34 This Is Not a Map

Sabine Müller-Funk and Maria Christine Holter
Vienna, Austria

Abstract

In the project THIS IS NOT A MAP the word MAP overwrites the map itself and the landscape described by this map. The word MAP lies as a superimposed pattern on both, the actual map and the the Rosa Mayreder Park, Vienna, thereby depicting itself and the filter which it constitutes.

34.1 Introduction

THIS IS NOT A MAP is the title of Sabine Müller-Funk’s contribution to the symposium Art and Cartography – Cartography and Art. The German born Müller-Funk, now living and working in Vienna and in a small community in Lower Austria, can be briefly described as a multimedia artist who creates objects, installations, land art and performances out of her deep interest in text, script and the process of her own handwriting. In realizing her work she always uses site-specific materials as the background or as a part of her – sometimes very large-scale – inscriptions. The provocative title, alluding to Magritte’s This is not a pipe written onto a picture of a pipe, is a good point of departure for a conversation about the artist’s strategies in THIS IS NOT A MAP and her art in general.

34.2 Interview

Holter: What did you have in mind for the installation THIS IS NOT A MAP (Figure 34.1) at the Rosa Mayreder Park, which is part of the large area generally referred to as Karlsplatz in Vienna?

Müller-Funk: In this project I see maps – and more specifically city maps – as a field characterized by different semiotic systems: the icon as a sign for houses,
churches, courses of rivers, ...; the symbol, whose letters form names and thereby marks villages or urban areas; and last but not least the image, in which the landscape is presented as a painting due to the bird’s eye perspective of the map. These different systems always overlap and mix in a map. Maps constitute a survey or measuring of the landscape (or the city), which lets the absent landscape arise before the mind’s eye and thereby reaches out to pull the absent landscape into presence. Obviously a map never depicts a landscape 1:1, and it always incorporates a filter – that of the cartographer, and also that of the viewer, the user of the map. In my project THIS IS NOT A MAP the word MAP overwrites the map itself and the landscape described by this map. The word MAP lies as a superimposed pattern on both, the actual map and the landscape (the Rosa Mayreder Park), thereby depicting itself and the filter which it constitutes.

Holter: Unfortunately the project could not be executed as planned. What were the obstacles to its 1:1 realization?
Müller-Funk: Since THIS IS NOT A MAP would have been an intervention in public space, I had to submit the project to a municipal department of the City of Vienna. It was turned down, because they argued that the installation would disappear under the January snow. They did not want to put up snow poles to fix the plastic ribbons onto them. Ironically there is no snow in Vienna at the