).
- 18 Douglas Brintnall, *Revolt Against the Dead: The Modernization of a Mayan Community in the Highlands of Guatemala* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1979).

- 19 Carlota Mcallister, "What are the Dead Made of? Exhumations and the Materiality of Indigenous Social Worlds in Postgenocide Guatemala," *Material Religion* 13, no. 4 (2017): 522.
- 20 On the paranoid aspect of exhumations and their relevance in the study of architectural formations, see Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anomalous Materials* (Melbourne: Re-press, 2008). 52–53.
- 21 Pereira, "The Underground Frontier," *Continent.*, 4.4 (2015): 4.