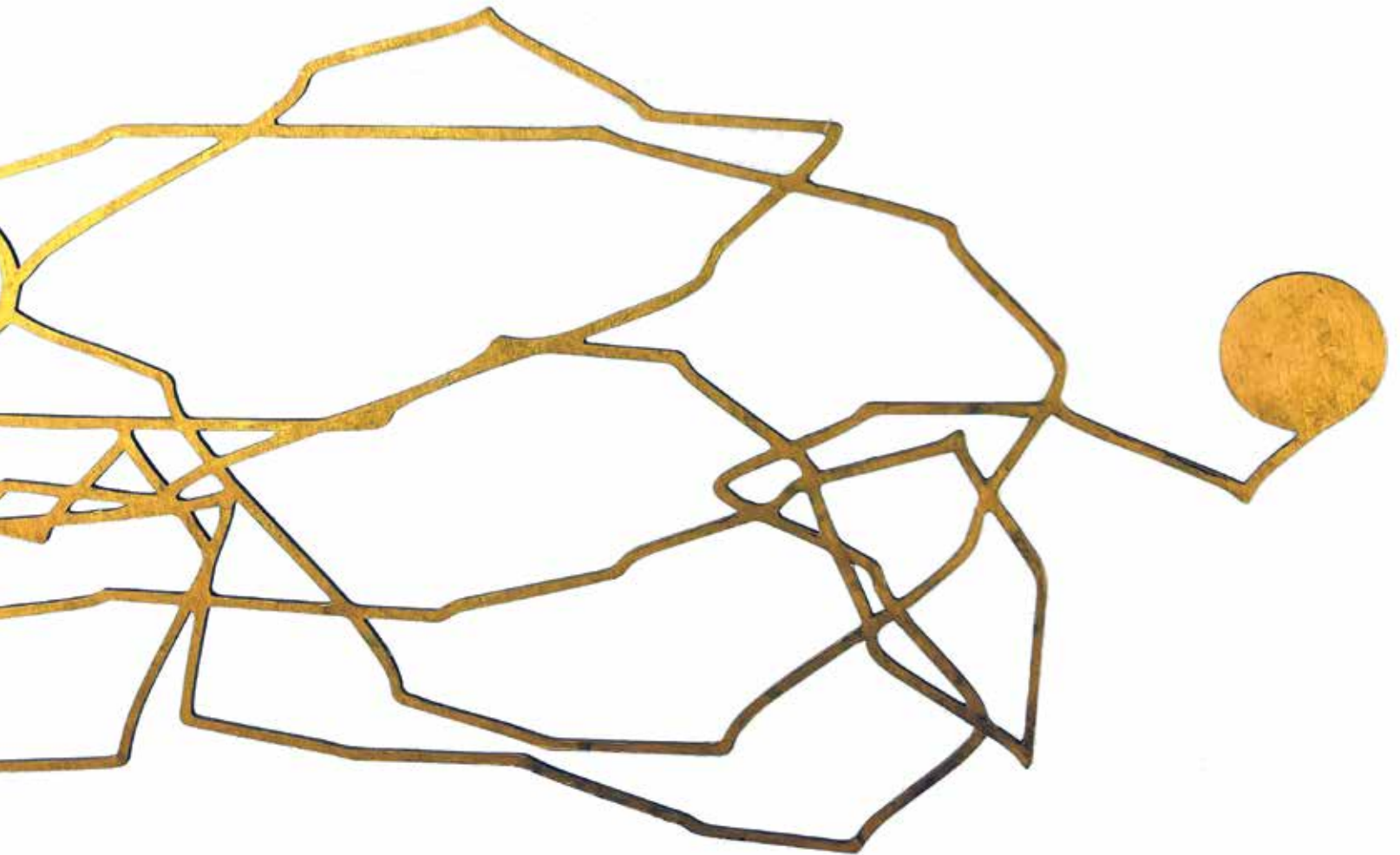


COUNTER MAPPING



516 ARTS / October 16, 2021 – January 22, 2022

EXHIBITION BROCHURE

COUNTER MAPPING ARTICULATES WHAT IS BETWEEN

by Jim Enote, Co-curator

*Wake in the morning.
Decide which foot goes in front of the other,
and move.*

Featuring counter mapping is fitting and timely as the world struggles with a pandemic and political soul searching. Now more than ever, the question, what information do we trust and value is profoundly relevant.

