

Art and Mapping: An Introduction

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For cartographers, geographers, and the many other people who produce, use or variously engage with maps, these are interesting times. Technology means that the map is everywhere in daily life: endlessly flexible, manipulable, reproducible and labile. Spatial referencing and coding give to cartographic reason a centrality in business, in administration and in daily consumption that is already unprecedented and seemingly boundless in its growth. With the ubiquity of maps and mapping comes increased reflection and critical response among academics and activists to be sure, but also from artists. So, while the claims and conventions of scientific cartography have been debated and ruthlessly deconstructed within the academy, in the creative worlds of the arts, maps and the processes of mapping have proved astonishingly fertile material for artistic expression and intervention.

The converging attention to maps and mapping demands comment and understanding, and this is beginning to happen in many places. The contributions that this special issue of *Cartographic Perspectives* have brought together here—in which scholars and artists comment on each others' cartographic activities—are the latest evidence of a burgeoning critical literature on the convergence of art and cartography. Although philosophical in nature and perhaps conservative in terms of art practices, Edward Casey's *Earth-Mapping* (Minnesota, 2005) is one of the first sustained reflections on the contemporary convergence of art and mapping to appear in print, and it follows his earlier discussions of the history of landscape and mapping in art and science. To add to the growing number of academic articles, exhibition proposals and conference discussions, I am aware of at least two other proposals currently being considered for book-length studies of the relations of art and cartography. As Denis Wood himself has put it, there is a cresting wave, and it awaits skilled surfers.

The papers by Wood and Krygier demonstrate that they are among the most experienced board riders in this particular ocean, their papers bringing strong evidence not only of the excitement of a current con-

vergence, but of how it may be understood historically and critically. Their particular interest is in a much more activist and interventionist approach to cartographic art than is represented in Casey's work, and there is no question that this is a dominant concern among many artists who embrace maps and mapping today. This concern is very apparent from Kanarinka's discussion of the inheritance of Situationist mapping. Whether Varanka is correct to suggest that there exists a deeper cognitive bias towards the graphic representation of spatial knowledge: a 'natural mapping ... that creates personal images of places, movement, and landmarks, highly invested with meaning, free to draw on the unconscious and memories, but experimental in depiction,' is debatable, but she is completely correct to say that 'it was only after cartography acknowledged its relation to Post-Modernism [i.e., the relativity of its own claims to objectivity and truth] that cartographic theory could include the mapping terms of artists.'

There is much more to be said about the extraordinary convergence of artistic creativity, technology and criticism that surrounds mapping. Some current myths about both cartographic and artistic assumptions and activities—even some that find voice in these papers—will need to be thoughtfully and carefully examined before the wave of interest in these questions passes. But the contributions gathered here represent a significant step in a process that is critical for all aspects of mapping practice.