

the 2011 conference theme of the importance of design, and it is very good to see these important issues take a front seat in the attentions of the cartographic community. Aesthetics is a broad term for concepts pervasive in our lives and behavior; aesthetics even intrude, as Leonard Koren has pointed out, “into what we believe are the domains of reason. We often rely on aesthetic cues to determine whether the information we receive from others is true, false, or in-between” (Koren 2010). It became clear quite early on in the *Aesthetics of Mapping* presentations and general discussion, however, that there was a good deal of confusion about how the concept of cartographic aesthetics was to be engaged, and its place in education and practice.

Aesthetics is a broad term for concepts pervasive in our lives

Significantly, the discussion in Portland (in both of the general sessions and in the smaller working group session the next day) tended to appose the concept of *aesthetics* to one of *clarity*. In fact, there was a widely held consensus that ascribed the quality of *beauty* to be a product of *clarity*, and to suspect an indulgence in *aesthetics* of tending to erode both beauty and clarity. Clearly, the long established popular antipathy between the self-image of the “serious” cartographer and pervasive cultural attitudes toward aesthetic concerns is alive and well. These attitudes are rooted (consciously or not) in both Schopenhauer’s view of aesthetics as a non-practical state of contemplation (Schopenhauer 1966) and in the Expression theory of art wherein aesthetic concerns are manifestations of emotion (Dickie 1997). Either view is predictably unattractive to any map maker with a positivist, “serious,” self image. Obviously, the supposed dichotomy between aesthetic and so-called “serious” concerns needs to be critically examined and debunked before a useful understanding of cartographic aesthetics can be reached.

CLARITY

Clarity was discussed by many in Portland as if it was an absolute commodity that was essential to a map’s value as a map. The consensus seemed to be that one should start with a *clear* map, to which one could carefully add “aesthetics” with fine discretion, taking care that the sacred clarity not be impinged. Although there was a broad agreement that clarity comes, in some undefined manner, through simplification and/or abstraction, in general clarity seemed to be thought of as some sort of state of grace. There was a great deal of resistance to the suggestion that clarity is itself an aesthetic dimension, and a cultural convention that may or may not be defined consistently across cultures or across time. This is to say that what might constitute cartographic clarity for one group of map readers (in time or cultural space) may very well not constitute clarity for another. Clarity, in this regard, is like realism: each is defined by culturally determined conventions that are variable. There is little reason to think that the famously realistic grapes of Zeuxis or curtain of Parrhasius (Pliny 77) would fool anyone today, and it is reasonable to expect that future generations will find images that we consider faithful reproductions of reality to be as artificial as we see ancient Egyptian figure painting (Gombrich 1960). This is not, however, because of any superior sophistication in ourselves over our ancestors, or any inferiority of our perception to that of our descendants, but simply that our and their criteria for defining realism and/or clarity are just rather different.

For an example of this, we could consider the case of blackletter type (often misnamed *Olde English* in the US). “The first types cut in Europe, including all of Gutenberg’s, were blackletters,” and use of the form was widespread. “Scripts and printing types of this kind were once used throughout Europe—in England, France, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Spain, as well as in Germany—and some species even thrived in Italy” (Bringhurst 2002, 250). This letterform could only have flourished so pervasively, and over such a considerable period of time (from the 10th century to well into the 17th, and in some cases into the 20th), because it was considered clear and readable by its audience: it afforded *clarity*. That blackletter is no longer considered clear, and is instead often denigrated as an obfuscated affectation, has no bearing on its earlier status as clear. Similarly, that some antique maps may sometimes seem crabbed, obscure, obfuscated, or even just quaint, to a reader today has no bearing on their clarity to their targeted audience, and any inclination to broadly dismiss such maps as, for example, being over-decorated to mask an underlying unsophistication, is profoundly naïve.

