

Exhibit tracks the trend of mapping out truth and beauty

By Cate McQuaid

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Every art object is a map, coded with color and texture and form, left for the viewer to interpret. The Bernard Toale Gallery's Joseph Carroll came to art via environmental design and has worked a lot with maps. With the advent of new technologies like global positioning systems, handheld maps have been falling by the wayside, but Carroll has noticed a rising interest in the art world in the aesthetic of maps and in the process of mapping. He has put together a small but meaty group show, "Linear Geography," featuring work that springs from maps and map making.

The work falls into the two camps of truth and beauty — those attempting to chart something tangible in the world, and those using maps as a visual reference. Mark Lombardi's chicken-scratch connect-the-dots flow charts in ballpoint pen fall into the first category: They have little aesthetic value, but conceptually, they're rigorous and chilling, plotting out corporations, people, and events

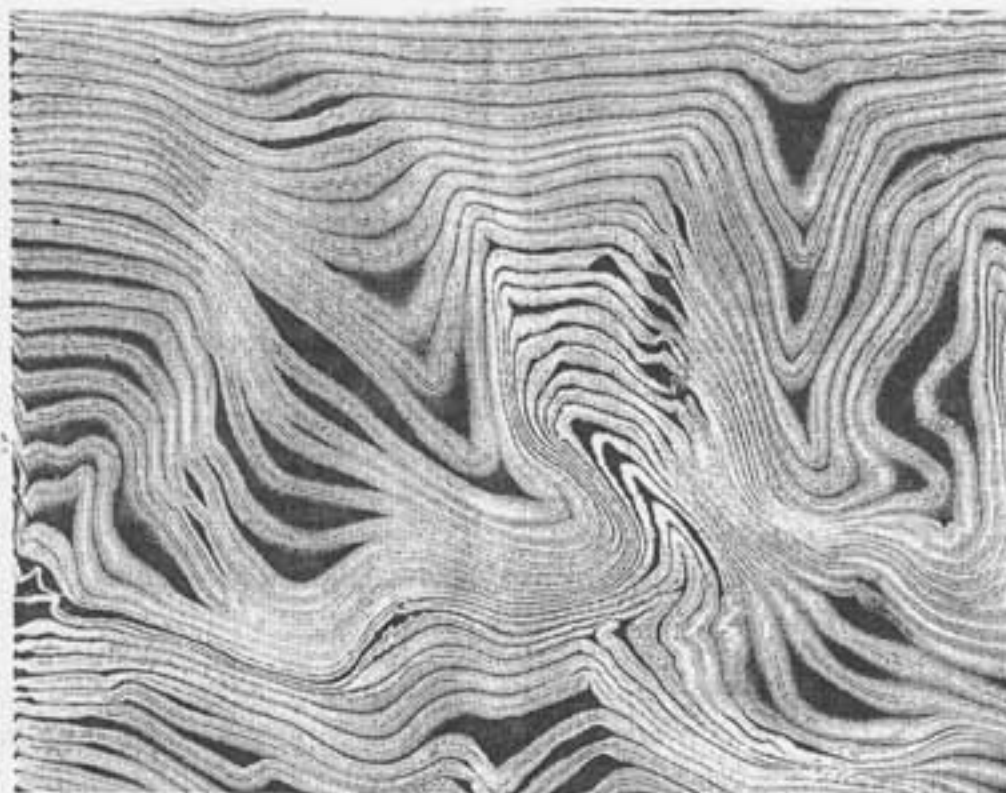
to illustrate seamy backroom dealings in the halls of power.

On the other side, Maureen McQuillan makes stunning objects with printer's ink and resin on paper. They throb and shimmer in black and white, with lines skirting each other as on a topographical map, but this is a topography of nothing but the artist's vision.

Likewise, Maya Lin's "Geography Lesson" prints only coincidentally resemble a map; the artist cracked tempered glass and used it as a printing plate, creating elegant bodies of color veined with rambling lines.

Some of the works are coded, interpretive documents that also happen to be beautiful. Theresa Chong traces the brushstrokes in Abstract Expressionist paintings, layers the delicate tracings, then makes a constellation on deep blue rice paper of pale tendrils, marked by squares of light where they intersect. Marsha Cottrell translates text into gestures, creating prints dense with tiny marks, recalling Chinese landscapes.

Julia Featheringill uses Mapquest to identify quirky place



Maureen McQuillan's untitled ink and resin on paper features lines that skirt one another as on a topographical map.

names, then draws the map between. She cuts out the slender route, complete with mile markers, exits, and rest stops, and attaches it to paper. "Hell to Heaven's Gate" takes a detour north to Purgatory. The result is both a spare and elegant line drawing and a comical conceptual piece.

If every piece of art is a map, the landscape ought to be the most straightforward, but Tanja Alexia Hollander's haunting photographic landscapes, also up at Bernard Toale, lead us into the mystery of ourselves more than they tell us about the world outside. They open out into great

spaces and invite contemplation.

Hollander's previous body of work, shooting through windows, suggested a veil between inside and outside; some of those photographs, like the lush translucent ribbons of curtain portrayed in "Sarah and Mike's Window, North Yarmouth, Maine," are on view here. But most of the images here are endless landscapes, minimalist views receding into a haze, framed in black so as to contain the eternity within.

Many of these photos have an unexpected anchor — a spot you might not see if you didn't peer in close, or catch it on the periphery. "Varkala, Kerala, India" shows an expanse of lazy, undulating blue sea, fuzzing out at the horizon into the white sky. Right in the center of the print there's a tiny gray dot; it might be a buoy, or even a distant vessel. That spot, so easily missed, becomes a finite touchstone for the infinity around it.

Linear Geography
Tanja Alexia Hollander: View

At: Bernard Toale Gallery,
450 Harrison Ave., through Feb. 12.
617-482-2477.