INTRODUCTION

Dan Mills makes work that is full of observations about historic and current events. He conducts extensive research on topics such as current wars and conflicts, colonialism, and life expectancy by state, and creates paintings and works on paper that visualize data and information on these subjects.

Mills frequently uses maps as the space to explore these ideas. He began incorporating maps into his work in the early 1990s while researching the quincentennial of what is euphemistically referred to as the The First Encounter. Since then, he has explored history and colonization in painting/collages on large roll-down school maps and in an atlas of future states, the loss of history through erasure and over-painting on maps, visualized data about current wars and conflicts in world maps, and data about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness on U.S. maps.

LESSON

Take a look at the work of Dan Mills in our Summer 2019 virtual tour found at cmcanow.org/virtual-tours/. Travel throughout the Bruce Brown Gallery and identify the different colors, letters, and places that Mills’ paintings incorporate. Do you recognize any of these places? Inspired by the mark-making techniques Dan Mills applies to his maps, create a unique mixed media drawing of a map using a system of patterns.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Explain the importance of viewing, what is the job of the artist versus the job of the viewer? Engage young learners in an eye spy game using letters, places, and shapes. What details are you looking at or for?

CELEBRATE YOUR WORK

Share your process and art work with us via email, Facebook or Instagram @cmcanow.
STEP 1
Close your eyes and think of a place you know and love. This place is somewhere you are able to identify details about that make it special. Imagine you are in the sky looking down onto this special place, what is the geography of this place, what shape does it form? Lay out a large piece of paper onto a flat surface and begin to draw the outline of this place you're thinking about so that it fills the page.

STEP 2
Begin to divide the areas of the map that contain important landmarks (i.e. grass, water, road) using lines and shapes. These spaces can overlap and lines can intersect.

STEP 3
Assign one two stamps, colors, or shapes to represent each section which you will use to create a pattern. For example, grass might be represented by GR stamps and ocean using □□□ stamp pattern.

STEP 4
Begin to fill in the divided areas using your assigned stamp combinations. Use your extra paint to fill in the area around your stamped patterns. Don’t forget to fill spaces that overlap with both stamp combinations.
Below:
Current Wars & Conflicts...(with, by continent, belligerent and supporter groups marked with black and red circles respectively, and Asylum Seekers, Internally Displaced, Refugees, and Stateless marked with a letter for every million, and killed marked with letters for every 250k), 2019 acrylic on paper laid down on board 92” x 144”

Dan Mills

Left:
Johnsing the Map I, 2014 acrylic on printed map on paper’ 11 x 14 inches