
המפה
לקרוא בין הקווים
The Map
Reading Between the Lines
الخريطة
قراءة بين الخطوط
מוזיאון ארץ־ישראל תל־אביב
MUSA ERETZ ISRAEL MUSEUM TEL-AVIV

The Map and the Territory As Well

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A map can return its user briefly to the site of its origin. Identification of a specific place and its representation continues to challenge makers of maps, their interpreters, and artists who seek to understand the meaning of existence in a place. Maps depict a terrain that cannot be taken in by a gaze; they describe a reality that is beyond reach. They do not enable the seeing of anything, only knowing what others have seen, understood, or dreamed. Though we map what is invisible—what is impossible to grasp through the senses—it is through maps that we turn the hidden into what it is not—tangible, mundane. The map is essential for defining one's place in the world; it is part of a personal and a national identity. It is necessary for creating a sense of coming from a certain place (a country, a city, a neighborhood), for a feeling of belonging and identity awareness, and, of course, for spatial orientation in daily life. While official maps disguise their fictional element by establishing a visual regime delineating a uniform and hegemonic view, artists seek to draw back the veil, to look directly at the territory, and to present it within a range from an ideal representation to a chaotic display, from a representation asking to focus on the histories of a place to attempts to tap into its everyday dynamics.

The function of a map—to define our place in the world and to make what lays hidden from our eyes tangible—corresponds to describing the purpose of the concept of homeland. As a central concept inherent in the essence of the national map, homeland is a collective place for which its inhabitants are willing to fight and even to sacrifice their lives, just as it is also the intimate home and the familiar streets of everyday life. Artists strive to locate the interfaces between these two—the collective and the personal—homelands, which do not always exist in harmony, or on the same continuum. In the exhibition are artworks that seek to discover the existential meaning of the deep universal

ties of a person to a home, a landscape, and the earth, and others that trace the meeting point of nature and culture. Alongside these are reflexive works that look into the act of appropriation of the landscape and the nature of man's relationship to the soil, which the Zionist ideology translated into the historical terminology of settlement. Thus, accompanying the gaze, which seeks to expose existential values and to decipher mechanisms of imprinting memory, is a critical picture of homeland, which combines historical layers of culture and personal memory, and a subjective reading of a current situation.

The recruitment of stereotypical images and their placement in changing national and critical contexts reveals a duality, sometimes a multiplicity, in terms of their symbolic space and modes of presentation. Such, for example, is the case with the map showing the contour line of Israel in its present borders, which serves both as an Israeli and a Palestinian symbol and represents a claim for ownership based on different and even contradictory narratives. Artists examine these rooted traditional symbols and present alternatives, merging historical sources with contemporary cultural and critical perspectives.

Illustrated maps ceased to serve as a source of information in the modern era, which demanded rational and objective representation, and instead became an interpretive site. Illustrated maps are not subject to cartographic conventions and therefore their creation offers a space of action that allows the artist to formulate a personal statement and to set it in place on the map. Alongside tourist maps and maps published during wartime, which include illustrations intended to make them accessible to broad audiences, artists illustrate maps both as humorous expressions and as critical statements. Some of them use a map's infrastructure as a basis for variations, and others borrow cartographic classification methods and analytic models, which enable them to take part in the critical discourse.

Presenting the outline of Israel's border as a map creates a visual sign that signifies the State of Israel and at the same time the sign creator's affinity to the national entity. Benedict Anderson coined the term "map as logo" to

describe the conversion of a map into a pure sign. In its form as an immediately recognizable logo the map becomes a part of a series that can be replicated on a variety of platforms and in an array of techniques.

The logo-map was utilized widely in graphics since the establishment of the state to disseminate national messages to its citizens. In the 1970s, the logo-map started to penetrate the artists' consciousness as an agreed visual sign and a rhetorical tool. Artists use it as a way to indicate a work's subject and to mark the coordinates of a personal positioning, and sometimes as a tool of criticism, or a means of examining ways of presenting information as well as disrupting it. In addition to the map of Israel in its present borders, the outline of the Green Line map appears in many works as a quotation, a borrowed geographic form intended to influence the viewer's attitude, both as memory and as a means to present a political stance.

Many artworks in the exhibition, whether they present a map or a certain combination of images, reflect stages in the process of cognitive mapping. In contrast to the official map's claim to rationality and objectivity, the cognitive mapping process exposes landscapes embedded with signs of experiences as testimony of the artist's substantial presence in the place. Like the well-known declaration the fifteenth-century Netherlandish artist Jan van Eyck would add to his works, "Jan van Eyck was here," this is a kind of cartography presenting itself as testimony. Some of the artists present works conceptualizing memory, sometimes as anthropomorphic maps, and sometimes as landscapes hiding a conflict of identities, or externalizing feelings, creating geographies of consciousness within a familiar reality. They reveal transparent layers of consciousness in which various kinds of knowledge and personal experiences mix together, confronting subject and object as a way to locate a meeting point between the claim of collective belonging and the individual's world.
Each map is a metaphorical reflection of a field of vision, an image from a particular point of view at a given moment. Therefore, artists recruit mapping as a *modus operandi* and the map as a tool to find a foothold within a mass of perceptions, histories, ideologies, and ways of seeing and to impose order and clarity on what appears disordered or ambiguous.

