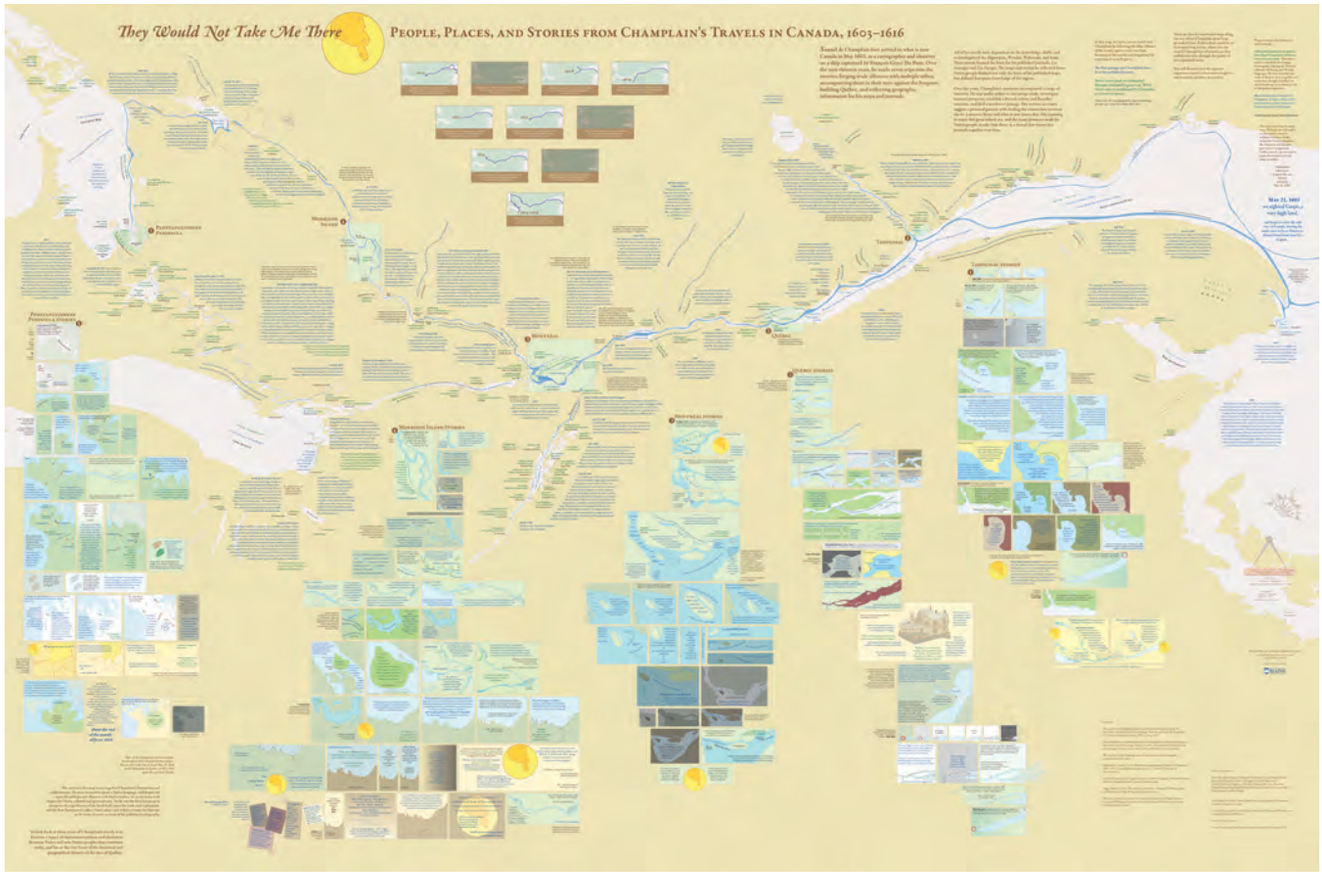
Visual Fields

In 2008, Michael Hermann (University of Maine) and Margaret Pearce (Ohio University) collaborated on a project to illustrate the travel journals of Samuel de Champlain in the 1600s.

