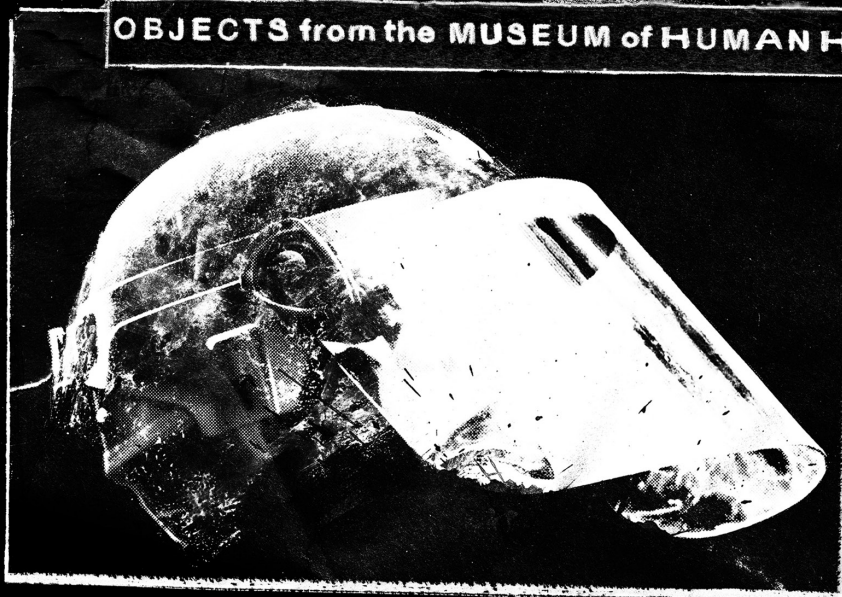


OBJECTS from the MUSEUM of HUMAN HISTORY



FIELD TRIP TO THE MUSEUM OF HUMAN HISTORY by Franny Choi

Everyone had been talking about the new exhibit, recently unearthed artifacts from a time

no living hands remember. What twelve year old doesn't love a good scary story? Doesn't thrill

at rumors of her own darkness whispering from the canyon? We shuffled in the dim light

and gaped at the secrets buried in clay, reborn as warning signs:

a "nightstick," so called for its use in extinguishing the lights in one's eyes.

A machine used for scanning fingerprints like cattle ears, grain shipments. We shuddered,

shoved our fingers in our pockets, acted tough. Pretended not to listen as the guide said,

Ancient American society was built on competition and maintained through domination and control.

In place of modern-day accountability practices, the institution known as "police" kept order

using intimidation, punishment, and force. We pressed our noses to the glass,

strained to imagine strangers running into our homes, pointing guns in our faces because we'd hoarded

too much of the wrong kind of property. Jadera asked something about redistribution

and the guide spoke of safes, evidence rooms, more profit. Marian asked about raiding the rich,

and the guide said, In America, there were no greater protections from police than wealth and whiteness.

Finally, Zaki asked what we were all wondering: But what if you didn't want to?

and the walls snickered and said, steel, padlock, stripsearch, hardstop.

Dry-mouthed, we came upon a contraption of chain and bolt, an ancient torture instrument

the guide called "handcuffs." We stared at the diagrams and almost felt the cold metal

licking our wrists, almost tasted dirt, almost heard the siren and slammed door,

the cold-blooded click of the cocked-back pistol, and our palms were slick with some old recognition,

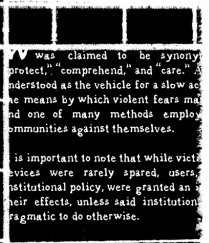
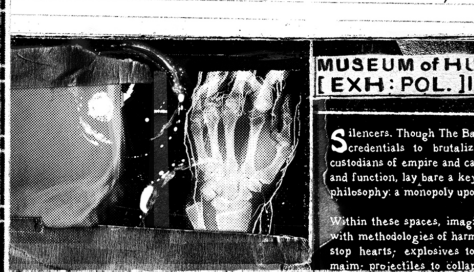
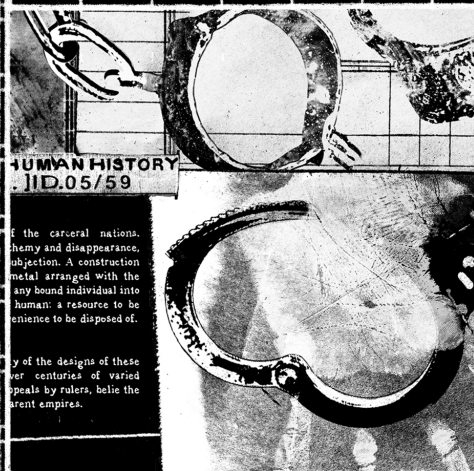
as if in some forgotten dream we did live this way, in submission, in fear, assuming positions

