

**ET CÉTERA**

**NEO-EXTRA-ACTIVISM**

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**PROTOCOLS FOR BUEN VIVIR**

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**VERA LIST CENTER FOR ART AND POLITICS**

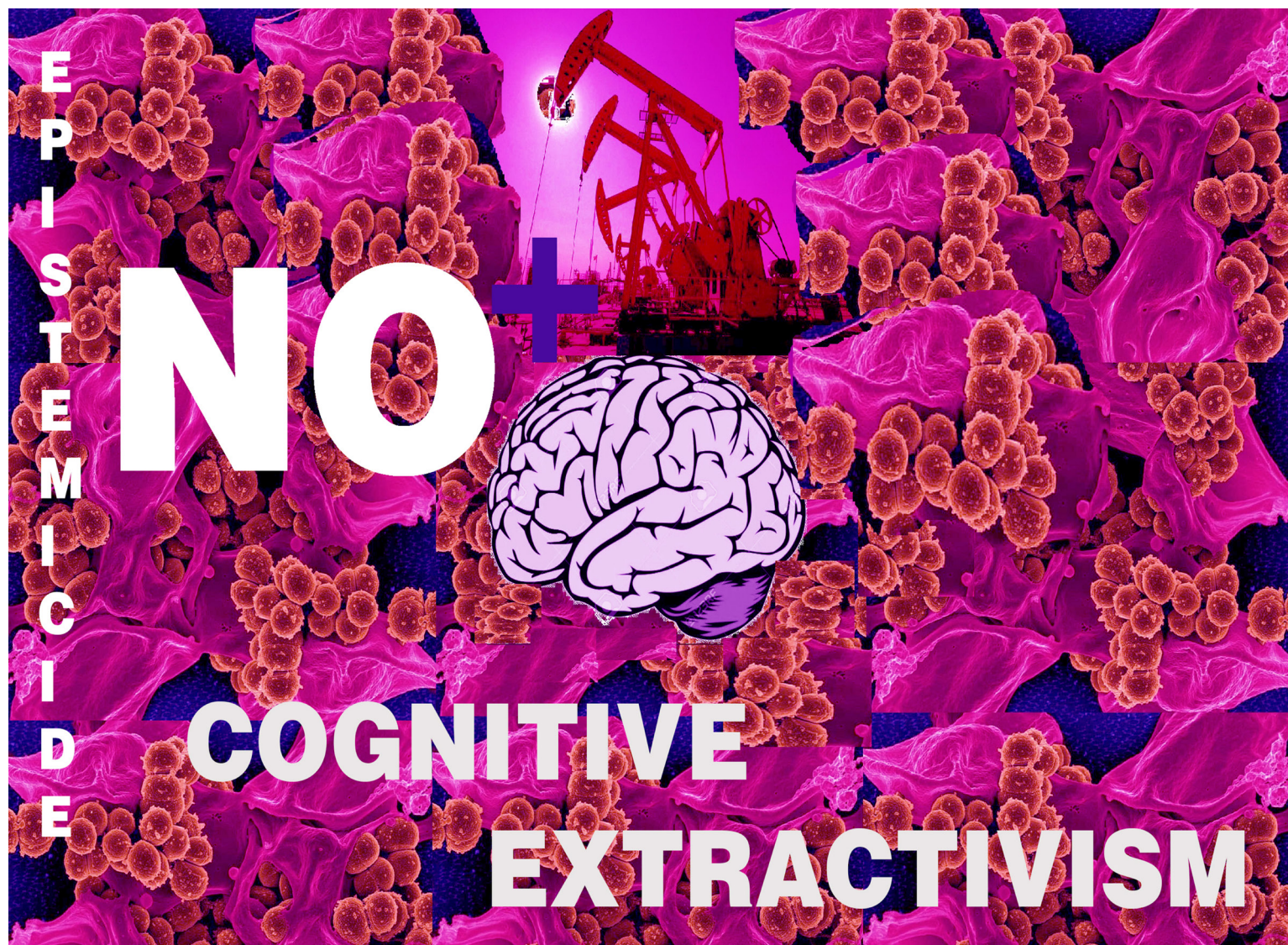
**CLEMENTE SOTO VÉLEZ CULTURAL  
& EDUCATIONAL CENTER**

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**MAY 20-JUNE 17, 2022**



**ETCÉTERA**  
**NEO-EXTRA-ACTIVISM**  
**PROTOCOLS FOR BUEN VIVIR**



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# INTRODUCTION



The Vera List Center for Art and Politics and The Clemente Soto Vélaz Cultural & Educational Center present *NEO-EXTRA-ACTIVISM-Protocols for Buen Vivir*, an exhibition of multidisciplinary Argentinian collective Etcétera. This exhibition is the third and final chapter in Etcétera's two-year 2020–2022 Boris Lurie Fellowship, and the first solo presentation of the collective's work in New York City.

