

LESSON TWO: Mapping National and Geographic Identity

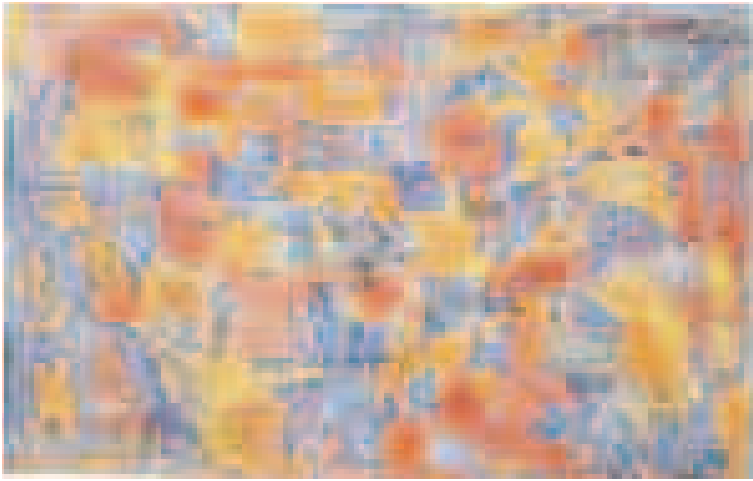


IMAGE TWO: Jasper Johns (American, born 1930). *Map*. 1961. Oil on canvas, 6' 6" x 10' 3 1/8" (198.2 x 314.7 cm). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull. © 2009 Jasper Johns/Licensed by VAGA, New York



IMAGE THREE: Alighiero e Boetti (Italian, 1940–1994). *Map of the World*. 1989. Embroidery on fabric, 46 1/4" x 7' 3 3/4" x 2" (117.5 x 227.7 x 5.1 cm). Scott Burton Fund. © 2009 Estate of Alighiero e Boetti



IMAGES FOUR (ABOVE) THROUGH NINE: Mona Hatoum (British of Palestinian origin, born in Beirut, Lebanon, 1952). *Routes II*. 2002. Colored ink and gouache on printed maps; five, six, and eight: gouache on printed map; seven and nine: colored ink on printed map, five: 9¼ x 8" (24.8 x 20.3 cm), six: 11 x 16" (27.9 x 40.6 cm), seven: 10¾ x 15" (27.3 x 38.1 cm), eight: 10 ¼ x 8" (27.3 x 20.3 cm), nine: 11 x 8½" (27.9 x 21.6 cm). The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection Gift. © 2009 Mona Hatoum



IMAGE FIVE



IMAGE SIX



IMAGE SEVEN



IMAGE EIGHT



IMAGE NINE

INTRODUCTION

Maps are **graphic** images that typically render a three-dimensional geographic or spatial area in two dimensions. According to historians and geographers, every human culture uses maps. The maps in this lesson range in **style** and address a variety of issues, including national identity and international relationships, **patterns** of migration, and the potential of artistic materials.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze the symbols used in geographic maps.
- Students will consider the impact of cultural, historical, and political contexts on mapping.
- Students will compare and contrast maps in diverse **mediums** made by artists from different geographic and cultural backgrounds.

INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION

- Ask your students what national identity is. How is national identity established? Who or what defines it? How might a country protect or preserve its identity?
- Does your family have a common identity? Does your town, city, or school have an identity? How would you describe the national identity of the United States? What is it based on?

Explain to your students that the borders and populations of countries are constantly in flux. Just as countries continuously reinforce or reshape their national and international images, so do artists, who struggle with their identities in an ever-changing world.

IMAGE-BASED DISCUSSION

- Show your students *Map*, by Jasper Johns (Image Two).
- Ask your students what they notice. How does this work differ from other maps of the United States they have seen? How are the contours of the states different in Johns's map?
- Johns used a **stencil**—an ordinary lettering tool—to indicate the names of states and oceans. Direct your students to the lower-left corner of the painting, where the Pacific Ocean is represented. Point out that the *P* in Pacific is missing. Ask your students to identify states that in name or shape are blurred, partial, or whole. Which states' names are missing?
- Ask your students what, if any, aspects of the work make it difficult to decipher. What effect does this have on their viewing of *Map*?

