

Suzan Shutan

Christian Nold

Eve Ingalls

Susan Sharp

Chip Lord

Pat Steir

Sharon Horvath

Denis Wood

John Cage

Sarah Amos

Josephine Napurrula

Heidi Whitman

Leila Daw

Ree Morton

Adriana Lara

Christo & Jean Claude

Merce Cunningham



GROUND TRUTH:

Mapping the Senses/
Charting Experience

Curated by Robbin Zella and Susan Sharp

January 13 - February 10, 2012

The Map

Land lies in water; it is a shadowed green,
Shadows, or are they shallows, at its edges
showing the line of long sea-weeded ledges
where weeds hang to the simple blue from green.
Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under,
Drawing it unperturbed around itself?

Along the fine tan sandy shelf
Is the land tugging at the sea from under?

The shadow of Newfoundland lies flat and still.
Labrador's yellow, where the moony Eskimo
has oiled it. We can stroke these lovely bays,
under a glass as if they were expected to blossom,
or as if to provide a clean cage for invisible fish.

The names of seashore towns run out to sea,
The names of cities cross the neighboring mountains
- the printer here experiencing the same excitement
as when emotion too far exceeds its cause.
These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger
Like women feeling for the softness of yard-goods.

Mapped waters are more quiet than the land is,
Lending the land their waves' own conformation:
And Norway's hare runs south in agitation,
Profiles investigate the sea, where land is.
Are they assigned, or can the countries pick their colors?
-What suits the character or the native waters best.
Topography displays no favorites; North's as near as West.
More delicate than the historians' are the map-makers' colors.

Elizabeth Bishop

Ground Truth: Mapping the Senses/ Charting Experience

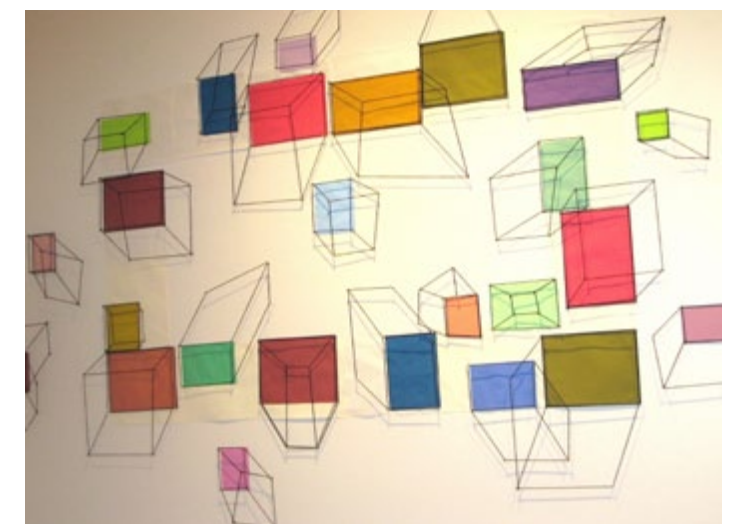
Looking out into the wider-world requires us to first develop a method of finding our way -- signs and symbols that lead us to new destinations; and second, to rely on memory—an internalized map. The first way situates us within a space as it relates to the cardinal points on a compass—north, south, east, and west; and the second, is in relation to our own home--the place where we live. Mapping is a way of ordering the world, and of finding our place in it.

The artists included in *Ground Truth: Mapping the Senses/Charting Experience* take the term “ground truth,” which refers to the use of an image to determine the identity and location of an area, as their point of departure. By combining the semiotics of cartography with their own experiences and imagination, each artist has developed a personal iconography to record the sites, movements, and responses to “place” that are highly invested with meaning and memories.

