

Conceptual Cartography: Spatial representations in conceptual art

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Cartography is a defining feature in many conceptualist artworks, from Douglas Huebler's maps that chart journeys with a felt pen on ordinary topographical road maps to Felipe Ehrenberg's 'Tube-O-Nauts Travels' that document the artist's continuous journey on London's Underground over 17 hours with diagrams on subway maps. This session focuses on artworks and artistic practices at the interface between conceptual art's spatial imagination in the 1960s and 70s and the variant ways in which artists employed a cartographic language as a process and production of space-making. The objective is to expand our understanding of conceptual art and conceptualism's use of maps, spatial measurements and other forms of information. This session will examine how these practices address institutional, physical and social spaces, encoding new territories, subverting systems of representation, re-ordering, de-centralising, reifying or expanding geography and its signification.

Speakers and Abstracts

Borderline: Mapping out (social) spaces of representation in conceptual art

Eve Kalyva (Independent Art Historian)

Art and Language's *Map to Not Indicate [...] (1967)* combines a list of US and nearby locations with a rectangular border enclosing only the geographical outlines of Iowa and Kentucky. Lamelas's film *A Study of the Relationships between Inner and Outer Space (1969)* explores the gallery's structure, functionality and meaning vis-à-vis the urban space. During the Argentine dictatorship of 1966 to 1973, Romero's *4,000,000m2 of the City of Buenos Aires (1970)* marks a square on a city map and superimposes street photographs, including those of the Modern Art museum and an illegal detention centre. Mathematical and cartographical systems became increasingly popular amongst conceptual artists. Notwithstanding the then dialogue between the arts and the sciences and the availability of equipment, artists turned to better-defined reference systems as a way of criticising the art establishment and socio-political reality. They sought to push the limits of traditional art forms, interrogate the scope of art and the nature of representation, and examine how social space is constructed.

This paper discusses exploration, cartographic framing and binary juxtapositions (inside/outside, art/non-art) in conceptual art. It considers how artworks position the artist and the viewer in relation to institutional, physical and social environments, and what is affected by dislocation. How do works that closely engage their context remain meaningful and critical elsewhere? While conceptual art's reproducible, 'dematerialised' works circulated through global networks, transregionality is today a key characteristic of contemporary art. Taking our cue from conceptual art, can we define a tentative spatio-temporal locality for art?

Remapping the Public Sphere: Conceptual art in 1970s London

Jennifer Sarathy (CUNY Graduate Center)

This paper investigates artists working in London in the 1970s, like Felipe Ehrenberg, Mary Kelly, and Stephen Willats, who increasingly engaged with urban space, combining conceptual practices with emerging forms of collectivism and social activism to create alternative cartographies. In particular, it examines Margaret Harrison, Kay Hunt, and Kelly's *Women and Work (1973–75)*, Willats's *The West London Social Resource Project (1972–73)*, and *Garbage Walk (1970)* by Ehrenberg's London-based collective, the Polygonal Workshop, exploring how they mobilised conceptual strategies to map and remap the public sphere.

Focusing on the collaborative production of flows of information and the documentation of collective experience, these artworks map the experiences of groups living and working in socially coded spaces – charting a community’s experience of garbage and its marks on North London in *Garbage Walk*, documenting gender-based labour inequalities in Bermondsey, South London in *Women and Work*, and inciting local populations in West London to ‘construct new cognitions’ through their awareness of social behaviour in public and private spaces, as with Willats’s *Social Resource Project*. Each of these interventions emphasised collective production, often with the direct participation of the community, to structure new conceptual frameworks that emphasised pluralism and encouraged social progress through collaboration. This paper analyses, therefore, the diverse ways that artworks in London in the 1970s combined conceptual models of production and display with collective methodologies, to simultaneously challenge traditional art-world models and remap space, critiquing and recoding the city’s social geographies.

Giulio Paolini and Mel Bochner: The architectural mapping of the exhibition space

Pamela Bianchi (University of Paris 8)

In 1960, Giulio Paolini created *Disegno Geometrico*, a white canvas on which the artist has only painted the conventional squaring – diagonals and medians – of a rectangular surface. Within the perspective of a radical depersonalisation of the work, the artistic gesture indicated the ‘conditions of the spatial setting in which the picture could have existed’. Nine years later, in 1969, Mel Bochner realised *Measurement Room*: a spatial diagram in which the artist only indicated the dimensions of the exhibition space with black tape attached to the perimeter of the room. As a literal representation of a space, Bochner transposed the two-dimensional plan to the architectural scale.

In both cases, the object and the space lose their ontological status within a process of superimposition that is interesting on three spatial levels: the real space, the geometric space and finally the fictitious space represented. In particular, while with Paolini we are still in a state of representation that suggests the idea of a space *a priori*, for Bochner we are within a tautological space which exposes itself. In any case, the idea of measurement emerges which, as a diegetic reading tool, ends up becoming a counterpoint to the perceptive experience of the individual in space, and in relation to objects. Through the crossed study of these two works, my paper aims to emphasise the heuristic potential of the exhibition space when it is represented, thus becoming an artistic proposition. In particular, we will focus on the idea of architectural mapping that not only defines a new exhibition space but also conceptually repositions the viewer at the centre of space.

