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MAPPING

2064

2064

LECTIVE

IG KIT #22

Everybody ☐ Map Now: Participatory
Map-Making on Bumpkin Island |
Uta Hinrichs & Zannah Marsh

2064

2064-

On a sunny morning in late July of 2011, we found ourselves standing on a dock in Hingham, Massachusetts, surrounded by piles of camping gear, provisions, and a boatload of artists and their various art-making materials. Along with two dozen other artists, we'd been invited to create public art installations on Bumpkin Island, a small island in Boston Harbor. Our own gear included more than a dozen handmade toolkits designed to encourage exploration and mapping of unknown landscapes. Over the next five days, we worked to create the first ever participatory, user-generated, psychogeographic map archive of Bumpkin Island.

We were participating in the 6th Annual Bumpkin Island Art Encampment, during which Bumpkin Island, otherwise uninhabited, is transformed into an outdoor studio and exhibition space. Artists camp on the island for five days and create works in response to the wild landscape - rocky beaches, grassy meadows, and tangled thickets and forests of sumac, vine, and poison ivy that overrun centuries-old, ruined stone structures. Working as the Traubensaft! Collective, we mapped this landscape and invited visitors to the island - members of the public - to do the same. We provided map-making kits for visitors to use as they explored the island. All maps were collected and displayed on site in an installation we call the Bumpkin Island Map Archive which grew rapidly over the