For cartographer, scholar, and artist Denis Wood, whose work is included here, “mapmaking is an expressive form, a way of coming to terms with place.”¹ Wood's romance with maps is experienced in his wonderful book, *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas* that maps the occupations, mailboxes, porches, clotheslines, garages, postal routes, and street lights of Boylan Heights, North Carolina. Wood says that for him, “neighborhoods are experienced as a collection of patterns of light and sound and smells and taste and communication with others...[maps] catch those patterns in

black and white and arrange them so that the larger pattern, the pattern of the neighborhood itself, can emerge.”²

But neighborhoods, and the activities that happen there, can also change over time. Suzan Shutan's installation, *Sex in the Suburbs*, maps the growing sex-for-hire industry that is slowly taking root. Suburbs, once the symbol of an upwardly mobile middle class, are now, according to a recent report in the *New York Times*³, the fastest growing centers of poverty. Job loss and foreclosures have begun to chip away at the American Dream, long characterized by single detached dwellings with manicured lawns. Once upon a time the suburbs offered an escape from the kinds of problems that plagued cities, but now provide an unseemly location for this budding home-based business. As both spouses and jobs are shed, women are returning to the oldest profession just to keep even. Suzan Shutan and Denis Wood, each in their own way, have developed a “narrative atlas” documenting all the things seen, and unseen, that make-up suburban life.



Sex in the Suburbs by Suzan Shutan

¹ Wood, Denis. *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas*. (Los Angeles: Siglio Press, 2010) p. 25.

² Ibid, p. 25.

³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/25/us/suburban-poverty-surge-challenges-communities.html>



untitled 2004, by Josephine Napurrula

Maps create a material memory for the maker. Josephine Napurrula's map, on view here, reflects the spiritual traditions, history, beliefs, cultural practices and socio-political circumstances of Australia's indigenous people. The patterns used by Central Australian artists, such as the Papunya, are translations of original motifs or symbols used to represent place or movement. Dreamtime stories are painted from an aerial perspective and Napurrula's map/story follows the lay of the land that was created by her ancestors at the beginning of time. Her colors and patterns reflect the moods, expression and spirituality of "place."

Napurrula's work offers another reading as well, although perhaps not intentionally. Perceived as a science, cartography is generally understood to be "objective," to hold no bias. Yet maps are highly political, according to geographer and author Mark Monmonier⁴, allowing the re/claiming of territory, the shaping of public opinion and national identity. Maps, which serve as instruments for exploration, expansion and imperialism, are historical documents. They tell a story of discovery, exploration, trade, war, exploitation and power. Maps shape our knowledge, our identity and our perceptions of the world, as well as our place in it. In the case of Australia, the application of "Terra Nullius" or "no man's land," Monmonier tells us, provided the British with the authority to lay claim to lands they deemed "empty," but, in fact, were occupied by indigenous

⁴ Monmonier, Mark. *How Maps Restrict and Control*. (The University Press Chicago, 2010)

⁵ Ibid. pp. 86-116.

people. Maps simplified land acquisition through omission and solidified the power and domination of the cartographer. In our own country, political redistricting is all the rage in the run up to the next 2012 Presidential election. Cartographic manipulation has the ability to effectively reduce or eliminate competition and to help determine political outcomes.⁵

Maps communicate all kinds of information as shown by Leila Daw's *Flow, Stick Charts* and *Map Icons* series. She presents a broad range of maps to include climate maps that chart levels of rain and snow; physical maps that record the features of the landscape to include mountains, rivers and wetlands; and maps that identify the stars in the night sky. The compass roses are left unmarked by the cardinal points of North, South, East and West to emphasize how maps can "dislocate" or skew information. Daw says "How can we know where we are in the world, when what we are looking for determines what we see?"⁶ Daw fashions contemporary stick charts, putting a twist on those historically constructed by Polynesian sailors to record wave swells, and to navigate the vast expanse of water that separates the many islands. These maps are so personal they only serve to guide the maker.



Forbidden Path, by Leila Daw

Personal symbols and imagery that document the memories and emotions associated with a specific location are also found in the maps, real or imagined, created by Susan Sharp, Ree Morton, Pat Steir, Sharon Horvath and Adriana Lara. Emancipated from communal meaning, these works explore a more expressive side of map-making.

Charting subjective feelings above objective observations, Susan Sharp's *Terra* series reflects the mapping of an internal world rather than the topography of a physical place. Her imagery is expressive in nature, using strong colors and vivid brushstrokes to convey emotional and psychological states.

Less dramatic than Sharp, Ree Morton's *Untitled* piece included in this show, explores spaces, enclosures and boundaries of a particular location. This drawing, made in 1973 while visiting Newfoundland, blends traditional art with the structural mapping of space and was a radical step away from the dominant art-making strategies of the time, namely Minimalism and Conceptual Art.

