Francis Alÿs
(In collaboration with Cuauhtémoc Medina and Rafael Ortega)
Born in 1959 in Antwerp, Belgium. Lives in Mexico City

The Making of Lima, 2002
Single-channel video projection with color and sound, 15 min. 37 sec.
Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner Gallery, New York

On April 11th 2002, five hundred volunteers were asked to form a line at the foot of a sand dune in Ventanilla, just outside the city of Lima, Peru, for the creation of a video work by Alÿs, When Faith Moves Mountains. Armed with shovels, the volunteers pushed forward a certain quantity of sand, moving the dune from its original position by about four inches. The actual displacement of sand was slight, but the work resonates as a metaphor for the ability of people to accomplish the impossible. This video documents the creation of When Faith Moves Mountains.

AREA Chicago
Founded in 2006. Based in Chicago

Notes for a People’s Atlas, 2006
Ongoing Interactive distribution network comprised of local maps
Courtesy the artists

Notes for a People’s Atlas takes its impetus from the Chicago-based project People’s Atlas of Chicago: Sites of Relevance, itself born out of AREA, a biannual publication dedicated to researching and networking the art, education, and activist practices within the city of Chicago. In this work, as in the Chicago project, blank maps of the area around the presenting venue are circulated, and recipients are invited to contribute to a radical revision of the urban landscape by plotting their personal knowledge of places, histories, and ideas on the map. Examples might include current political struggles, social movements of the past, environmental racism, cultural spaces, riots, graffiti, corporate headquarters, labor history, underused buildings, vacant lots, and dumpsters. Such a project is as much about countering the supposed fixity of maps and challenging the power that map-making and urban planning demonstrate, often without consulting citizens, as it is about acknowledging the significance of a wide variety of people as experts in their own right—making maps and plans for the city they help produce every day.
The Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI) is an artist collaborative/research organization involved in exploring, examining, and understanding land and landscape issues. The Center employs a variety of methods to pursue its mission, such as engaging in research, classification, extrapolation, and exhibition. Their influence on the field of experimental geography is profound. Combining a meticulous research methodology on human interaction with the earth’s surface with an institutional awareness of the power of representation, they have developed an altogether unique niche of cultural production.

For the past fourteen years, CLUI has been developing a pioneering research strategy in the field of experimental geography. The organization takes Robert Smithson’s interest in the earth’s surface and applies it to the entirety of geologic and urban phenomena, producing multidisciplinary contributions to the debate over contemporary land use. On display are twelve inkjet prints of the promotional posters for their geographic exhibitions. Seeing them as an array of exhibitions (bear in mind each poster represents hundreds of hours of meticulous field work) allows the impressive scope of CLUI’s overall practice to come into focus.

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization formed in 1997 in New York City. Its mission is to make educational projects about places, particularly urban geography, and how these sites change. Their multidisciplinary practice combines elements of design, urban planning, art, and education. CUP’s stated mission is to make educational projects about places, particularly urban geography, and how these sites change. Their multidisciplinary practice combines elements of design, urban planning, art, and education.

For this project, eight City-As-School (CAS) students and four CUP staff members spent one semester (January to June 2002) exploring New York City’s garbage infrastructure; interviewing waste management professionals, activists, and entrepreneurs; visiting noteworthy sites of garbage activity; discussing New York City’s garbage problems; and documenting the process. The result of this semester’s work, Landfill vs Incinerator, illustrates a socio-political landscape wedged between “technical details.” On the other side of this work, Garbage City is a proposal for the reuse of the Fresh Kills landfill.
e-Xplo
Founded in 1998. Based in Berlin and New York

Untitled-Collection of Five Independent Audio Works, 2008
Sound work comprised of five audio recordings
Courtesy the artists

e-Xplo members: Rene Gabri, Heimo Lattner, and Erin McGonigle

A collaborative, e-Xplo creates maps, routes, sound pieces, and films, reflecting a multifaceted investigation into location, context, social identity, landscape, and public space. Their works often take the form of bus tours through cities with triggered audio tracks providing an alternative narrative to how individuals usually experience these spaces. Five of their soundtracks from North Adams, Massachusetts; Sharjah, United Arab Emirates; Budapest, Hungary, and two tracks from Berlin, Germany are made available for you to listen to.