As an extension of their long-term project *THE MUSEUM OF NEO-EXTRACTIVISM (MNE)*,\* the exhibition *NEO-EXTRA-ACTIVISM: Protocols for Buen Vivir* presents artistic research that analyzes postcolonial and post-neoliberal models of natural resource extraction. Etcétera—led since 2007 by co-founders Loreto Garín Guzmán and Federico Zukerfeld—focuses on the connections between art, socio-environmental imagination, and resistance movements by environmental activists and artists from the Americas. Etcétera's current research questions how nation-states and corporations hold responsibility for socio-environmental crimes and violations of the rights of human and non-human beings, and connects international artists, environmental activists, and local communities across Latin America and New York. Centering the Indigenous notion of “Buen Vivir,” or “good living,” the exhibition is a proposition for living well through community, which expands to creating art, culture, and knowledge through non-extractivist approaches.

Central to the exhibition is *Letter for Buen Vivir*, an installation documenting a 2019 intervention at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The two directors of MNE, dressed as “Original Corn” (non-genetically modified corn costumes), Garín Guzmán and Zukerfeld delivered a letter and petition to the members of the United Nations Assembly and several departments in the building. Their letter makes a simple plea on behalf of all organisms, asking for both recognition and protection of all “human rights, the rights of other animal and plant species, bacteria and all living organisms that are part of the earth.” The corn features in a number of other works on view in the exhibition, including flags and banners that document Etcétera's actions and performances. Hung from the ceiling or propped on wooden structures, the banners place the viewer in the middle of the Etcétera's protests and mass movements, in effect issuing a call to action and activation.

As with the collective's performances and actions, the exhibition is offered as a space for meeting, sharing, and organizing around urgent topics with a collective spirit. A central question “What does Buen Vivir look like in an urban setting?” invites the public to think alongside Etcétera in search of alliances and common imaginaries for environmental justice and climate change beyond our own territorialities. Responses to this prompt are recorded in the gallery and can also be submitted as images, text, audio, or video to [vlc@newschool.edu](mailto:vlc@newschool.edu) for inclusion in the dedicated exhibition space as well as its documentation.



\* *THE MUSEUM OF NEO-EXTRACTIVISM (MNE)* is a nomadic project that takes diverse formats based on the spaces, institutions and contexts it travels to. The MNE, works as a parody of a museum, mixing aesthetics of art, ethnographic and science museums. The museum includes research, public interventions, exhibitions, publications, speeches, videos, interviews, and the creation of a collection.



# RESPONSE- ABILITY\* A MANIFESTO

Presented in the framework of the *ArtsLink Assembly 2021*, the second chapter of Etcétera's fellowship project, *RESPONSE-ABILITY\* A Manifesto on Ecocide* (November 19, 2021), offered a manifesto, a manifestation about ecocide. Ecocide is the mass damage and destruction of ecosystems—severe harm to nature that is widespread or long-term. Recently, legal experts from around the world have come together to rework a definition of ecocide, which is intended to be adopted by the international criminal court to prosecute the most atrocious crimes against the environment.

Joined by Jay Bernstein, University Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at The New School, and performance artist L.M. Bogad, Etcétera presented material from the second chapter of their current research through a collection of voices, images, testimonies, and public actions around this topic.

# ON

*Not only ecocide has being perpetrated, the way of killing ecosystems, there is also femicide, but also those murders of those different ways of understanding life: epistemicide. We are fighting to preserve our spirituality, and we found the word that synthesizes that: Terricide, a synthesize of the ways in which the system has built contraptions for death.*

—Moira Millan

\*The word responsibility stylized as “response ability” was a concept developed by John Cage (1912–92) that proposes shifting an ethics of accountability to an aesthetic of engagement.

# ECOCIDE

# NEO-EXTRA-ACTIVISM- PROTOCOLS FOR BUEN VIVIR

As the third chapter of their research, the exhibition *NEO-EXTRA-ACTIVISM-Protocols for Buen Vivir* brings together materials collected through *NO WORK, NO SHOP: Socio-Environmental Imagination and Pedagogies of Action* and *RESPONSE-ABILITY\* A Manifesto on Ecocide*, alongside posters, installations, videos, and performances from the collective's twenty-five-year archive.

