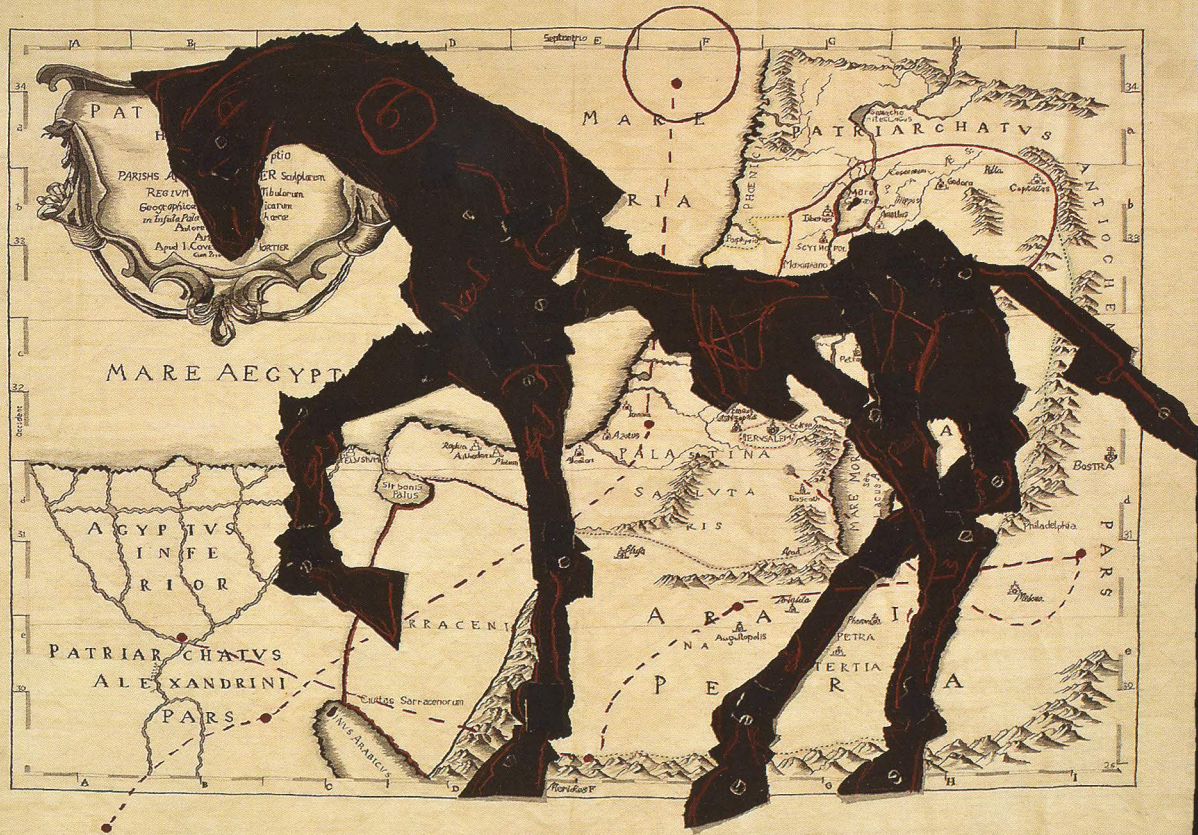


# THE MAP AS ART





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# THE MAP AS ART

CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS EXPLORE CARTOGRAPHY

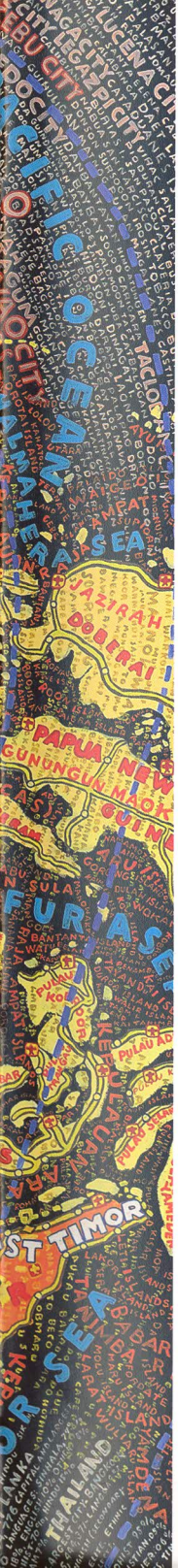


KATHARINE HARMON

with essays by GAYLE CLEMANS



PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS  
NEW YORK







FRANK BOWLING

*Marcia H Travels, 1970*

Acrylic on canvas

120 x 180 in.

Exhibited at the 2003 Venice Biennale

On extended loan to Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London

Photo by Graham Mileson

## INTRODUCTION

There has always been art in cartography. Maps by definition are utilitarian, of course; they bear implicit promises of routes into and out of the unknown. Yet the language of maps as developed over time is a beautiful one, filled with artistic potential.

Cartographers have long known that deploying artistic skills and techniques can enhance a map's effect, and have to varying degrees used visual creativity to make their maps more compelling. Now the relationship between maps and art has swung around; artists are using maps to further their artistic purposes. In postmodern times, with all truths suspect, artists have found in cartography a rich vein of concepts and imagery to mine. Cartographic rules give artists whole networks of assumptions to exploit and upend. In the last fifty years artists have produced much inspiring material for those who appreciate what art can tell us about maps, and how maps enhance art.

Since the 1960s there has been an exponential increase in artists working with maps, and that abundant output has in turn inspired this book. Like the growth of a small settlement into a metropolis, cartographic motifs have spread across the artistic landscape. The timeline



## TIMELINE

Salvador Dalí  
Surrealists' Map of the World

Max Ernst (through the 1970s)  
Joseph Cornell (through 1958)  
Joan Miró

Marcel Duchamp  
Arshile Gorky  
Piet Mondrian  
Joaquín Torres-García

Ellsworth Kelly  
Guy Debord  
Robert Rauschenberg

George Brecht  
Christo and Jeanne-Claude  
Hamish Fulton  
Nancy Holt  
Jasper Johns  
Yves Klein  
Richard Long  
Claes Oldenburg  
Yoko Ono  
Nam June Paik  
Larry Rivers  
Robert Smithson  
James Turrell  
Robert Watts

Alighiero e Boetti  
Marcel Broodthaers  
Waltercio Caldas  
Agnes Denes  
Öyvind Fahlström  
Nancy Graves  
Susan Hiller  
Robert Indiana  
Sol LeWitt  
Saul Steinberg  
Roger Welch

at left lists some of the better-known artists who have used mapping in their work, grouped by the decade in which each began; many artists continued to find inspiration in cartography over two or more decades. An ongoing succession of recent gallery and museum exhibitions and several cartographic blogs led me to map-enthused artists in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. Some of these artists have explored mapping in one phase of their careers; for others maps are a unifying motif throughout their work.

