

HORACIO ZABALA

*Otras cartografías* Other Mappings/ Works, 1972 – 1975

Though there is mapmaking that is imaginary, false and incomplete (such as that which led to the Discovery of America), the science of cartography is mainly an instrument for determining precise extensions of territory. So intense is this drive toward stabilization that it is hard at times to sense the fluctuations between a geographical reality and that which its map represents, as we can observe, for instance, in the drawing up of borders: sometimes these are determined by accidents that the map incorporates; at other times, it is the map itself that sets certain limits that are projected over the landscape.

In the early 1970s, Horacio Zabala worked with maps. Through them he showed not only this discrepancy between reality and its representation, but also a tension that was of the utmost urgency at that time: the tension existing between the stability of maps and the geopolitical instability of the spaces they organize. Through fillings-in, through texts, through fire, official seals or literary references, Zabala questions the truths of mapmaking and, by extension, those of reality and the world, in times of profound national and political conflicts.

The frequent use of school maps reminds us that it is through them that we construct our notions of geopolitical identity, territory and nation. Every instance of mapmaking, moreover, implies a positioning of the reader (whether he or she is in the place the map shows or not) and an active labor of decoding that confers materiality and substance on the lines, surfaces and colors that inhabit them.

Zabala joins together all these elements in an enunciative practice that turns the forms of mapmaking into analytical and critical tools. His insistent images of Argentina and Latin America grapple with a regional concern, yet do so starting out from a no less insistent shakeup of its geographies --geographies that forebode problems, that deny any possible stability, that call for readings and positionings that suggest other mapmakings.

Rodrigo Alonso