of power were earned, or at least carved in steel, that they couldn't be torn down like musty curtains,

an old house cleared of its dust and obsolete artifacts. We threw open the doors to the museum,

shedding its nightmares on the marble steps, and bounded into the sun, toward the school buses

or toward home, or the forests, or the fields, or wherever our good legs could roam.



Abolition asks what we can reimagine, rearrange, deconstruct and build from the ground up to create more equitable worlds. However, in order to thoughtfully move towards these futures we must always be aware of our individual and collective histories. How have we been led or forced to where we find ourselves currently, and how can we choose a different path in the here and now?

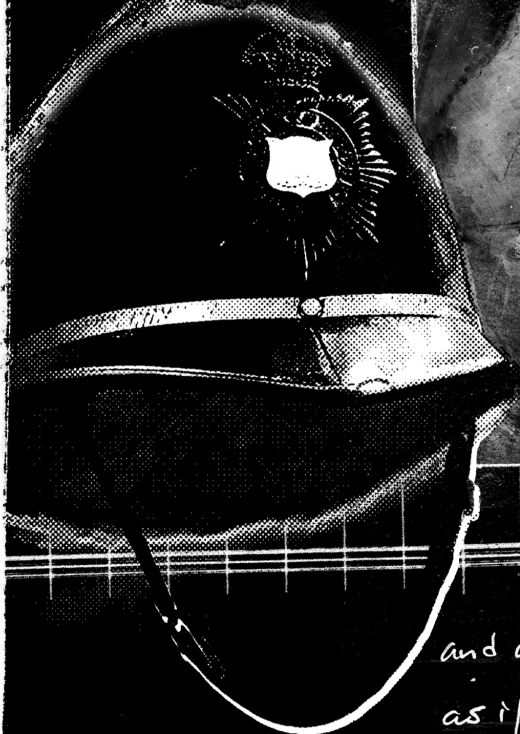
"Field Trip to the Museum of Human History," written in 2015 by author Franny Choi, offers a poetic glimpse into an abolitionist future, where a group of children view a museum exhibit featuring instruments of policing and prisons from a bygone era of punitive justice. Confronted with guns, cages, handcuffs and other devices, the children reflect on the implications of living in a society viewing such tools as necessity, as well as how their world has since changed. The following drawing series, "Objects from the Museum of Human History," takes its cue from Choi's work, as a collection of five renderings and didactic notes of possible objects contained within Choi's speculative exhibit. Attending to both critical histories and imagined futures, these images and voices from a different world examine what such devices were used for in the carceral past and, as such, asks viewers to consider their use in our present, and what it could mean to live without them.

Jacob Yeates

MUSEUM of HUMAN HISTORY [EXH: POL.] ID.05/45

A sigil of office. Both a statement and a promise: a statement of immunity, a promise of violence soon to come. Contradictory claims of secular nations aside, it is not difficult to locate a sort of talismanic, deified quality granted to the majority of those associated with "The Badge," an adulation just as likely to be motivated by terror as by hate. Garrisons of armed children simultaneously self-righteous and fearful, always in allegiance to the highest bidder, and, always, destructive.