In *Map* Johns has preserved the general dimensions and shape of each state; however, as with the Pacific Ocean, he has taken great liberties interpreting the identities of territories. Direct your students' attention to where Johns drips his paint from one state into another, an imprecision that would defeat the purpose of most maps.

Inform your students that Johns is an American artist who has chosen subjects from everyday life—maps, flags, targets, numbers, and letters—because, he says, he prefers to work

with images “the mind already knows.”³ By depicting familiar subjects, he encourages viewers to look at them anew. In this case Johns has countered the expectation that a map is a faithful representation of geography and of state borders. His map suggests that borders within the United States are open and state identities are not fixed.

- Ask your students how they know they are crossing a border of a city, state, or country when they travel.
- Johns made *Map* in 1961. Ask your students if they know of any political or social events that occurred in the United States around that time. How might these events have influenced Johns?
- Tell your students about some of the events of 1961: John F. Kennedy became president of the United States, and the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War were both beginning. How might these events have affected how Americans looked at their country at that time? How might this have affected Johns's depiction of the United States?

Now show your students *Map of the World*, by Alighiero e Boetti (Image Three).

- Ask them to describe what they see. How is this map different from the world maps they are accustomed to seeing? Ask them if they can tell by looking at the image what materials the artist used. How did the artist represent each country?
- Now have your students compare and contrast this work with Johns's *Map*. Then ask them to consider how borders function differently between American states and between nations.

This is the last in a series of 150 maps Boetti made over a period of twenty years in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Peshawar, Pakistan. The Italian artist was interested in investigating how the boundaries between countries form and change over time; each map in the series is different from the others, visualizing national borders as they existed when the map was made. By fitting the colors and patterns of each country's flag within its borders, Boetti clearly visualizes the patterns of territorial ownership around the globe. His aim was to question global power imbalances and the validity of national identity.

- Ask your students to describe the patterns that emerge in the map. Where do motifs repeat? What is the significance of these recurrences?
- Ask your students to find the United Kingdom on the map. Where else do they see the flag of the United Kingdom?

Let your students know that the places covered by the British flag were its territories at the time Boetti made the map.

- Ask your students to identify Italy and Afghanistan in *Map of the World*.

Boetti traveled to Afghanistan for the first time in 1971 and ultimately made it his second home. He was attracted to the country's austerity and natural beauty and its traditions of Sufism and Buddhism. He commissioned Afghani women—famous for their traditional **embroidery**—to execute his map designs. Much of Boetti's work finds meaning in the collaboration and exchange of ideas with people from other cultures.

3. Jasper Johns quoted in “Saluting the Flags,” by David Sylvester, in *Jasper Johns Flags*, by Anthony d’Offay Gallery (London: Anthony d’Offay Gallery, 1996), 15.

Boetti acknowledged his cooperative effort with Afghani women in the text bordering the map—in Italian (top and bottom) and Farsi, a Persian language spoken in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the region (left and right). The Farsi poem extols the power of knowledge and a common humanity.

- Ask your students if they have ever traveled to a place they believe reflects their values and interests. What are the characteristics of that place? How do your students negotiate or integrate its culture with their own?

Inform your students that Alighiero e Boetti, which means “Alighiero and Boetti” in Italian, was originally named just Alighiero Boetti—he added the *e* to indicate his interest in dualities, or aspects of life that pair two contrasting characteristics, like east and west, order and disorder, the individual and society, and local and international relationships.

Now show your students *Routes II*, by Mona Hatoum (Image Four).

Inform your students that this work is composed of five color photocopies of maps taken from airline brochures depicting flight patterns and routes (Images Five through Nine). These maps show the United Kingdom and Ireland, Europe, the United States, and Spain—and Hatoum has drawn over them with ink and **gouache**.

- Ask your students to compare and contrast Hatoum’s work with Boetti’s *Map of the World*. How does Boetti use the map differently than Hatoum?

