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Cartographic Heritage in the eyes of artists and cartographers – experiences from the International Symposium on “Cartography and Art”

Introduction

Contemporary methods for depicting the earth and its cultural and natural attributes use graphic and non-graphic formats, maps and map-related artefacts, for visualizing geography and for building virtual landscapes and environments. The discipline area of Cartography, traditionally, has applied Art (Design), Science and Technology to map-making to design and realise these products. Prior to the mid 1950s cartographic artefacts were built under the theoretical and practical ‘umbrella’ of this partnership of Art, Science and Technology. However, since then it is argued, the theory and methodology associated with visualizing geography has focused on Science and Technology, and away from Art. This ‘move’ away from Art was accelerated by: 1. Computing, computers and complete automated systems; and 2. A ‘quest’ to gain ‘scientific legitimacy’ by using Scientific Visualization as a lodestone for gauging the ‘quality’ of theories and applications (Cartwright et al 2008, Gartner 2008). In order to bridge the gap between science and art in cartography initiatives have been taken which led into the organisation of an International Symposium on “Cartography and Art” in Vienna 2008.

Establishing an exchange forum for cartographers and artists

The international symposium „Cartography and Art – Art and Cartography“ has taken place from January 31 to February 2 2008 in Vienna with big success. It was backed by the International Cartographic Association (ICA) and was organized by the Institute of Geoinformation and Cartography of the Vienna University of Technology, the Academy of Fine arts Vienna and RMIT University Melbourne.

Ideas to establish such an event have been developed and derived from various discussions of cartographers to topics like “Aesthetics”, “artistic aspects in cartographic communication” or “cartographic heritage”, which finally led into the foundation of a new working group of the International Cartographic Association called “Art and Cartography”. The objectives of this working group are primarily to stimulate and establish cooperations and links between cartographers and artists. With this it might be possible, to bring artistic aspects of maps into the main focus again. The symposium at Vienna as a result of the initiative of William Cartwright (RMIT Melbourne), Antje Lehn (Academy of Applied Science Vienna) and Georg Gartner (TU Vienna) was meant as a first attempt, to establish an exchange forum for cartographers and artists and archi-

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tects and therefore enable discussions and to encourage interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation of ideas and concepts.

The symposium on “Cartography and Art”

Interested participants have been called to present their work on topics of artistic aspects in cartographic artefacts. There has been no dedicated limit in terms of looking at maps of historic periods only, but there has been a specific call for contributions to contemporary aspects of cartography and art. Furthermore interested scientists and artists have been addressed especially, who attempt to communicate space and place by means of modern media or experimental artefacts and establish therefore options to maps as the main mean of spatial communication. The only limitation to interested participants was, to keep the “spatial context” as reference. The call aimed for contributions as scientific papers, posters, installations, videos, web applications and experimental media. The call has been answered by a surprisingly big number of contributions from more than 20 countries and various disciplines. A wide spectrum of the submitted contributions was the result. The selection of the contributions has been done by William Cartwright (president of the ICA, then chair of the working group „Art and Cartography“ of the ICA, RMIT University Melbourne), Antje Lehn (Academy of fine arts Vienna) and Georg Gartner (Vienna University of Technology) due to criterias of scientific and artistic originality and quality. Finally more than 60 contributions, representing authors of 15 different countries, have been selected.

Due to the heterogenous nature of contributions three different event locations have been used to present the papers, artefacts and installations in an appropriate way: in the main hall of Academy of Fine Arts Vienna artefacts, paintings, installations, videos and media projections have been displayed. At the „project space karlsplatz“ of the Kunsthalle Wien (Hall of Arts Vienna) artists presented their work, especially in the field of conceptual art, in short presentations. Finally, the scientific contributions were presented in form of lectures and posters at Vienna University of Technology.

The event started with a vernissage of the exhibition “zoomandscale” at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Thereby works were presented with regard to the context “Cartography and Art” from the perspective of artists. These works drew a thematic bow from maps to artistic descriptions of specific places as starting point for orientation strategies and maps as metaphors. The exhibition, which was organized by a group of artists “collabor.at” together with Antje Lehn and Johannes Hoffmann, used reduced instruments for design like paper webs, ladders and field glasses, which contained associations to the process of mapping and therefore incorporated the visitors actively in the events. Exposing artists were amongst others Peter Dykhuis (Canada) – Pressure today maps, Wolfgang Fiel (Austria) - Urban Adventures, Manuela Mourao (USA) - Metaphors of Space and Spaces of Metaphor, Ludo Slagmolen (The Netherlands) – Eridano, and Ruth Watson (New Zealand) - Reformed world (for Johannes Stabius).