A good many participants at the *Aesthetics of Mapping* sessions professed the opinion that clarity was achieved through simplification and/or abstraction. If so, then, logically, this would mean that the most clear map graphic would be a single mark on an otherwise blank sheet of paper. It would seem unlikely, however, that such a “map” would have been accepted by any of the session participants as a paradigm of clarity. There must, therefore, be some sort of *qualification*, some sort of *limit*, to simplification and abstraction that allows achievement of clarity. Perhaps it is only certain *types* of simplification and abstraction, or only certain *ways* of carrying it out, that result in clarity. This is certainly the case; the conventions of cartographic generalization provide qualifications and limits to practice, and the limits are as conventional as the generalization conventions themselves.

Clarity, it is clear, is as much a product of a conventional code as any other aspect of the map, and must be understood as an aesthetic element. As such, clarity is defined contingently, as a part of the overall definition of what makes an artifact a *map*, and of what makes a map a *good* map.

MAPICITY AND DESIGN

Maps are artifacts, first and foremost, before they ever become maps. A map is an artifact with particular formal attributes, and that artifact mediates a process of social communication. Map form is critically important, because it is the formal aspects of the map that allow it, first, to be recognized as a map, and then to go on to sustain a reading as a map. Without recognition, something can never be a map, whatever the intention of the map maker, and without an ability to sustain a (post-recognition) map reading engagement, a map will be dismissed: not used, not read, not considered. If that happens, the artifact will have failed as a map.

The designed form of the map mediates between the map maker and map user, and is the sole means the maker has of signaling to the potential user that the artifact is a map. It is the map user who must recognize an artifact’s potential to be a map, and it is the design of the artifact that allows the map to be recognizable.

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No one can recognize a map, or set out to make one, without knowing how to tell a thing-that-is-a-map from a thing-that-is-not. We recognize maps, and distinguish them from all other things, because they conform to a schema of map-ness that we receive from our cultural communities. This schema, which includes a paradigmatic vocabulary of appropriate form, a grammatical syntax of application, and a canon of exemplars, is how we recognize suitable candidates for map-ness. Conformation to that schema constitutes *mapicity*, which is the quality a map reader recognizes in the artifact as constituting the condition of being a map (Denil 2011). Recognition of mapicity relies on formal attributes, and design is the means the map maker has of manifesting it in a manner accessible to a potential reader.

Maps can only exist inside strictly defined, albeit mutable, formal boundaries, and outside the boundaries of the schema of mapicity lies the not-map. We read and understand only that which we recognize as readable and understandable, based on criteria we receive from and share with our fellows. Ludwig Wittgenstein noted that: “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.” (Wittgenstein 1958, 223e), and similarly, if a lion drew maps, we would not know them to be maps. This is because we have no community of culture with the lion, and should lions have a schema of mapicity, we would have no access to it.

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There is a certain hegemony in the operation of all schemas of understanding, similar to that Max Beerbohm noted exists in regard to dandy-ism: a dandy must be innovative, but can be so only within strict limits.

“It is only by the trifling addition or elimination, modification or extension, made by this or that dandy and copied by the rest, that the mode proceeds. The young dandy will find certain laws to which he must conform. If he outrages them he will be hooted by the urchins of the street, not unjustly, for he will have outraged the slowly constructed laws of artists who have preceded him.”
(Beerbohm 1962, 1896)

Similarly, a map that departs from the accepted schema of mapicity will have a hard time even being recognized as a map, and will at best incur extreme prejudice against its validity, veracity, and value. “Common sense” (which is simply an application of the dictates of the schema) will speak against the map’s acceptance.

The mapicity schema provides us with criteria for judging not only the existence of the map object, but also for judging its quality, and it does so, as has been mentioned, through both a conceptual framework and a canon of exemplars of quality. The canon provides a library of models for what constitutes good practice (examples “their shipmates would do well to emulate,” as enlisted sailors are exhorted in the US Navy), against which all maps are judged. Truly, Heinrich Wölfflin’s remark that all paintings owe more to other paintings than they owe to direct observation (Wölfflin 1932; Gombrich 1969) can also be applied to maps. In short: we can recognize a good map because we have seen good maps before.

