

## *Copper Geographies*

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*Copper Threads* from the *Copper Geographies*, Ignacio Acosta, 2015

This paper will explore a global flow copper, ‘the metal that runs the world’.

Copper is a miraculous and paradoxical metal characterised by high electrical and thermal conductivity. Copper is an essential element for nearly every human enterprise. Hidden in plastic, behind walls, bound into cables, carried as loose change, inside air conditioners, cars, computers, electronics, ‘green energy’ generators, airplanes, mobile phones; copper is everywhere yet rarely seen.

Due its unique configuration in the Andean subduction zone, Chile has the world’s largest reserves of copper. Part of the ‘Pacific Ring of Fire’ where the Pacific plate dives below the continental plates producing an invisible geological conflict, which is linked to deadly earthquake and volcanoes activities. The geology and geography of Chile are shaped by these extreme conditions and intrinsically linked to its mineral wealth. As consequence of these geological forces, the land of Chile

presents the largest copper mineralisation in the world, having Chile the largest reserves of copper in the globe.

*Copper Geographies* investigates the relationship between capitalism, mining and photography. It explores the notions of hyper-mobility and unequal geographical development, two aspects of the nature of the natural resources industries that are central to globalisation. The research develops through a series of fieldwork explorations of geographically disparate landscapes historically connected by copper, connecting remote extraction ecologies in Chile with global sites of consumption and trade in Britain. The photographic series develops along three axes: first, the global flow of copper, from raw material, through traded liquidity, smelted commodity, recycled material and musicological specimen; second, post-industrial mining landscape and the new forms of territorial occupation; and third, the impact of contemporary large-scale mining operations in its relationship to London, the global centre for mining investment.

The title, *Copper Geographies*, refers to both the geographies where the photographs were taken and the geographies where the images circulate. The circulation of both, commodities and photography, back and forth from Chile to the UK is at the core of this investigation.

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