# A MANIFESTO FOR BUEN VIVIR

*Vivir Sumak Kawsay (Kichwa), Suma Qamaña (Aymara), Kyme Mogen (Mapuche), Teko Porâ (Guaraní), Pishind Waramik (Misak), Wët Wët Fxi'zenxi (Nasa), Ubuntu, Vivir Sabroso, Vivir Sin Miedo, Con Todo Sino Pa' Qué?!.*

*Buen Vivir, is not a utopia.*

*Buen Vivir, is a relocation of life in the center.*

*Buen Vivir, is to live in harmony with nature, human and non-human beings.*

*Buen Vivir, a constituent's bodies.*

*Buen Vivir, let us leave developmentalist productivity.*

*Buen Vivir, to live without fear.*

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST



### EXTRACTIVE LANDSCAPE, 2021

Painted wall mural  
Dimensions variable



### LETTER FOR BUEN VIVIR, 2019-2022

Installation with photograph, video, printed letter  
Dimensions variable



### PROTECTION SPELLS, 2019

Video, sound, 2:49 min



### MANIFESTOS, 2022

Eight banners with archival images, graphics, and text supported by wooden frames  
Dimensions variable



### ECOCIDE AND BUEN VIVIR, 2021-2022

Letterpress posters  
Dimensions variable



### NEO-EXTRA-ACTIVISM, 2021-2022

Video, sound, 31:01 min

All works courtesy the artists.



# ETCÉTERA

Formed in 1997 in Buenos Aires, Etcétera is a multidisciplinary collective composed of visual artists, poets, and performers. Since 2007 co-founders Loreto Garín Guzmán (Chile) and Federico Zuckerfeld (Argentina) have led it. In 2005, they were part of the founding of the International Errorist movement, an international organization that proclaims error as a philosophy of life. In addition to participating in exhibitions in museums and biennials such as the biennials of Jakarta (2015), São Paulo (2014), Athens (2013), Istanbul (2009), and Taipei (2008), they often work with street-art, public interventions, actions, and performances that are necessarily contextual, ephemeral, and circumstantial. In 2015, they received the Prince Claus Award in the Netherlands. Their work has been recognized for its denouncement of human rights and environmental abuses through theatrical and poetic actions and statements often exercised at personal risk.

*Etcétera embraces an expanded notion of creativity that infects social sensitivities and floods daily life with intensity. We do so through an embodied experience of 'trial and error' that is rooted in the collectivization of knowledge and activates our social imagination.*

*To us, three principles are essential to breaking the protocols of power:*

*You are what you do, not what you say, not what you think. (Comuna Baires manifesto, Buenos Aires, 1973)*

*The word without action is empty, action without the word is blind, and action and the word outside the spirit of the community is death. (Pueblo Nasa proverb, Cauca, Colombia)*

*Errorism bases its action on error. (International Errorist Manifesto, 2005).*

—Etcétera

**YOU ARE WHAT  
YOU DO,  
NOT WHAT YOU  
SAY,  
NOT WHAT YOU  
THINK.**

(Comuna Baires manifesto,  
Buenos Aires, 1973)

**THE WORD WITHOUT ACTION IS EMPTY,  
ACTION WITHOUT THE WORD IS BLIND,  
AND ACTION AND THE WORD  
OUTSIDE THE SPIRIT OF THE COMMUNITY  
IS DEATH.**

(Pueblo Nasa proverb, Cauca, Colombia)

**ERRORISM**

**BASES ITS ACTION ON**

**ERROR.**

(International Errorist Manifesto, 2005)

# ARCHIVO VIVO, THE POLITICS OF ETCÉTERA'S ARCHIVE<sup>1</sup>

Tania Aparicio Morales

To create an archive is a political act. To control narratives rooted in historical material is powerful. The members of Etcétera, Loreto Garín Guzmán and Federico Zukerfeld, know this. Collecting their artistic production has been a crucial part of their practice since 2006. In April of 2022, against all the odds that unreliable internet connection presented us over Zoom, Loreto and I talked about the meaning that archiving has to them: “We started gaining awareness of the value...that it allows a study of social processes at the local level in Argentina, but also internationally in terms of observing the downfall of neoliberal systems.” The archive became a site to perform the kind of structural critique that characterized their practice. It turned into a field of contention and resistance against commercial art circuits, institutions from the Global North,<sup>2</sup> commodified collections, and dominant narratives about their political art. Most importantly, Etcétera’s living archive—*archivo vivo* in Spanish—invited new forms of pedagogy in which their ephemeral performances could be brought to the present without losing the context of the past.