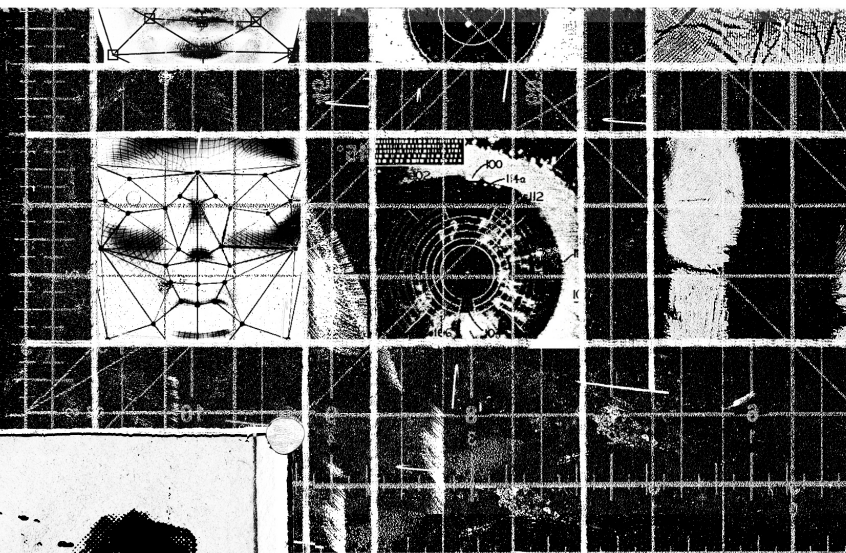
Since rehabilitated, a perversion of the eagle frequently seen from this period, mutations of wisdom to paranoia, strength to brutality and protection to predation.



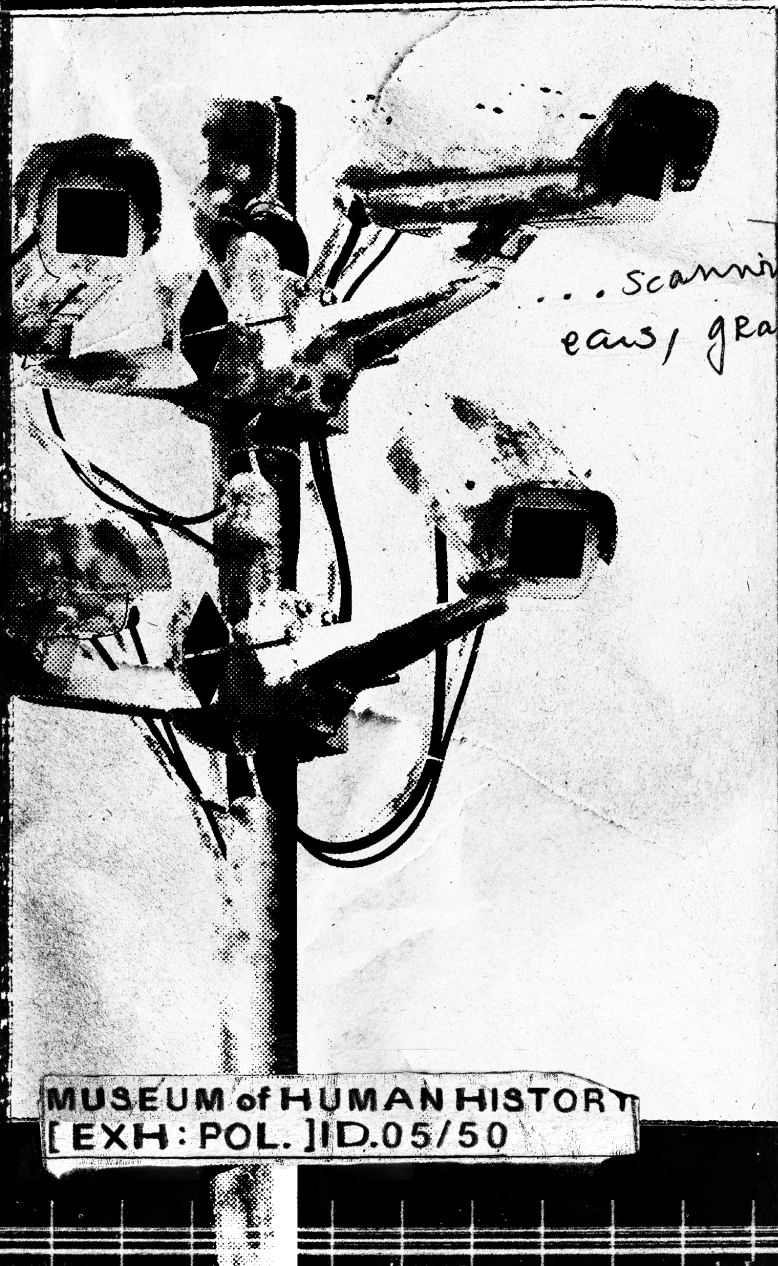
and our palms were slick with some old recognition,
as if in some forgotten dream we did live this way,
in Submission, in fear, assuming positions of power were earned,
or at least Carved in steel...