Ilana Halperin
Born in 1973 in New York. Lives in Glasgow, Scotland

Boiling Milk (Solfataras), 2000
Chromogenic print
Courtesy the artist and doggerfisher, Edinburgh

Halperin has written: “My work is an exploration of the intersection between personal, historic and geologic time. Merging a topography of intimate activities with natural phenomena, my aim is to navigate narratives between private and public, scientific and cultural events...tectonic pleasures can make way for geologic intimacy as the bed, the bath, and the hot spring become synonymous. Through gently shifting plates, erosion and repeated eruptions, I hope to find a terrain of possibility.” In her project Boiling Milk (Solfataras), Halperin conflates domestic gestures with geologic phenomena by boiling milk in a natural hot spring. In mixing the geologic with the intimate, Halperin explores the dichotomy between large natural phenomena and the deeply personal. This gesture is inspired in part by Halperin’s discovery from a geology professor that tectonic plates move at the same rate as the growth of human fingernails. For Halperin, this profound connection of temporarility between phenomena of such vastly differing scales, provides a sense of poetic comfort and wonder.
Ilana Halperin
Born in 1973 in New York. Lives in Glasgow, Scotland

Iceberg City (from the project Towards Heilprin Land), 2007
Etching on handmade Fabriano paper
Courtesy the artist and doggerfisher, Edinburgh

Near ITTOQQORTOORMIIT (from the project Towards Heilprin Land), 2007
Etching on handmade Fabriano paper
Courtesy the artist and doggerfisher, Edinburgh

The Hanging Glacier (from the project Towards Heilprin Land), 2007
Etching on handmade Fabriano paper
Courtesy the artist and doggerfisher, Edinburgh

Towards Heilprin Land, 2007
Wooden bookshelf and complimentary booklets, bound in cardstock
Courtesy the artist and doggerfisher, Edinburgh

In Towards Heilprin Land, Ilana Halperin investigated the polar region of Greenland whose name, by chance, is similar to hers. Attracted by this seeming coincidence, Halperin interrogates the mysteries of Heilprin.

kanarinka (Catherine D’Ignazio)
Born in 1975 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Works in Boston

It Takes 154,000 Breaths to Evacuate Boston, 2007
Twenty-six glass jars with speakers, CD players, and painted wood table
Courtesy the artist

For It Takes 154,000 Breaths to Evacuate Boston, Catherine D’Ignazio has collected and counted the number of breaths that it takes to run all of the recently introduced disaster evacuation routes in Boston as a way of measuring collective fear across the post-9/11 geographies of insecurity. In the gallery, the recordings of over 154,000 individual breaths is broadcast in a series of twenty-six glass jars of varying sizes that correspond to the twenty-six runs completed by the artist. A speaker contained in each jar emits the sounds of D’Ignazio’s breaths as she ran the evacuation routes.
Julia Meltzer and David Thorne
Born in 1968 in Hollywood, California; 1960 in Boston, Massachusetts.
Live in Los Angeles

*take into the air my quiet breath*, 2007
Single-channel video with color and sound, looped, 17 min.
Courtesy the artists

Julia Meltzer and David Thorne produce video, photography, and installations focusing on the records and effects of political violence. Current projects deal with the use of documents—images, texts, objects, bodies, and physical structures—to project and claim visions of the future.

*take into the air my quiet breath* is a documentary from the point of view of the Syrian architect commissioned to design a massive new building complex to replace a fourteenth century Mamluk mosque in Martyr’s Square in the center of Damascus. From the commencement of the project in 1966 onwards the architect’s work and the construction of the building have been repeatedly rejected or halted, resulting in an empty, unused, half-erected structure currently known as the Basel al-Asad Center. The resulting architecture of failure provides a palimpsest from which to interpret the political history of Syria.

Lize Mogel
Born in New York. Lives in New York

*Mappa Mundi*, 2008
Digital print
Courtesy the artist

Lize Mogel is an interdisciplinary artist who addresses issues of public space and cultural geography. Her works often incorporate extensive research into questions of urbanism, resulting in elegant maps and public interventions. The world map is a ubiquitous form that describes basic global relationships and identity. Mogel sees it as a design problem—how can it convey a “new” sense of the world—one whose geography is shaped by the forces of globalization?

*Mappa Mundi* uses an “associative” geography to reorder the physical world based on connections between places, their histories, and contemporary global situations. Familiar borders are denied, and new connections between places are brought to the surface. This world-map mash-up is more descriptive of the processes of globalization, but more visually difficult and disorienting. The title of the piece refers to medieval world maps that sometimes combined real and imaginary geography, made at a time when the complete picture of the physical world was still being formed.