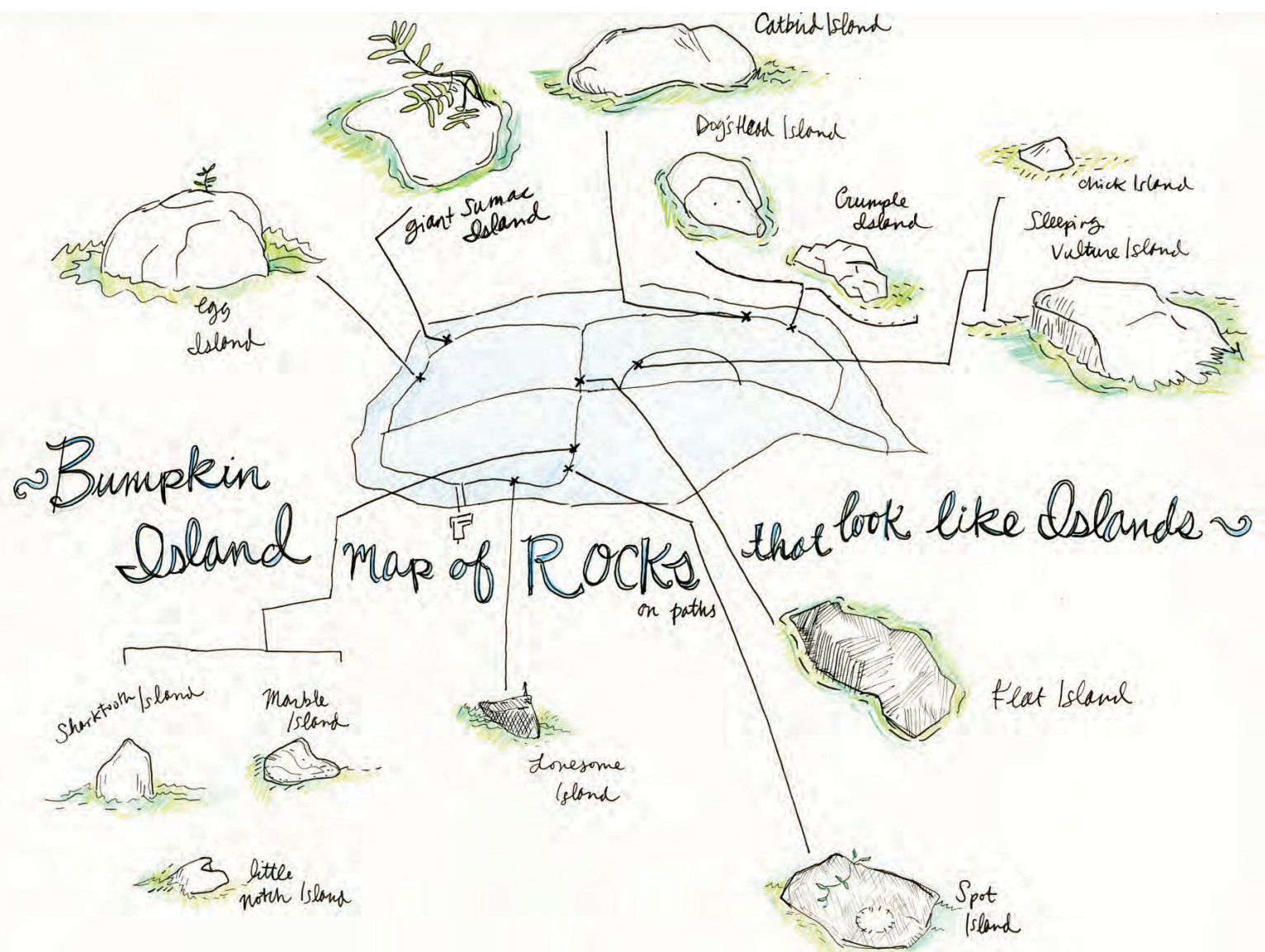
hiding place →
hi hi →
move it →

← voice



Photography: Mara Brod | All other photographs: the authors

IMAGINING
Bumpkin Island
BEWARE



five-day encampment.

Mapmaking practices

The Bumpkin Island Map Archive sought to co-opt and transform the language and conventions of cartography. Maps, products of the practice of cartography, are typically a means of representing geographic spaces in an abstract, concise, and objective manner. Maps signify known territory: spaces that have been explored, marked down on paper (or in pixels), and labeled. This process of mapping and naming is often closely linked with possession, drawing borders and taking ownership of a landscape. Cartography is traditionally practiced by experts who wield expensive, sensitive measuring tools with authority, to depict the “truth” about geographic spaces as accurately and objectively as possible. Everyday people may utilize “official” maps to navigate but they are usually not involved in the process of creating maps, nor can they influence how maps are created and what is being mapped.

The Bumpkin Island Map Archive invited anyone to try map-making, and encouraged an experiential, highly subjective approach to cartography. The set of thought processes and creative practices required for map-making has close parallels to art-making. Map-making demands an active sharpening of the senses, an heightened awareness, an intentional presence in both the immediate physical/emotional present and in the realm of

abstract, symbolic thinking. The mapmaker must make deliberate decisions as to what to represent on the map and how to show it. In this way she creates her own individual, powerful, unique version of the world.

Our approach draws heavily on the notion of psychogeography, defined by the Situationist thinker Guy DeBord as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographic environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.”[2] The Situationist practiced *derive*, a particular way of exploring urban space by drifting through it, propelled only by their awareness of the “ambiance” of the cityscape, as it attracted or repulsed them. DeBord produced a few maps that marked out these emotional territories, the most famous being *Guide Psychogéographique de Paris: Discours sur les passions de l’amour* [5]. More recently Denis Wood, a cartographer working in North Carolina, has created a “narrative atlas” of the small community of Boylan Heights, obsessively mapping unexpected, often poetic aspects of the landscape, from pools of light cast by streetlights to the path of a paper route through space and time to the relative locations of absentee landlords [6].

There is also a history of cartographers collaborating with the public on grassroots map-

ping projects. We were inspired by the radical cartographer Bill Bunge, who worked with local communities to create thematic, highly political, humanistic maps of Detroit in the late 1960s [1]. Christian Nolde, an artist and technologist from the UK, has facilitated several community-base mapping projects [3,4]. In creating Emotion Maps of San Francisco, CA and Greenwich, England, Nolde employs bio-sensors to record participants' autonomic physical responses to a landscape, and correlates and displays this data along with participants' narrative accounts of the terrain. Finally, our work is influenced by the fields of relational aesthetics and social practice, in which the interaction or experience of the audience (who is necessarily also an active participant) takes primacy over the art object, or the private vision of the artist.

The Bumpkin Island Map Archive

The goal of the Bumpkin Island Map Archive was to generate and gather a collection of maps that characterized and contained myriad aspects of the island: plants, animals, rocks, paths, temporary inhabitants, and natural changeable elements such as wind and water... but also abstract or immaterial traces, such as the passage of time or the experiences, emotions, and memories of mapmakers.

All maps were displayed in our open-air Archive for visitors to browse and examine. Just as our

LEAVES ON BUMPIN ISLANDS
MAIN ROAD



SANDSPIT

CENSURED MAP OF R



APPROVED FOR PUBLIC
CONSUMPTION, 7/13/2011.