A contemporary of Morton, Pat Steir borrowed the grid from Minimalism and used it as a scaffold to construct her own personal iconography using letters, numbers, pictures, words and symbols. Her piece, titled *Kyoto Chrysanthemum*, 1982, is a commentary on developments in art-making over time. The words *Form/Illusion* are inscribed on the lower left hand side of the drawing, and *Illusion/Belief* on the lower right. Maps, in the same way, are abstractions of a "real" thing—a diagrammatic representation of the world—which we understand and believe.

Ancient poets, philosophers, historians, and cartographers mapped an imaginary world; one that was flat, or floating, or surrounded by water that rested on a tree or was suspended from the sky with four corners each fastened with raw-hide. Aristotle and Ptolemy offered a model of the universe with the sun and planets revolving around the earth. Copernicus challenged that notion, and placed the sun at the center of the universe, while 16th century master map-maker, Gerardus Mercator, using a system of longitudinal and latitudinal lines, systematically divided and conquered both earth and heaven.

⁶ Harmon, Katherine. *The Map as Art: Contemporary Artists Explore Cartography*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009)

⁷ Soren Kierkegaard, Letter to Peter Wilhelm Lund dated August 31, 1835.

Turning our gaze toward the sky, Sharon Horvath makes celestial bodies the subject of her painting, *Over Me*. Her dense surfaces are rich with saturated color and dotted with a twinkling galaxy of stars. Similarly, Adriana Lara's autobiographical slide show, *380 Degrees*, 2008, seems to contemplate the heavens and her/our place in it. The locating I/eye stares up at the night sky and asks the existential question first voiced by Soren Kierkegaard, how do I seek "... a truth which is true for me, to find the idea for which I can live and die".⁷ By mapping the personal and cosmic, Horvath and Lara remind us that we are made of stardust—we are *of* the universe as well as *in* it!

Stars also provide the basis for *Atlas Eclipticalis*, 1961-62 by composer John Cage. A student of Zen Buddhism, Cage embraced the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*, an ancient Chinese text used for divination. He often used dice or coins to score his works, to help break habits of thinking and to introduce the unpredictable. Preferring to leave some part of the composition to chance was a radical departure from the traditional method of writing music. For *Atlas Eclipticalis*, transparencies were placed over the charts and random markings of stars were used to create this score.



Over Me by Sharon Horvath

Merce Cunningham, Cage's partner, also incorporated the notion of chance into his dance event, *Points in Space*. Choreography, itself a form of mapping, documents patterns of movement that can be repeated by other performers. Cunningham revolutionized dance, which had always been a symbolic and expressive form of story-telling, by bringing a "new realism" to the form whereby the only parameters were space (physical) and time (duration). Cage composed the music for *Points in Space*, which was inspired by Einstein's comment that "there are no fixed points in space." In fact, the dance was intentionally developed to be seen from any angle and the performers move freely *within* the music rather than *to* it.

Moving through spaces is the impetus for Christian Nold's *Emotion Maps*. Laura Crestohl points out in her on-line essay *Mapping Ourselves*, "that the map in the digital age has transformed our thoughts and experiences, our bodies, and even our personalities into locations, proving that material experience can be measured, analyzed and critiqued. Wearing Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) units, participants move through a variety of geographical locations which is then pin-pointed on a map of the area."⁸ Perhaps more than any other artist in this exhibit, Nold draws upon all the senses, mapping the responses to sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Emotion impacts memory, and by documenting the subjective

feelings associated with each place, he destabilizes the notion of "maps", with its emphasis on accuracy and objectivity.

Location is also the subject of Chip Lord's *Movie Map: SF 03*. Lord splices together adrenaline-inducing, high-speed car chase scenes from Steve McQueen's film *Bullitt* with clips from *Vertigo* featuring Jimmy Stewart stealthily tailing his subject as she drives along, slowly. Jimmy Stewart and Steve McQueen, both playing detectives in each of these films, relentlessly pursue each other as they endlessly "map" the streets of San Francisco. Like periods in a sentence, Lord intercuts static shots of movie theater exteriors offering the viewer a brief respite from the absurd, but fun-loving, "chasing of one's tail." By juxtaposing reality and fantasy, Lord's video keeps us in a liminal state—everywhere and nowhere.

