

# YOU ARE HERE

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# Translations



# Map Paintings

Dan Mills

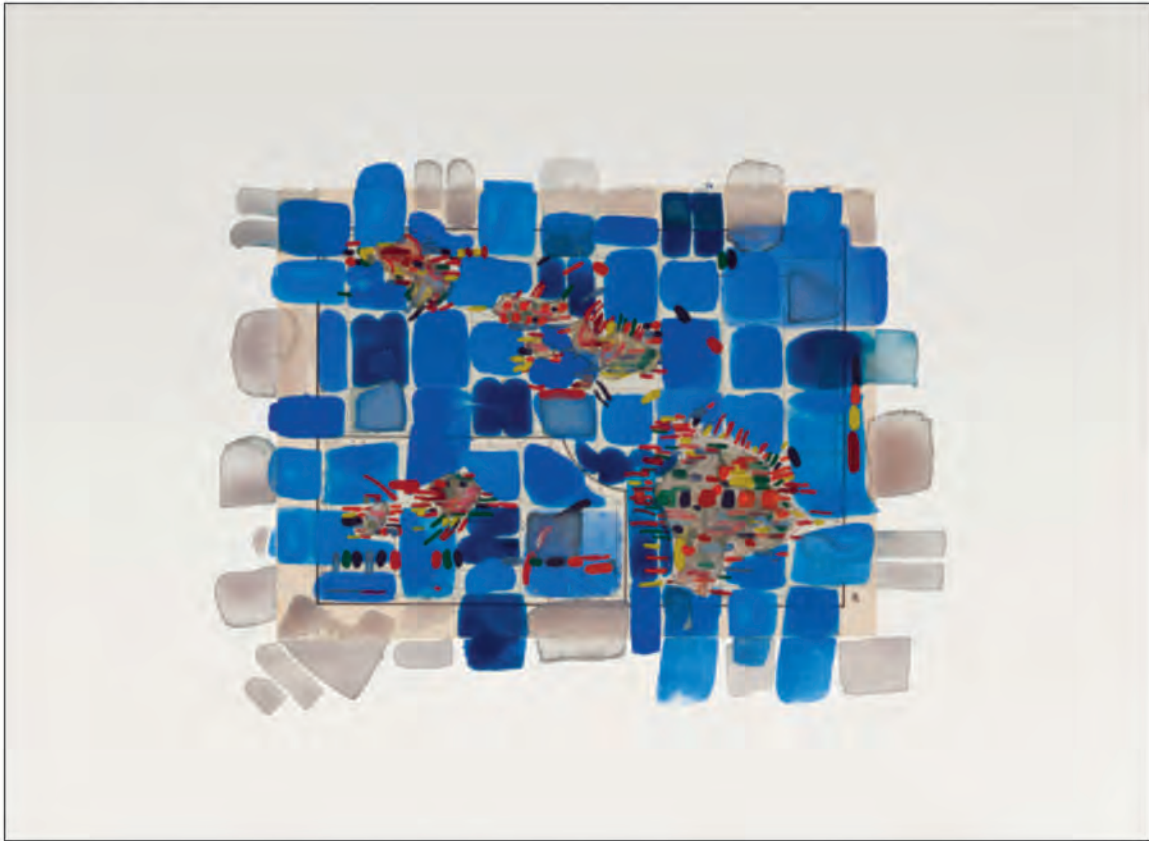
For years, I explored history, colonialism and imperialism in text-laden map works (see *US Future States Atlas*, by Dan Mills). More recently, my work has focused more on visual components. Rather than including descriptive written text about specific aspects of real or imagined history, as in the previous work, these works consider history as a series of superimpositions and erasures. In each, I establish rules and systems based on written information on the map underneath. The resulting works translate the text into aesthetically codified colors, patterns, marks, and shapes that have been determined by the content of the map, but are no longer visible.

## Fictio II



*Fictio II* is painted on top of two identical printed maps. Each side was painted at the same time and painted to be the same; however, the painting is not identical. The same color is used to paint out the name of a body of land or water, but the mark, painted gesturally by hand, cannot be identical.

## Outtake HI



For the unsure viewer, the title provides a hint for the subject of the map in *Outtake HI*. This work is mostly about the surrounding water, and the small lines that paint out the names and extend from the edge of the islands over the water. The resulting painting creates fetish-like objects out of the islands, which seems appropriate: isn't human history a story filled with objects of desire, of coveting others' land, location, and people?