Watchtowers from a time in which "surveil" was claimed to be synonymous with "protect," "comprehend," and "care." Also may be understood as the vehicle for a slow acting poison: the means by which violent fears may reproduce and one of many methods employed to turn communities against themselves.

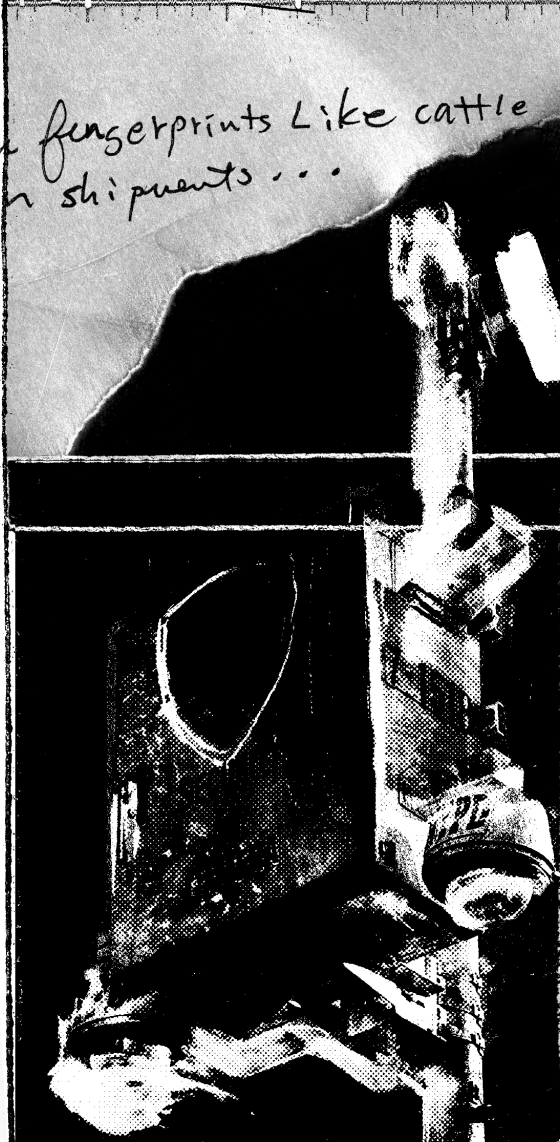
It is important to note that while victims of these devices were rarely spared, users, often as institutional policy, were granted an immunity to their effects, unless said institutions viewed it pragmatic to do otherwise.

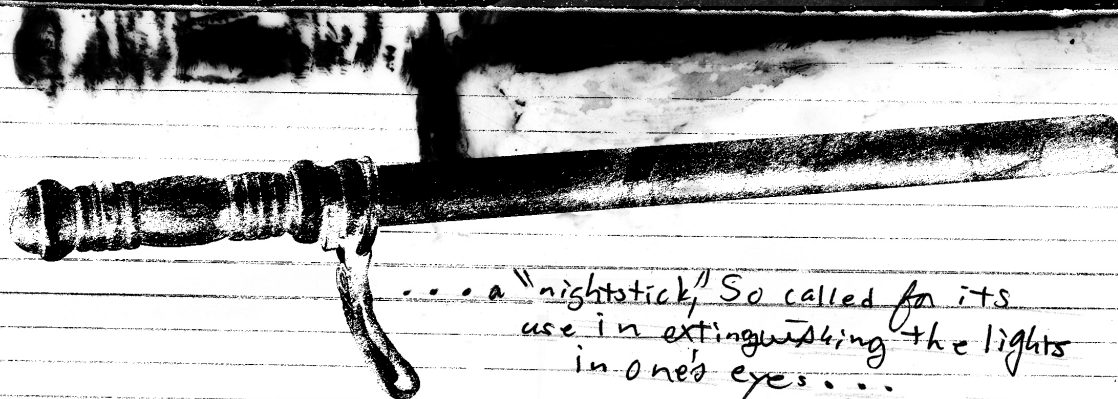


... scanning fingerprints like cattle ears, grain shipments ...



