JOYCE KOZLOFF BY ANN MCCOY

Maps + Patterns
DC MOORE GALLERY | MARCH 26 – APRIL 25, 2015

Social Studies
FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE GALLERY
FEBRUARY 25 – APRIL 25, 2015

Mapping Brooklyn
BRIC HOUSE | FEBRUARY 26 – MAY 3, 2015
BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY | FEBRUARY 16 – SEPTEMBER 6, 2015

To capture the encyclopedic scope, breadth, and dimensionality of Joyce Kozloff's exhibitions, a magic carpet is a prerequisite. Firstly, it might help avoid MTA snafus while dashing from *Mapping Brooklyn* to see her two Manhattan exhibitions. Second, because in Kozloff's cartographic universe, the viewer is flying at a bird's eye view over terrains spanning the globe, not to mention histories from antiquity to current world events. She has been exploring cartography for over two decades in a sustained manner, always interjecting fresh viewpoints that are sometimes dark, and sometimes funny.

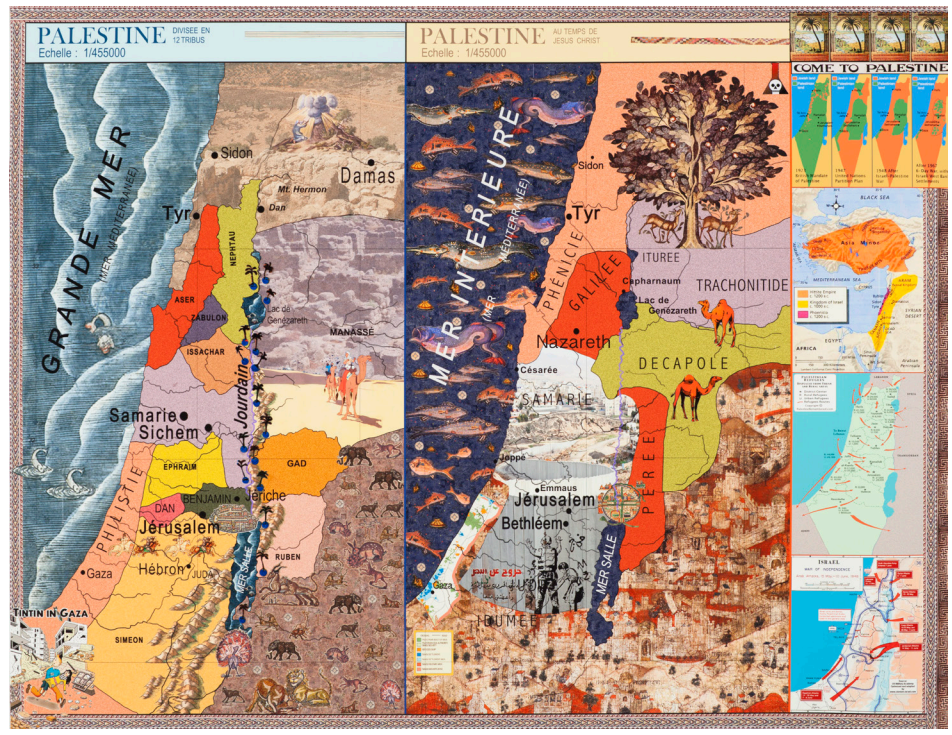
Cartography has traditionally been a man's game, but Kozloff improves upon that tradition. Little escapes Kozloff's aerial view; she is a world traveler in the best sense. We are transfixed in Kozloff's map room with lead soldiers, miniature tanks, camels, octopi, and some wonderful politically incorrect references.

Joyce Kozloff, "The Tempest" (2015). Acrylic, pencil, collage, and assemblage on panel, 120 × 120 × 4″. Courtesy of the artist.

Rob Storr curated *Mapping* at MoMA in 1994, an exhibition of 29 artists including: Alighiero e Boetti, Jan Dibbets, Oyvind Fahlstrom, Jasper Johns, Kim Jones, Annette Lemieux, Richard Long, Miguel Angel Ríos, and others. Kozloff's mapping activities predate this exhibition. Many exhibitions since have examined this terrain, such as *Mind the Map* (2014), curated by Selene Wendt at Punkt for the Global Art Project in Moss, Norway, where Kozloff's "Targets" was featured. Some other memorable map exhibitions include: *Map as Art*, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, Missouri (2012); *HereThereEverywhere*, Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, Illinois (2007); and *The World According to the Newest and Most Exact Observations: Mapping Art and Science*, at the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York (2001).

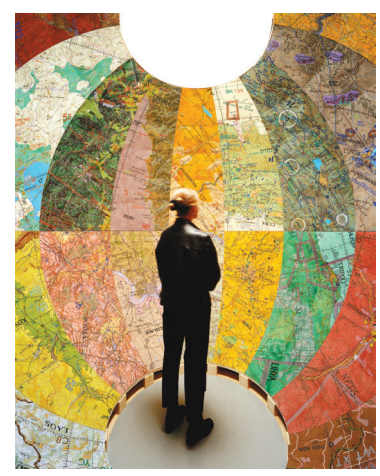
Artists have many reasons for using maps: psychological, political, and even illustrative. If Kozloff is close to another artist cartographer in spirit, one might be Kim Jones, with his battle maps obsessively altered over time. She might also be compared to recent Arab artists dealing with the dark side of the colonial and post-Ottoman regional conflicts fostered by the likes of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916). Moataz Nasr's "Missing Parts (Ice Cream Map)" (2008) and Marwan Rechmaoui's "Untitled 22 (The Arab World)" (2005), a map of 22 black rubber Arab states, are darkly humorous examples. Bouchra Khalili's "The Mapping Journey Project" (2008 – 11) used video to chart diaspora and displacement. Khalili, like Kozloff, has also employed constellation maps.