Hatoum drew colored lines on copies of maps published by airline companies, adding her own hand-drawn abstract patterns to the airlines’ existing web of routes. The airlines’ maps visualize the networks created by travel and chart the globe primarily according to movement rather than natural, national, or political boundaries.

- Ask your students to consider what impact Hatoum’s hand-drawn lines have on these maps.

Hatoum was born in Lebanon to Palestinian parents exiled from Haifa, Israel. Explain to your students that exile means self-imposed absence or forced removal from one’s home. In 1975, at the age of twenty-three, she moved to England to escape the war that was beginning in Lebanon. As an artist displaced by conflict, Hatoum has found inspiration in movement, travel, and the discovery of new cultures, people, and lands. “The nomadic existence suits me fine,” she says, “because I do not expect myself to identify completely with any one place.”⁴ Playing on words, she has said that she considers the paths she drew in *Routes II* to be “routes for the rootless.”⁵

- Ask your students to name some reasons people move around the world today.

In this work Hatoum has attempted to use **cartography** to diagram a kind of personal travel and movement that is often absent in conventional maps, such as the ones she utilized in this work. These maps depict only certain prescribed routes, and therefore cannot account for the travel paths of individuals like Hatoum, who consider no one place to be their home. Although they do not represent her own paths of travel, Hatoum’s hand-drawn marks assert her individuality within the preplanned and measured webs of commercial airline travel.

4. Mona Hatoum quoted in *Beyond East and West: Seven Transnational Artists*, by David O’Brien (Urbana-Champaign, Ill.: Krannert Art Museum, 2004), 44.

5. Mona Hatoum quoted in “Caught in Her Web,” by Hannah Duguid, *The Independent* (London), December 13, 2006, 2.

- Ask your students to compare and contrast the ways Hatoum and Johns address borders in their maps. How does each artist challenge the authority of borders?
- Ask your students to discuss the different mediums the artists in this lesson have used to make their maps. How does each medium help convey the work’s meaning?

ACTIVITIES

Mapping Your Day

Ask your students to make maps of their days using pencils and paper. Have them chart where they were before they came to school (point A), where they are now (point B), and the places they passed to get from point A to point B. When they are finished, ask them how they determined which elements to include and exclude in their maps. Have your students exchange maps. What are the similarities and differences?

Where in the World is . . . ?

If you have a world map in your classroom, provide students with thumbtacks or stickpins so that they can indicate where they or their ancestors are originally from. Be sure to note the cases in which students’ ancestors come from the same place in order to draw out any previously unknown shared histories among your students. Then ask them to mark their favorite places locally, nationally, or internationally.

The World Map: 1989 to Now

Have your students conduct research on the relationships between countries in Alighiero e Boetti’s *Map of the World* when it was made, in 1989, and today. Many countries and borders that exist today did not exist in 1989. Ask your students to identify at least ten flags on Boetti’s map. Then give them a current map and images of international flags and ask them to find differences between Boetti’s map of 1989 and today’s world map. Ask students to compare the relationship between two neighboring countries in 1989 and today. Have there been conflicts between those countries since then?

Divide the class into groups, and ask each one to focus its research on a different area of the map. For example, ask one group to look at Europe as depicted by Boetti. Then have the group research the establishment of the European Union in 1993 and how it has affected countries in Europe today.

Social Media/Social Mapping

Ask your students to create maps showing where some of their Facebook friends live. What does each student’s map look like? Do their friends live close by or far away?

Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell

As a follow-up research project, show your students Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell’s two screenprints *Air Routes of the World (Day and Night)* (2001) without telling them the title. (An image of the work is available in the Collection section of the Museum’s Web site. Visit http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=10055 or search the online collection for “Air Routes of the World.”) Ask them what they think is depicted in this work. What might the lines represent? Why might one image be black and the other white?

Tell your students the title of the work, and then ask them if they can identify specific cities on this map. Ask them to consider what this work might reveal about Langlands and Bell's view of human relationships. Does travel isolate us or connect us? Have your students examine the edges of each print. What happens to the lines? Langlands and Bell omit the borders and physical boundaries that are found on most maps, revealing that the world is a web of movement and interconnectivity. Ask your students if they think this is an appropriate way of mapping the world now. What about a century ago?