Is there any motif so malleable, so ripe for appropriation, as maps? They can act as shorthand for ready metaphors: seeking location and experiencing dislocation, bringing order to chaos, exploring ratios of scale, charting new terrains. Maps act as backdrops for statements about politically imposed boundaries, territoriality, and other notions of power and projection. Mapping and art movements are equally susceptible to shifting political and aesthetic winds. Like artworks, maps are selective about what they represent, and call out differences between collective knowledge and individual experience. Artists use maps to respond to social and economic globalization, and to find orientation amid cultural volatility. And some artists include maps in their artworks not for their semiotics but because they can adapt cartographic systems to their uses or because they simply are drawn to the line and shape of the map's vocabulary.

Reflecting the diversity of contemporary artistic practice, there is little that contemporary artists haven't done with maps. Artists rip, shred, slice, splice, carve, and dissect maps; they fold, pleat, trace, encase, weave, and crumple them; they burn, drown, twist, tear apart, and stitch together every kind of cartographic document imaginable. One artist mapped her sweat, a pair of artists mapped the wrinkles and folds of their skin, and another charted her every movement for weeks on end. Artists make maps of memories, mental states, and futuristic visions. There are maps in this book made from an unraveling sweater, giant green balls, and slabs of meat; I discovered more than one map made of bubble gum. I regret not seeing, in person, one of William Pope.L's maps of the United States made of thousands of rotting hot dogs.

Geographers submit to a tacit agreement to obey certain mapping conventions, to speak in a malleable but standardized visual language. Artists are free to disobey these rules. They can mock preoccupation with ownership, spheres of influence, and conventional cultural orientations and beliefs. In his celebrated series of paintings of the U.S. map created in the early sixties, Jasper Johns took a familiar icon, a form that children learn to recognize in kindergarten, and played with it as a child might. Brushstrokes soften borders, names are untethered from territories, colors come from a broader artistic palette. This is not the map that





schoolchildren envision as they pledge allegiance to the United States. Why must they—or artists—inherently inherit current cultural conditions, systems, or boundaries?

In the sixties and seventies Frank Bowling painted color-saturated maps with an even softer focus; the forms of continents almost disappear in a sea of reflected light and texture (see pp. 8–9). The rules of mapping cease to exist. Rather than establish “meanings,” postmodern artists mess with received wisdom

and poke at assumptions, rousing viewers to reconsider cultural truths. Traditional maps assert, “This is how the world is,” and expect the reader to agree. Artists’ maps countermand that complicity, saying, “This is my vision, and I encourage you to construct your own.”

Around the time that Johns and Bowling were chipping at cartographic bedrock, British artists Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, working together as Art & Language, produced a series of maps revealing

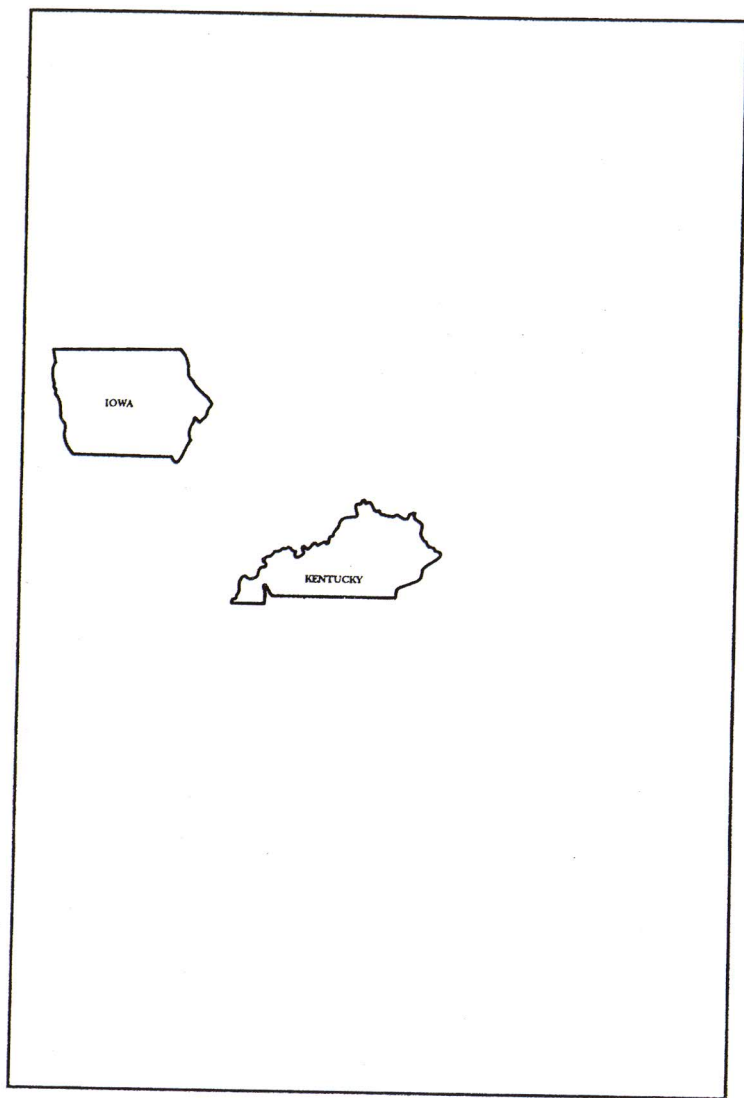
JASPER JOHNS

*Map*, 1963

Encaustic and collage on canvas  
60 x 93 in.