WE HAD A
C [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

MAP OF OUR
AFTERNOON
(with a little help from
some of our staff)

Swim

ISLA
de
GEOLOS



SHULA KHA MA HI KEEHY IYALLI

SOUTH SHORE PUNK



YSA de Buenos Aires

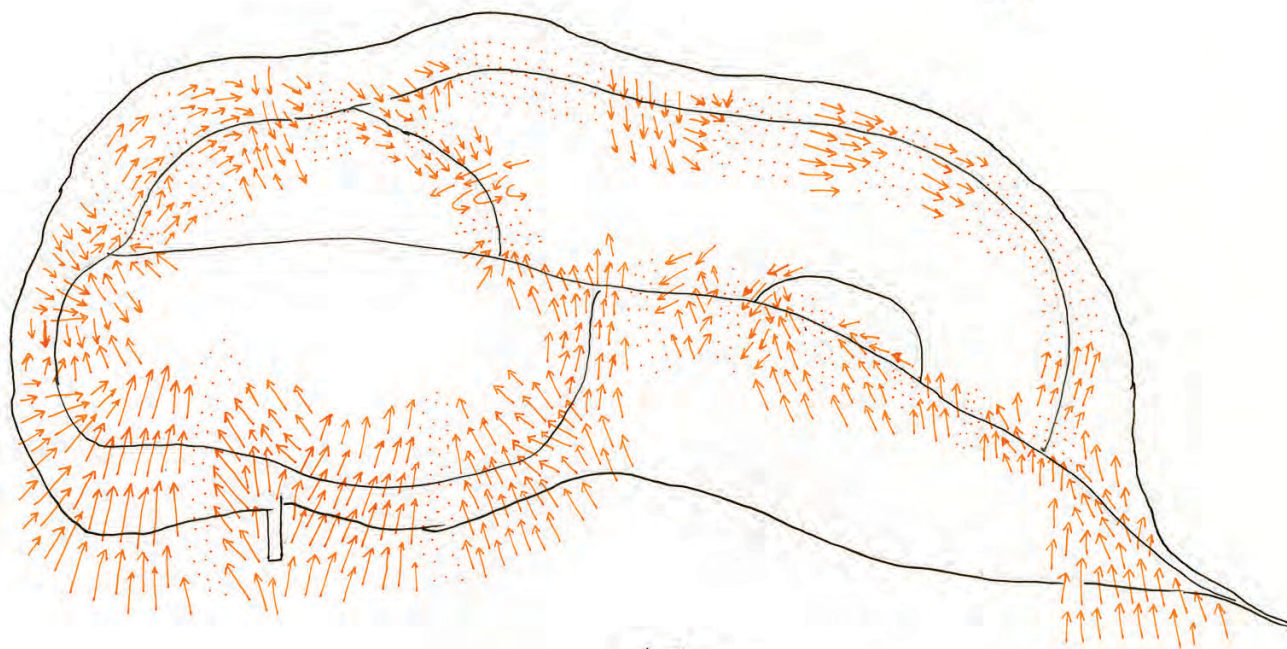
mapping process subverted typical notions of cartography, our archive was nothing like the dusty, ordered, entombed collection that the name might imply. For the Archive site, we chose a leafy tree with far-reaching branches at the center of Bumpkin Island. We looped clotheslines across the tree's branches and used clothespins to hang up maps. We wanted the maps to be easily visible and totally accessible to visitors. The clothesline and pins - familiar materials - reflected the intimate, transitory, and tactile nature of the installation. For us, it was important that the Bumpkin Island Map Archive would feel welcoming, and invite visitors to handle the maps and examine them closely.

The success of the Archive hinged on participation - it could only grow and truly represent Bumpkin Island if visitors contributed to it. We wanted the Archive to contain as many different visions of the Island as possible - not just our own, limited impressions. We knew that the initial contents of the Archive would influence the approach of any new map-makers, sparking ideas and expanding and exploding assumptions about what could be mapped, and how. So we spent our first days on the island hurrying to create a variety of maps to "seed" the Archive. We fanned out across the island to create maps, and went for hours without seeing each other... only to come upon the other along a path or sitting under a tree, immersed in

AIRFLOW/BREEZE

MAP of BUMPKIN ISLAND

on the morning of July 29th
2011



KEY



= no detectable breeze



= small breeze in direction of arrow



= larger breeze in direction of arrow



= switching breeze



map-making. Since there's no electricity on the island, we worked as long as there was daylight. The maps we created reflect our initial explorations Bumpkin Island, and include an airflow/ breeze map of the island, a map of all the plants along the main path, a map of rocks on the island that look like mini islands, and a map of horizon vistas seen from various viewpoints around the island. The Archive also included maps made prior to our arrival, including a history map of the island, and maps showing imagined dangers and fantastic, mythic creatures.

