

essay

ALL IN THE MIND

The following is a direct transcription of an essay delivered by Mr. Roger Rosenblatt of Vanity Fair Magazine. The essay entitled "All In The Mind (recent exhibit of maps and thoughts about different types of maps)" aired on the Mac Neil/Lehrer Newshour on Thursday, March 25, 1993. We would like to thank the Mac Neil/Lehrer Newshour for granting us permission to share this essay with our readers.

Somewhere the map you need exists or can be made. That innocent sounding promise is tucked in the flier of an exhibit on the power of maps at the Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design in New York. In the high, rich rooms of the old mansion hang maps of the North Pole and of the Alps, road maps of North Carolina and of the ancient Roman empire, a map of the structure of the Sphinx, a map showing the locations of American Indian tribes, children's and sailors' maps, the maps of kings to certify their conquests, a map of the entire world, a map of lava flows on Mars. The point is made by the exhibition that maps are manipulable and relative documents, instruments of propaganda, persuasion and perspective, the map of Australia as a chastening example to Europeans and Americans shows Australia right side up, and the rest of the world down under. To move through this exhibition is to move through all the intelligences of human beings as they have tried to place themselves to orient themselves in history. People are trying to do that again today on a global scale so drastically has the world's map changed of late. Three times already in our century have the

world's Atlases revised their pictures. Once after the First World War to account for the ruins of the Austrian, German, Russian and Ottoman Empire, once again after the Second World War with the reconfigurations of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, now, once again, due to the reunification of Germany, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. There is a new Hammond Atlas of the world, a new National Geographic Atlas of the world, and a revised New York Times Atlas of the world. Among these moderns, a beautiful ancient also showed up, the Atlas of Atlases, a book displaying mapmaking as one of the fine arts. Somewhere the map you need exists or can be made. It's a lovely consoling thought when you recall all the times you felt lost in the world, your little world, and how grateful you would have been for directions up or out, how grateful you'd be now if someone were to hand you a map of your life as it is about to unfold like a map, showing in clear colors and contours all the icebergs, all the shoals in your past, all the dragons, all the treasures. Yet, the exhibition proves that no map is trustworthy. If it were true an accurate at one time, it was only for a moment until history or science demanded a correction. In a way, the truest maps are the ones that flaunt their falsity. At the ironic extreme is Saul Steinberg's famous map showing the perspective of West side Manhattanites whose vision of the universe extends as far West as New Jersey. At the spiritual extreme, there is the map of the Possum Beings of the Australian Aborigines who believe that the location of God and dreams is the only map that counts. Here, look at the exhibit's so-called picture of the world. It is a trick, a sham, a painting, not a map. One cannot photograph the whole of a sphere. Then see what this world leaves

out, clouds, depth, motion, time, political and national division. It leaves out you and me. The truest map, in fact, seems to be the one that announces, "You do not know where you are going and you will never know, but I exist to dignify the attempt." The deep appeal of maps, after all, is not the territories they show but our relation to them, a verification of being. You are here, as they say on museum tours, you are in the world, ancient and modern. You live and you are your own ocean and your own desert and one side of you is visible and one side is not, and one side of you is dark and one is light. The exhibitors say, "Somewhere the map you need exists or can be made." I think they had the mind in mind. I'm Roger Rosenblatt.

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recent publications

SOFTWARE

New Vertical Datum conversion (VERTCON) Software

The National Geodetic Survey Division (NGSD) announced the availability of a new vertical datum transformation software program. Program VERTCON computes the modeled difference in orthometric height between the North American Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD 88) and the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD 29) for a given location specified by latitude and longitude. This conversion is sufficient for many mapping purposes. The VERTCON software and database operate on standard disk-operating-systems (DOS) controlled computers with a math coprocessor. The VERTCON software and two files of modeling