

## **PLACEBOUND**

### **CURATOR BIA GAYOTTO**

Early cartographers traveled to distant lands making maps that emerged from their personal experiences of places. Because the cartographer could not see an entire landscape in detail these visual representations were often subjective and partial. Over the years with the development of technology and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) the nature of mapping has changed dramatically. No longer static images, maps have become active interfaces for information exchange, continuously determining where we are in relation to distant satellites and suggesting where we ought to go. In the past mapmakers used pen and ink to add and remove information; today they write algorithms to render details. But even with the most up-to-date systems, cartography still relies on visual interpretation and naturally something is always left out.

There has always been art in cartography, and artists have found in cartography a rich field to explore. Since the late 50's many artists from North America and Europe have used map or mapping as a tool in their works. Guy Debord and the Situationist International created playful non-rational strategies to explore the city and termed it "psychogeography", which consisted of "drifting" around urban environments. Their maps charted not the physical distances that separate two locations but its influence on our mental experiences while walking through it. Similarly, Robert Smithson and Land artists had an important role of the map as a precursor to some of today's practices that seek to engage with the land or geographies beyond the gallery walls. After post-modernism and post-colonialism artists have been using counter-cartographies to destabilize centered and exclusionary representations of economies and social relations on a global level.

Contemporary uses of mapping tend to shift away from the literal image of the map towards the map as evidence of other investigations. Today's artistic mapping practices may describe processes that takes place every time a map of any kind is created – a drawing scribbled on the back of an envelope, a sequence of places or events etched in someone's memory, an itinerary or a chart, a political action or a meditation. Rather than purely mimetic descriptions, these mapping processes indicate territories beyond the surface of the artwork or sometimes beyond art itself. *PLACEBOUND* focuses on artists who use mapping techniques as a creative strategy to translate their experiences of place from macro to micro, social to artistic, local to global. Implying that boundaries are arbitrary and flexible, these artists utilize mapping in different ways.

**Naotaka Hiro's** drawings and sculptures stem from use of the body and its mediation in an exploration of the otherwise unseen. His work relies on the unavoidable fact that the perception of our body is partial and only possible through mediated apparatus, such as a camera or a mirror. The dilemma of "unknowability" thus serves as a creative point of departure; a place from which his imagination thrives. In *Untitled (X)* he uses bees' wax to cast the outlines of two opposite sides of his body: from feet, via knees, crossing his face to the vertex of his head. *Untitled (X)* captures not only the X-shape, but also embodies time and subtle movements through traces of brush strokes and fingers upon wax. Like a storyboard, his fluid drawings *Untitled (M)* and *Untitled (4 Legged)* play an important part in creating the sculptures. Rather than a perfect replica, Hiro's intention is to portray imperfectness and deformity based on the inability of seeing oneself.

Through memory and architecture **Carmen Argote** traces her family history and immigrant identity. In *My father's side of home: Mantas* she focuses on Mansion Magnolia, her father's family house in Guadalajara, Mexico where she visited during her childhood. Argote covered the walls with manta, a thin cotton cloth, on which she traced the outline of all the objects that were in the room. Then she decided to move the objects and paint around the outlines. When she tried to return the objects to its original place, the fabric had shrunk and the objects didn't fit right. The two accompanying photographs *My father's side of home: part A (at Mansion*

*Magnolia*) document her process in making the mantas and visually represent the idea of not fitting in: time has passed the objects dislocated cannot return back to its original place.

**Owen Driggs** is the collective identity of Matthew and Janet Owen Driggs, whose works range from agit-prop to app design. Their practice focuses on physical sites where one meets the other, which may be a public street, a sidewalk, garden or a private interior. Owen Drigg's most recent project *Frothing and Foaming: Geographies of Class Conflict* maps specific places in Chinatown Los Angeles where radicals danced, wrote, spoke, performed, and fought the forces of law and commerce during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Through an in depth research of this area's rich history and archives, this project consists of a walking tour of Chinatown and environs to explore some of these places and the stories attached to them. For time and date please check flyer displayed in the gallery.

**Cirilo Domine's** textile based-works are both wearable and sculptural. During a residency in Parkfield, a town located in Central California right in the middle of the San Andreas Fault, he found himself looking at a dried riverbed noticing how the rocks stood out from the mud. To him these small sections were like windows representing the history of this place. To create *part else lectivistas* Domine carefully dipped the found rocks in clay made by mixing the river's dirt and water. The resulting piece emphasizes the idea that we are only looking at the surface of things, but below there is a much larger story. Domine extend the idea of the rock's dislocation and trauma to *rep isodic epic enter* were he used earth colored linen and red thread to "draw" road maps and paths. By piecing, layering and folding, the running stitches break and reappear with no beginning or end. The striking visual patterns evoke macro and micro topographies from below, above, and beyond.

**Peter Bo Rappmund** travelogues rely on understanding both empirical and metaphysical properties of the built environment. *Psychohydrography* is a time-lapse video composed of about 100,000 photographs, which took the artist three years to complete. The hour long video presents an analysis of the flow of water from mountain to aqueduct, city to sea. Over 280 miles in length, Rappmund's journey followed Los Angeles' Aqueduct from its source in the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains to the city and then from the Los Angeles River to its endpoint at the Pacific Ocean. Although *Psychohydrography* is shot with a fixed frame, Rappmund achieves movement from stillness addressing notions of time in multiple ways (geologic, filmic, urban). For *Southern California Water Ecology*, the filmmaker-cartographer draws a map showing his trajectory including markers for the locations shot along Eastern Sierra Nevada, Owens Valley, Los Angeles Aqueduct, Los Angeles River and Pacific Ocean. The sequences of landscapes pieced together show a complex topographical system that function both as a subject of historical and aesthetic contemplation, as well as political and environmental analysis.

**Clarissa Tossin** investigates the promises, legacies, and failures of modernity and globalism through an interdisciplinary practice that include objects, video, sculpture, photography, and site-specific installations. Her works are formed through an analysis of the politics of space, interrogations into the mappings and discourses of power, relationships of consumption and identity, and the role of architecture—particularly that of Brasília, a modernist city in the center of Brazil that she calls 'home.' In *Unmapping the world* she creates a series of world maps by balling up blank sheets of tracing paper and drawing on the resulting three-dimensional surface. Four drawings are then flattened back into their original two-dimensional form except one that is left balled-up. Through this poetic gesture Tossin compresses and expands the globe into a new symbolic web of inter-relations that suggest a permeability of boundaries and borders.

Art is located in real and imaginary experiences, and documented through drawings, found documents, sculptures, photographs, film, textiles, maps and tours. These investigations take up narratives of geography, memory and dislocation in the production of images revealing to us aspects of our surroundings that would otherwise have been left out or kept unnoticed.