

Alexandra Mir

(Lubin, Poland, 1967)

Alexandra Mir's drawings in marker pen on sheets of various sizes, a central component of her work, are characterized by a summary style that can be related to certain satirical cartoons and to poster production in Poland during her childhood. The clear, eloquent and notably graphic line, together with the humor of the image, remain constituent elements of every work of art she creates.

Always drawn with black marker on a sheet of white paper, her line has acquired every type of dynamism and virtuosity, sometimes as naive as a comic strip, sometimes as intricate as art nouveau arabesques. The artist also has developed a technique of shading, cataloguing the marker pens according to the degree they are worn down, in order to use them to render different values of gray. Working in large exhibition spaces, her drawings also have become increasingly large and now necessitate the help of numerous assistants, with the result that, after the initial outline, her work has become, as she likes to say, a choreography, the direction of a dance.

Following the movement of the line across the sheet, Mir has traced some fundamental themes in her imaginative world: "I have spent a lot of time on naive cartography, drawing being a journey of sorts and the hand leading me backwards from this GPS era when everything is perfectly explored to a realm where there are still things unknown and dots unconnected. The question of geographical and cultural displacement is probably the one single subject that I dwell upon."

Her maps can in some way be called "ingenuous," for their approximation and lack of any possible explicative symbology makes them very similar to the completely empty oceanic map in *The Hunting of the Snark* by Lewis Carroll: "The process of having to navigate with only a few known coordinates, of throwing yourself into the landscape and of making up the rest the best you can is very much a part of drawing itself. I also like the idea that a viewer who has a close relationship to a particular site and who knows where the roads actually lead to and from, or how the borders became the way they are, can complete the drawing according to his own historical and geographical references. This way, the maps are never finished and appear different to everyone."

In 2010 Mir began a series of *World Maps*, which includes *The World Map of the Underworld*, where the perspective embraces the entire globe, inscribing it in the flattened ellipse of an old schoolroom planisphere. The title refers to worlds, networks, and invisible layers on the plane of physical and political cartography, which still exist, although perhaps in a completely different form from what we suppose. Perhaps it is precisely by pointing out the paradox of mapping of what, by definition, cannot be systematically represented, that the use of the classic and assertive equivalence of white and black to translate our supposed certainties leaves room in this series for drawing on black paper and for the somewhat blinding and mysterious presence of silver. (EV)