Our magic carpet ride might begin at BRIC House in Brooklyn to see Kozloff's "Targets" (created in 2000 during her Prix de Rome Fellowship). The nine-foot high walk-in globe's interior features 24 maps sectioned like orange slices, based on NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) generated maps, which aid US pilots in navigating globally. Kozloff chose the aerial charts of countries that had been bombed by the US beginning with China in 1945 through a long list of 24 others, including Vietnam, Cuba, Libya, and Afghanistan. With the "bomb Iran" crowd chomping at the bit, her work is timelier than ever. There is a wonderful no holds barred spunk to this work. Kozloff's life-changing visit to Iran in 2001 reinforced her views, and her touching homages to the lands beneath the bombs comes through in her works with every brushstroke. Outdated arguments about cultural appropriation, which may act to prop up cultural imperialism, Orientalism, etc., miss the mark. Her comment says it all, "Some of the most exhilarating moments of my life were spent in mosques and cathedrals."



Joyce Kozloff, "Palestine" (2013). Collage, digital archival inkjet print, 36 × 47″. Courtesy of the artist.

Two works included in *Mapping Brooklyn* that also deal with the dark side of American imperialism have been borrowed from the "Social Studies" series — "Les Etats-Unis d'Amerique" at the Brooklyn Historical Society and "L'Amerique du Nord" at BRIC House. "L'Amerique du Nord," is a delight with a superimposed map of drug cartel routes in the USA, and some images of Chiapas that challenge the myth of NAFTA.



Joyce Kozloff, "Targets" (2000). Detail. Acrylic on canvas, wood, 108" diameter. Courtesy of the artist.

The series *Social Studies* at the French Institute Alliance Française Gallery even takes a few pot shots at the French. "La France" (2012) is overlaid with tiny cones marking nuclear facilities, alongside bucolic agricultural symbols for cows and wheat. Another gem is "Algerie/Tunisie" (2012). *Algerie alors* was a phrase seldom heard during Charlie Hebdo—as though French atrocities against the Arabs during the Battle of Algiers never happened. "Algerie" features bomb charts circa the French Algerian War (1954 – 64), and images of some badass French troops. "Tunisie," the site of the first Arab Spring, was recently the site of the worst terrorist attack in Tunisian history. An image of a Roman boat, a floor mosaic from the Bardo Museum (where the 21 tourists were killed) is digitally layered along with an image of a demonstration during Tunisia's Arab Spring on the map.

Kozloff has used a cache of charming 1950s French scholastic maps that she found at the Clignancourt flea market in 2011 for the works, updating them using digital technology acquired during a residency at Carnegie Mellon University in 2012. The maps reflect a '50s classroom worldview which omitted topics like French colonialism. Kozloff began to overlay taboo topics with a vengeance using Google, a process of free association, and paint. National mythologies take a hit in her work. The image of Tin tin in Gaza on her "Palestine" map stands out, alongside the map showing a diminishing Palestine that caused a stir when posted on Connecticut train platforms. My favorite, however, was "L'U.R.S.S." (2012), otherwise known as Russia. In a corner is a map of NATO installations of warheads used to control the Russian bear. We are left to wonder who exactly is the imperialist threat? Seventeen maps complete this series at FIAF and cover the globe.

The best place to touch down for a finale is at DC Moore Gallery. "The Tempest" (2015) is huge, as though Kozloff has tipped some imperial map room's table on end. Maps have traditionally been made by male cartographers and their portraits are collaged everywhere—globes made from earrings, erasers, peppershakers, and eBay finds cover the work's surface. This goofy collection of tchotchkes, globes, portraits, and even Captain Planet, are layered over a Chinese map from the 18th century. We see a tiny Great Wall at the top and a stylized China Sea we hope to navigate under Kozloff's command.

Kozloff's magnum opus is a long scroll covering a long gallery wall. Here she has snipped and pasted the contents of decades of work into Islamic star patterns. The lovingly painted patterns make Kozloff the worker into a marvel; it is hard to believe one pair of hands could pull this off. "If I Were a Botanist: the Pale" (2014) and "If I Were a Botanist: Gaza" (2015) show this remarkable artist's ability to see conflicts from all sides. Kozloff's ancestors come from the Pale of Settlement—a restricted area for Russian Jews before 1917. As such, she is able to empathize with Gazans restricted by checkpoints from leaving. In a world torn asunder by misguided imperial mapping, we could use Kozloff's ability to take on the subject from all sides, including the dark side. I wish this remarkable artist were in charge of the map rooms of our world.