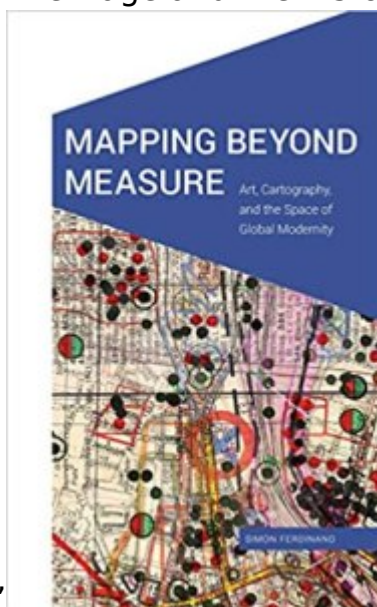




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Ferdinand, Simon. *Mapping Beyond Measure: Art, Cartography and the Space of Global Modernity*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. 299 p. LCCN 2019003673. ISBN: 978-1-4962-1211-5.

Simon Ferdinand wants “Mapping Beyond Measure” to be a discussion through time of maps intended as art cartography and as expression of modernism and globalism. In this book, he focuses on the “mapping in art.” Ferdinand considers a map a symbolic representation emphasizing relationships between elements of some space, such as objects, regions, or themes, and analyzes a work of art as a card, a painting, or a drawing or a video or similar art work, and other non-textual material. The author examines “the poetics of visual representation with respects to areas such as the mapmaking, the cultural heritage and the historical



representation of the whole planet Earth.”

In chapter one titled “I am Therefore I am Modern”, the author provides an interesting analysis of an illustration of Solomon Benediktovic Teligater (1903-69) and a collage of Joyce Kozloff titled “Boys Art #18 Mombasa 2002.” This analysis leaves a reader to know more, but the discussion only partially materializes. There is, however, a short discussion that will become deep and wonderful in the chapter Two, on a painting of Solomon Borisovich Nikritin titled “The Old and the New. A Group Portrait”, 1935, of the Soviet art at that time depicting a globe (which the author calls a “disenchanted Earth”) as a central object of the painting.



The analysis of maps, between art and geography as described in the book seems very European and somewhat old in this early 2021, but worth it to master. The modernism and the globalization discussed in this book seem to me a beautiful endeavor. Modernism is an art movement that is typical of the twentieth century, whereas globalism is a national policy of treating the whole world as a proper sphere of influence. I think that the book makes a very compelling and frequently beautiful analysis of the maps as artworks in modernism, but the chosen maps as art shown in this book does not convince me that they represent globalism. While the discussion on the “The Old and the New. A Group Portrait” reported in the second chapter “The Shock of the Whole” is excellent as far as modernism concerned, I personally could not find in Ferdinand’s erudite writings the connections between artworks-maps, and information related to globalism. That said, I very much like Ferdinand’s analysis on the artworks and literature concepts of maps and globes, especially related to the modernism. In fact, the painting “The Old and the New. A Group Portrait” now at the Museum of Art in Uzbekistan, previously censored, is considered by the author “a modern condition in which people and policies consciously project their own meaning onto the fortuitous earth disclosed in the midst”, and the depicted figures “live upon the globe, not immersivity in a world, still less part of a meaningful constructed cosmos.” I cannot accept it, since I believe that we, as humans, are totally immersed in this planet, and we are not living on even artistically. In fact, I believe we are a product of this planet, and we live in a geologic age that is called “Anthropocene,” and we are so populous that we have started to modify the resources and the environment of planet Earth. Sometimes, the author shows us a particular view, but I recommend one reads this book with a critical spirit, so as to come up with your own views.

In the three chapters that follow, specifically in the chapter two “Combined and Uneven Cartography,” chapter three “Drawing Like a State,” and chapter our “Insular Imaginations,” the author does a superb work in analyzing art and cartography works.

In chapter two, Ferdinand looks at the artworks from the North American artist Alison Hildreth, and only mentions others like the Asian (Chinese only) artists with the maps of Yu Ji Tu of 1136 and Yudi Tu of 1526. However, the author seems to stumble on the word “choropleth” (a type of thematic map where the choropleth represents any area colored or patterned according to a statistical variable), in his enthusiasm for describing his concepts of monochronous maps versus polychronous maps. First, the word “choropleth” maps do not define them as “maps representing



a temporal change,” but maps that are simple thematic maps that may represent also temporal change or may represent other variables. Moreover, even choropleth maps are not maps that are “monochronous” or occurring at the same time. All the data depicted in maps have a time, defined by date and time of collection plus other information that are described in the metadata, or information about the data. A “monochronous map” therefore, does not exist, according to me, unless it is a work of art and that should be clarified.

