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The Collages of Anna Fine Foer: Mapping the Political, Ecological, Mystical

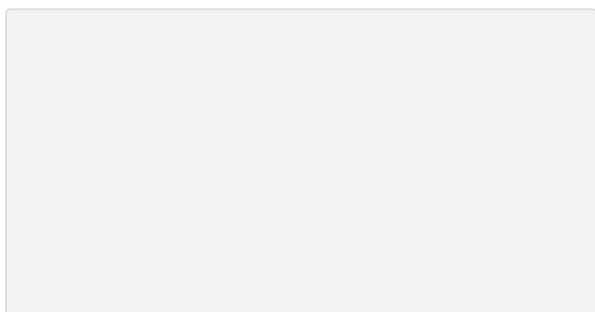
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The themes explored in visual artist Anna Fine Foer's work are diverse and ambitious, and span the spectrum from religion and politics, to ecology and social issues. But while the conversation in each piece varies, they all share a common visual language in that they're carefully constructed, layer upon layer, with maps.



Title: Machtesh, Shetach, Hill, Crater (Topographic demarcations on maps use concentric circles to show geological elevations or depressions; a crater and a hill may look the same. The hill and the crater are placed in alignment with the topographic depiction of the landscape.)

The artist first discovered the technique in an abstract painting class, where instead of paint, she decided on maps as her medium. Her choice of materials was purposeful on a number of levels, as a means to multiple ends. Practically speaking, the visual characteristics lent themselves for use in a variety of subject matters: the color and pattern could represent land, architecture, sky, water. The texture could create the effect of marble on a building. But conceptually, it opened many doors for the artist as well.



As Fine Foer understands it, "A map is an abstraction that we accept as standing for a place." In speaking with *GLIMPSE*, she recalled a plane trip to Los Angeles during which she compared an airline-provided map with the terrain below, and found the difference between the two striking. It was a poignant moment in her exploration of maps as an abstraction of place, which could then be manipulated further to construct collaged abstractions of landscape.

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Title: New York Without Us (The book "The World Without Us" was the inspiration for this collage. Layers of the city and the geological strata that are underneath it are in the formation of a well. 2009 \$1,000 20"h, 16" w, framed collage)

As the artist's map abstractions date back to 1979, she's witnessed a technological evolution that fundamentally shifts the way people understand and relate to cartography. And as is the case for many artists, it's also offered new methods by which she's able to physically construct her work — methods she embraces, but only to a degree. Reflecting on her workflow, she explains, "It's important to me that it's still very constructed [by hand], that the craftsmanship is still there. I can appropriate and manipulate [the maps] in Photoshop, but that's as far as I want to go." This desire for tangibility directly relates to the artist's stance on cartography in the face of changing technologies in the field; she doesn't use a GIS device for travelling, and worries about the fate of the physical map. But on the other hand, the artist admits that technology has undoubtedly made it easier to find materials, "beautiful, historic maps," by searching for them online.

When it comes to the raw materials, whether their origins are an historic atlas or the web, the artist is in no short supply, and we at *GLIMPSE* intend to sit back and watch the collection grow.

Excerpt of Anna Fine Foer's Artist Statement:

My artwork is map collage that offers the viewer a combination of imaginary landscapes with mystical, scientific and ecological themes. The visual description of a three-dimensional world on a flat plane is conjoined with the depiction of the metaphysical.

Maps that I incorporate into collages may be part of the regional, geographic, geological or religious narratives; boundaries may have been altered in hopes of furthering certain ends. Usually there is more than one story a map can convey.

My work also has more than one story to tell. I may be trying to both describe the curve of the

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Title: Steam Punk Earthquake in Baltimore (20.25" w, 29" h, collage 2011 \$1,800)

earth on a flat piece of paper and using maps to blur the boundaries between the natural and the manufactured/technological world, representing simultaneously land, sky, water and architecture.

Be sure to chart your course over to Anna Fine Foer's website, [here](#). And while on your way, why not check out GLIMPSE's latest issue

on [Cartography](#), where you'll find more musings on, and celebrations of, maps.

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Written by Glimpse Journal
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