

Dan Mills Artist Statement

Dan Mills abstractly visualizes data about historic and contemporary events that impact our time. Using the conceptual space of maps and a painter's vocabulary, he explores different ways of understanding the complex and information these events hold. Mills combines painting, collage, drawing, and printmaking to make works that vary in size from the diminutive dimensions of a child's atlas page to paintings over twelve feet wide. In his work, he transforms the analytical language of cartography and data visualization into charged representations, invoking a more visceral and palpable response while furthering our understanding history and contemporary events.

Mills often begins with a question, then researches to learn about the topic, look for answers, and investigate ways to represent it visually. One series began with the deep sorrow felt when thinking about how much war and conflict there is in the world, followed by the realization that he had no idea how much there actually was. Mills began to research layer upon layer of information on this grim subject, with each discovery leading to more data. He took copious notes and began exploring ways to visualize this complex subject in notebooks and atlases, and eventually created large Current Wars and Conflicts paintings.

Mills started incorporating maps into his work in the early 1990s while thinking about the quincentennial of what is euphemistically referred to as "The First Encounter". Since then, he has focused on wars and their consequences, on borders, boundaries, and their effects on populations. For example, recent ongoing series investigate colonialism (Contest), imperialism (US Future States Atlas), land claims (Magallanica, a series on Antarctica), wars and displacement (Current Wars and Conflicts), colonialism and indigenous cultures (What's in a Name? and Amazon Region), and inequities of fulfilling the American dream (Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness).

Mills is married to artist Gail Skudera. They live in Maine. He directs the Bates College Museum of Art. (See Curatorial). His parents, Virginia Ward Mills and E. Andrew Mills were both artists in Upstate New York and Outer Cape Cod. For more, see Links.