In the first decade of the 2000s, there was renewed attention in the archives of political art collectives from the Global South. Etcétera was approached by a university in the U.S. to get theirs digitalized for acquisition. The majority of the archive contains posters and flyers Etcétera used in their actions, as well as photos others took to record their performances. The archive is organized by media, though it is also possible to search the catalogue by year, action, and material. Until then, Etcétera had stayed in the periphery of commercial art circuits, avoiding the types of monetized exchanges that take place in galleries and, while an offer from an academic institution could be seen as innocuous, they also

identified the gesture as aligning with the type of neo-extractivism from the Global North they sought to disrupt. Indeed, disruption has guided their practice from the beginning. They target the art world as their stage because it is important to taunt a field of power where aesthetics, ethics, and politics were defined; where multinationals launder their often blood-soaked money; and artists had ceased to make art for the public, and instead for buyers. As their artistic practice overflowed into archiving, their energy stayed focused on unsettling power relations. So, the collective took on the task of the archivist to maintain their autonomy. They sought cataloging knowledge sideways, looking to learn from the experiences of other collectives. As Loreto told me, “among political artists in Argentina, we have a bond, we care, we share, we have solidarity among us. The necessity to decolonize art is very clear to us.”

For political art collectives, keeping an archive can be a form of self-defense, according to Loreto. On the one hand, technologies, training, and resources for archiving have always been more prominent in institutions in the Global North. On the other hand, it is important to stop maintaining relationships of dependency where one side continues to be intervened by the other. “We understood that if we didn’t do it ourselves there would be part of the history that would be erased,” Loreto explained. Self-defense, in the case of political artists such as Etcétera, is an act of narrating their own histories in the first person, of safeguarding their material and symbolic trajectories, of letting the archive speak in its own context, and of having local scholars and artists study the material in place instead of forcing them to travel North to learn about their own past.

1. I want to thank Loreto Garín Guzmán for making time to talk to me about Etcétera’s archiving practices for this essay. I translated her words from Spanish for ad-verbatim quotes. More broadly, this piece reflects the insights and knowledge she shared with me during our conversation. In that sense, the authorship of this article is an entanglement of her thoughts and mine.

2. While other concepts are used to classify a postcolonial globe, including those that underline the continuous exclusion of Indigenous People and Native Nations from global narratives, I use Global North and Global South because during our conversations Loreto used North and South to compare institutional dynamics rooted in postcolonial world orders.

Etcétera has resisted the demand from institutions from the Global North to provide “originals” from the archive, which they consider to be fetishized materials that overshadow the historical content of their work. Once, they worked with curators who requested photographic documentation for an exhibition. The collective printed and sent some photos, but the curators were unhappy with the paper because it was not from the same time period in which the original events took place. So, the curators invested in sending a specialist to analyze the originals in order to replicate the exact material. To the artists, the waste of resources seems to come from a colonial mindset of wanting to have what is not yours, to further exoticize and obsess over material as if it had supernatural powers instead of valuing the content. To me, the contradiction in such an impulse to capture the aura of the object, as Walter Benjamin would put it, is that such aura does not exist in a reproduction—more so when it is out of its context. In that sense, I would argue that trying to replicate materiality while taking a reproduction out of its original regional and cultural context is an exercise in futility. Instead, exotic material from past technologies becomes a needless added value to what is important: the historical event it portrays. Furthermore, the original artwork that members of Etcétera and their collaborators created belong nowhere else but in their collection, in Argentina, kept in a location that witnessed the political uproar captured in Etcétera’s photos, posters, and flyers. As soon as the original leaves the political space that yielded it, it is no longer the same regardless of how determined curators from the Global North become on materially recreating it. The members of Etcétera find such incidents comedic because they see them as evidence of how art collectors in commercial circuits can become hyper-focused on materials that no longer have meaning when taken out of their setting.

