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## MAPPING HISTORY

Armenian-Egyptian artist Anna Boghiguan works in mixed media, using many different art forms: drawing, painting, writing, collage, paper cutouts, sculpture, and installation. In her 2018 New Museum solo exhibition, *The Loom of History*, Boghiguan addressed wars and revolutions, histories of materials and labor, the ancient roots of modern imperialism, and colonialism. One of these pieces, *Sail* (2017), is a painted map on a sailcloth that begins to tell a story of the countries and continents involved in the slave trade. In front of *Sail* is an installation of soil and cotton, one of the slave trade's primary products. Below, the artist talks about European trade and migration histories connected to slavery in the U.S. The phrase "New World" had been used by Europeans to describe lands that were new to them. However, the land was already the homeland of Indigenous people before the Europeans invaded.

"The history of the modern world changed completely with the age of "exploration" and "discovery" when imperialism and colonialism opened their doors. Dutch, Portuguese, French, Spanish, and English invaders entered lands previously unknown to them to find raw material they could trade...Over 12 million slaves were brought to the "New World" by British, Spanish and Portuguese traders.... Slaves were sold and forced to work in the cotton plantations and those of sugarcane and tobacco in Virginia. After the discovery of the spinning jenny and the cotton gin, production became faster and the demand higher, and more slaves were brought to work in the fields, and more cotton was shipped out to Europe."

**– Anna Boghiguan, *The Loom of History***

To learn more about Boghiguan's examination of history, colonialism, nationhood, materials and labor, you can [listen](#) to her talk, or watch her [here](#).

### KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

- **map:** an illustration or representation of a land and/or waterways; a visual diagram of political and national borders; representing land through a diagram or illustration
- **colonialism:** the practice of taking full or partial control over a land, usually including politics and economics

- **decolonial:** rejecting the model of Western European/white supremacy by reviving the diverse cultures, habits, and languages of Indigenous people that preceded and continued after colonization; related to the return of land and resources to Indigenous people



### START WITH ART: ANNA BOGHIGUIAN

- How would you compare Boghiguian's painting of the globe to other maps you've seen? Are there areas that are difficult to see clearly?
- Do you see any familiar shapes of land and bodies of water? Do you recognize oceans, countries, and continents? What colors are they on this artist's map?
- Do you recognize any flags? Where are they placed?

How can Boghiguian's **map** inspire us to think about how point of view, history, **colonialism** and **decolonialism**, relate to how physical and political borders of lands are drawn and named?

### LOOK AROUND

- Look at a map, printed, or online, or think of a map you've seen. Perhaps choose maps of the town, city, state, or country where you live. Who do you think made the map? How do their decisions about what to include influence our ideas of history and place, including who "belongs" to, or on, the land?
- Artist Victor Temprano created an **interactive map** with the names of the

Indigenous people who lived on the lands centuries ago and sometimes still live there today. Can you find the Indigenous names of the land where you live? How does this map compare with Boghiguian's map? How does it compare with other maps you've seen?

## **MAKE ART**

Let's create a map with symbols showing sites we consider important or interesting.

### **Materials**

- Pens, markers, crayons, pencils or other drawing media
- Paper
- Online and/or printed maps for research

### **Making**

1. Start by identifying the place you'd like to map. This can be your street, neighborhood, city, country, or continent. It can be a real or fictional place, a place you've visited or one you'd like to visit.
2. Whether you've picked a place you know or one you don't, view and compare several printed or online maps. How are these similar to or different from your ideas of the place you plan to map?
3. Decide which streets, roads, waterways, landmarks, and names to include.
4. Design symbols to represent things like houses, trees, streets, or waterways. Can you represent memories and stories related to a place that you think are important?
5. Sketch your map in pencil, later adding color in your preferred drawing or painting medium.

### **REFLECTION**

- How did your research influence what you chose to include in your map?
- How do you think your map would differ from someone else's map of the same place?
- What new historical, cultural, or geographic ideas or facts did you learn through your research and mapmaking?
- Some contemporary mapmakers are using maps as tools of decolonization, including **The Decolonial Atlas**. How might ideas of decolonialism influence the way you design a map in the future?

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