Thus, the schema both facilitates and constrains the form of the artifact, and the stricture of that schema both defines the boundaries of mapicity and gives meaning (and a means of reading that meaning) to the artifacts which lie within the pale. Boundaries fence both in and out, and, as Mozart is reported to have remarked, “we would not be creative if we did not have all these boundaries.”

MAPICITY THEORY

The existence and operation of schemas of mapicity, defining the very existence of a category of things-that-are-maps, is an extension of the broadly recognized way that such schemas of understanding govern many aspects of culture, notably in regard to our ability to recognize and read graphic images (Gombrich 1960), and it is consistent with a great deal of recent thinking in a variety of theoretical fields. Particularly, the theory of mapicity can be compared to what is known as the Institutional Theory of Art, wherein “works of art are art as the result of the position or place they occupy within an established practice, namely, the artworld” (Dickie 1997, 88; Danto 1997). Mapicity theory is also strongly grounded in linguistic theory, in particular the Reader Response theories of Stanley Fish (1980), and in the work of many others, such as Roland Barthes (1972). By contrast, although some aspects of the functioning of the mapicity canon might be modeled using the example of prototype theory, which is a mode of graded categorization sometimes used in cognitive science, prototype theory is likely not a good overall explanation for mapicity. While it may help explain how one map might be seen as a “better” model than another, prototyping also tends to imply that some maps are more map-ish than others, and so tends to run straight into the dead end of mistaking taxonomy for definition.

The theory of mapicity has been criticized for a certain circularity of causation; *to wit*: a map is a map because we recognize it as conforming to the schema of mapicity, and mapicity is the schema of things-that-are-maps. While a chain of definition should ideally lead only to more and more basic terms, and circularity is commonly seen as an argumentative fallacy, it should be recognized that where the phenomenon itself,—in this case the existence, creation, recognition, and use of things-that-are-maps—is intricate, interdependent, and co-relational, then the terms of the definition must be inflected and presuppose each other. Thus, the perceived circularity is not vicious. We must keep in mind that cartography is not an essential activity: there is no essential category of things that are maps, that always were maps, and will always be maps. Cartography is instead a body of conventions to which communities of humans subscribe, and the map is an artifact that meets the criteria set forth in that body of conventions. Regardless of any hypothesized or fantasized human predilection or predisposition to map making, cartography is only a conventional practice producing conventionalized artifacts to the parameters defined in a cultural convention. Nowhere does the cycle rest on any essential bedrock. Instead, like Baron Munchausen (Raspe *et al.* 1960), cartography pulls itself up by its own bootstraps, and it has kept itself in the air for thousands of years by that means alone: by means of that common agreement we are calling mapicity.

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THE ACT OF DESIGN

The map artifact is composed in conformity with a schema of mapicity, and the artifact itself is formed through a process or act of *design*.

Alex White points out that “having material on the page read and absorbed is a visual communicator’s chief responsibility” (White 2002, 1), and that design is a process, not a result. He goes on to remind us that to design means to plan, and that “the process of design is used to bring order out of chaos and randomness” (White 2002, 1). Furthermore, as Randy Nakamura noted, “design is about analysis and problem-solving, [but] its fundamental impact on the world (for better or for worse) is in the artifacts and form it produces” (Nakamura 2004, 49).

Design, the means used to bring the map artifact into existence, involves an intersection of theoretical and craft knowledge. Theory tells us what a map is and should be (mapicity); what a meaning bearing graphic text is and can be; and what a persuasive argument is and must be. Craft, on the other hand, gives us a mastery of means and a culture of materials, and among the means are the so-called cartographic fundamentals in which aspiring map makers have long been drilled. It is within a framework of theory that tacit craft knowledge is applied.

