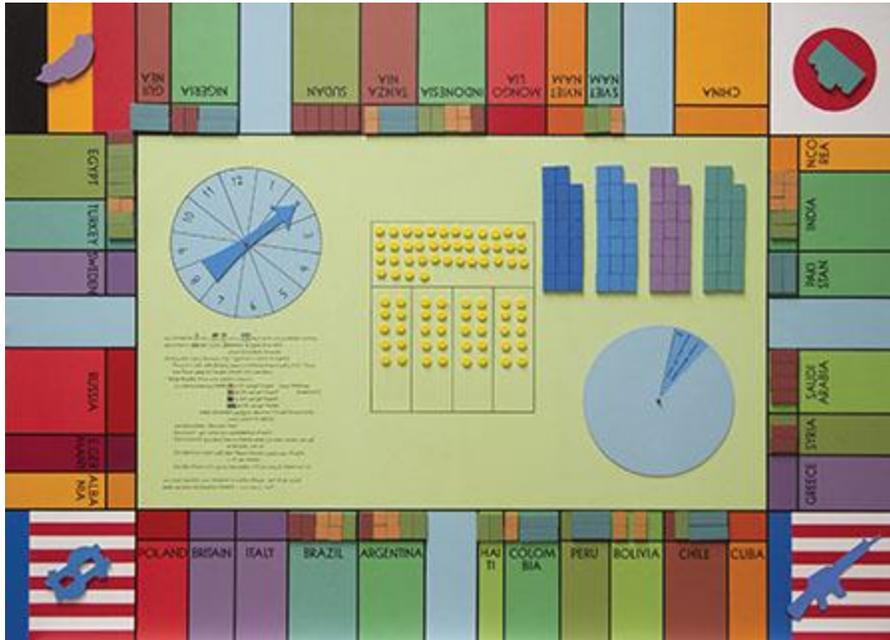


Simon Evans & Öyvind Fahlström

KUNSTHALLE DÜSSELDORF , DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY



Öyvind Fahlström, *World Trade Monopoly* (B, large), 1970, paint, magnetic elements, acrylic, vinyl and metal on board, 91 × 128 cm

The exhibition 'First We Make the Rules Then We Break the Rules' at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf brought together the work of two artists who are separated not only by a continent but by half a century: Öyvind Fahlström was born in 1928 in Brazil to a Norwegian father and a Swedish mother, and died in 1976. Simon Evans was born in 1972 in the UK, to British parents. What unites them is that both have made a name for themselves as psycho-geographers, drawing maps of their environment along the lines not of territory or geology but of politics, sociology or the body. Their cartographies are not the charts of atlases but of institutional racism and class divides, of personal experiences and dreams.

Hung across two large interconnected rooms, their maps presented a spatial history of the late 20th and early 21st century. In the first room, Fahlström's powerful charts of the global political order provided an engaged picture of the antagonistic political activism of the 1960s. *World Trade Monopoly* (1970) depicts international trade relations as a game of monopoly among the USA, Japan and Germany. As players move along the board, they buy up assets from the developing world whilst selling off their own products to trade partners. Sketch for *World Map*

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part 1 (1972) is a loosely drawn, almost cartoonish atlas of exploitation and violence, documenting via anecdotes and parables the effects of global capitalism and US imperialism on countries such as Costa Rica, Chile, Taiwan and Guatemala.

Fahlström's work subtly led into the adjacent space housing Evans's maps. Much has been made of Evans's past as a professional skateboarder, and one can understand why. Skating requires one to experience space in terms of surfaces rather than social conventions: a fence is an opportunity to grind instead of an enclosure; an alleyway is not a passage but a place for tricks. Skateboarding creates alternative geographies, often at odds with the actual ones. A similar re-imagination is at work in Evans's art. In *Shitty Heaven* (2010), the artist draws a layered psychological map of everyday life in the 21st century, including a library, a museum, a bar and a clinic. Each space is filled with mental and emotional associations: anecdotes and sketchy drawings, sarcastic remarks and dreams, truisms and citations from popular culture. The cellar, for instance, awkwardly accommodates both Kalashnikovs and a 'Genocide Campsite' as well as Christmas decorations. Individual galleries of the museum are labelled 'Deutsche Bank the shop' or 'IKEA: Avant-Garde Graveyard', problematizing the relationship between art and commerce. In *I's* (2012), Evans re-imagines the London Tube map as a system of personal predilections. These associations, however, are temporal. Evans's maps are layered: tape is pasted onto paper, which is pasted onto yet another layer of tape covering another layer of paper. The associations we see are just the most recent in a series of notes. The outlines of earlier thought processes and emotions are still visible, if not legible. These traces draw our attention to the extent to which our experience is always multiplicitous and changing over time.

Moving from Fahlström's work to Evans's felt like moving from the 1968 uprisings to the Occupy movements, and in this sense the exhibition was especially powerful. Fahlström's maps are drawn up along well-defined lines. Like the initiatives of the late 1960s and early 1970s, they have an overt ideological incentive as well as a distinct method of critique. Looking back, however, we know that these incentives proved problematic and that the method failed. Evans's works are far less clearly demarcated. Much like the skateboarder, or #occupy, his maps re-imagine the geographies of everyday life without making it obvious which issue is taken up, or which Utopia invoked. Fahlström, the late Modernist, offers an ideological stratum; Evans, like many artists working today, operates from a post-ideological position: he desires change but finds it hard to get inspiration from or towards a particular source. Fahlström breaks the rules; Evans, as his pun on the show's promotional poster suggests, 'brakes' them – that is, momentarily suspends them. Whilst remaining critical, he tries to make the best of things – in spite of everything, to try.

Timotheus Vermeulen