Wars and Conflicts

Wars and Conflicts by Continent, Belligerents and Supporters III, 2015, ink on printed map on paper, 15 x 22 1/2 inches

Dan Mills
Over the years, I have become increasingly interested in the visualization of information. After extensive research on various topics, I develop ideas about how to make work that explores ways to visualize data and information on a chosen subject. As is the case with the Wars and Conflicts series, I often use maps as a space to investigate these ideas.
This visual essay includes notebook pages and a few works from War and Conflicts (2015-), the series that has been a primary focus this year. Some pages contain research notes on belligerents (a country's military, or a militant or other hostile armed group) and supporters of current wars. Others contain lists of countries, belligerents and supporters. There are also pages used to test inks, stamps, and paint colors, and some renderings of numbering systems used by ancient civilizations.

Sadly, there is an immense amount of data on our world's many current wars and conflicts. Some things that I learned while researching. As of 2014:

There were 47 wars and conflicts. These have resulted in deaths estimated at 6,920,450 - 7,910,815+ people so far.
The oldest current war/conflict began in 1947 (Kashmir Conflict).
Five wars/conflicts have begun since 2012 (Central African Republic Conflict, War in Donbass/Eastern Ukraine, Libya Civil War, Northern Mali Conflict, South Sudan Civil War).
It is not uncommon for allies in one war to be enemies in another concurrent war.
Wars and conflicts that were relatively inactive in 2014 (16 had 100 or fewer deaths) resulted in over 1,000,000 casualties since they began.
Ancient cultures had visually and conceptually fascinating ways to represent numbers.
Wars and Conflicts, pages from various Notebooks, 2015
Wars and Conflicts by Continent, Belligerents and Supporters II (above) and III (page one, both 2015), simply represent the idea of the title: one red dot = one belligerent group engaged in a war or conflict on a continent and one blue dot = one group of supporters. For each, the tremendous quantity of dots overflow the school geography book pages they are printed on and spill out onto the text or float into space.
Wars and Conflicts by Continent, with Ancient Symbols (2015) also represents belligerents and supporters. A variety of symbols are used: the digit “1” or a star represents one belligerent (red) or supporter (blue), and one “0” or “X” represents a country with no belligerent or supporter. These are printed above or below the continents, and a graphite line connects groups of symbols to their corresponding country. Total belligerents and supporters are tallied by continent or geographic area and painted using ancient numbering symbols from a culture from that region.

Wars and Conflicts by Continent, with Ancient Symbols, 2015, ink and graphite on printed map on paper, 22 1/2 x 30 inches
I recently created the mural Current Wars & Conflicts, Belligerents and Supporter Data Visualized as part of the exhibition Dan Mills: Interferences, Montserrat College Art Galleries, Beverly, MA, (August 24 - September 19, 2015). Below are notebook pages, studio, and in progress images.
Current Wars & Conflicts, Belligerents and Supporter Data Visualized, 2015, acrylic on digitally reworked map, 9’ x 12’. Below is the completed mural, a detail of painting on the Middle East and North Africa, and the key.