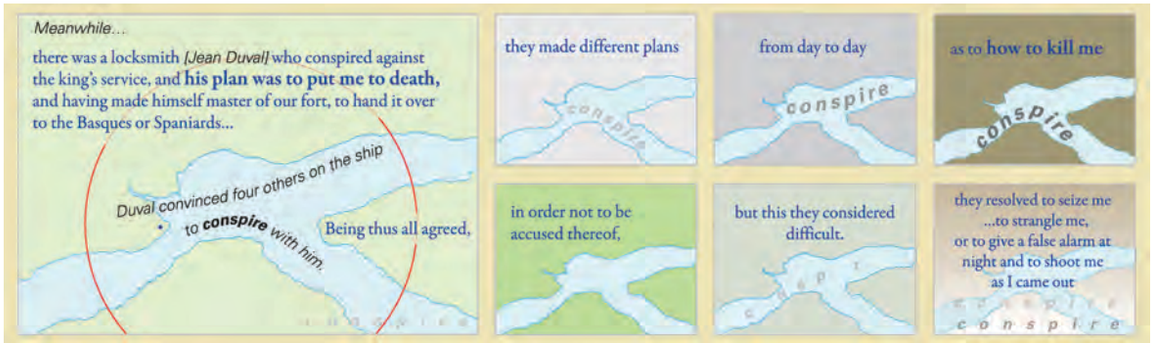
Within the context of a larger map (39 x 59 inches), they created a series of sequential panels to convey the depth and diversity of experience in places over time. These panels were designed to bring the reader into the storied landscape using different techniques with type, color, and scale, to express isolation, seasonality, danger, despair, death, hope, and survival. Champlain's voice is quoted directly from his journals (typeset in blue), imagined Native voices respond (in green), and the cartographers' voice (in black) moves the story along. The map is published on two sides; English on one side and French on the other. Native placenames are translated on both sides. Some examples follow.

They Would Not Take Me There; People, Places and Stories from Champlain's Travels in Canada, 1603–1616



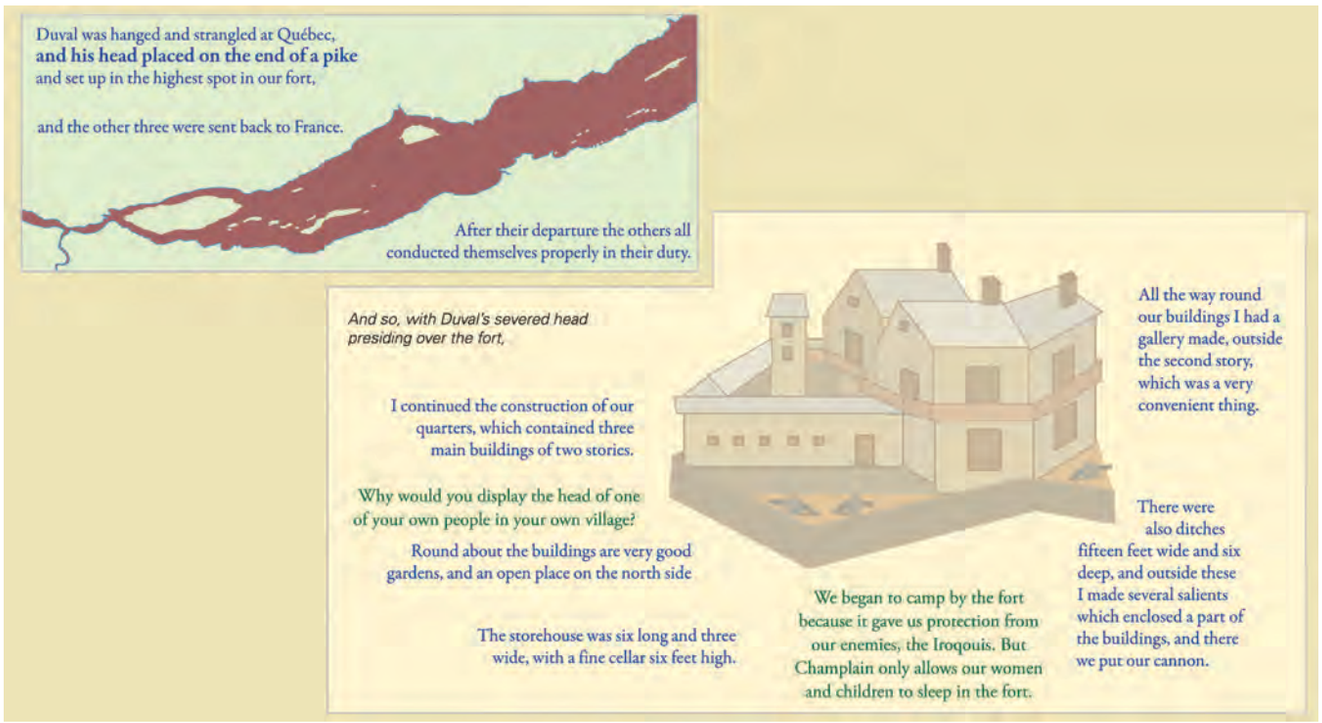
Paper map is 39 x 59 inches, folded to 8 x 10 inches, or available rolled. Published by the The University of Maine Canadian–American Center, Orono, Maine, USA. ISBN 978-0615-23159-4. Retail $14.99.