Fig. 1: Extract of the work of Ruth Watson - Reformed World (for Johannes Stabius)

The scientific lectures program at Vienna University of Technology was structured in sessions due to thematic aspects. As keynote speaker we have been able to invite Philippe Rekacewicz, cartographer and journalist of the French monthly newspaper „Le Monde diplomatique“. In his lecture he draws the picture of joined aspects of artistic map production to mapping art. His main argument consists of the idea, that artistic elements in maps have a high significance for the efficiency of cartographic communication processes. Following the keynote the opening session “Theory” consists of presentations of William Cartwright (Australia), David Fairbairn (England), Felicitas Thun-Hohenstein (Austria) and Markus Jobst (Austria). As result of this introducing session it could be stated, that the theoretical basis for the importance of the relationship between art and cartography was neglected for a long time. Out of the lectures it became clear too, that it is very useful to compare the various terms, concepts and theories of the diverse disciplines. Finally, all lecturers accentuated the importance of cooperation of the various disciplines, which gives the fundament for increasing the efficiency of cartographic communication processes by enhancing mapping processes by artistic elements.

In the following session “Cartographic Design” detailed suggestions are given to exactly the topics mentioned before. While Bob Lilley (England) analysed artistic aspects in historical and contemporary maps of ordnance survey, David Forrest (Scotland) features the aspect of “composition” as the central element of map design. Jari Korpi (Finland) discusses the design of associative symbols especially for crises management applications and Jeroen van den Worm (The Netherlands) presented a general methodology for standards of cartographic symbols.

The first day of the symposium was finalized by two sessions called “Integrated Media” and „Non Graphics“. In the first session Sebastien Caquard (Canada) and also Teresa Castro (France) drew parallels between the composition and elements of film making for cinemas and cartography. Anna-Lena Kornfeld (Germany) demonstrated with her presentation „Soundlike“ the potential of the acoustic channel for the communication of spatial information, while Robert Edsall (USA) a couple of similarities in composition and design aspects analysed between music and cartography. In the first presentation of the session “Non Graphics” André Skupin (USA) analysed the role of written text in cartography and art, followed by presentations to the context of literature and cartography by Armin von Ungern-Sternberg (Germany), Nils Plath (Germany) and Harriet Edquist (Australia).

For those participants being still “hungry” for more another vernissage was offered. In the nearby “Kunsthalle Wien” (Art Hall Vienna) various multimedia presentations of conceptual works to the context of “cartography and art” were given, including presentations of Sabine Müller-Funk (Österreich), Waltraud Palme (Österreich), Christian Spanring (Österreich), Evamaria Trischak

(Österreich), Nasrine Seraji (Frankreich), Hosoya Schäfer Architects (Schweiz) as well as of probosics (England) - Urban tapestries.



Figure 2: From the display of Manuela Mourao (USA): early-modern portuguese maps

The second day of the scientific program at TU Vienna started with poster presentations. Manfred Buchroithner (Germany) analysed 3D-relief representations in the context of aesthetic aspects, Zsolt Török (Hungary) discussed the context of modern technologies and map production, Alexander Wolodtschenko (Germany) presented prehistoric maps as an example of cartosemiotics, Jan Blaha (Czech Republic) analysed aspects of creativity in cartography, Jesus Reyes (Hungary) presented maps of children and finally a display of paintings of various artists of one particular place was given by Vanessa Parravicini and Klaus Kramer (Austria).

The presentation program then started with a session on “Aesthetics”. The presenters Jan Feranec (Slovakia), Karel Kriz (Austria) and Alexander Kent (England) analysed the term „aesthetics“ from a holistic point of view and demonstrated by historic and contemporary examples aesthetic aspects in maps and cartographic processes. The following session on „Non-traditional mapping“ focuses on the usage of cartographic methods to represent „non traditional“ information. Stephanie Deitrick (USA) analysed the effective representation of „Uncertainty“, Barbara Piatti and Anne-Kathrin Reuschel (Switzerland) described in a brilliant dialogue concepts of cartography and literatur sciences for producing an atlas of literature, Christina Ljungberg (Sweden) presented „Fluid Spaces“ and finally “Informal Geographies” were presented by Michaela Kinberger and Verena Widorn (Austria) by highlighting the sacred landscapes of “Lahaul”.