*Mappa Mundi* is part of an ongoing project that explores two kinds of popular representations of the world—the world map and the international spectacle of World’s Fairs.
Multiplicity
Formed in 1995. Transnational

The Road Map, 2003
Installation of two-channel video projection and four-channel video on monitors with color and sound; Two projections: 28 min. 14 sec., and 28 min. 48 sec., each looped; four monitors: 2 at 2 min. each, each looped; 2 with still images
Courtesy the artists

Multiplicity members: Stefano Boeri, Maddalena Bregani, Maki Gherzi, Matteo Ghidoni, Sandi Hilal, Anniina Koivu, Alessandro Petti, Salvatore Porcaro, Francesca Recchia, Eduardo Staskowsky

The Road Map addresses the territories of Israel and Palestine today, offering concrete data drawn from a straightforward experiment. The city of Jerusalem became the center for Multiplicity’s 2003 project The Road Map. Two people set out on journeys with similar routes between almost identical latitudes and only one feature to distinguish them: one journey was made in the company of a person holding an Israeli passport, while the other was made with a Palestinian citizen. The audiovisual documentation of those two journeys is the result of what was conceived as an experiment to analyze the various control mechanisms and border strategies faced by members of the two conflicting communities in that region. The difference in the duration of the two journeys (an hour versus five and a half hours, respectively) is just one example of the accommodating services encountered by the Israeli population as compared with the obstacles facing the Palestinian community, particularly in the context of travel. The Road Map offers a detailed analysis of the various inspection mechanisms at geographic control points and highlights the way in which the same disinterested geography can in fact render two completely different experiences for a traveler, depending upon his or her socioeconomic conditions, religious beliefs, and gender orientation.

Raqs Media Collective
Founded in 1991 in New Delhi. Based in New Delhi

Erosion by Whispers, 2007
Wood, chromogenic prints, chicken-wire mesh, and fluorescent lights
Courtesy the artists and Bose Pacia Gallery, New York

Raqs Media Collective Members: Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula, Shuddhabrata Sengupta

Raqs Media Collective is a group of media practitioners that works in new media and digital art practice, documentary filmmaking, photography, media theory and research, and writing, criticism, and curation. Erosion by Whispers challenges the impression that cities are indestructible centers of architecture. The piece explores the intangible presence of words, whispers, and rumors as they flit across our dense urban infrastructure, suggesting that fragility is as much a part of the experience of cities as the claim to endurance that is built into their design.
Trevor Paglen is an artist/geographer whose work explores a ghostlike landscape of presence and absence, appearance and disappearance. Responsible for coining the term “experimental geography”, Paglen has developed a practice that encompasses activism, journalism, geography and art. His ongoing interest is in the geography of spaces outside of sight, whether that refers to incarceration centers or secret military bases. In short, Paglen studies the geographies of places that do not exist. Black Site and The Salt Pit are from a series of works dealing with the CIA's covert activities and secret prisons (called “black sites” in internal CIA documents): Paglen carefully deduced the locations of secret CIA prisons by cross-referencing accounts from former “ghost” prisoners with flight records of CIA aircraft and public satellite photo databases. These are the only extant photographs of those sites—thus they are evidence, but it is unclear of what. If seeing is believing, Paglen seems to ask, what exactly do these photographs expose?

In his piece “James Thomas Harbison,” Paglen legally obtained a xeroxed copy of a CIA operative's passport. Although the man’s name on the passport is an alias, the silkscreened image from the forged passport nonetheless presents a poignant and public accusation of identity. All of these images address the documentation of geographies or people that ostensibly do not exist.
Ellen Rothenberg  
Born in 1949 in New York. Lives in Chicago

De-Stabilized Geography: Map 3, 2007-08  
Camouflage fabric, metal and plastic map tacks, metal and plastic map flags, zip ties, wire  
Courtesy the artist

This work continues the artist’s recent interest in camouflage and mapping. Using the seams from camouflage clothing, Rothenberg constructs wall drawings that mimic formal cartographic techniques. Using small orange pushpins to mark specific points on the fabric, Rothenberg suggests a militarist visual lexicon. Not a map of any particular place, her work evokes the formal qualities of maps to comment on their potentially militaristic use.

Spurse (with involvement from Chris Archer, Cole Caswell, and Jeffrey Jenkins)  
Founded in 1994. Transnational

Micromobilia: Machines for the Intensive Research of Interior Bio-Geographies, 2005-08  
Three units, each with plywood shelving and interior foam packing, five modular chairs, two digital microscopes, refrigerator, DVD player, research book selection, one DVD video, diagrams, laboratory clothing, office supplies, Petri dishes, cotton swabs, sampling and testing implements, glass and plastic jars, nine chalk boards with fixed diagrams  
Courtesy the artists

Spurse is a large collective (approximating fifty members) interested in interpreting conditions of urbanism through elaborate archive and experimental research methods. Their works often contain vast, aesthetically minded archives that challenge dichotomies between natural/unnatural, urban/rural, city/country, and housing/nature, among many others. As opposed to a finished product, the collective launches innovative processes.