Conspiracy Panels



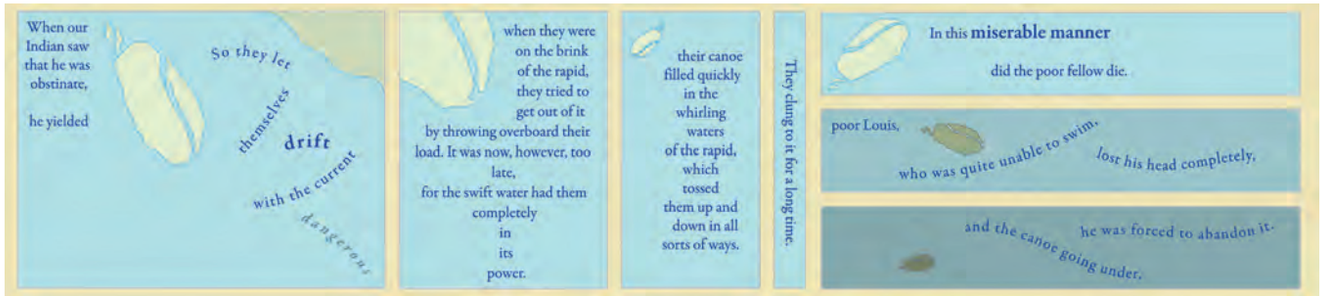
The conspiracy panels use color and typography to illustrate the story of a plot to kill Champlain. The same map is used seven times, once as an opening panel and then in a series of six small multiples. The text 'conspire' is the common element, placed on water because the conspiracy is located on the ship. The word appears and disappears in shades of gray, becoming darker as the plot thickens and disappearing altogether as they plan to avoid detection. In one panel, the vowels are removed to reinforce the difficulty the men faced as they considered how to avoid detection. In later panels (not shown) Champlain learns of the conspiracy and jails the men.

The Fort at Quebec



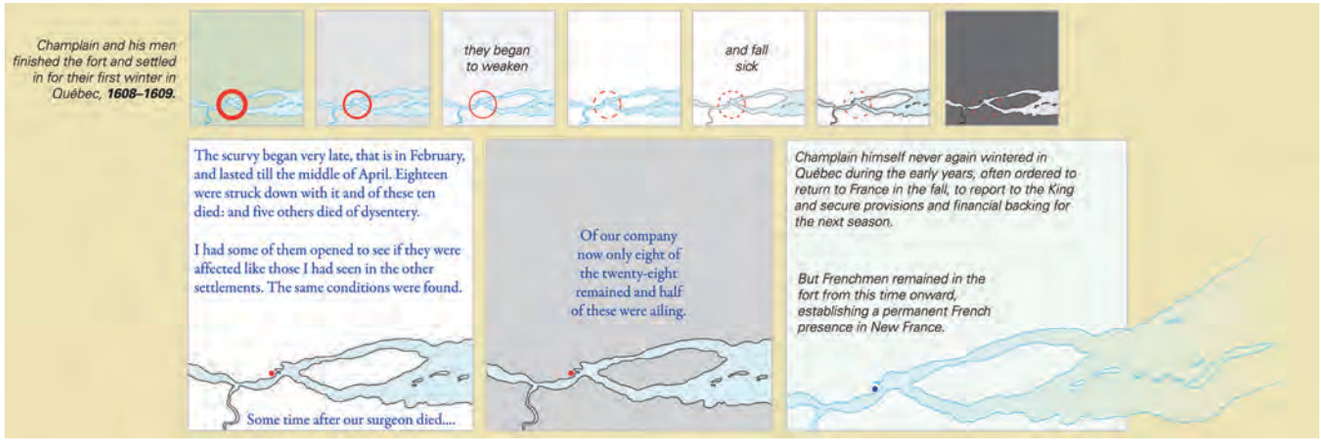
The conspiracy story ends with a St. Lawrence River flowing red to symbolize the beheading of Champlain's adversary. All of the men, whether part of the conspiracy or not, must now return to building the fort together. The fort is drawn in the same style of Champlain's rendering of the fort in his journal. Interspersed with the mundane details of the construction, Native voices question the scene before them, the French practice of beheading the man, and comment on the way in which Champlain controlled who could enter the fort.

Drifting and Drowning



In this series, Champlain tells the story of a drowning. The type is placed to suggest drifting with the current. The scale changes to reinforce the helplessness of the situation. As Louis drowns, the color palette darkens.

Winter in Quebec, 1608



A series of small multiples illustrate the first winter the French stayed in Quebec. A heavy red circle locates the fort in Quebec. The river is located at the base allowing an expanse of open space above to reinforce the sense of isolation. The first map is green to suggest late summer, and the thick red circle is a graphic fortress symbolizing many men and supplies against a long winter. As the season gets colder, the color palette shifts to grays and white: winter has arrived. As supplies diminish, the circle line weight is reduced, and as their health declines, the circle becomes a dashed line and the shoreline turns from blue to gray to black. The panel ends in black, forecasting death and dark times. This leads to a series of three panels and scale changes to bring the story back into the context of the river. Hue shifts from white (winter) to gray (emotion of survival) to green (spring), and the point symbol for the fort shifts from red to blue, as a handful of men survive to see spring. In the last panel, the St. Lawrence is spilling off the panel as the passage to France opens up, and the reader is directed back into the flow of events elsewhere in the map.

More information about this project can be found at www.umaine.edu/canam. It was awarded third place in the thematic category of the CaGIS 2008 36th Annual Map Design Competition.