## Riveroj, Lagoj, kaj Montoj

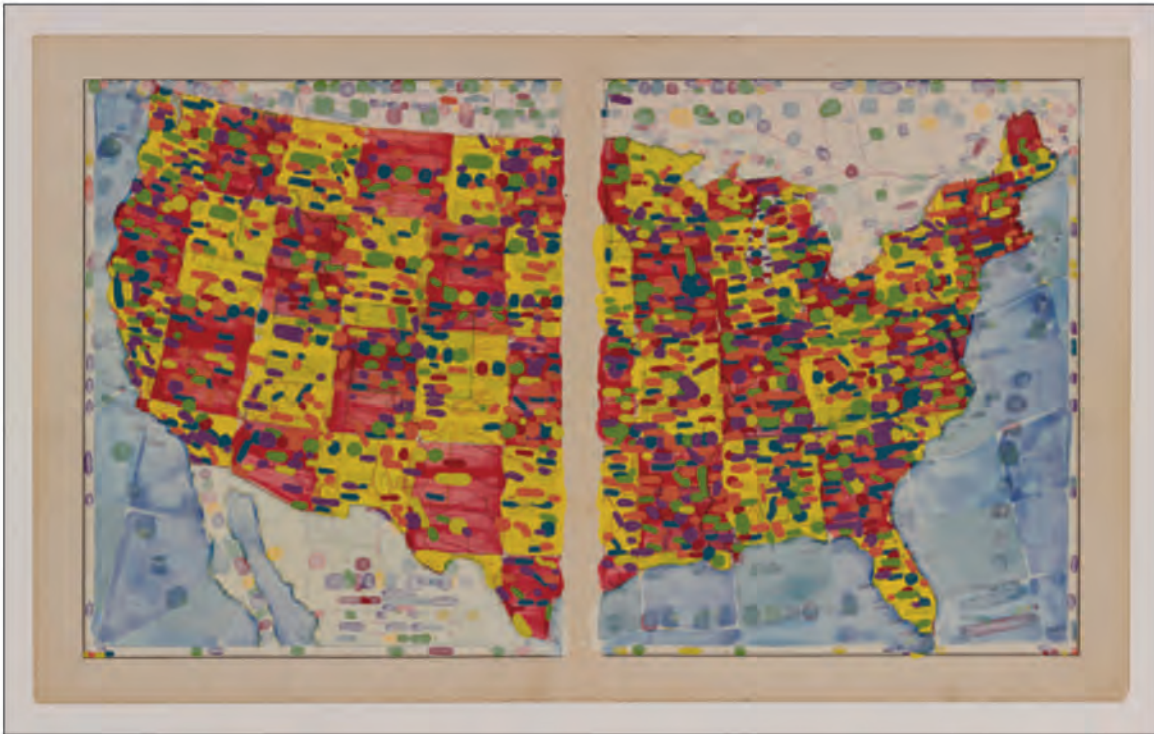


I often use the romantic but flawed language of Esperanto to name my work. It is romantic by goal—to create an international language so people from different cultures and who speak different languages can communicate. It is flawed because its inventors looked only to European languages during its creation, leaving out the languages spoken by the vast majority of the (non-European) world.

My painting has rendered the text of the map in *Riveroj, Lagoj, kaj Montoj* obsolete, and has transformed the map into visual information. Highly consistent and well-organized, the map now has a visual logic, and has no key to unlock any specific meaning.

To paint these works, I first establish certain rules or game-like strategies that determine the colors and related painting decisions. Often they are simple, words starting with certain letters are painted a particular color, for large words, each letter may be painted separately. Map areas may follow similar rules. This makes the painting an act of discovery: I do not know in advance what the work will look like when complete.

## Mapo Tabulludo



I often reference game-boards, such as those used in checkers or chess, in my work. The strategy of these games is to take away your opponents' land or people and winning is achieved by getting everything they have. Mapo Tabulludo features a red and yellow checkerboard that is a stand-in for individual states. The map, a two page spread from a geography textbook, includes a gutter in the center of the image, similar to the crease of a folding game board. It's easy to imagine a player on the right moving westward and conquering a player on the left. The names of places have been painted out, an allusion to the erasure and superimposition of history in the conceptual space of this work.



New York Portait I



*New York Portrait I* is a visual exploration of the city, painted over large maps of Manhattan and its vicinity and the underlying visual and text information about its streets, bridges, parks, subways, and ferry routes. The painting continues recent map painting strategies: establishing rules and systems that determine the colors and shapes so that the map information underneath is painted/painted out. The portraits depict a structural likeness of Manhattan, and the lively and sometimes jarring passages of thickly applied paint capture the energy of life the island and adjacent boroughs and lands. This painting includes several discrete map passages that depict various aspects of Manhattan and vicinity, accompanied by keys, which are painted out using the same strategies. While the text/language of both the maps and codes are no longer visible, they still work logically—the color/visual relationship between them is referential.