To further encourage visitors to create their own maps, we designed more than a dozen "mapping toolkits." These handmade cardboard cases had a recycled aesthetic, and contained map making materials such as papers of different colors and textures, stickers, colored pencils and pens, measuring tape, flags to mark particularly interesting features, and clipboards for drawing in the outdoors. Visitors could take a kit from the Archive site and take it with them on their island exploration, and they were encouraged to return to "donate" their finished maps to the Archive. Visitors had different approaches to map creation: some borrowed a kit and worked on their maps as they explored the island. Others created maps from memory at the Archive, taking refuge from the midday heat in the shade of the tree. Visitors were also welcome to pin maps up in the Archive



MEADOW VOLE HABITAT

BEST LOCATION FOR EARLY MORNING VOLE SIGHTINGS (check for the vole trap - have the vole trap)

WHERE TO HEAR A VOLE AT NIGHT - BEST AFTER DARK 9 OR 10 PM (sounds like a rat but it's like a bird too)

BEST PLACES TO START FOR VOLE SIGHTINGS - RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE BUT DON'T SMILE (THAT SWIMMING SINGS)

ed on research conducted between 1-28 and July 2011-2012



themselves, so the categorization of maps was participant-driven, and constantly in flux.

Reflections on the Bumpkin Island Map Archive

During the 5-day encampment, more than 80 maps were created and donated to the Archive.

Visitors seemed to share our obsession with maps and most were eager to borrow a mapping toolkit and make a map. Other encampment artists participated too, producing maps that described their process and the evolution of their artworks. Maps created by visitors included fanciful, imagined maps of the island, maps marking episodic, mini-narratives of their visit, as well as maps of specific, meaningful sites, and maps of physical artifacts, sometimes collected and pasted to the surface of the map.

The mapping toolkits seemed to help people shift from their everyday mindset into a new role. Their rough-and-ready, recycled aesthetic made the kits appealing, special artifacts to carry around the island. Each toolkit looked different, and visitors enjoyed selecting the one they liked best. One visitor reported that carrying a toolkit made her feel like she was living out a childhood dream of becoming an explorer. This shift into an adventure/exploration mode may have helped participants feel more present, more attuned to and aware of their new surroundings. Since we had a

limited number of kits, we first wondered if visitors might damage the kits, abandon them on the island, or take them home, thus derailing the entire project. But people handled kits with great care, returning them promptly or handing them off to other visitors or park rangers before leaving the island. No kits were lost, and only one toolkit was abandoned. This kit was left, rather dramatically, in the exact center of one of the ruined buildings. We guess that it was placed there so other visitors might pick it up and continue with it.

“Island-ness”: Mapping in limited space and time

The success of the Bumpkin Island Map Archive - the high levels of interest and participation among visitors, the sizable number of maps collected - might be attributed in large part to the unique setting for this project. Bumpkin Island is small: one can easily walk around the entire island, along the rocky beach, in about two hours. And compared to urban landscapes in nearby Boston, it is somewhat limited in terms of stimuli: a dense growth of vegetation dominates, there is only one local mammal species (a vole), and few traces of human habitation. The landscape feels intimate and manageable. One can imagine knowing it, or beginning to, and mapping some aspect of it in a single afternoon. Also, the notion of “island-ness” - an isolated “other” space, quite removed from the everyday world, potentially a refuge or retreat,

a space for reflection - might have encouraged visitors to shift into exploration mode, making them more willing to explore a new task.

We wonder how participatory psychogeographic mapping projects might work in other locations, those without the organic constraints an island affords. How might participants approach mapping tasks in urban areas that can stretch for miles, and where stimuli is intense, extremely varied, and sometimes overwhelming? These spaces, for some of us, are our everyday environments, and they may feel exasperatingly familiar. How can we lure participants from their routines, and encourage them to shift into adventurer/explorer roles, to practice heightened awareness of their everyday landscapes? What kind of sites in the urban environment might house an archive? As we further develop the set of structures and tools created for the Bumpkin Island Map Archive, we will re-design them for new landscapes and settings.

You can see more maps and read more about the Archive, new projects, and our long-distance collaborative process at traubensaftarchive.org. ☿