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## Mapped: Intersections of Cartography and Painting

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Mapped:  
Intersections of Cartography and Painting

A Senior Project Submitted to

The Division of Arts

Of Bard College

By

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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*Mapped: Intersections of Cartography and Painting* explores the role of representation in art and how we, as people, communicate through visual language. More fundamentally, my paintings ask at what point does an abstract painting become a map, and what structures and conventions do we use in cartography that appear in abstract painting? Is a map a painting or is it a functional object? The map is a fundamentally flat, abstract object to which we assign practical meaning. Details are only considered if they are necessary for travel or displaying data and information. Like maps, my paintings turn flat lines and shapes into representational three-dimensional objects while the paintings remain on a 2-D surface through a mix of collage and traditional technique inspired by Brice Marden, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns. An Abstract Expressionist would be appalled because the paintings, despite focusing on the surface, are derived from recognizable imagery.

In addition to the techniques of Brice Marden, Rauschenberg, and Johns, the works were inspired from ideas about space and time from my senior project in physics I completed last semester. This fascination manifests itself in my paintings in that they ask about how we communicate and represent the physical world. I have included images of the Cosmic Microwave Background on my paintings, which are at first glance static moving around a page, but represent the radiation from the Big Bang. In a sense to the uninformed, the map is a beautiful design, but to a physicist, the image is very well recognizable, and the contrast excites the painting's meaning. Similarly, if you give an average American a map of Africa or Europe and ask him or her to recognize every country, they would just see random shapes. We are trained to recognize shapes and imagery from a map, but when those are altered the image produced has an inherent

contrast that blurs the distinction between a recognizable or abstract shape. This is why I have chosen places like New York City, San Francisco, and Chicago for my paintings as a way to play with the viewers' knowledge of what the map *should* look like and trick them into seeing something they did not recognize. For instance, in *Go Chicago* is an abstracted map of Chicago, Illinois; but when turned on its side it becomes a view of mountains with roads running along its perimeter. What is it about the specific combination line, shape, and color, that makes a map? Or are we just programmed by certain conventions, i.e., that an organic blue shape represents sky or a body of water? My paintings break down the recognizable image into something beautiful, yet familiar.

My project began when my representational work collided with my abstract work, coming from a broad artistic output during my years at Bard. I started senior year after my summer in Rome, Italy, with the Rome Art Program, and painted portraits of friends and landscapes of the surrounding Hudson River Valley. Up to that point I had two very distinct methods of working in painting: traditional representational (or impressionist), and abstract and conceptual works. In the previous year I developed a new style of abstraction reminiscent of Brice Marden. The use of maps has not been foreign to my art: I have completed various map making projects before—carefully pinning every painting and drawing location in Rome on Google Earth, discovering hidden geometrical connections between the obelisks of Rome, and then working on a giant pixelated maps/paintings of my home town, Little Rock, Arkansas. I combined all of these interests and made a giant pixelated map of Rome. I redid that and made a map four times as small at twice the resolution. Afterwards, it became clear to me that I was interested in generalizing this interest of mapmaking and painting and thus this project was born.











































