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IP Thesis Paper

April 2008

Summer 1997

Family trip to Israel; Me (9 years of age):

>*"Can I please have a map of Israel when we get home?"*

When I returned from Israel I was captivated with the idea of mapping out every place I went. This was the second family trip to Israel and after going twice I had seen much of the country. My father bought me a map of Israel and we had it laminated so that it would be perfectly preserved. I then labeled with a permanent marker every place I traveled, how I traveled there, and how long I stayed using different symbols. If I put my hand through a state border fence into another country, like Lebanon and Jordan, I would use a tiny hand symbol. The map of my experience hung in my room for years.

September 2007

Because of my long time love for maps, I started researching maps as part of my art thesis. I came across many different artists, websites, and articles all on the topic of maps. A couple artists I was particularly interested in were Nina Katchadorian and Jorge Macchi. I immediately related to Katchadorian's work because of her dissecting techniques. She would take apart a map, put little clusters of roads intersecting into glass, as if you were looking at it through a microscope, and display them on a wall (Katchadourian). Similarly Macchi would cut away all the roads in Amsterdam leaving only the canals. It started to make me think about maps relating to the body (Macchi). In New York City there's a saying that the subway lines are the arteries and veins of the city. The subway is the cities lifeline—it is what makes it strong, accessible, and unique. That is when I expanded my thesis topic to include the vital systems of the body. A question that came up in my mind was—if people compare the NYC subway to arteries and veins in a human body then, could the rest of the transportation in America be compared to the body as well? Is it possible to connect highways and plane routes to the entire nervous and circulatory systems?

Fall 1999

Road trip; Dad, my sister Erica (14 years of age), and Me (11 years of age):

> *"Erica, why don't you sit in the front seat and navigate."*
>
> *"Hey Dad! I'm good at reading maps! Can I do it?"*
>
> *"It's okay Dan. Let's let Erica take care of directions. She's older."*

October 2007

Maps and the body are more intertwined than someone might immediately think. By connecting the two systems it would give the viewer a stronger sense of the commonalities between the two. Thread is the main material for each piece in the series. Thread is an incredibly important factor because it resembles veins and arteries and different roads and paths on a map. The use of thread creates lines and movement, like the path our blood takes in our body or the way a train turns into a station. Using thread makes the piece feel organic, while at the same time the thread is portraying highways and subways. With the use of thread and a sewing machine, it allows the piece to have an extreme amount of detail and precision that is necessary. Another material is a plastic-like substance that dissolves in water known as sulvy. When a grid is sewn into the material and then placed in water the plastic dissolves and leaves behind the thread. Grids are extremely important for their function on a map and the sulvy. The reason for this is because it helps the viewer efficiently locate where they are going on a map and it holds together the design on the sulvy. Grids are also the basic structure for many cities including Manhattan.

My inspiration for the first project in the series was the New York City subway and with its metaphor as being the arteries and veins of the city. Dissecting the subway and heart was the first step of the process. The word dissect means, "to examine minutely, part by part" (Random House Dictionary) and that is exactly what I did. After dissecting the subway system and the circulatory system of the heart, I was left with the four main subway lines in Manhattan (2, 4, E, and L) and the four main arteries and veins of the heart which I layered on top of each other, suspended in air (Mindlin). Suspending the pieces made it easy for the viewer to walk around and look through them like a tunnel book. Even if the viewer was not exactly sure what they were looking at, they could sense a somatic theme.

Since the main material in the project is thread I started to research different artists that used mostly thread in their work. One artist in particular is Ghada Amer. Amer uses thread to portray

pornographic images onto canvas. Although her images are extremely explicit, her use of thread is impeccable. Her details and style placed into each canvas is one to admire. Thread is an important material because of its ability to allude to something delicate yet is provocative and it's precise with detailing the images (Ghada Amer). After viewing her work it became apparent that thread would be an efficient way to connect different systems.

Summer 2006

Trip around Europe; Erica (23 years of age) and Me (20 years of age):

     "Dan, take the map. Where are we going?"

     "Okay, let's see. If we're here right now then we have to make a right at the next street and then another left. Once we get there we should be able to see the Metro sign."

     "But how do you know which direction to walk?"

     "Because if we're facing this way and that park is to the left, then we have to go away from it."

     "I didn't know you were so good at reading maps."

     It was a common misconception in my family that I was never any good at reading maps. Truthfully, I had never had a real reason to use a map before the summer of 2006 in Europe. Before then I had lived in the same town I was born in; when I traveled it was with my family so my Dad and Mom would most likely take care of things; and in car rides, well as you can see above my sister would be the navigator because "she's older." Europe was a great place to fully develop my map skills. Each new city we would travel in, we needed to obtain a map, figure out where we wanted to go, and then study it carefully. I began to really love maps. I love the aesthetics of the different maps, the way each cities map was unique from the other, the idea of mapping something out and being able to find the place you want to go, and I love when I would follow a map and get to where I was going flawlessly. When I left Europe and came home to my familiar environments, I missed the use of maps from my everyday life. It wasn't until seven months later when I would begin to use maps once again.