The way of depicting the surface within a map derives from the point of view of its creator—the cartographer or the artist—which can be identified with an ideological center on one extreme, or be contaminated by alienation and anthropological distance, on the other. It can be attributed to a native-born, a foreigner, or an immigrant and be characterized by an emotional or analytical aspect. Most of the works imbue a mix of tones, while their creators move between these two ends.

What knowledge does a map impart? What are its sources? What is its purpose? Questions like these are among issues raised by artists. Artists in the exhibition probe the meaning of the iconic shape of the national map, attempting to decipher the nature of the considerations raised during the delineating of its borders, offering in some cases an alternate organizational order. They seek to examine signs on the map, such as toponymy, or the delineation and defining of areas, or other signs addressed to specific target audiences. Displaying a map means exposing an outlook and creating a hierarchy; that is, formulating a point of view as a center and pushing other information to the margins.

The importance of maps and how they lay claim to the existence of things and delineate spatial connections and contexts is evidenced by the metaphors associated with them: "To map something out" means to delineate, to create order, to organize, to plan a course of action; "to put something on the map"—to expose to the public, to publicize, to highlight; "to blow off the map"—to annihilate, to destroy, to erase from consciousness; "off the map" means forgotten, no longer in someone's consciousness; "all over the map"—is to be spread out or scattered all over at the same time, having a great number or variety. These metaphors relate to the space of the map and the represented territory as a dynamic field of action that is constantly subject to change. Maps, like myths, cease to be relevant and become historical artefacts when their narrative, drawn according to a society's codes, no longer serves that society.

The political border separates populations, worldviews, and historical narratives. Israel's borderline is a result of wars and armistice agreements,

comprising an official border and temporary disengagement (separation of forces) lines. It delineates a territory that is a homeland for one and an enemy land for another. The borderline on the map is an agreed sign, a line that does not represent the terrain, strewn with separation fences, barrier walls, and checkpoints, and whose width is usually incongruent with the map's scale. It is a virtual line translated in the terrain into a typology of defending, blocking, and dividing elements interspersed along it, identifiable by their shape.

In order to raise awareness of the border, artists implement three main approaches while shifting between the figurative and the abstract. The first focuses on the lexicon of images identified with substantial objects and events inside the space that is marked on the map as a boundary line. The second harnesses the icon of the map of Israel within the borders of the Green Line to present implications of political moves on the fabric of existence in the State of Israel. The third is concentrated in the areas of the West Bank and Gaza, in other words, in the areas of the map of Israel not contained within permanent, official borders.

Most of the artworks in the exhibition formulate a double response—to the reality and to filters activated through its representation on the map. However, this response, although often related to political aspects, does not lead to classification of these works as political art. Art's ability to directly and unequivocally influence reality is limited. Thus, for example, despite its undeniable artistic value, *Guernica*—painted by Picasso in 1937 in response to the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica by the German air force during the civil war in Spain—had no influence on Germany, which continued to pound cities in the Iberian Peninsula, and certainly had none on the actions of Nazi Germany in World War II. Nevertheless, in political and social contexts art plays a decisively important role in exposing ethical positions and anchoring moral worldviews in a viewer's consciousness, even though it is not political by definition but only in subject.

Participating Artists

Larry Abramson
Farid Abu Shakra
Asim Abu-Shaqra
Boaz Arad
Asad Azi
Ido Bar-El
Avner Bar-Hama
Michael Ben Abu
Deganit Berest
Eliahou Eric Bokobza
Roy Brand, Ori Scialom, Keren Yeala-Golan
Mirjam Marion Bruck-Cohen
Zoya Cherkassky
Esther Cohen
Michael Druks
Ashraf Fawakhry
Tsibi Geva
Sharon Glazberg
Gaston Zvi Ickowicz
Carmel Ilan
Joseph Jibri
Menashe Kadishman
Mahmood Kaiss
Dani Kerman
Hagit Keysar
Miki Kratsman
France Lebee-Nadav
Galit Levi
Roni Levit
Ariane Littman
Lilac Madar
Haim Maor
Roni Mero
Michal Na'aman
Efrat Natan
Joshua Neustein
Avraham Ofek
Mor Perez
Ze'ev Raban
Guy Raz
David Reeb
Ori Reisman
Michael Sgan-Cohen
Moran Shoub
Ezri Tarazi
David Tartakover
Micha Ullman
Sharif Waked
Gal Weinstein
Tamir Zadok
Mushon Zer-Aviv
Ayelet Zohar
Igal Zorea


HOME
PAGE