MUSEUM of HUMAN HISTORY
[EXH: POL.] ID.05/50





... a "nightstick" So called for its use in extinguishing the lights in one's eyes...

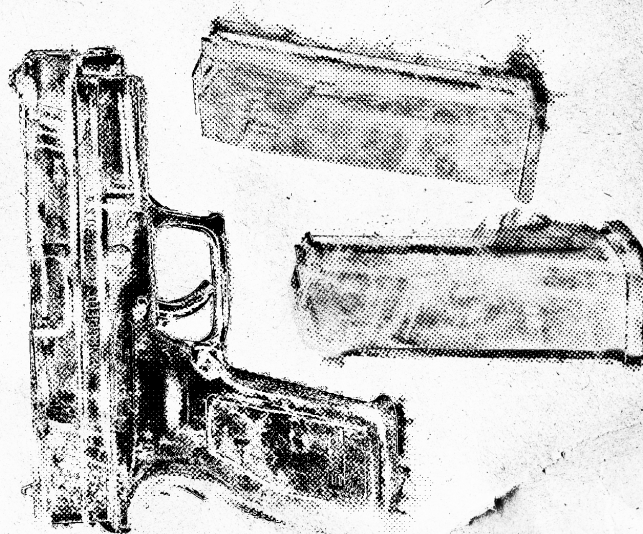
MUSEUM of HUMAN HISTORY [EXH: POL.] ID.05/54

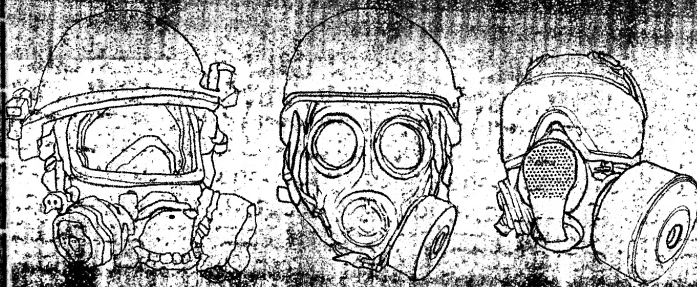
Silencers. Though The Badge [ID.05/45] provides the credentials to brutalize a world, and identifies the custodians of empire and capital, these instruments, in form and function, lay bare a key element to the carceral nations' philosophy: a monopoly upon, and management of, violence.

Within these spaces, imagination always began and ended with methodologies of harm. Barbed metal and electricity to stop hearts; explosives to blind, stun, poison, choke and maim; projectiles to collapse chests and snap bones; and, always, always, the bullets for limbs, the bullets for backs, the bullets for hearts, for minds.

Now implicit, but supposedly unclear — or possibly hidden — to many at the time of their use, are the profound limits and paradoxes of these objects and their programs.

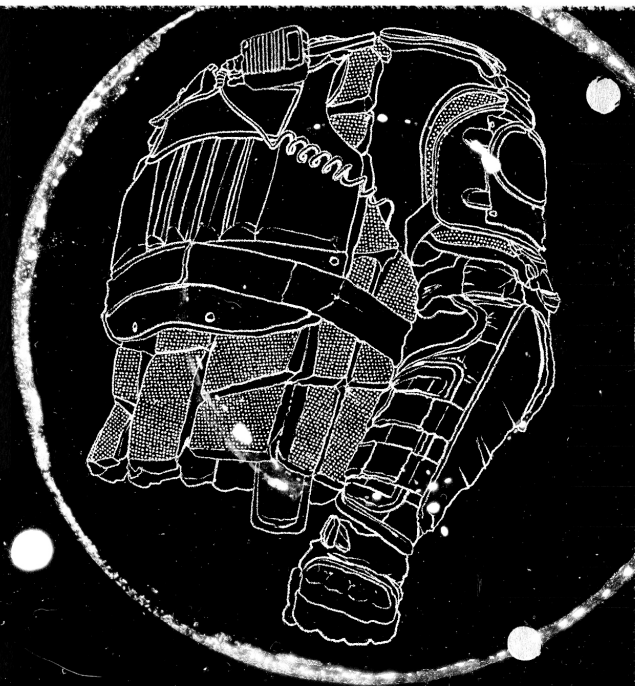
If the most common sources of pain and death within the carceral nations had, even at the time, been causally linked to an inequitable access to food, to medical care, to shelter, to education, why swagger sticks, chemical sprays, and gunfire were believed to be the most sanctified means to protect their populations can only be viewed as hypnosis or subjugation.