Analogously, the use of triangulation: this method is so called because the points of the vertices of each triangle are usually defined by the measure of the angles of the control points and the length of one side of the triangle. This method is used by the artist Allison Hildreth and by thousands of people before her for different aims. This geodetic technique is used extensively in mapping, from survey maps to astronomical maps, and to maps as art such as Alison Hildreth proposes in *Forthrights and Meanders #19*, 2008, as it is reported in Ferdinand’s book. Triangulation is used routinely by mapmakers also in the printed and digital world. The triangulation technique is well known to be the basis of surveys all over the world from the Greek, Roman, and Arab times and has been developed further by the Dutch mathematician Willebrord Snell and others before Jean Picard used it in “The Measure of the Earth” in 1687, as mentioned by Ferdinand. Though these are nuances, Ferdinand’s analysis of Hildreth’s artworks is remarkable and the book is worthwhile to read for its descriptions of the crossing between art analysis and cartography.

Chapter three, “Drawing Like a State,” analyzes the art works of the Dutch artist Gert Jan Kochen, called “Depictions” of several towns. Ferdinand analyzes the connections among these artworks and cartography, modern states, and warfare, especially in the periods 1914-1918 and 1933-1945. The analysis of Kochen is grounded in Zygmunt Bauman’s theory of modernity where modernity occurs in society with more and more frequent changes. Ferdinand shows us several maps of towns, but the author finds these “Depictions” as somewhat similar, “historically and today.” Are these similarities true geographically in the post-pandemic and in this world of climate change? It seems to me that “art as map” is different globally

(let’s consider why a commercial mall, for example, is typical of the towns in the United States but difficult to find in Africa or part of Asia) and has changed presently in this world but to describe this phenomena would require another book. Until chapter three, Ferdinand views maps as works of art that were “confected orders onto the time and spaces of the disenchanted world” so these orders have



introduced us to the ontology of calculability or the existence of things that can be put on a map or a globe and can be used with our creativity.

In chapter four titled “Insular Imagination,” Ferdinand analyzes the artwork “Utopia” of the Japanese artist Satomi Matoba, who combines in an artistic map the real locations of Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor into one imaginary island state. Ferdinand also analyzes many other art works such as the frontispiece of Thomas More’s “On the Best Condition of a Republic and the New Island of Utopia” of 1516. According to the author who analyzes the artwork by Matoba, the nationalist enmities of the twentieth century are overcome and reconciled through “globalization” and “cosmopolitan identity” and “by accentuating the repressed transcultural hybridity.” Politically, Ferdinand analyzes the insular states representations in terms of geographic borders and geographic bodies. He also refers to several other art works and literal-philosophical books and even to a postcard of a unified Germany and Austria in 1938 that reads (in German) “One People, One Realm, One Leader.” The danger is that mapping does not go “beyond measure,” for example, what we can do when the borders are controversial like the ones between China and India? And when some territories are not defined like in the Arctic Ocean? I found this chapter to be the best one in the book in terms of the variety of artworks displayed and analyzed.

Chapter five titled “Cartography at Ground Level” focuses on expanding a discussion that was introduced in chapter two on the adoption of the meridian of Greenwich as the origin of the latitude and longitude. This chapter is noteworthy for its analysis of the artworks of Jeremy Woods, who is the author of “My Ghost,” “Meridians” and many other works. Ferdinand does a remarkable job in his analysis of Woods’ work in promoting the concept of “art as mapping,” although I found Ferdinand’s explanation of the Prime Meridian somewhat confusing. It is not true that each “line of longitude” represents a “prime” meridian. It is only an artifact by Jeremy Woods like other objects in his artwork. Woods makes in his artworks “places that don’t exist,” according to Ferdinand. This is like Herman Melville who writes in the *Moby Dick* that a place “It is not down on any map; true places never are.” Furthermore, the ellipsoid of Airy, mentioned here by Ferdinand, is only one of many ellipsoids, like the WGS84 (World Geodetic System, 1984), which is used by the GPS (Global Positioning System, geostationary satellites) technology by the United States, and which is also used by Woods. Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) technologies that are similar to the GPS technology and are used extensively by Woods, include Galileo (European Community), GLONASS (mainly Russia) and BeiDou



(China) and others. The main point here from Ferdinand's perspective is to go beyond the quantifier-experts or institutional knowledge, and the ontological assumptions that have made cartography and mapping part of modern history, and to democratize cartography and mapping to the art.

Does Ferdinand succeed in his goal of analyzing art as maps and to go beyond the ontology of quantification of cartography? I think so because the tools of mapping, navigation and others have become more distributed to the masses and are easier to use digitally. In about 3,000 years humans passed from maps in stone and mosaic (such as the Bedolina petroglyph, Babylonian World Map, Madaba Mosaic Map, Dunhuang Star Chart), to wood-carved, printed and painted maps for aristocrats (such as the Italy map of Ignazio Danti, one of the Piri Reis maps), to printed maps mostly for navigating through the sea and land during the "Age of Discovery," to mostly digital maps of the planet Earth and outside the Earth. The advancement has been phenomenal, and it is mostly due to the advancement of measures by experts, so far.