Theory and craft are not a dichotomy; neither can exist independently, and one side of the pair cannot be privileged over the other. Theory requires craft for embodiment, and even a state of pure virtuoso craftsmanship requires a belief (a theory) that virtuosity is by itself sufficient.

STYLE

The particular schematic elements, graphic practices, and rhetorical tropes and figures that a particular interpretive community has come to identify as correct and appropriate (come, that is, to recognize as constituting good, effective, acceptable, clear, fine, or even barely credible, map making), are not entirely autonomous and independent. One does not generally pick and choose “one from column A and two from column B,” as if in a Chinese restaurant. The individual elements are instead bundled together in sets that are deemed to constitute frameworks of appropriate application; sets of elements, practices, and features that are conjectured to work well together. These frameworks of “correct” practice are called *styles*.

If asked, most people would likely say that style is something added to a work or object; something tacked-on or applied like paint or wallpaper. Walt Whitman, writing in his introduction to *Leaves of Grass*, saw style as a curtain: something that covers what lies beneath, and that hides what is “really there.”

“The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddling, will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I

will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is.” (Whitman 1855, vii)

Many would agree with Whitman’s view, but his definition rather confuses substance with decoration. The curtain metaphor implies that the curtain could be parted, or made transparent, and that something deeper would in that way be revealed (Sontag 1969). Denis Wood (2007) makes a similar mistake in writing that the mask of the map could somehow be removed, or, as in his so-called “art map,” never donned in the first place—but such an unmasking is clearly impossible.

It is impossible because, as Susan Sontag wrote, “Even if one were to define style as the manner of our appearing, this by no means entails an opposition between a style that one assumes and one’s “true” being. In fact, such a disjunction is extremely rare. In almost every case, our manner of appearing is our manner of being. The mask is the face.” (Sontag 1969, 26).

Whitman’s curtain metaphor lends itself to ideas of style as having thickness and opacity, and implies that there can be quantities of style; more style or less style, or perhaps even no style at all. This conception is rooted in the idea that style somehow covers or hides what is really there, and that style can only obscure something deeper. Sontag refuted that, noting that “the notion of a style-less, transparent art is one of the most tenacious fantasies of modern culture” (Sontag 1969, 25), and went on to observe that “the antipathy to ‘style’ is always an antipathy to a given style. There are no style-less works of art, only works of art belonging to different, more or less complex stylistic traditions and conventions” (Sontag 1969, 27). There is not, and cannot be, a neutral, absolutely transparent style. Even a so called “non-style” is a style, and is simply another set of conventions.

The writers Albert Camus (Camus 1955), Ernest Hemingway (Hemingway 1949), Roland Barthes (Barthes 1968), and George Orwell (Orwell 1958) had all, in their day, been hailed for dispensing altogether with style and instead presenting bald, unadorned prose devoid of all artifice. Nonetheless, as Sontag observed, neither the “white style” of a Camus novel, nor the “zero degree of writing” of Roland Barthes, is any less selective and artificial than any other style of writing (Sontag 1969).

Style, then, is not a curtain or mask, but is instead a collection of elements and characteristics enshrined in the schema as effective and appropriate for employment, and that are recognizable as “consistent” and “right” by someone versed in the schema. Leonard Koren wrote that “a style [...] is a conglomeration of perceptible elements recognizable as a distinct variety of order. In other words, a style is a perceptually cohesive organization of qualities [...] that is distinct from other perceptually cohesive organizations of qualities” (Koren 2010, 21). These organizations of qualities are simply patterns of practice, and form the paradigmatic frameworks that are extracted from the mapicity schema’s vocabulary, grammar, and canon as prototypes for both designing and judging maps.

No map anyone can make is ever anything except a selective application of conventional codes, and the codes are definable and classifiable stylistically. Anyone who attempts to actually make a map without any style may succeed in making

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something, but that thing will not be a map. Maps only exist by conformation to a schema of mapicity, and style is just a set of characteristics enshrined in the schema as effective and appropriate for employment.