Robert Smithson and a Map: A cartographic experiment

Jane Madsen (University of the Arts London)

In 1969, Robert Smithson and Nancy Holt made a trip to Britain and Wales. They visited historic and material sites such as Stonehenge, Avebury, Silbury Hill, Cerne Abbas, Pentre Ifan, as well as quarries in Surrey, Wales and Dorset. The sites were carefully chosen, and reflected Smithson’s interest in landscape, geology, quarries and material places. They spent time on Chesil Beach and in the limestone quarries at Portland Bill; while he was there Smithson made two pieces, which continued his previous *Mirror Displacement* series begun in 1969 whereby a number of mirrors are placed on a site and then photographed. The work *Mirror Displacement (Portland Isle, England) 1969* was shown in *Prospect 69* at the Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf and, notably, this piece included a map of Portland Bill.

This paper considers how the inclusion of this map was a significant conceptual departure for Smithson. In this work the use of a map identified and created geographic location through the application of cartographic reference. The landscapes Smithson usually worked with were de-located and unidentifiable. It could be argued that this piece, made outside the open landscapes and sites where Smithson usually made work in America, was both a notation about time and place and an experiment with mapping a site.

North East South West: Orientation, cardinality, and Michael Heizer's first earthworks

Alexis Lowry (*Dia Art Foundation*)

Michael Heizer's first earthworks, *North* and *South*, were built in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in 1967. Two open cavities dug into the ground, the negative sculptures are touchstones in the dematerialisation of the art object and among the earliest works of the American Land art movement. The sculptures were conceived as part of a sequence of four elements titled *North East South West*. Most people saw *North* and *South* as reproductions in Heizer's carefully staged photographs, which deliberately obscure the two sculptures' size, location, and alignment; it is impossible to tell whether *North* is actually north of *South*. Later iterations of the entire set more definitively disrupt the geographic expectations of the title.

The cardinal directions transform landscapes into planar abstractions in ways that have been key to the socio-political and economic mapping of territory. However, the divisions enacted by these orthogonals are often in opposition to the topographical conditions on the ground. In the USA, this reality was viscerally felt in the post-war era of freeway construction and (sub)urbanisation. Heizer's subversively disorienting project stages a confrontation between the theoretical space of the map and the real space of encounter by uncoupling the terms of cardinality from geographic alignment.

Engaging with recent Land art scholarship that has drawn from critical geography to consider both the formal and semantic operations of these artworks, this paper will reposition Heizer's practice in relation to contemporaneous debates about the culture and philosophy of space and spatial practice during the post-war period. Orientation, I will argue, was a key concept of inquiry among spatial planners of the period, one that surfaced as a result of an increasing awareness of the condition of vision in motion brought about by new modes of travel, and one that was central to Heizer's own move to large-scale earthworks.

Navigating the Art World: André Cadere's peripatetic art

Inesa Brasiske (*Vilnius Academy of Arts*)

Soon after relocating to Paris in the late 1960s, the Romanian artist André Cadere embarked on his seminal artistic venture known as *barres de bois rond*, or round bars of wood, a project that would occupy him up until his untimely death in 1978. Composed of wooden circular segments painted in different colors and assembled following a strict permutational order (with a single error) that was set in advance, the bars had no back, no front, no bottom or top and possessed a flexibility which allowed them to be exhibited in a number of ways. Echoing Lucy Lippard's remark that communication and distribution were inherent to conceptual art, Cadere designed these bars as portable objects, which he carried around and presented in a wide range of situations, from the streets to surprise interventions in other artists' exhibitions. In my paper, by examining not only the bar itself but also taking into account the rhetorical and functional value of the artist's paperwork, including *comptes rendus*, photo-documentation, and various ephemera, as well as different tactics the artist used to break apart the traditional space-time coherence of exhibition display, I will locate Cadere's ambulatory practice in the broader tendency of de-territorialisation that the art world's infrastructure and operations underwent in the wake of conceptual art, and present the multiple and often contradictory senses of space-making in Cadere's oeuvre as both a critique of the art establishment and as strategies of efficient logistics and self-management.

Mapping Mobility: Travels in conceptual art

Elize Mazadiego (*KU Leuven*)

The opening of her book *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of the art object 1966–1972* art critic and curator of conceptual art Lucy Lippard described conceptual artists as attempting to 'visualise a new world and the art that would reflect or inspire it' (Lippard, 1973, vii). In the preceding pages she gives a chronological survey of the varied artistic practices, exhibitions and events that constituted a formation of 'dematerialised art' – a reductive quality of the art object into ideas, information and communication that enabled artists to disseminate their work more freely and cheaply. As a consequence of its easy mobility, conceptual art was

attributed to expanding international circulations and networks of artists, artworks and exhibitions, seeming to break art free from its localism and concentrated centres.

This paper will focus on the movement of conceptual artists, examining the maps and other forms of documenting their mobility and circulation. It considers how this mode of travel and displacement transfigured into a central and constitutive subject of the work, but was also key to conceptual art's attempts to expand its geography.

Cildo Meireles' Physical Art: Space between perception and representation

Marco Pasqualini de Andrade (Federal University of Uberlandia)

Cildo Meireles is one of the prominent Brazilian artists who, at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of 1970s, flirted with conceptual tendencies. His main experimental works are well known by contemporary critics, but some of them were not sufficiently analysed, such as the *Physical Art* series (1969). In these works, the perception of space is inverted through a mix of conceptual instructions, effective actions, and documented by maps, photography, matter and container boxes. Subverting perception references and creating a strange cartography, Meireles develops new representational possibilities to art. The territorial aspects are also put into question, breaking hegemonic thinking, as in *Cruzeiro do Sul* (1969–70): the manifesto published in the 'Information' exhibition catalogue and the art object. This paper aims to bring to light this group of works and connects it to other later propositions by the artist.