The final sessions focused on the term “design”. While in the first session the perspective of designers, artists and architects was given, the second session offers a forum for cartographers to give their perspective. The “artist oriented” design session was opened by the internationally awarded designer Angie Rattay (Austria). She displayed her “directions for use the planet earth“, which has been featured in mass media already. Edward Kinman (USA) presented his work on representing places by ceramics, while in the presentations of Laurene Vaughan (Australia) and

Peter Downton (Australia) conceptual works of the context of architectural artefacts and design principles were highlighted.

The “cartography oriented” design session was opened by Sidonie Christophe (France). She presented interesting attempts of IGN Paris, to incorporate colour palettes of famous painters into map legends for topographic mapping. A similar topic was presented by Lucie Friedmannova (Czech Republic). She analysed Claude Monet’s colour schemes and demonstrated a method to apply this in cartography. The final presentations of Alexandra Benova (Slovakia) and Mirjanka Lechthaler (Austria) dealt more generally with the definition of map styles and historical aspects of cartography and art.

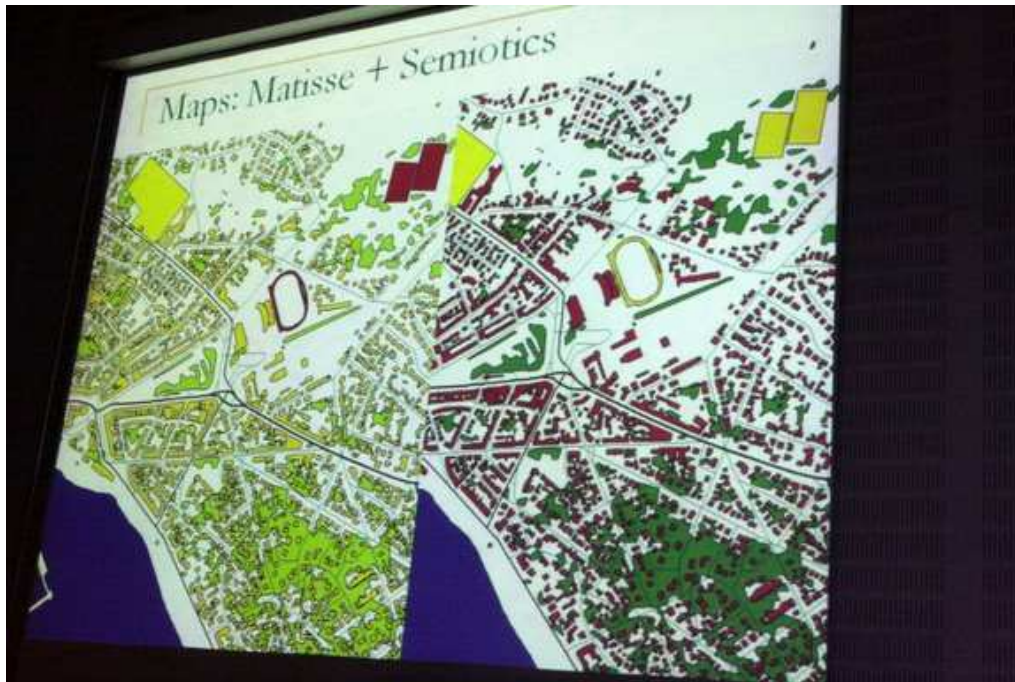


Figure 2: Applying the colour palettes of famous painter Matisse to french topographic maps (Sidonie Christophe)

With a glass of prosecco the program was discussed afterwards. Ideas for ongoing cooperations were discussed and established like e.g. in the strengthened role of the „Working Group on Art and Cartography of the ICA“ (<http://artcarto.wordpress.com>). Stimulated by the enormous response of the participants the organizers have started to produce a book with the results of the symposium. Approximately in October 2008 the book „Cartography and Art - Art and Cartography“ will be published as part of the series „Lecture Notes on Geoinformation and Cartography“ of Springer, edited by William Cartwright, Georg Gartner and Antje Lehn. In the meantime further information can be found at <http://cartography.tuwien.ac.at/artandcartography> .

Conclusion

By organizing an experimental event on Cartography and Art it turns out, that a significant number of contributions demonstrated and described the context of aspects like aesthetics, design, beauty, quality to maps and mapping by referring heavily to cartographic heritage. It seems like, that this can be seen as an important indicator for the value of historic maps and ambitions to keep them available and accessible to those being interested in cartography.

References

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