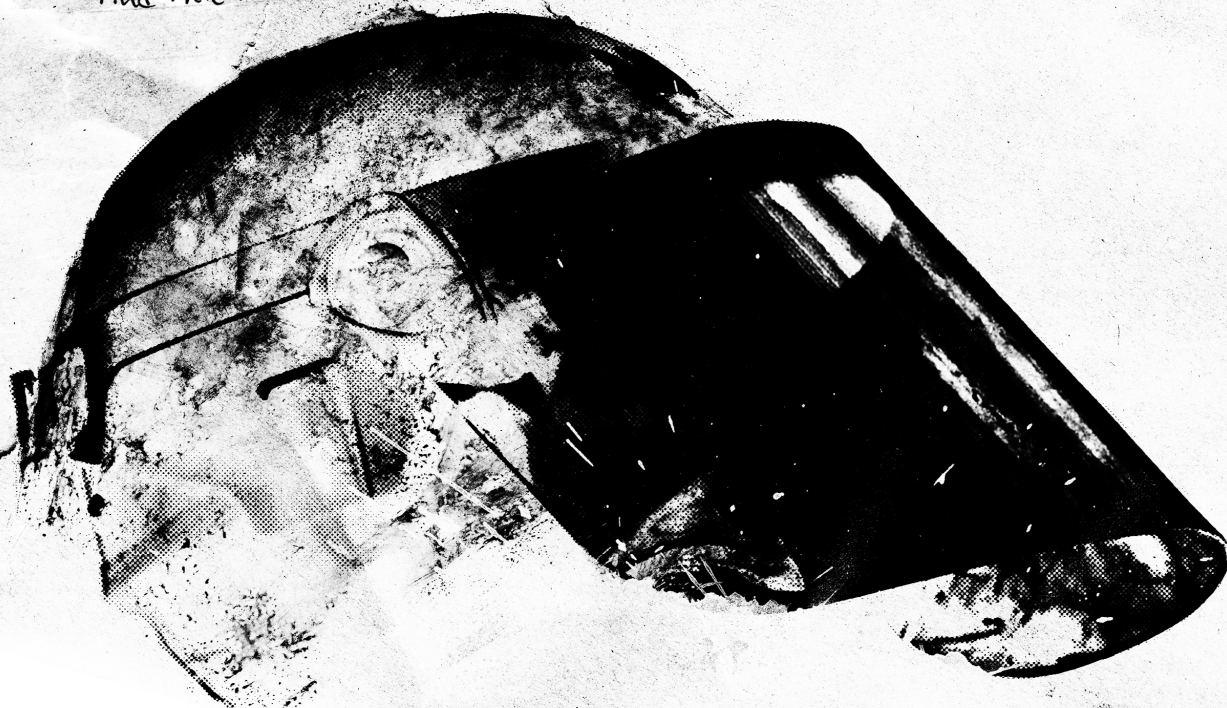
Fright masks and assorted carapaces. Provides users physical protection from the otherwise inevitable consequences of repeatedly terrorizing a community, as well as acting as a spiritual salve: can a cruelty committed by a body that is no longer yours be truly attributed to you? Each added layer, alien and anonymous, an additional distance from a shame that could otherwise never be hidden or denied. The sheer presence of such objects may operate as an admission of a particular kind of guilt.