Art © Jasper Johns, licensed by VAGA,  
New York





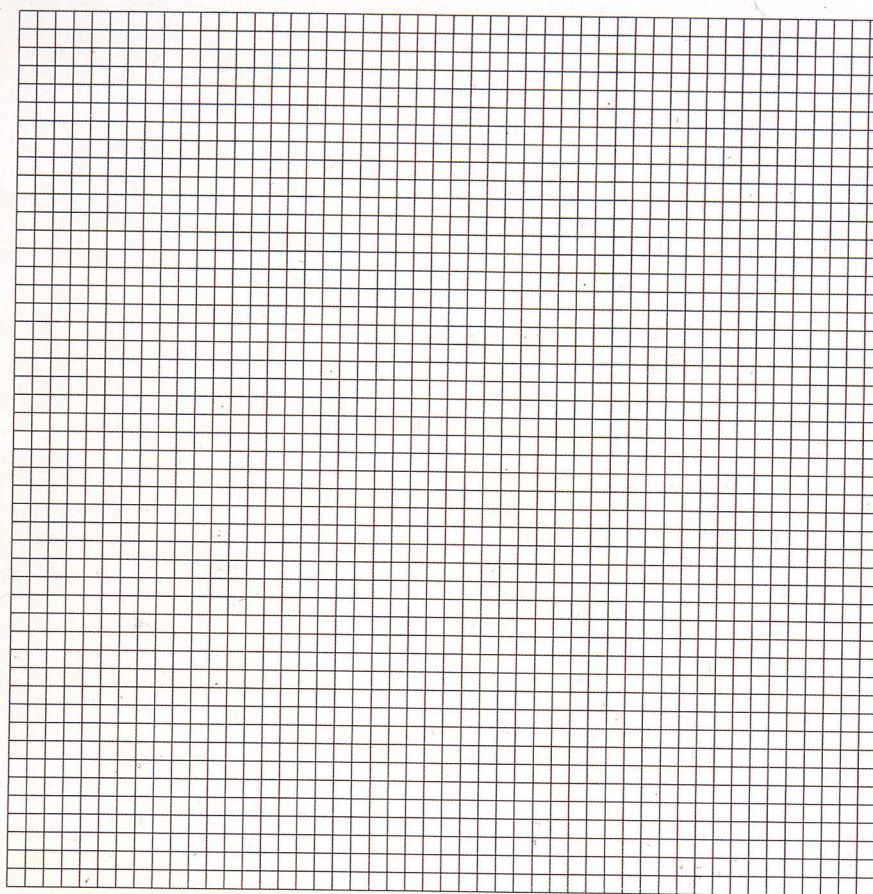
Map to not indicate : CANADA, JAMES BAY, ONTARIO, QUEBEC, ST. LAWRENCE RIVER, NEW BRUNSWICK, MANITOBA, AKIMISKI ISLAND, LAKE WINNIPEG, LAKE OF THE WOODS, LAKE NIPIGON, LAKE SUPERIOR, LAKE HURON, LAKE MICHIGAN, LAKE ONTARIO, LAKE ERIE, MAINE, NEW HAMPSHIRE, MASSACHUSETTS, VERMONT, CONNECTICUT, RHODE ISLAND, NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, PENNSYLVANIA, DELAWARE, MARYLAND, WEST VIRGINIA, VIRGINIA, OHIO, MICHIGAN, WISCONSIN, MINNESOTA, EASTERN BORDERS OF NORTH DAKOTA, SOUTH DAKOTA, NEBRASKA, KANSAS, OKLAHOMA, TEXAS, MISSOURI, ILLINOIS, INDIANA, TENNESSEE, ARKANSAS, LOUISIANA, MISSISSIPPI, ALABAMA, GEORGIA, NORTH CAROLINA, SOUTH CAROLINA, FLORIDA, CUBA, BAHAMAS, ATLANTIC OCEAN, ANDROS ISLANDS, GULF OF MEXICO, STRAITS OF FLORIDA.



only what they wished to show and jettisoning the rest—drawing attention to what cartographers have always done. A & L also made jigsaw puzzles of their maps, demonstrating that a map can be reduced to fragments without connection or context. The artists made no attempt to conceal their motivations. Creative geographer and author Denis Wood writes, “Map artists... claim the power of the map to achieve ends other than the social reproduction of the status quo. Map artists do not reject maps. They reject the authority claimed by normative maps uniquely to portray reality as it is, that is, with dispassion and objectivity.”<sup>1</sup>

In the 1960s the emergence of earth art, as pioneered primarily by Robert Smithson, introduced another means of mapping via a direct connection to the territory, with feet on the ground and hands in the dirt. “The lived body is what affords a ‘feel’ for a given landscape,” writes philosophy professor Edward S. Casey, “telling us how it is to be there, how it is to know one’s way around in it. Such a body is at once the organ and the vehicle of the painted or constructed map, the source of ‘knowing one’s way about,’ thus of knowing how we can be said to be acquainted with a certain landscape.”<sup>2</sup>

For *Buried Poems* (1969–71), a series of private artworks, artist Nancy Holt gave printed maps to five participants—including Smithson (Holt’s husband) and other artists—directing them to isolated sites (an unnamed island in the Florida Keys, the Utah desert), where Holt had buried a concrete poem written for



Map of an area of dimensions 12' × 12' indicating 2,304 1' squares

#### ART & LANGUAGE

◀ *Map to not indicate: Canada, James Bay... Straits of Florida*, 1967

Letterpress print

20 × 23.5 in.