To centralize style in this manner—that is, to maintain that there can be no map devoid of style—is not to allow the definition of the map to be infiltrated by stylistic characteristics (which would be to mistake taxonomy for definition). This is to say that the *kinds* of map (topographic, thematic, sketch, plan, diagram) play no part in *defining* the map, but only in *describing* a particular map. The map, as a thing, must ultimately be understood as “the projection and materialization of a mental schema on a medium. The materialization of an abstract intellectual order extracted from the empirical universe” (Jacob 2006), and as a rhetorical object that must be “useful, usable, and persuasive” to its audience (Denil 2002). As a rhetorical object, the map clearly has no special subject matter (it can be about almost anything), and it has no special or specific means of presentation and persuasion (it can use any means at its disposal). Obviously, as a rhetorical vehicle, it will employ means that are amenable to its target audience: it will make use of tropes and figures that will persuade that community. The architecture of that body of means is encapsulated in the schema of mapicity for that community, and can be described by reference to stylistic definition: the map itself is an artificial architecture of signs ruled by graphic choices (Jacob 2006), and the sets of appropriate choices are gathered into styles.

Style, we see, has a clear role in describing the map, but not in defining it. Of course, for many people, defining and describing is the same thing.

A PARABLE ABOUT DEFINITION VERSUS DESCRIPTION

Since 2007, the Cartography Special Interest Group (CartoSIG) for Esri software users has appointed a panel of map judges to select winners of CartoSIG Map Awards at the annual Esri International User Conference. In 2012 a very interesting map was nominated: it was a street furniture map of the City of Carson, California, that was composed by an unnamed map maker using the tool that the maker had at hand and knew how to use, which happened in this case to be Microsoft Excel. The map was a remarkable production: clear, easy to read and understand, full of useful and usable information, and persuasive of its value and reliability. The CartoSIG nominator argued that this, perhaps unorthodox, map deserved the attention of the judges and, quite possibly, an award. However, the majority of the judges on the panel thought otherwise, and some were, in fact, openly affronted by the suggestion. “*That is not a map!*”, and “*That is only a diagram!*” were typical comments in the debate. Regardless of the merits or otherwise of the map in question, the vehemence of the resistance to even considering the artifact as a *map*, let alone as a *good* map, demonstrates both the operation of the schema and a naive interpenetration of that schema that mistakes taxonomy for definition. For the majority of the judges, the artifact was squarely beyond the not-a-map pale, and they made it clear that their placing it there was grounded not in a evaluation of its value as a map (*to wit*: is it useful, usable, and persuasive as a

map?), but on the fact that it didn't look like (that it did not stylistically match), what it is they are expecting maps to look like. The consequence of employing this narrow viewpoint is that the artifact in question (and, by extension, a large class of other such artifacts)—which in fact meets all practical and logical criteria for being a map; that answers a need for a map, that can be used as a map, that is persuasive of its veracity as a map, and that is in fact (apparently) employed by some people as a map—is, somehow, and somewhat irrationally, *not a map!* It is as if it had been born on the wrong side of the tracks, and so must be cut by polite society.

This story leads us to consider how judgments about maps (such as map/not-map? or good/bad/indifferent map?) are made. The schema supplies us guidelines, rules, and a canon of samples, but how are these overlapping and sometimes contradictory instructions to be applied? The decisions are made by employing *taste*.

TASTE

We can recall that the outward signs of mapicity are manifested through design, a process which determines the form of the artifact, and we can recall as well that design itself incorporates both theoretical and craft aspects that co-exist in a symbiotic relationship. We have also seen how sets of graphic and structural choices appropriate to audiences holding particular schemas of mapicity are recognizable as styles. *Taste* provides the balance between theory and craft, and between competing factors within each of them, and also provides the facility for navigating between, and negotiating amongst, the dictates of style. While *style* manifests the schema as sets of appropriate choices, *taste* is the schema's judgmental manifestation that allows choices to be made.