The rise and fall of cities is the inspiration behind Heidi Whitman's *Brain Terrain* series. Her sculptural paper constructions are a network of city grids, road ways, floor plans and ancient ruins. Whitman conflates the structure of the brain with the structure of a city creating an internal and external cartography. "Whitman says her Brain Terrain paintings are an intuitive response to information processing in contemporary life- how we take in the disturbing events unfolding in a turbulent world. The mental maps chart states of mind in the language of cartography: symbols for railroad tracks, streets, rivers, and aqueducts act as neural

networks, always churning, whether we are awake or asleep. 'I'm interested in how experience is translated into thought, how memories are layered, and how dreams jumble reality,' she says."⁹

Cities, and the surrounding Australian landscape, are also central to the work of Sarah Amos. Her mark-making is personal and idiosyncratic but offers a palimpsest of information gathered from scientific charts that include seismic and bathymetric data as well as topographical and plate tectonic maps. Amos says, "I want to explore the intersections of this accumulated data where the urban matrix and geo-elements jostle to form a new technical landscape."¹⁰

Eve Ingalls maps the features of an imaginary landscape that is reminiscent in feeling to Tang Dynasty painter Dong Yuan. Using a monochromatic palette, coupled with a sophisticated use of perspective, Ingalls captures the rhythm of the earth's surfaces through the use of contour lines, cross hatching, and stippling to build up a lively and delicate terrain.

Maps and mapping have been the basis of numerous exhibitions, including this one. While the number of artists who utilize the form is uncountable, the question is why? Denis Wood suggests that Modernism passed over cartography, leaving behind a system of symbols and iconography that remain the same, providing a stable, agreed upon meaning. The map as ballast, to mix metaphors, remains a "regulating principle" in an art world that is in a "perpetual whirl of countervailing and contradictory styles and attitudes."¹¹ Perhaps the map offers structure and a sense of identity—a kind of buoy in a sea of freedom that offers the artist unlimited options. Or maybe the map, as form, provides established criteria that allow artists a way back to what Suzy Gablik describes as art's virtue and that is, "meaning-giving."¹²

The map, as a form, provides a sense of "rootedness, of identity, a frame of orientation and an object of devotion"---providing artists with a "tradition" replete with rules and methods, creating an "obstacle to be transcended" while restoring to the artist, and art, an ability to communicate to a wider audience.¹³

Robbin Zella



Flow by Leila Daw



Chip Lord

⁸ Crestohl, Laura. <http://mappingourworlds.wordpress.com/category/mappingourselves>

⁹ Harmon, Katherine. *Maps as Art*. p 138.

¹⁰ Amos, Sarah. Artist's statement given to curator.

¹¹ Gablik, Suzy. *Has Modernism Failed?*, London: Thames and Hudson: 1984 and 1992) pp. 76-77.

¹² *Ibid*, p 80

¹³ *Ibid*, pp 118-119

Ground Truth Artist Checklist

Christian Nold

Greenwich Emotion Map, 2006

40" x 60"

<http://www.archive.org/details/GreenwichEmotionMap>

John Cage

Atlas Eclipticalis/Winter Music

December 11, 1983

Musical recording playing on gallery sound system

199:55 (Mode 3 records)

Christo + Jean Claude

Wrapped Reichstag, 1980

Mixed Media

22 x 28"

HMA Collection

Ree Morton

Untitled, 1973

Watercolor, crayon and graphite

15 x 22.25

Courtesy of the LeWitt Collection

Pat Steir

Kyoto Chrysanthemum, 1982

Color woodcut

16 x 21.125"

Published by Crown Point Press

Courtesy of the LeWitt Collection

Josephine Napurrula

Untitled, 2004

Acrylic on linen

36 x 24"

Courtesy of the LeWitt Collection

Susan Sharp

Terra #2, 1998

Mixed media on Architectural drafting mylar

34 x 43"

Courtesy of the artist

Terra #3, 1998

Mixed media on Architectural drafting paper

34 x 44"

Courtesy of the artist

Terra #4, 1998

Mixed media on Architectural drafting mylar

34 x 44"

Courtesy of the artist

Suzan Shutan

Sex in Suburbs

String, steel pins, paper, paint.

