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# e-MISFÉRICA

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BODY MATTERS/CORPOGRAFÍAS

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## EDITORIAL REMARKS



Body Matters/ Corpografías

By [Claudia Briones](#) and [Marcial Godoy-Anatívia](#) | UBA and NYU

On March 5, 2006, the Sunday editions of Chile's two most important newspapers, *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*, arrived at newsstands with their usual arsenal of cultural supplements and advertising circulars. Yet on this particular Sunday, the publicity insert for the Ripley department store chain showcased its spring fashion line in a series of photographs that featured denim-clad models with their faces covered, suspended by their arms and feet from a variety of mechanical contraptions—clearly and unambiguously making reference to specific methods of torture employed by the Pinochet regime during its 17 years in power for the express purpose of selling blue jeans. Almost immediately, local human rights organizations denounced the circular through an email campaign and local websites and threatened to call a consumer boycott unless the department store chain promptly removed the photographs from circulation and issued a public apology. Ripley quietly complied and, within a day or two, the matter simply disappeared from public attention, almost as if it had never happened.

One of the essays in this volume examines this incident not only to call attention to the banalization and aestheticization of horror that the Ripley's ad circular performs, but also to interrogate a sociopolitical conjuncture, one in which the irruption of tortured bodies across a particular mediascape fails to generate responses capable of comparably efficacious contestation. What this analysis suggests is that critical understandings and deployments of bodies must not only concern themselves with the presence and absence of particular bodies from particular spaces, but also with the mechanisms by which these bodies are imbued with and stripped of their capacity to condense and convey the thick socio-historical significations that make them intelligible within fraught social formations. Attention to these mechanisms is crucial, not only for deciphering the ever-expanding proliferation of bodies made visible by the representational machinery of market-driven technoculture, but also for recognizing the strategies through which social actors, individual and collective, restore to these bodies the dense histories of domination, exclusion and violence that are so often erased or trivialized, but which are so necessary for imagining and constructing spaces of hope.

In some very concrete ways, the scholars, critics, artists, activists, and citizens featured in this issue of *e-misférica*—Body Matters/Corpografías—are all participants in a project that insists on making bodies not only visible, but densely so. We live in a time in which the market, medicalized visions of wellbeing, and the will to security produce contradictory images of bodies to be desired and

consumed. These visions oscillate between over-determined utopias of corporal beauty and fitness and banalization through incessant commercialization; between bodies born with birthrights and others in need of self-improvement; between dehumanized masses of “countless” war casualties and detailed biographies of “true” victimhood; between those worthy of mobility and those assigned to confinement; between those bodies trapped in fear and those who are to blame; between bodies gripped by pain and others in the throes of ecstasy; between bodies presumed to be innocent and those that are always already guilty.

Against this backdrop, the contributions to this volume take on a dual task: on the one hand, they shed new light on hypervisible bodies; on the other, they make us see the import and effects of those deemed expendable. Hypervisibility, we must recognize, is not only a result of marketing, tabloids or otherwise marked artistry. Several of the works herein also focus on the ways in which communities and movements envision and mobilize their own body politics and, in so doing, recur to their own essentialisms and canonizations, incurring the burden of their discourses of redemption and the costs and open-ended meanings of innovation. Yet, it is precisely at the juncture of such complexities and ambiguities that the work of the scholars, artists, and activists in this volume intersect. And while the tasks at hand are in no way easy endeavors, the critical enterprise of which they are part is undoubtedly necessary.

--*Claudia Briones and Marcial Godoy-Anativia*

EDITORIAL REMARKS

## [Claudia Briones & Marcial Godoy-Anativia](#)

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