The operation of taste came to prominence in eighteenth century philosophy, in the work of such writers as the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (Shaftesbury, 1737), Francis Hutcheson (1725), Edmund Burke (1770), Archibald Alison (1790) and Immanuel Kant (1790). In subsequent years, however, focus for most thinkers moved on to center on theories of aesthetics and of art (Dickie 1997). Thus, taste gradually became a side issue in wider discussions, less attended and less clearly understood.

Despite the fact that “the idea of taste is problematic and widely contested today” (Keedy 2004, 97), it still provides us with “the ability to perceive and distinguish—to recognize and identify—artistic and stylistic features of things, and then to use this ability to make judgments of value based on cultural or professional criteria” (Koren 2010, 22).

Taste, we see, is an ability to balance and prioritize amongst the dictates of style, the facilitations and constraints of craft based technique and the culture of materials, and between the arbitrary demands of clients, the perceived needs of the targeted audience, and the hegemony of the schema of mapicity itself. Ultimately, experience is needed in order to establish criteria for balancing and prioritizing amongst seemingly contradictory demands and needs and conventions and rules. It is difficult, but, as the designer Jeff (Mr.) Keedy said: “that’s why you ask an ex-

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pert—you know, someone who actually knows what they are talking about” (Keedy 2004, 97).

The skilled cartographer, the expert, the one who actually knows what they are talking about, sees the cartographic challenge from inside the context of the schema of mapicity, and tastefully navigates amongst applicable stylistic convention to compose the useful, usable and persuasive map. In a similar manner:

“a client coming to a lawyer tells a story that in his mind has obvious critical features and decisive moments; but when the lawyer hears that story, she hears it quite differently and with different emphasis. What may appear most significant to the client may drop out altogether in her consideration of the matter. What she has been doing is translating (or transubstantiating) what was told her into appropriate legal categories; that is, into the categories from which a legal case might be assembled.” (Fish 1995, 71)

There are some who maintain that this process is a distortion of reality by the special vocabulary of a mere discipline (whether of law or cartography), and see this as a cautionary tale as to why one should not put oneself into the hands of lawyers, or of cartographers. Such people believe that if one could only get rid of the machinery of cartographic culture, with its terms, conventions, standard map furniture, neat lines, and whatnot, then everyone would be closer to seeing what is *really* going on. We could then grab the map by the scruff and rip away its mask, allowing us to march naked truth up the street for all to ogle and to paw.

But such stripping is simply not possible. If we really ripped away the mask, we would no longer recognize what we held. This is because the map exists as the mask, not as something lurking under it. This is not to say that the mask is immutable; the mask is the schema of mapicity and that schema evolves and mutates over time. It is also important to note that the mask worn by the map is not necessarily the mask intended by the map’s maker: it is the reader who supplies and imposes the mask. If the reader so chooses, a subversive mask can be imposed, as Denis Wood (1992) has shown, although Wood himself might not express it that way. It would even be possible to dramatically remake the schema itself, and Mark Denil (2011) has outlined what would be required to do that in a radical fashion. Such re-makings, however, must then perforce be reabsorbed into the schema because once we have seen and recognized a radical map, it is then, by definition, a map, and thus a part of the schema.

The schema functions this way because cartography is a conventional activity, not an essential one. In other words, the cartographic activity is not an activity with an essential existence in and of itself, but is instead defined by sets of conventions. No one *discovered* cartography (it was not sitting there waiting to be noticed); but someone had to *invent the conventions* of cartography, and every map maker and reader has had to *learn* them.

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ACQUIRING TASTE

If taste is so important, how does one go about acquiring it? How can one learn to tell if he is a tuna with good taste or just a tuna that tastes good? The answer is that taste, like the schema itself, is passed to us.