Courtesy of the artists and Lisson Gallery, London

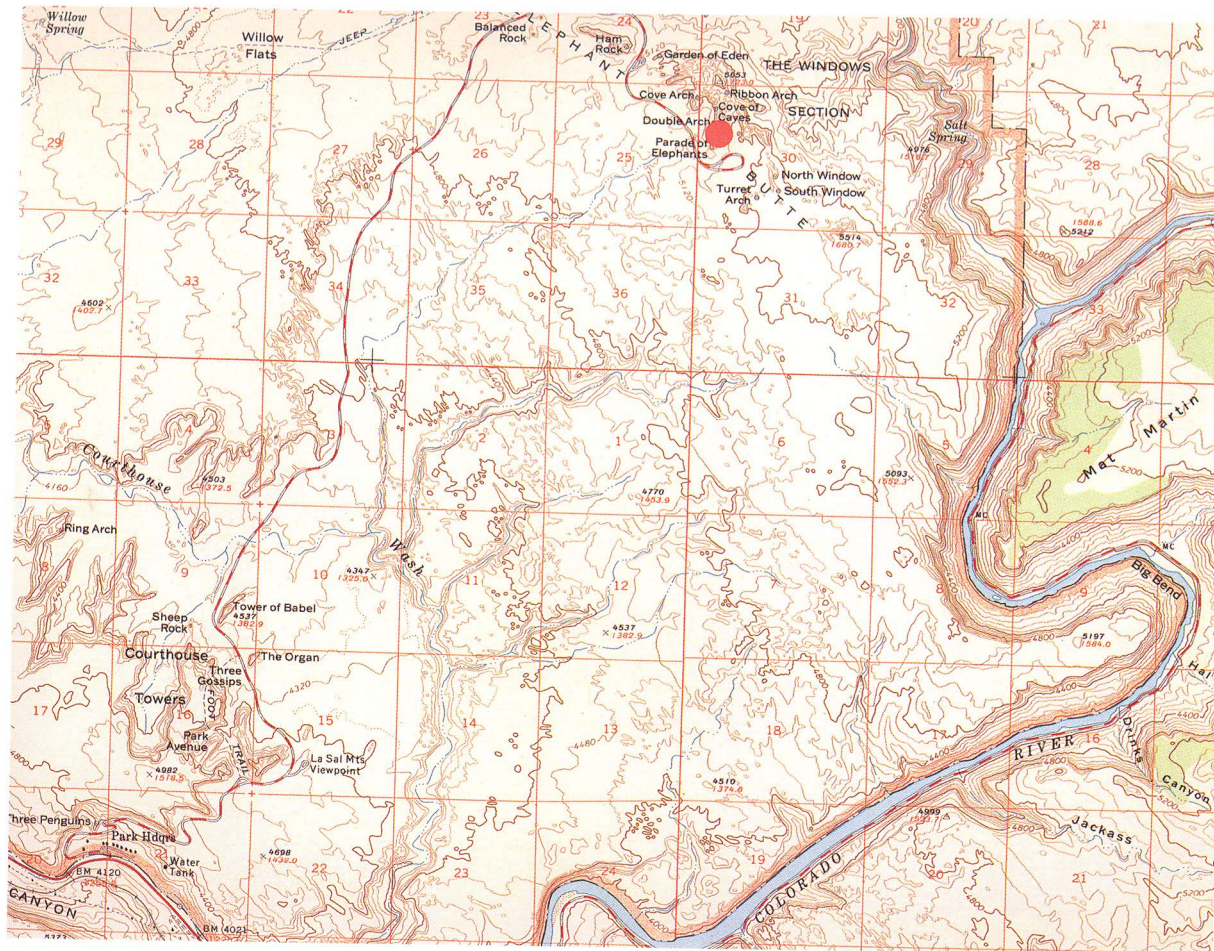
▲ *Map of Itself*, 1967

Bookprint

14.5 × 18 in.

Courtesy of the artists and Lisson Gallery, London

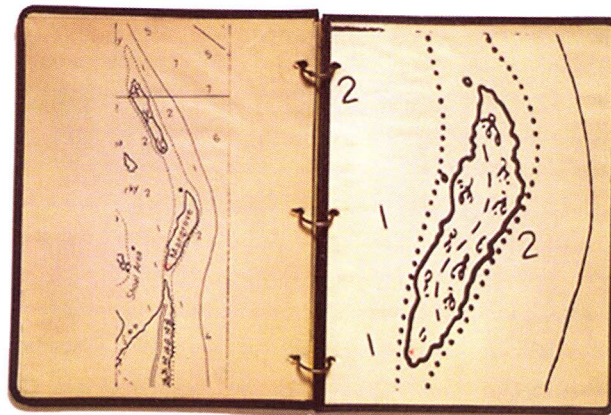




NANCY HOLT

*Buried Poems*, 1969–71

Documents from private installation  
 Art © Jasper Johns, licensed by VAGA,  
 New York





each. "Certain physical, spatial, and atmospheric qualities of a site would evoke a person who I knew," Holt wrote in 1992. "I would then read about the history, geology, flora and fauna of the site and select certain passages from my readings for inclusion in a booklet, which also contained maps, photos, very detailed directions for finding the *Buried Poem*."<sup>3</sup> The booklets presented a series of maps, beginning with an overall map of the United States, zooming in on the poem's location, indicated with a dot. The gesture of a personalized poem at the project's heart and the "lived body" mapping that occurs via the trek to and from the poem make it obvious that this is meant to be a one-of-a-kind experience. The booklets with maps both enable, and are souvenirs of, the individual journeys Holt "gave" to her friends.

Conventional maps can do no more than point the way to unpredictable, individual experience, while artworks embody those experiences. Conceptual artist Jan Dibbets once chose four spots on a map of Holland, found his way to them, and took a snapshot of each. "What matters is the feeling," he says. "I discovered it's a great feeling to pick out a point on the map and to search for the place for three days, and then to find there are only two trees standing there, and a dog pissing against the tree."<sup>4</sup>

Which comes first, the territory or the map? Artists chart singular perceptions rather than assert meaning for any collective truth. To quote French philosopher Jean Baudrillard on "the precession of simulacra": "The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory."<sup>5</sup>

Would you rather navigate a stretch of Utah desert, or find a dog peeing on a tree in Holland—or instead try to fix your position in the wilderness of the internet? Probably not by chance, the escalation of artists' mapping activity in the 1990s coincided with the rise of technological systems of global communication and information dissemination. In mapping modern

chaos, some artists may be attempting to defuse its threats. The internet, a network of networks, connects us to a global village. With the world at our fingertips, keeping our bearings can become overwhelming. Do we focus on the forest or the trees, the tiny globe or the immense village? A 2000 song by the folk group Donna the Buffalo puts it this way: "Oh my head / It hurts my eyes / The world's getting bigger as it shrinks in size."<sup>6</sup>

The internet is itself a vast cultural map—if not of a holistic global culture, then at least of a culture that has produced the artists in this book. Like both Lewis Carroll's and Jorge Luis Borges's fictional mapping visions, the map can be seen to overlie the territory in a one-to-one scale.<sup>7</sup> This is a map of overwhelming proportions, a map whose reference points are practically impossible to pin down. Choices of scale, of the whole versus the details, have always been central to cartography, but never to the extent they are today. In contending with such extremes of scale, both web cartographers and artists are recognizing the need for new kinds of cultural maps that acknowledge the impossibility of pinning down what is always shifting. For a Spanish exhibition of new artistic takes on mapping, Lola Dopico wrote, "The organization of information produced by technology, on the one hand, and the constant flux of society, on the other, generate a tension that emerges visually in the form of maps as models... of what is moving and changing rather than of what remains static."<sup>8</sup>

Psychogeography, a relatively new outgrowth of artists' mapping, explores systems and relationships rather than imagery. As the psychogeographer kanarinka writes, the world today needs no representations. "It needs new relations and new uses: in other words, it needs new events, inventions, actions, activities, experiments, interventions, infiltrations, ceremonies, situations, episodes, and catastrophes."<sup>9</sup> For any of these direct interactions with places and their inhabitants, a map can be a starting point, a form of documentation, or the end result.



