

# CARTOGRAPHIC CONCEPTS

PROJECT LINK 2009, WEEK TWO  
MAPPING YOUR JOURNEY



## CARTOGRAPHIC POWER

"You cannot simply put something new into a place. You have to absorb what you see around you, what exists on the land, and then use that knowledge along with contemporary thinking to interpret what you see."

- Tadao Ando

What is a map? For centuries, people have struggled to map the literal boundaries of the world in which we live. The power of the cartographer has been seen in the mapping of these new and unexplored lands but at the same time has been limited in the ideas that it captures. Today, mapping has become a means through which ideas and concepts can be made apparent, illustrating how the literalness of the old world can be abstracted to the expression of the new. The map can show a diagram of a person's daily routine, the feeling of a particular space, the energies and activities of a section through the city or even the ways in which places have changed their form over time. The contemporary cartographer is not focused on the literalness of the map but more interested in the expressiveness and abstraction of the map, making visible the invisible ideas that constitute an idea of place.

Cartographic representation relies on lines, symbols, images, the imagined, the real, found objects and simple abstractions to convey geographic, sociographic and experiential ideas. Although the history of cartography struggled solely on geographically mapping the earth, the contemporary version uses maps to represent a multitude of concepts. Take for instance the works of Eadweard Muybridge who used photography to map motion and movement of animals, people and ideas. Through the invention of stop motion photography and high shutter speeds, Muybridge captured each subject's movement second by second to create a represented time line that captured the mapping for how we move. Or, take for instance the mapping of the city and country by Alison and Peter Smithson whose main interest were the ways in which architecture could address social need and activity. No longer are our ideas geographic, but now they are much, much more. How can we illustrate an experience? What materials convey an idea? Is a drawing the only medium through which cartographic representations can exist?

# THIS IS HOW WE VIEW IT



"Representation not only reflects a given reality but also conditions a way of seeing and acting in the world. In other words, how a particular people view value, and act upon the land is in large part structured through their codes, conventions, and schemata of representation- their cultural images." -James Corner

Maps, signs, and navigational tools assist us everyday in directing us along our daily paths as well as inform our understanding of the larger urban environment in which we reside. Maps and images of our environment are not passive, but instead have an agenda to frame and preference what we see in our environment. So what happens if you are in a strange place, don't have a map, fly instead of walk, or have an alternative set of senses? How then would you perceive your surroundings, what clues would be important to pay attention to and which would you ignore, and how would you translate these clues into a new type of map for someone else to follow your path or understand your viewing point? Through this assignment students will critically evaluate how an individual perceives its environment by assuming a unique perspective different from their own and then graphically translate that new vantage point into an alternative map.

## ASSIGNMENT

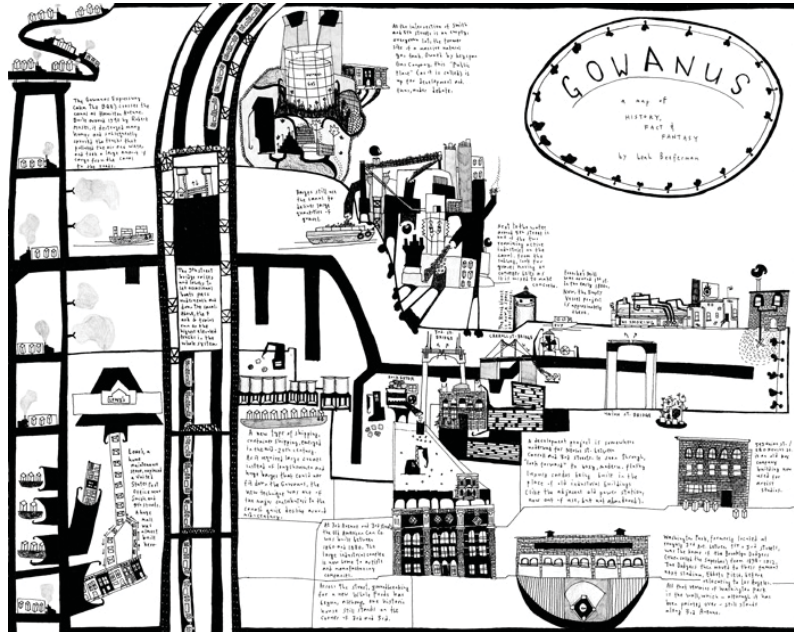
Each student will assume the new perspective of the character they have been given in studio, and IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT EVERYONE KEEP THEIR NEW VIEW POINT SECRET! In their sketch books each student will brainstorm how from this new perspective they perceive their environment, what senses do they use, how they navigate or move through a space, what destinations or landmarks are important, what obstacles are to be avoided, what is an appropriate scale or distance for the map to include, etc. Simultaneous to understanding this new view point is inventing a graphical language to translate these perceptions of space into 2D representation. Each student will build on the drawing skills and representational tools they have been learning over the course of the first week to produce a layered composition of sketches, plans, sections, photo collages, audio recordings, pictures, found objects, texture rubbings, etc to convey to the studio this new vantage point without explicitly naming their character.

## ASSIGNMENT DUE MORNING, 07/13

Each student should be prepared to present their sketchbooks at the start of Monday morning studio as investigations and research for developing an alternative map for their new viewpoint.



# THIS IS HOW WE VIEW IT



## ASSIGNMENT

In this drawing exercise, students will conceptually draw the line mapping their personal experience as they travel from their home to the GSD. Each student will build on the discoveries made from the first mapping assignment to document their unique perspective. The drawing should be a layered reading of the place that calls out landmarks and locations along the path that the student deems significant.

To begin this exercise, students should understand all the different factors that define the line. Listen to sounds, touch surfaces, collect found objects along the path. Select a few significant moments along your line and develop a means to signify these moments in the drawing. The line will be a drawing that is an abstract representation of your walk. While abstract, the line is a representation of scale, such that a certain number of steps along the path should correspond to a precise length in the drawing.

The project will be a layered composition combining freehand drawing, drafting, as well as literal collage to allow the student to capture a conceptual understanding of place, perception, movement, and time. The tools used to create these maps will allow the student to continue to expose ideas of representation and form while still observing and understanding process.

In order to spawn a little more creativity on the topic, feel free to look through some of the following artist's works to garner new ideas for mapping. Nina Katchadourian uses the idea of cartography and the material of standard maps to represent new ideas for geographic regions. Guillermo Kuitcha uses the ideas of abstraction to capture new ideas for understanding the feel of mapping as a recording. Mark Bradford creates abstract mappings through the use of found objects and paint in a mix of both high and low end art.

## DUE TUESDAY AFTERNOON, 07/14

Students will have two days to accomplish this project and it is intended to be very hands on. We will meet as a group in the afternoon on Tuesday to discuss everyone's progress.