The purpose of this work is to interrogate reality at the microscopic level. The project operates on the premise that constructed disciplines of geology, geography, biology and even culture criss-cross at the bacterial level and that these interactions can be demonstrated. For example, changes in the amount of dust relate to shifts in materials presented in a space (molds), which can lead to worker alienation. The mobile laboratory allows visitors to understand the material reality by which supposedly separate phenomena (particularly the cultural and material) collide and co-exist. Most importantly, the work demonstrates a technique of working that the collective describes as “geo-philosophy.”
Deborah Stratman
Born in 1967 in Washington D.C. Lives in Chicago

Park, 2000
Eight chromogenic prints, eight Polaroid prints, and parking booth with steel, wood, plexiglas and hardware
Courtesy the artist; partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council

Park is a portable parking booth first built in April 2000 that migrated to numerous sites around Chicago over a one-year period. This mobile architecture of authority (albeit a fairly humble form) transforms the urban landscape by implying an absent system of control. An empty lot suddenly becomes a potentially abandoned or mismanaged parking lot. In radically transforming the social coding of urban space through the simple introduction of a portable security booth, Stratman provides a lens into the mutability of the city.

Alex Villar
Born in Vitoria, Brazil in 1962. Lives in New York

Upward Mobility, 2002
Single-channel video with color, 7 min. 43 sec.
Courtesy the artist

In his work, Upward Mobility, Alex Villar performs numerous comedic interventions by attempting to literally climb the urban body. Grappling to the top of telephone booths, walls, window ledges, and buildings, Villar resists the assumed function of architecture and urban planning. The overall effect is Chaplinesque as Villar’s absurd actions turn the city into a gymnasium or climbing wall. Instead of following the obvious function of the city—a sidewalk is for commuting, a wall is for preventing access—Villar’s antics point to the possibility of re-interpreting the city entirely.
Daniel Tucker (Project organizer)
Born in 1983 in Louisville, Kentucky. Lives in Chicago

The We Are Here Map Archive, 1997-08
Twenty-seven maps in a freestanding poster display
Courtesy the artists

In recent years, a large number of artists, designers, and activists have turned to the map as a method for making visible the complex phenomena of everyday life. If the point of a map is to assist in getting to a location, then mapping such confounding political realities as the military, global capital, migration, and incarceration (for example) may assist in untangling some of their negative effects. This, at least, is the hope and this collection provides a sampling of the myriad of approaches popular today.

The maps, while both fun and playful, are tools as well. They are meant to be used not simply enjoyed. Thus each map makes available insightful research combined with potential for education and possibly, activist strategy. The maps have been organized according to three categories that encompass the wide range of cartographic experiments operating today. It will introduce audiences to an international spectrum of mapmakers and provide an orientation for the content that will appeal to new viewers as well as seasoned map lovers.

2. Bill Rankin, The United States?, 2003–07
5. Ashley Hunt, What is the PIC, 2003
6. Ashley Hunt, What is the context for the PIC, 2003
8. subRosa, Cultures of Technology at Bowling Green State University, Ohio, 2002
10. Indypendent, New York City, Threat to Peace, 2003
12. Lize Mogel and Dario Azzellini, The Privatization of War: Colombia as Laboratory and Iraq as Large-Scale Application, 2007/2008
15. Center for Urban Pedagogy (with Rosten Woo, Longshore Workers Coalition, Labor Notes, Bill Rankin, thumb projects, Stephanie Whitehouse, William Hood), The Cargo Chain (from The Making Policy Public Series), 2008
16. Temporary Travel Office, Contaminating the Preserve, 2008
17. Hackitectura (Pablo de Soto, Jose Perez de Lama osfa, Marta Paz sweena), Indymedia Estrecho and collaborators, Tactical Cartography of the Straits, 2004
18. Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri, Fear is Somehow Our For Whom? For What? and Proximity to Everything Far Away, 2006
21. Los Angeles Urban Rangers, LA County Fair, 2006
23. Amy Franceschini, Silicon Valley Superfund Sites, 2006
25. Adriane Colburn, Whose On Top (race to the pole, part two), 2008
27. Grupo de Arte Callejero, Aquí Viven Genocidas, 2001
Beijing-based artist Yin Xiuzhen’s *Portable Cities* series are models of cities inside suitcases, made using old clothes discarded by that city’s residents. In her practice, Xiuzhen explores issues of globalization and homogenization, but also memory and transience. The suitcase as a metaphor suggests portability and global movement but equally, as an object, performs the function of a carrying case for garments and belongings. These dual references inform Xiuzhen’s work in general and particularly in this work. Her sewn cityscapes vacillate between the ever transforming, global city, and the effects (in manufacturing, and personal lives) that these phenomena have on a city’s residents.