Psychogeographers probe patterns of behavior, often in collaborative teams, in urban environments, working over a period of time. Projects may involve data collection and personal interviews, experimental actions conducted with scientific rigor, and street theater. Examples of explorations by the Institute for Infinitely Small Things, a Waltham, Massachusetts, performance group include *Unmarked Package* (2007), an event for which team members deployed hundreds of boxes around Chicago and polled residents on terrorism and fear in public spaces; *Funerals for a Moment* (2005), a compilation of eulogies, submitted by people worldwide, for past moments in their lives and funerals for moments held by New Yorkers in the locations where they originally occurred; and *The City Formerly Known as Cambridge* (2008), a project that produced a new map of the city with routes and landmarks renamed by people who live there. Once again, individual actualities come to the fore; the artist/cartographer is the enabler, subverter, and documenter of experience.

Space travel and satellites allow us to see more and more of the Earth, a God's-eye view we have had for less than the blink of human evolution's eye. Now, with

Google Earth and other imaging tools, we can both locate ourselves at the center of our worlds and recognize just how colossal that world is. We are thrilled to zoom in on our states, cities, neighborhoods, streets, and homes, even as we feel disquiet at the power of surveillance systems' omniscience. Taking advantage of technology to communicate with the eye in the sky, Nikolas Schiller, an artist whose mapping medium is satellite photography, hauled bricks onto his Washington, D.C., rooftop to spell a message in large block letters: NO WAR.

There is a vast difference between maps that measure geographic features and those that take measure of psychological terrain. Spend time immersed in the world of artists' maps in this book, letting it steer you through familiar landscapes revealed in new ways and over strange topography resonating with hidden meaning. Contemplate each artist's use of cartography and consider maps of your own journey. Discover how mysterious, jarring, thought provoking, and gorgeous artists' maps can be. Wayfinding documents as artworks have never been as diverse, or as stimulating. Map-making as a whole is enhanced as each artist makes a mark on a bigger map, calling out, I AM HERE. ◆

#### THE INSTITUTE FOR INFINITELY SMALL THINGS

*The City Formerly Known as Cambridge*, 2008

Performance and map









KIM JONES

◀ *Blue Shirt with Horns*, 2004

Acrylic, ink, wood, and fabric  
43 x 41 x 5 in.

Courtesy of the artist and Pierogi, Brooklyn  
Photo by Joe Amrhein

▶ *Untitled (War Painting)*, 1978–1984–2005

Acrylic and ink on paper  
22.5 x 28.5 in.

Courtesy of the artist and Pierogi, Brooklyn  
Photo by Joe Amrhein

Over the years, Jones has depicted warfare in imaginary lands—drawn on immense gallery walls, sketchbook pages, and the backs of coats and shirts. Some of his battles take years to end; see the date for *Untitled (War Painting)*. He describes the *War Drawings* as a primitive, hand-drawn computer game played with pencils and erasers. Settlements and battlements may be beautifully articulated, but at any moment their creator may obliterate them. Such are the caprices of war.



# Conflict and Sorrow

Maps of Opposition and Displacement





AXIS OF EVIL MOSTLY IN THE DARK





AXIS OF EVIL : CITIES AND LOCATIONS

<p>La Habana Great Exuma Cape Santa Maria Crooked Island Paradise Agadiz Taroudant Zebel Giraua Abadia Henri Meraoud Wazira Tiji Al Jawah Jafra Al Qasabat Homs Zlitan Misratah Holonais Al Bayda Tulungtah Ras Al-Hail Apollonia Tyne Akko Hak Merou Karuel Teveya</p>	<p>Cuba Polynesia Morocco Algeria Libya Lebanon Israel</p>	<p>Al Quaytira (abandoned) Al Misriyah Darayya Damascus Apesht Al Ra'im Rawah Anah Tikrit Al Hadithah Jadidah Khan al Baghdadi Hit Ar Ramadi Al Fallujah Baghdad Al Khali Balad Biyala Mandal Suway Al Miqadiyah Jabala Khanagin Kifri Qasr-e-Shirin Pol-e-Zhab</p>	<p>Green Spain Iraq Iraq Iraq</p>	<p>Korea Al Ca-in-ghorb Eslamabad Hala Biah Bakhteran Ravanser Sangor Sohel Harrin Hamadan Asdabad Kangava Malayer Tuyarken Balher Tarkhuran Rezan Nowbaran Savah Zarand-e-Kahnd Robot Karim Si dabad Shahyar Qom Kan Eslamshahr Tehran</p>	<p>Iraq Iraq Iraq Iraq Iraq</p>	<p>Varamin Gasmor Eyvanekey Firaz Keth Semnan Khand Khodi Hahad Sheberghan Kazir-e-Sharif Khalan Kouduz Talogan Balakshan Galeh ya Panjeh Langar Mintaba Pass Aofan Mingfeng Tuokusidawanlong Beldag Urt Moran Da Jalr Delingha Tianjun Wuwei Jingchunay Tengger Shamo</p>	<p>Iran Afghanistan China China China</p>	<p>Sangjin Delai Yongning Jinchuan Wuhu long miao Kuwo Shamo Mang Djia Wan Great Wall Jaoji Babu Lyoyakon Daing Cheng Dixiang Qiyang Bealing Wen An Dubu Tieytsin Beitang Tangga Dequ Zhou shulzi Jiu xian Changshan Qudao Talian Dao Hayan Dao Han jiong-ni Tao dong Yi Yongfang</p>	<p>Iran Afghanistan China China China China</p>
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CHARBEL ACKERMANN

Axis of Evil Mostly in the Dark, 2003

From the classroom installation *The New Geometry*

Inkjet print and ink on paper

15 x 22 in.

Courtesy of Irvine Contemporary, Washington, D.C.

