

FDGA Grant Application/Follow Up Report

submitted by

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Topic: Funding request to create large scale wall map for NJCU Map Exhibition

Visual Arts Building, New Jersey City University, Jersey City, New Jersey

Maps Everywhere Exhibition, Curated by Donna David. October 17 – November 26, 2019

<https://www.njcu.edu/community/events/maps-everywhere-0> (NJCU calendar page)

FDGA category

II. Research, Scholarly, Creative, Pedagogical and Industry-related Activities Creative Practice: Grants for faculty to develop their creative work.

report

I requested funds *to create a large wall map* to compliment an exhibit I curated at New Jersey City University, Jersey City, New Jersey. <https://mapseverywhere.net/njcu-jcmap> (*my blog*)

The finished wall map is 4ft x 6ft. It was made with a painted cork surface, on which visitors were invited to “pin” memories, where they live, eat and shop. Map pins of different colors and flags were used to indicate where they live, where they fell in love and other public or personal information.

The map was the focal point of the exhibit. I went to the gallery many times and each time people were gathered around the map to read the notes and make their own flags. This project created a good snapshot of Jersey City. People drew pictures and labeled hyper local things, like stores and neighborhoods.

What I find most interesting are the pins that are at the edges of the map. Several pins are at the very edges, telling us that everyone wants to be represented on the map. I intentionally left off streets in Hoboken and Bayonne, yet people still claimed their space with a pin in the blank areas.

It was a challenge to create this map. When I wrote my proposal, I thought I would make the map out of fabric-topped cork panels, with the map printed in 12 x 12 inch sections. I realized creating the map in these small sections would interfere with the design. I tested painted cork panels and felt this worked well. On a large cork sheet, I used a standard interior house paint as a base, which I knew could stand up to many people touching the map over the course of the 6 week exhibition. The latex paint took acrylic color paint and marker very well. The end result was a friendly, crisp map, in shades of blue. I backed it with foamcore, which gave more depth in which to sink the pins.

To start, I drew a small map, and then made an enlargement at Print FX. I used chalk on the back of the map to transfer the design to the cork. I hand painted the streets, parks and waterways. I hand wrote street names in marker. I created custom flags for the map.

All in all, this has been a positive experience. This large map added a dimension to an otherwise static art (map) show. Visitors spoke with each other when looking at and interacting with the map. As part of my gallery “tour” I explain how this big map came to be. Jersey City has a bit of a map identity issue. Not many nice maps of Jersey City exist. I explained how a mapmaker brings a bias to every map they make and I wanted to minimize this, in favor of letting visitors “finish” the map by adding pins and flags. The result was a truly unique snapshot of Jersey City in the fall of 2019.

I am happy to report the map found a home after the show. It was adopted by the Division Chief of the Division of Planning, Hudson County. It will be displayed for the public in Jersey City and used for a 2020 census outreach program. It may also be utilized to gather public input for various transportation studies, including one on the expansion of ferry routes across the Hackensack River.

I am currently teaching a senior course, "GD444 Graphic Design Core Studio 3: Design and Innovation." Many of my students have created maps in their projects. Maps are good tool to record and understand the evolution of information design, beyond understanding geography and place.

With this project I learned more than how to create an oversized piece. The piece reinforces what I know to be the power of a map to bring people together to understand a place. Before I created this map, my only thoughts of Jersey City were the terrible traffic, not so nice areas and it was squeezed by major highways. Through this map, and by talking to people who pinned on it, I came to know most of Jersey City's geography and I feel I understand its citizens better. Maps are a great way to bring people together!

The show, and the map were given some press. The articles are attached.

1) <https://www.nj.com/hudson/2019/11/map-how-you-already-made-it-yours-in-exhibits-on-free-njcu-walking-tour.html>

2) <https://jcitytimes.com/maps-everywhere/>

I have documented the big map at <http://mapseverywhere.net/njcu-jcmap/> (This is the blog I created while on sabbatical.) You can see more pins at @mapseverywhere on Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/myjerseycitynjcu/>

I would like to sincerely thank the Committee and the School for providing funds for this project. It was a wonderful experience!

Attached:

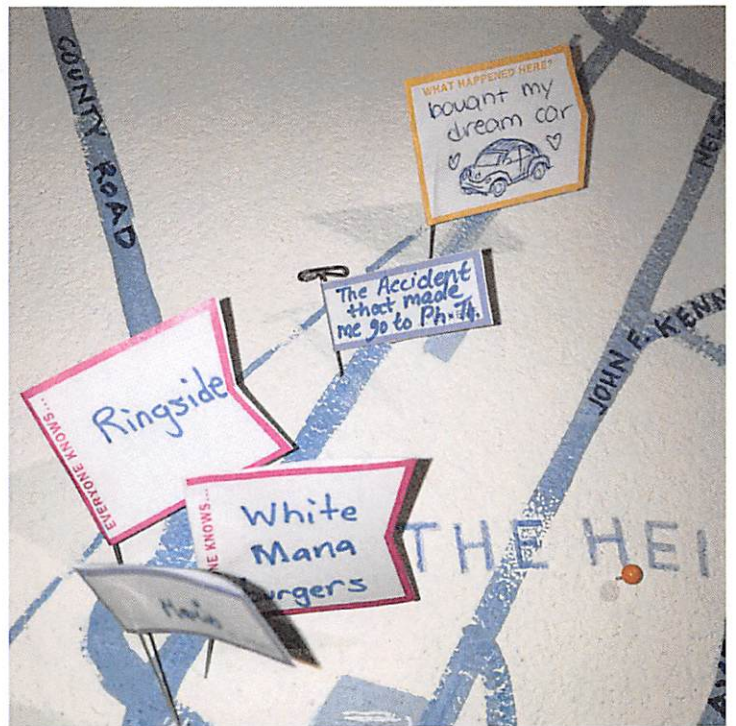
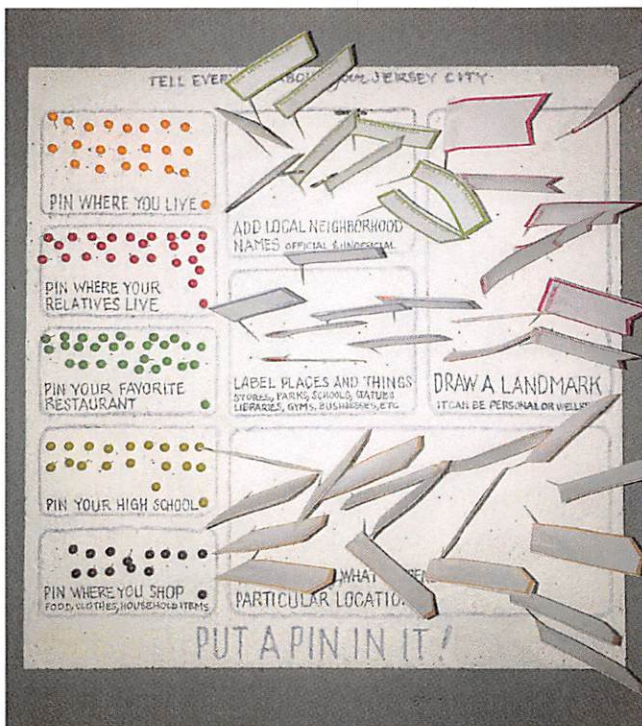
Images of the map

Receipts

Press



Details. Different color map pins tell us where people live, shop, etc.



Map pins and flags used to add to the map.