The expanding global society, an increasingly transcultural world, and the ascendancy of the information age can give the impression that geographic borders are defunct. Fluid economic geographies, digitally influenced political inclinations, and the arts have activated new interest in intuitive and inquiring maps and portrayals. As a philosophical practice, counter mapping exalts liberation and artistic freedom, speaks for the revision of traditional mapping to bring about an imaginative and refreshed society, an ethos of truth, and arranges places and events as spirited parts of a cosmological process.

Maps have always been a form of subjectivity, informing this and not necessarily that. Several years ago, I showed my mother a map I made using cartographic software; her response was, “What am I looking at?” I told her it was a map of our village, and specific colors I chose depicted trails and waterways. I told her she needed to imagine looking straight down on a landscape to make sense of the map. And to that, she said, “I’m not a bird.” That was quite naturally an epiphany. Yes, my mother is not a bird. She is a human with a distinctive way of looking at the world.

Counter mapping opens the door for agency and influence for different ways of knowing. This exhibition of counter mapping challenges the colonial histories of maps, opens doors to new expressions of ordering place, encounters multiple knowledge systems, and asserts that it is unnecessary to be a practiced mapping technician to make informative and influential maps.

*My stride is my ultimate measure,
as I plant seeds,
nurture and cultivate,
harvest and give thanks,
and then reflect.*

I continually remind myself that we live in a world with damaged people and people left behind. We also live in a world with environmental limits. We cannot continue to take from the planet without giving back, and we must not continue to neglect vulnerable people. Now is the time to make counter maps and share different ways of knowing more widely and with compassion and accessibility.

A large part of the globe is trying to look past the pandemic and hoping to return to normal. But most of us know “normal” has not been satisfactory or adequate, especially for marginalized peoples. If nothing, the Corona virus pandemic has taught us how fragile the world is. Paradox has become a too common theme as we seek to care for ourselves and others while others push back against civility and sensibility. Emerging to a more empathetic world cannot be contingent on and controlled by the orthodoxy of outdated mapping standards and attitudes. We can transcend the boundaries of mapping conventions and share our visions of a righteous world with diverse expressions. Stepping into mappings, what is next, requires conjuring the broadest spectrum of imagination, ideas, and perspectives.

Counter mapping is not only about deflating conventions of mapping and confronting the canon of map-making; it is about creating unprecedented maps that set the record straight and incite and motivate us in an approachable and unexpected way.

*Counter maps appear from neglected spaces,
forgotten peoples,
intervals of crisis and rapture,
and in the pattern languages of our lives.*



Jim Enote is a Zuni tribal member, farmer, and activist who has spent over 40 years working professionally to protect and steward cultural and natural resources. He is the CEO of the Colorado Plateau Foundation, which supports regional Native communities to protect water and sacred places, ensure food security, and preserve languages and ancestral knowledge. He serves as the Chair of the Board of the Grand Canyon Trust, and lives in Zuni, New Mexico.

Mallery Quetawki, *Phytoremediation and Air Particulates*
2018, acrylic on gesso board, 16 x 20 inches

Courtesy of UNM-COP Community Environmental
Health Program at Stanford House



Steven Yazzie, ^^^^ (BWBY - Black White Blue Yellow),
2017, still from 4-channel video, 13:21

HIC SUNT LEONES, AND YOU ARE HERE

by Viola Arduini, Co-curator

In the old medieval maps from Europe, large parts of the surface were left blank with three words as a label. *Hic Sunt Leones*, there are lions here. Don't go, don't ask, revere the unknown. Contemporary maps are quite different; all is shown at our fingertips now, on any smartphone or computer. One can zoom into neighborhoods one will never visit in-person, or even explore craters on the lunar surface where human feet have never roamed. You are here, and that is potentially everywhere.

The question that arises, then, is: what is left unknown when everything is shown? Or, the opposite: what is really understood when everything seems mapped? The *Counter Mapping* exhibition explores these questions and invites us to enter spaces of liminal and disputed knowledge. Western and standard topographical maps reproduce the surfaces, but what those surfaces connect to is not registered. Practices of counter mapping reveal connections that are not shown in Western maps. There is power in the unknown; it is the power of creating new paths. This exhibition brings it back through the work of artists who retrace lines that seem set and make space for the lions. You are here, where the lions are.

Western mapping is rooted in the assumption that it is representing all information of the land. This exhibition seeks to disarm that all-knowing approach, and to recognize the impact of colonial and exploitative powers on land, people, and the planet. *Counter Mapping* includes the work of artists and art collectives that use a wide variety of media, approaches, and themes. There are lines that move through the exhibition and connect different work, as well as practices that trace an array of spacetelling strategies.