Axis of Evil: Cities and Locations, 2003

From the classroom installation *The New Geometry*

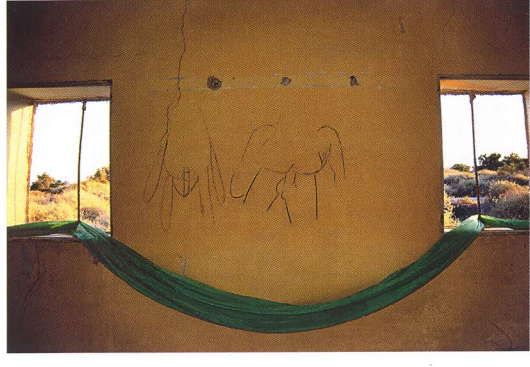
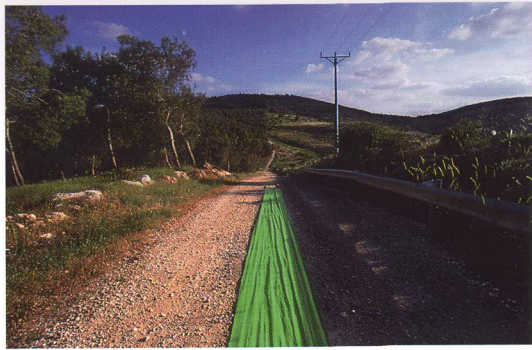
Ink on paper

15 x 22 in.

Courtesy of Irvine Contemporary, Washington, D.C.

In his series *The New Geometry*, Ackermann presents data based on the existence of a geographic "axis of evil," as posited by George W. Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address. Each of the twenty plates in the series portrays an axiom describing a line connecting Havana, Baghdad, Tehran, and Pyongyang and its relationship to other global locations, based on complex analytic contortions involving geometry, physics, music theory, statistical data, and more. The final axiom states: "The Axis of Evil squares the circle (quod erat demonstrandum)."









## ALBAN BIAUSSAT

Selected images from *The Green(er) Side of the Line*, 2005  
 Lambda prints, on aluminum and Perspex or transparent fabric  
 Varied dimensions  
 Project produced with support from the Al-Ma'mal Foundation  
 for Contemporary Art, Jerusalem

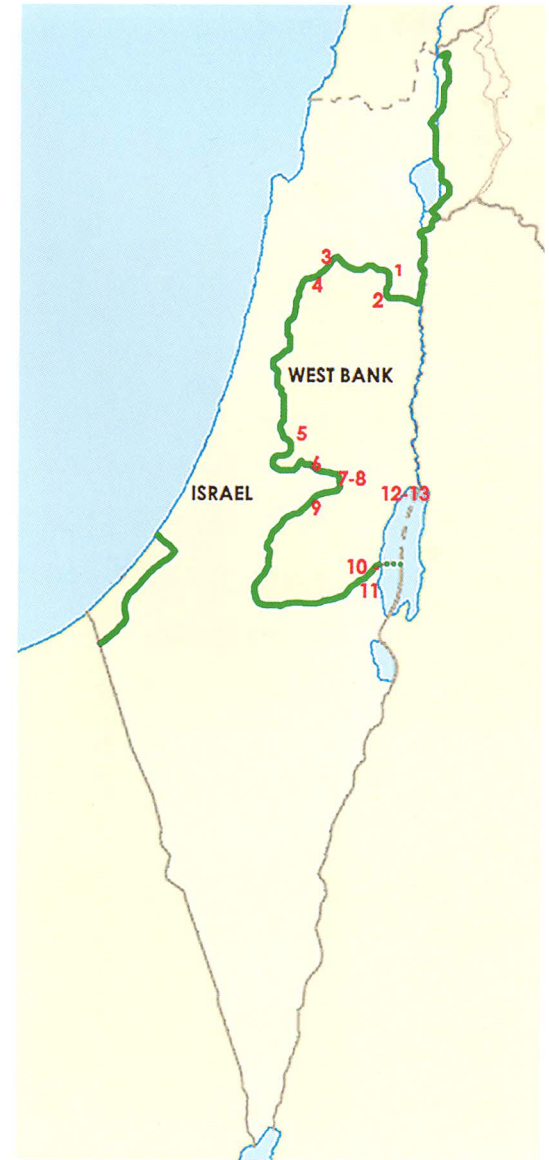
*Facing page, L to R*

1. Trees planted along the Green Line, near Moshav Mevav and Jalbun
2. The Fence "touches" the Green Line on Mont Gilboa
3. The Green Line on the Fence, Um El Fahm
4. Butcher in Barta'a East
5. Between Qibya and Budrus
6. Salam, the shepherd from Qatane
7. Har Homa, with Bethlehem in the background
8. Bathing settlers, between Har Gilo and South Jerusalem
9. White donkey in Battir
- 10, 11. Judean desert
12. Drawing hope inside an abandoned military base north of the Dead Sea

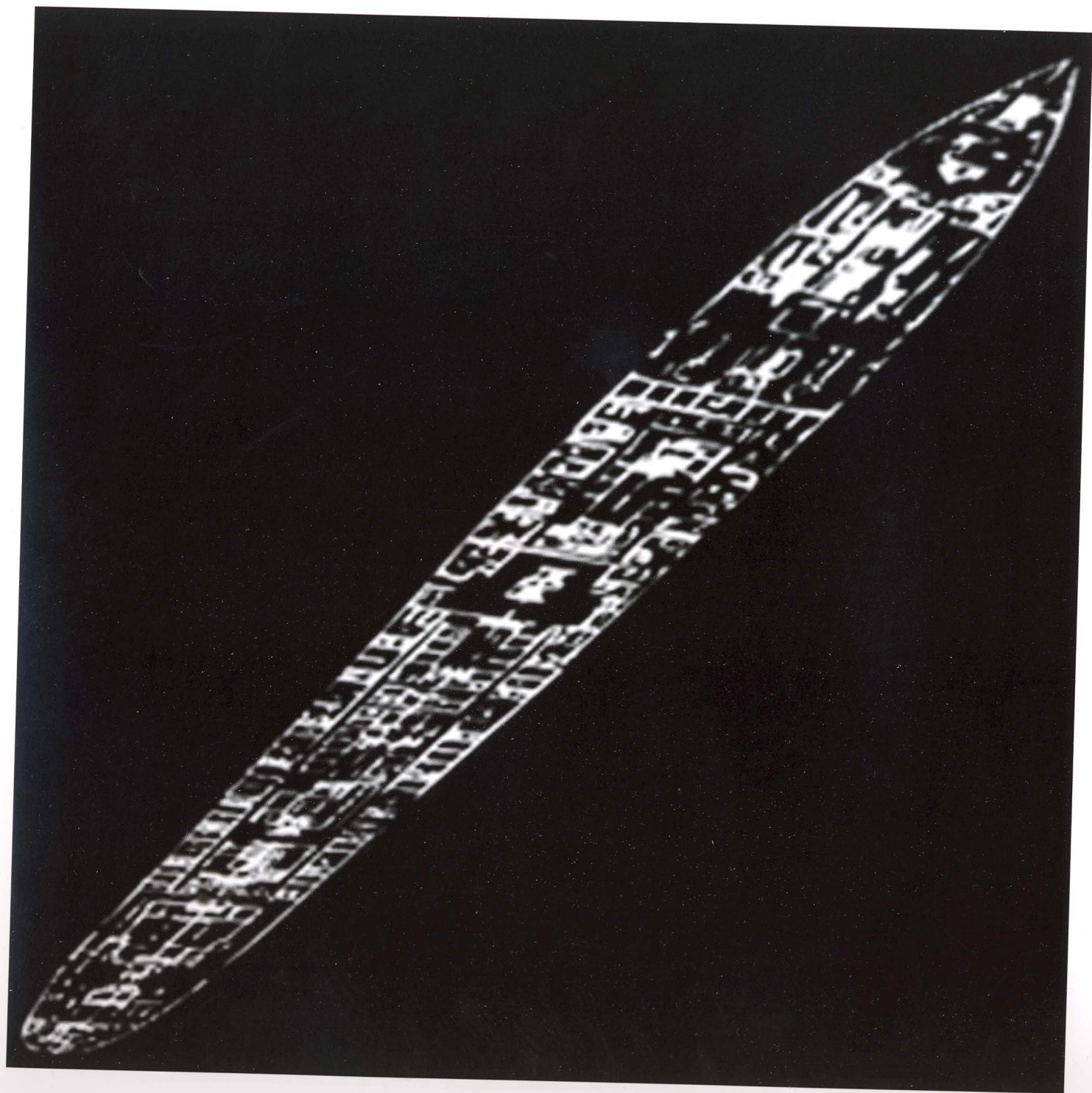
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13. Abandoned military base north of the Dead Sea