As keepers of the archive and the remaining founding members of Etcétera, Loreto and Federico must grapple with the weight—both literal and figurative—of the archive. Throughout the years, they have tackled the question of how to properly catalog and collect their work, an open-ended question that is constantly debated not only in terms of systems of classification, but also in how to keep it materially organized so it demonstrates order and complexity at the same time. A delicate balance that they witnessed in the archiving work of the late artist Juan Carlos Romero (1931–2017) who was orderly and meticulous, yet able to capture the historical “porosity and rugosity,” as Loreto defined it, of different materials. In an unfortunate turn of events, after the artist passed away in 2017, his relatives sold his archive to collectors in fragments that left Argentina and spread over the globe. Loreto expressed that “it was unique, it had an enormous historical richness for Argentina. It was the largest archive of Argentinian graphical protest since 1910.” While Romero understood that archives hold the power of narrative beyond capitalist logics of accumulation, after his death his collection was commodified and exchanged in spite of the ideals that motivated its creation in the first place. Swiftly, the market for art objects overrode the public need for aesthetic self-reflection in times of crisis and change. Etcétera knows this is one of the challenging aspects of maintaining artistic archives that must be prevented, so they refuse to sell theirs. As they continuously find ways to safeguard their archive from the whims of the commercial art world, the order for their collection is in flux, open, undefined, chaotic, alive.

Unlike many other political art collectives that developed archives in Argentina but are no longer practicing, Etcétera is still active. Theirs is an archive of the now, always growing. In that sense, the collective uses the construction of their collection to control the narratives around their practice. In the 1990s, the collective’s members were often labeled as activists, which was a classification that did not fit how they felt about their work, nor the space they wanted to occupy. To them, Etcétera is

a political artist with aesthetic ideas that reject a market ready to commodify activism. They know that in their archive they will write the history of the collective in the first person, as political artists whose perspectives are distinct from those readily available to artists in commercial circuits.

The archive is made to be activated in Etcétera’s current practices and contexts. Loreto recalled the experience of opening a box from their archive and finding a project she had forgotten about in which the collective had been grappling with the same questions they are undertaking now. These moments enable the artists to witness generative cycles of creative practice, which in turn become a form of honoring the presence of the past. In the exhibition they prepared as Boris Lurie Fellows at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics, the politics of Etcétera’s archive are present. While their art has traveled North to be experienced in a foreign context, they disrupt the kind of display in which archival materials are the protagonists. The world of art offers a dialectical rescue that brings the ghosts of political demonstrations of the past to the present. Their specter materializes, for example, in the flags they prepared, which make use of light fabrics that perform an important distinction from the paper on which these protest posters were originally printed. The textile difference signifies that the original has not left the archive where it belongs. The fabric depicts the content and commemorates the context in which the work was created without pretending the past can be reconstructed through fantastic aesthetic expeditions between the North and South that mimic old paths of colonial extraction. Instead, material history in Etcétera’s hands disrupts by inviting us to question the past and its destructive neoliberal trajectories into the present.

**Tania Aparicio Morales** is a sociologist of art and culture, and a PhD candidate at *The New School for Social Research*. Using archival and qualitative methods, she writes about the production of culture, art institutions, and art workers. For her dissertation, she has been studying the production of film curatorship in a comparative study between two organizations in the Global North and South. She focuses on how different forms of inequality are experienced in these organizational settings with an emphasis on postcolonial relations.

## ABOUT THE VERA LIST CENTER

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics is a research center and a public forum for art, culture, and politics. It was established at The New School in 1992—a time of rousing debates about freedom of speech, identity politics, and society's investment in the arts. A leader in the field, the center is a nonprofit that serves a critical mission: to foster a vibrant and diverse community of artists, scholars, and policymakers who take creative, intellectual, and political risks to bring about positive change.

**The Boris Lurie Fellowship** is the first artist-named fellowship at the Vera List Center. Established with a grant from the Boris Lurie Art Foundation and the Schaina and Josephina Lurje Memorial Foundation, it is named after Boris Lurie (1924–2008), Holocaust survivor and founder of the NO!art movement. In tribute to Lurie's life and The New School's historic role as university-in-exile during World War II, it is awarded to an artist living outside the U.S., with special consideration given to those who have faced political hardship. For more information about this artist and the Boris Lurie Art Foundation, please visit their website [www.borislurieart.org](http://www.borislurieart.org).

## ABOUT THE CLEMENTE

The Clemente Soto Véllez Cultural & Educational Center Inc. is a Puerto Rican/Latinx multi-arts cultural institution that has demonstrated a broad-minded cultural vision and inclusive philosophy rooted in NYC's Lower East Side/Loisaida. While focused on the cultivation, presentation, and preservation of Puerto Rican and Latinx culture, we are equally committed to a multi-

ethnic / international latitude, determined to operate in a polyphonic manner that provides affordable working space and venues to artists, small arts organizations, emergent and independent community producers that reflect the cultural diversity of the LES and our City.

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Museo del Hambre / Hunger Museum (Marcos Fillardi)

The Natural History Museum (Steve Lyons) Jennifer Ponce de León

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FOR <sup>AS</sup> PROTOCOLS

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