Humor and playfulness are used as a powerful tool against the authority that is intrinsic to institutional maps, and become entry points to some of the artworks. They invite the viewer to disarm that authority. Suddenly, the emperor is naked. We find fonts made of gerrymandered congressional districts, such as **UglyJerry**. Shining balloons invite us to protest borders and reinvent ideas of nations in the participatory work of **Cog*nate Collective**. Mexican-American artist **Ana Serrano** creates playful, colorful sculptures using paper and cardboard, mapping important issues around identity and integration.

Identity in relation to territory is explored in many works in the exhibition. Artists use methods of counter mapping to explore and affirm their identities and sense of belonging, which are often overlooked in dominant, colonial narratives. These artworks are both personal and political, connecting multiple stories of bodies and people with the land that hosts them. **Jamie Robertson** charts the past and present of African American history in the Texan county her family is from. **Cortney Metzger** works with the interconnectedness of land, indigeneity, and bodies.

Basement Films, an Albuquerque collective, has curated a selection of short films that use surrealism and humor to counter the technicality of topographic mapping. They revel in the unexpected, using the language of video to play with perspectives. Other video works in the exhibition use poetic language to unveil meanings of geographic spaces. While traditional mapping is based on data, these artworks open up new regions where the lyrical and creative merge with alternative narratives, revealing cartographies of what is left

unseen. **Felipe Castelblanco** delves into narratives of the Amazon region, and **Steven Yazzie** offers video portraits of Navajo landmarks.

Participatory processes are also important tools for inviting communities to counter-narrate the spaces in which they live, reversing the power structures intrinsic to maps and making room for different sets of values. Calls for action are disseminated in the gallery space, offering viewers to take part in a shared archive of alternative monuments by the Albuquerque art collective **Friends of the Orphan Signs**.

The marks that compose the map itself are under scrutiny, breaking apart the visual language of maps and providing in-between spaces for the audience to enter. The arbitrariness of map representation and its conventions are unveiled, as in the site-specific installation by **Val Britton** at the entrance of the exhibition space. **Shannon Rankin's** *Earth Embroideries* trace by hand, in the physicality of paper and thread, the ever changing reality of Arctic ice caps, offering symbolic mending for ecological disruption. **Minoosh Zomoridinia**, an Iranian-American artist, uses walking and technology to trace and record lines over the land and virtually take ownership of it.

Ultimately, counter mapping provides a link between land, science, and embodiment. **Mallery Quetawki's** work serves as an expanding bridge between traditional Zuni cosmology, Western medicine, and community health in a land that is affected by uranium mining and extractive industries. In **Drew Trujillo's** *¿Sangre contaminada?*, the body becomes the center, bringing together land and histories. His data-generated map

traces the geographical and genetic position of a mutation affecting Hispanic generations.

The *Counter Mapping* exhibition is about space and the intricate relationships that take place within it. It is an invitation to reflect and take back the narratives about what is mapped, and why. As a person living in a country where I don't have citizenship, this exhibition resonates with my own migrant questions around place, identity, and belonging, in contrast to systems of power that define territories, borders, and their impermeability. Additionally, the exhibition springs from a time when maps have acquired a central presence in our lives. From election maps, to color-coded data collection on the Covid-19 pandemic, maps have become a familiar and often contested visual language. *Counter Mapping* brings us to where the lions are, where land is living and lived. It suggests we take the unprecedented paths.



Viola Arduini is an Italian artist and educator currently based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She received her Master of Fine Arts in Art & Ecology from the University of New Mexico. Her artwork and research investigate the relationships between humans, nature, and technology, and her work has been included in group and solo exhibitions in the United States and Europe. She currently serves as Education & Outreach Manager at 516 ARTS.

LEFT: *UglyJerry*, open source font created by Ben Doessel and James Lee, 2019
RIGHT: Shannon Rankin, 77° 50' 38" S 150° 33' 41"W (from the *Earth Embroideries* series), 2018, hand-stitched thread on paper, 11 x 17 inches

ARTISTS & COLLECTIVES

Basement Films

Val Britton

Felipe Castelblanco

Cog*nate Collective

Cortney Metzger (Osage)

Friends of the Orphan Signs

Shannon Rankin

Jamie Robertson

Ana Serrano

UglyJerry

Steven Yazzie (Navajo)

Mallery Quetawki (Zuni Pueblo)

Drew Trujillo

Minoosh Zomorodinia

CURATED BY

Viola Arduini & Jim Enote



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SPECIAL THANKS:



COVER: Minoosh Zomorodinia, *Golden Routes 5*, 2021, birch wood, acrylic gold, 27.5 x 12.5 inches