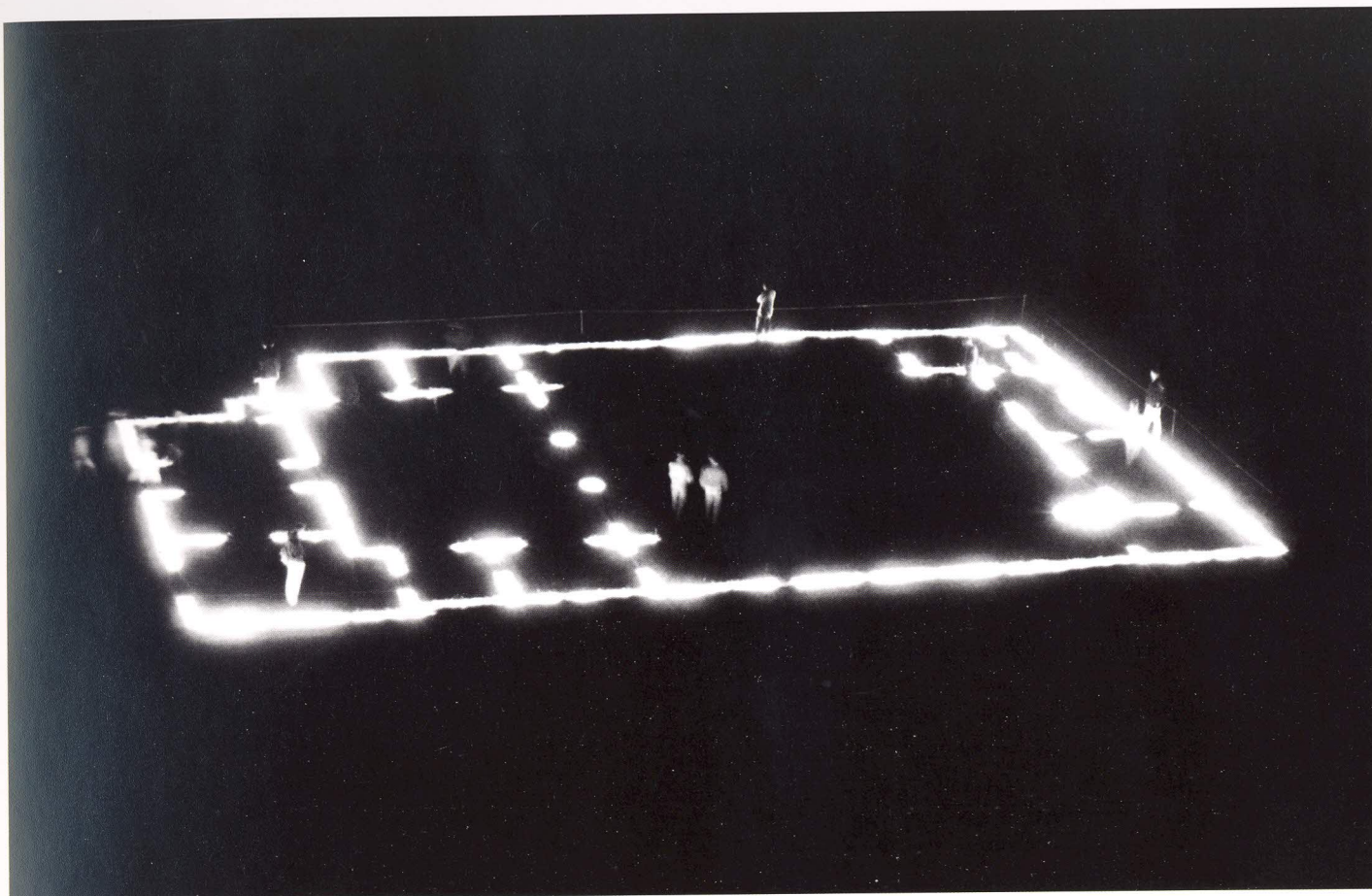
In 1949 Israeli military commander Moshe Dayan drew a green pencil line on a map, establishing armistice lines between Israel and the West Bank. The Green Line looms large in the region's psyche: when Biaussat made the virtual borderline visible, with thirty-nine-foot lengths of ribbon and painted balls placed in the landscape, people reacted to the shade of green he chose. The color, like the notion of the border, is a subjective construct. Biaussat's green ribbons waving in the wind and portable green balls point to the borderline's artificiality and mutability. He writes, "This project intends to communicate, with a smile, a sense of absurdity when envisaging the likelihood of establishing borders in this landscape, if such a thing is possible at all."