November 2007

     The next series in the project is slightly larger, more detailed, and connects different systems to a greater extent. The subway systems in the cities of London, Paris, and Sydney are sewn out in thread overlapping with three different systems in the body — the lymph node system of the breast,

arteries and veins of the heart, and bronchi of the lungs. They are each roughly 10x10 grid squares. Although the work looks like abstract lines, it has a similar effect to the NYC subway lines and arteries and veins of the heart. There is a strong feeling of movement because of the different colored lines overlapping in space.

The piece mentioned in October needed more connections between the heart and subway. Looking straight at it the viewer can see lines and squares connecting but nothing from the side. After this realization, I knotted multiple pieces of string from the first to the last piece. By doing this, the viewer could look from all sides and really see a connection between the subway lines and arteries and veins. Gego and Ernesto Neto are two artists that strongly helped in developing this new idea of knotting the pieces together. Gego uses wire to create 3-D geometric shapes while playing around with the use of the shadows her work creates (Gego). In some of her work, she uses an entire room creating intense shadows and a new sense of space. Both of our work uses lines to create a space. Ernesto Neto generates large-scale installations using a variety of materials. He loves to get his viewers involved with his art, like walking around his pieces or even stepping inside them and sitting down. With the pieces I created my vision for the viewer was to get up close to it and walk around its three sides to see the details in the thread, similar to Neto but on a smaller scale (Ernesto Neto).

January 2007

Semester in NYC; my friend Hanna and Me (21 years of age):

"Where is the 2 train? I thought it was right here. Oh no did I mix it up with the 4?"

Hanna pulls out her larger-than-life subway map that the stations give for free, as I had forgotten my pocket size map that day. She sees me cringe when she pulls it out of her bag.

"Oh don't be embarrassed, I love using this map. It's so big it's funny and it makes us look like tourists when we're not!"

I moved to New York City in January of 2007 and I certainly needed a subway map as soon as I got there. It is crucial when you are first starting out in the city to have some sort of subway map. My map was small, 3x7 inches with size 5 fonts, but it did the job and did it well. I used that map until the creases in the folds began to tear and some stations were barely legible. The NYC subway map is different than most maps because the whole city is planned out. Instead of having just the subway lines it also has streets, buildings, and parks all labeled and accurately placed on the map. The London Underground map,

designed by Henry Beck, is completely opposite. It only shows the subway lines at ninety-degree angles neglecting all information unrelated to the lines (Smart, 60). The NYC map was an extremely helpful tool in becoming familiar with the city.

January through March 2008

Two seemingly unrelated systems are more intertwined than one may think. The main theme of my final project compares the transit in America with the transit systems of the body. It is a large-scale installation of a sewn map of America with a similar adjacent piece of an entire body. Each piece contains the main transportation systems in America. This includes, the National Highway System, Amtrak train services, and the major airline routes around the country. The body contains arteries, veins and nerves. America has certain states mapped out of thread projecting ahead and slightly larger than the states portrayed on the large map. The more the parts pulled out, the more detailed they became. Similarly the body piece has certain organs and body parts coming forward. The last layer to the map, are the cities mapped out in thread layered ahead of the states showing their individual transit systems. When looking at it all together the viewer will see that certain states have more highways, more trains, more ways of transportation. In the cities there will be a noticeable difference between the transportation showing which cities are in the decline and which are rising. The body has certain sections protruding and showing even more details. Some parts of the body, like a declining city, will have a disease to represent the body's decline.

By comparing the two systems I am making a reference that the country is a large body with essential organs just like our own. The country and body both have transportation and movement. By portraying America and the body in this way it shows a strong connection between two different functioning systems.

July 2007

Summer in NYC; Me (21 years of age):

I visited the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and discovered my theme for my IP project. I saw Massimo Vignelli's New York City subway map designed in 1972. It was completely different than any other subway map of New York and I loved it. Later I found out that the overall design concept was based off of the London Underground and it failed to function in NYC (Helvetica). People hated it, they couldn't figure out where to go, and the map was not accurate when it came to locations. The design of the

subway map used today has been the same design for roughly the past 30 years and the only thing people have been complaining about now is the interior of the subway itself and not the map (Mindlin).

April 2008

Once the final piece was strung up to the ceiling and down to the floor, I stood back to take a look at it for the first time. My original ideas of layering, mapping, and dissecting came rushing into my mind. This piece in the series was intense with crossing lines, layering system upon system, and proving that the ways in which America runs is similar to our own body. Thread was no longer looked at as thread but as roads and veins describing different yet connected paths. The piece illustrated systems overlapping and intertwining with other systems, creating a unique web of imagery for the viewer's eyes.

May 2008

Road trip home from Michigan; my boyfriend Adam and Me (22 years of age):

"Turn right onto I-95 south," said the GPS voice in a British accent…

…to be continued.

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