It is time to enlarge the field of cartography and mapping from the experts to the masses, and art is critical in this endeavor, this book seems to say. Ferdinand, in his passion for arts and literature, does not seem to appreciate the remarkable work that quantifier-experts have done through the centuries and millennia, to introduce technologies such as the ephemeral grid of latitude, longitude and elevation, the triangulation, the online and satellite technologies.

In the last chapter (chapter six) titled "Another Chorein: Alternative Ontologies in Peter Greenway's *A Walk Through H*," Ferdinand analyzes the art work of Peter Greenway and in particular his movie "A Walk Through H: The Reincarnation of an Ornithologist." The author discusses how "map art . . . might also transcend the ontology of calculability and articulate geographical reality in fundamentally different ways." I want to assure Ferdinand, since he apologizes for having discussed first Woods and then Greenway, that the art work of Jeremy Woods, although extremely novel, is not unique in the field of quantitative geography: Parkes and Thrift in 1980 draw a similar, although different representation of "Space-time diagram showing people in their daily lives" as reported in the caption of the figure by Nicholas Chrisman "Exploring Geographic Information Systems", in 2002, published by John Wiley and Sons, Inc. In this chapter Ferdinand rejects the "ontology of calculability," the concept of "space" that implies "objectivity, uniformity, and calculability" and is inspired by the video of Peter Greenway. I would like to contribute here to Ferdinand's excellent analysis of the movie, where



he discusses exhaustively the concept that a place can be hell for somebody and heaven for somebody else. Peter Greenway's movie takes one through the afterlife in 92 maps draws for me a comparison with the artwork of the literature work "Divine Comedy" by Dante Alighieri, who also describes an afterlife about 700 years before Greenway. An afterlife described in the "Divine Comedy" that became an inspiration of artists like Domenico di Michelino, 1465. Alighieri also imagined an afterlife of hell, purgatory, and heaven and above all a "promised land." Ferdinand goes from the analysis of Greenway's movie, defined by many as post-modern, to the cartography's chorein. Chorein, that Ferdinand consider a verb coming from the Greek word "chora", gives away from calculability to artworks and describes art objects as maps.

Although I do not agree with every word in the book, I think that a reading of it enriches a reader. I also very much enjoyed Ferdinand's map analysis of artists that had been unknown to me. Moreover, I think that the use of scholarly words by Ferdinand outside the "calculability" frameworks can easily be absorbed by an artist and an expert in the quantitative disciplines who wants to consider maps beyond the measurable ones. In the book's "Envoi," or afterthought, part of chapter six (last chapter), Ferdinand restates that he has analyzed six cores or samples of a wider geology that indicates the complexity of map art. How representative are these core samples? According to Ferdinand, they are very representative, and he gives ample reasoning for his thought. In the first four chapters, Ferdinand explored the diverse visions of modernity, and he suggests that these artworks are a "geographical reality" due to "artists' capacity to socially expand mapmaking" beyond institutional expertise.

Although Ferdinand's discussions in the book were beautifully presented, they avoided the art of living in a truly global world, I think, where destitute people are dying every day, and the privileged people live "ordinary" lives, and where a virus can travel within hours to any part of the planet Earth. For this main reason, I think that this book addresses scholarly "maps as art" about modernism but not about globalism.

A shortcoming of the book was the limited selection of maps as artworks. I could not find any map of Africa (except that mentioned at the beginning of 2002), of Asia (some Chinese and Japanese mapmakers were mentioned, but of India or South America and Australia artists or mapmakers were not). The author could have indicated that he would address the art and maps from these continents in a later edition or a second volume. In essence, the author seems to base his consideration



of modernism and globalism on the art and cartography works of European and North American artists and mapmakers. However, I appreciate the remarkable effort undertaken by Ferdinand to see maps and mapping through the eyes of artists. My limited dissatisfaction is the geographic limit of the “art as map” work that is considered in this book.

I recommend this book for a museum curator, an art historian, an artist or a person with a serious interest in art and/or cartography, and a mapmaker. Ferdinand has written the book in a highly scholarly way, preventing its appeal to a general audience. As a map enthusiast and one of those quantifier-experts, I regarded the book as a challenging read, and I know that my core interest in art and cartography motivated me to read the book. My familiarity with some of the philosophers – including Jorge Luis Borges, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Peter Sloterdijk – who were mentioned frequently helped me to understand the arguments in the book. Simon Ferdinand succeeds with this book to pose a timely question: is it time to go beyond measurements with the maps? He convinced me so, and I hope he convinces every one of you, once you read this book.

Dr. Lucia Lovison-Golob, PhD

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