MELISSA GOULD (A.K.A. MEGO)

◀ Proposal image for *Ghostship/ The Titanic Project*, 1991

From the series *Memorial Lightscapes*  
92 x 882 ft.

Computer rendering by Marc Rosenberg

▲ *Floor Plan*, 1991

From the series *Memorial Lightscapes*  
Temporary installation at the Ars Electronica  
Festival, Linz, Austria

Site-specific outdoor installation of 110  
fluorescent light tubes embedded slightly  
below ground level with complementary sound  
installation, "Notes from Underground," by  
Alvin Curran, from peripherally buried  
loudspeakers  
57 x 80 ft.

Designed for viewing between dusk and dawn, Gould's *Memorial Lightscapes* are dedicated to the memory, both personal and collective, of "lost spaces"—places that no longer exist because of tragic events, reincarnated through the metaphor of light as life.

*Floor Plan* is a conceptual Holocaust memorial based on the blueprint of a destroyed synagogue, the Reformgemeinde, in the former East Berlin. With its eerie light, Gould alludes to the fires of Kristallnacht, the flames that consumed so many European Jews during World War Two, and the eternal light that burns in all synagogues. Gould has also conceptualized *Ghostship/ The Titanic Project*, a full-scale light projection of a Titanic deck plan to be beamed onto the surface of the Hudson River, in the very slip where the ill-fated ship was expected to dock in 1912. She would like the project to be realized on April 15, 2012, to commemorate the centennial of the Titanic's fatal maiden voyage.





MEL CHIN

*Render*, 2003 (installation view, with details)

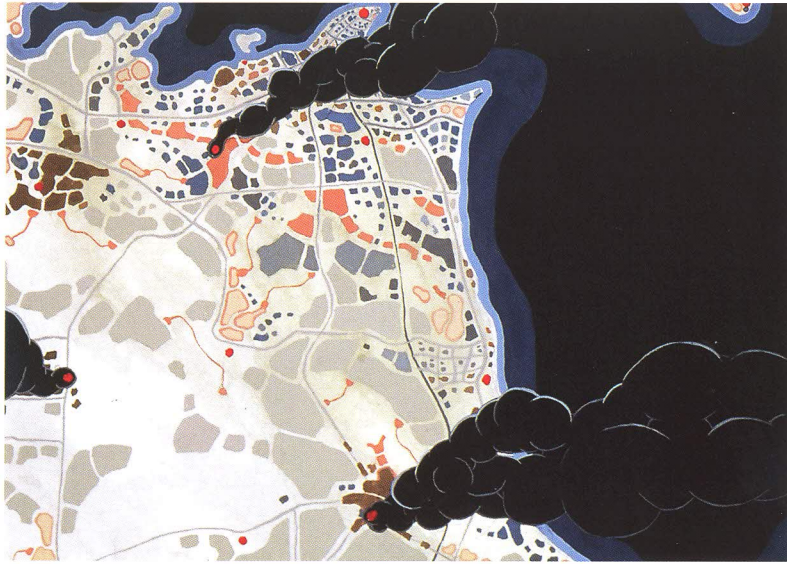
Oil on velvet, steel, kaffiyehs, wax, wood, pigment, traces of Palestinian soil, and white muslin

Installation: 108 x 216 x 216 in.

Photo by John Lucas

*Render* is the sum of numerous emotionally laden parts, with a map at its center. Shrouds of white muslin, similar to traditional Jewish burial cloths, enclose a space proportionate to the Kaaba, the massive granite cube at Mecca toward which Muslims pray. Inside is a framed portrait suggesting a terrorist; the eyes and mouth are based on a news photo of George W. Bush. Turning to leave, the viewer passes a wall embedded with shredded kaffiyehs, the traditional Arab headdress, painted with pigments mixed with Palestinian soil. These pieces of fabric approximate the mass of a young female suicide bomber and are arrayed as a map of the Palestinian West Bank settlements.





SARAH TRIGG

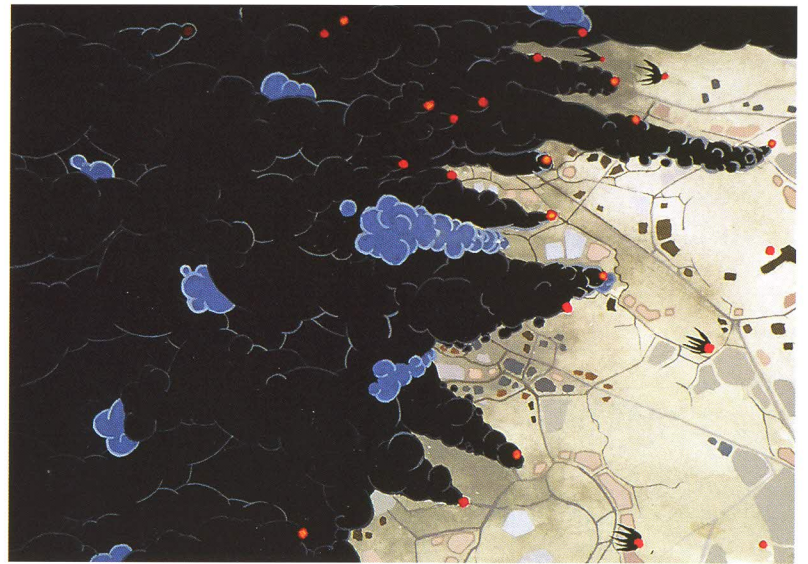
*Frame 1*, 2003

From the series *Mutation Sites*  
Gouache on paper mounted on panel  
5 x 7 in.  
Collection of Patrick McMullan



*Frame 2*, 2003

From the series *Mutation Sites*  
Gouache on paper mounted on panel  
5 x 7 in.  
Collection of Robert A. Southern



*Frame 3*, 2003

From the series *Mutation Sites*  
Gouache on paper mounted on panel  
5 x 7 in.  
Collection of Maurice Tuchman

Trigg's *Mutation Sites* series was inspired by reconnaissance images from the Cuban Missile Crisis, which indicated a grave prognosis for the political "body" of the modern age (a nuclear war would be fatal for all concerned). She studied current satellite imagery for signs of malignant sociopolitical activity. "Throughout my work," Trigg says, "I view the surface of the earth as a living system that can be biopsied to undergo analysis much like a scientist or doctor might biopsy a living human tissue." *Frame 1*, *Frame 2*, and *Frame 3* depict Kuwait's burning oil fields during the Gulf War.