



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2007 Volume III: Maps and Mapmaking

Maps and Mapmaking for the Artist

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As I read the outline for this seminar I was immediately struck by the similarities of the challenges of the early explorers/mapmakers and that of art making. The world for them must have appeared both exhilarating and intimidating. The risk these early explorers took combined a spirit of adventure, a knowledge (limited as it was) or sense of place and a great deal of courage and conviction. I believe the nature of art making to be similar.

No doubt, art making is hard. To be inspired, to create innovative marks on a page, and to confront personal censure are difficult challenges for artists and teachers alike.

Through a series of 'personal geographies' - or works of art that map their past and future lives- students will explore the history of maps and mapmaking. What ways do we use maps? How do they define their subject? How do they define what is not know or cannot be seen? How do they lie? These questions will help students consider the content of the maps they study, as well as the potential expressive qualities of the map as a medium in art making. Maps have their own inherent visual qualities of tone, value, and density. Maps also make use of such dominant elements as line and color. Maps make use of both the literal and conceptual make-up of a work of art.

(Developed for Studio Art, grades 10-12; recommended for Studio Art, grades 10-12)

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