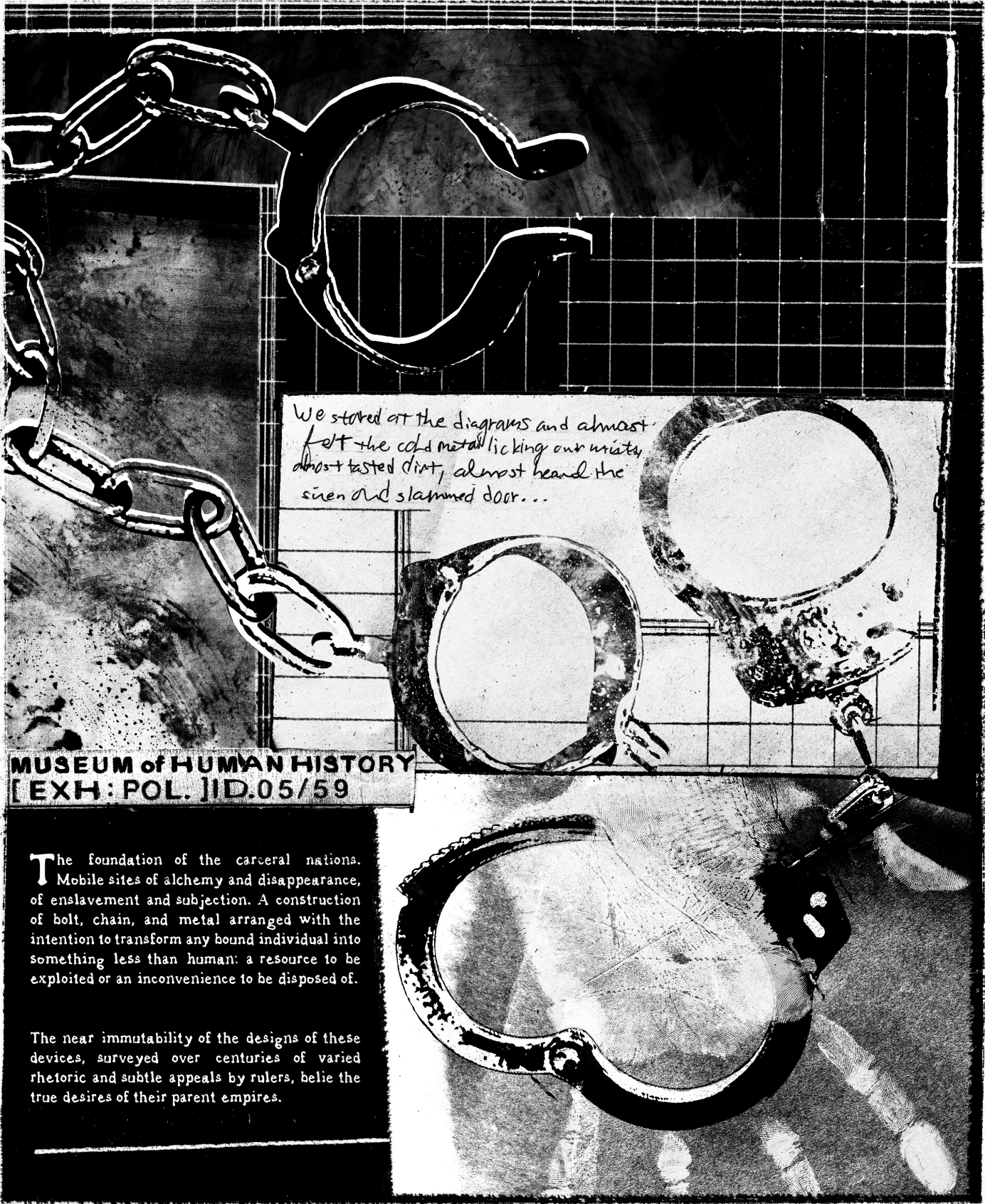
Depending on circumstance, certain makes and models were worn to additionally protect users from chemical compounds frequently deployed against popular uprisings. Said chemicals, known at the time of their use, were often as foreign and dangerous to the human body as were their users dangerous to the spaces they forcibly occupied.



MUSEUM of HUMAN HISTORY
[EXH: POL.] ID.05/55

...But what if you didn't want to?
And the walls snickered and said, steel, padlock, strip search, hardstop.





We stared at the diagrams and almost
felt the cold metal licking our wrists,
almost tasted dirt, almost heard the
siren and slammed door...

MUSEUM of HUMAN HISTORY
[EXH: POL.] ID.05/59

The foundation of the carceral nations. Mobile sites of alchemy and disappearance, of enslavement and subjection. A construction of bolt, chain, and metal arranged with the intention to transform any bound individual into something less than human: a resource to be exploited or an inconvenience to be disposed of.

The near immutability of the designs of these devices, surveyed over centuries of varied rhetoric and subtle appeals by rulers, belie the true desires of their parent empires.