Size-variable: 12' x 28 feet

spanning 2 walls and a corner.

Courtesy of the artist

Paris Metro Terrorist Cells

Felt, straws, string, steel pins, foam, paper.

Size-variable: 7' x 10'

Courtesy of the artist

Leila Daw

Flow,

Accordion-fold strip map of the Connecticut river and its watershed,

straightened to fit format, at 1/12,000 scale

Mixed media on paper,

41" x 28' overall (fully extended)

Courtesy of the artist

Continental Drift,

Three part floor sculpture on wheels,

Wood and paint

Approximately 10' square

Courtesy of the artist

Map Icons Installation

Islands in the Night Sea

One Glacier

Nine Stick Locator

Night of the Fourth

Their Once Sacred Plains

Irrigated Pleasure Garden

Patara

Persisting in the Land

Before Nazca

Pisces

Seaward Wayfarer

Village by the Estuary

Peaceful Valley, So far

12 Stick Map

Perfect Place

A Forbidden Path

Highway Topography

Destination Cape

What Had Drawn the Ancients to this Lonely Place?

Settlements Escape the Flood

Summit Rockfall Glaciers

Map icons

Mixed media on wood panels

9" square

Stick maps

Wood, metal leaf, mixed media, variable sizes, reversible

Courtesy of the artist

Sarah Amos

Knotstopper, 2009

Etching

60 x 64

Courtesy of the Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, NH

Sootstorm, 2009

Etching

85 x 59

Courtesy of the Cynthia-Reeves Gallery, NH

Heidi Whitman

Somewhere, 2011

ink, gouache, acrylic, paper, and cast shadows.

39.5 x 68.5, x 3"

Courtesy of the artist

From Z to A, 2011

Ink, gouache, acrylic, paper, and cast shadows

30 x 44 x 3"

Courtesy of the artist

Chip Lord

Movie Map: SF 03 (Video)

2003, 8:50 min, color, sound

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix

The Roxie/Kim Novak in Mission Dolores (diptych)

C-print and Giclee Ultrachrome ink jet print

16 3/4 X 41 1/2 inches (framed)

Courtesy of the artist and the Rena Bramsten Gallery,

San Francisco

The Vogue/ Jimmy Stewart in the Marina

C-print and Giclee Ultrachrome ink jet print

16 3/4 X 41 1/2 inches (framed)

Courtesy of the artist and the Rena Bramsten Gallery,

San Francisco

Eve Ingalls

Human Disturbance, 1982-2008

Ink, and graphite on raw canvas

80 x 55"

Courtesy of the artist

StillPoint, 1982-2008

Ink and graphite on raw canvas

80 x 55"

Courtesy of the artist

Adriana Lara

380 Degree Slide Show, 2008

80 slides

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Artists Pension Trust, Brooklyn, NY

Denis Wood

Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas, 2010, 24/25

Squirrel Highways

Police Calls

Fences

Sidewalk Graffiti

Wind Chimes

Autumn Leaves

8.25 x 10.5"

Giclee print on acid-free vellum

Published by Siglio Press, Los Angeles

Merce Cunningham

Points in Space (DVD)

Video dance with choreography by Cunningham, direction by Elliot Caplan and Cunningham, music by Cage, sets by William Anastasi, and costumes by Dove Bradshaw. It was performed by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and video-taped at BBC Television Centre in London in May 1986. First broadcast on BBC Television on 18 July 1987. The title is taken from Albert Einstein's assertion 'There are no fixed points in space.' Cunningham made the work, for the full company, especially for the camera, taking into account the multiple points of view afforded by the medium. He later produced it for the stage at City Center, New York, 10 Mar. 1987. The Paris Opera Ballet took it into the repertoire in 1990.

Sharon Horvath

Over Me, 2011

Pigment, ink, and polymer on canvas 46"x45"

Magic Skin, 2011

Pigment, ink, and polymer on canvas

30"x40"

Programs and exhibitions are sponsored, in part, by the Werth Family Foundation, The Housatonic Community College Foundation, The Housatonic Community College, Target, United Illuminating, as well as individual donors.



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