Turning back to our law office example, the lawyer is applying what we could call her “legal taste” in navigating the structures and strictures of the legal schema. The client has come to consult her because he believes she can do this. She may, in turn, have a mentor to whom she can turn for advice. No doubt the mentor would not build her case for her, but may be willing to critique her brief: to point out what may or may not fly in the courtroom she is entering, and to steer her in directions the mentor’s experience might suggest. Taste is not developed in a vacuum; it is passed through critique.

Critique is too large a topic to tackle in this paper, but it is clearly pivotal to developing taste, just as taste is critical to employing style. The topic of critique was bandied about in the *Aesthetics* sessions, and Nat Case specifically spoke about it at length in a separate NACIS session later that same day, but it seems clear that critique is little understood and cultivated in the cartographic community.

At one point in the general discussion, a well known professor from a large, north-eastern university quoted a colleague of hers to the effect that “*we should not solicit the opinions of students; we should supply them with opinions.*” While succinct and pithy, this glib statement is, however, only true in a very limited sense, and only insofar as it pertains to the most elementary levels of education. Yes, a basic education must supply a pupil with a clear understanding of the mapicity schema: the student must be drilled in the common understanding so that it solidly underpins their reading and composition. At that level, cartographic education is essentially craft instruction. At more advanced levels, however, such a professorial attitude is a positive disservice to both the student and to the cultural community. Of course a student’s opinion must be solicited: it must be solicited and dissected and examined and discussed; it must be paraded and made to dance and itself be constructively criticized. It must be solicited, that is, if the teacher ever hopes to impart or implant discerned judgment (which we call *taste*) in the student. One *raison d’être* of critique is the building of taste, and, clearly, one person cannot just hand taste to another, or drill it into them with instruction; taste can only be fostered and cultivated so as to grow itself and bear its own fruit.

SUMMARY

Together, style and taste are key elements in the composition of useful, usable, and persuasive maps. All maps, from the simplest and most naive or primitive to the most elaborate and complex, exhibit style, and a style is a set of appropriate choices afforded by the schema of mapicity. However, while style can assist in the implementation of good cartographic decisions, it cannot by itself direct the map maker to make good decisions. This is the role of taste, which is the ability to perceive and distinguish stylistic features and aesthetic dimensions, and then to use this ability to make value judgments based on cultural or professional criteria, which is to say,

on the schema of mapicity. Taste develops with cultivated experience, and must be cultivated to be valuable. A naïve, serendipitous, “good taste” is possible, but such a taste is, at best, limited. Experience throughout history has taught us that the best vehicle for cultivating and refining taste is through engaged critique with experienced mentors. A basic educational groundwork upon which to build this superstructure of taste is required, but that basic education is unfinished if it is not used as a plinth for underpinning taste.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical, practical, and canonical elements of cartographic mapicity are made available by the cultural interpretive community to which the individual map maker or map reader belongs. Mapicity is manifested in artifacts composed through aesthetic acts of design, and the formal aspects of the map artifact are parametrized in styles. These styles are navigated by means of discerned judgment guided by taste, which is fostered in an individual maker or reader through basic instruction (including craft instruction) and advanced, critique-based experience afforded by mentors who are themselves facile with the tasteful application of paradigms and exemplars afforded by the vocabulary, grammar and canon of mapicity. The convergence of style and taste leverages a particular map into the canon, where it serves as an aesthetic benchmark and expands and refines the horizon of mapicity for the wider interpretive community.

SOME CLOSING REMARKS ON THE 2012 NACIS AESTHETICS SESSIONS.

The difficulty the cartographic community exhibits in engaging with aesthetic issues, including design, style, taste, and critique, seems to lie in a certain poverty of vocabulary and grammar for addressing aesthetic concerns. This poverty may well spring from the uneasy relationship many in the community have with accepting the pertinent and essential nature of aesthetics in cartography; but, regardless of the cause, it is a lack that can only be overcome by vigorous and persistent critical exercise with knowledgeable and open minded colleagues. Let us hope the 2012 NACIS *Aesthetics of Mapping* sessions are only a beginning that foretells a deeper engagement and understanding that is to come.

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