A:shiwi A:wan Ulohnanne
The Zuni World
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Editorial: Rose Houk
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Front Cover: Double spiral petroglyph at Chaco Canyon. Photograph by Jim Enote.
Hand, moon, and bright star pictograph at Chaco Canyon. Photograph by Jim Enote.
Back Cover: Locating the Center of the Zuni World, Zuni Emergence and Migration Mural at the Ashiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center. Photograph by Jim Enote.

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A:shiwi on A:shiwi
Zuni on Zuni

Jim Enoté

The Zuni have always had maps. We have maps in songs and prayers, painted on ceramics, and etched in stone. Our maps aid our memories, they give reference to our places of origin, places we have visited, and places we hope to go. They also provide us with a reference of where we are within the universe and help to define our relationship to natural processes surrounding us. And because these maps are ours, they function within our particular cultural sensibilities.

But over the past 500 years we have been remapped. Our names of places and their meanings have been all but eliminated from mainstream use. In their place we've been given a new set of maps, with a new set of names that reflect other values and ways of seeing the world that has been our home for generations. Chimik'yan'ka' is now called the Grand Canyon, Sunha:kwin K'yaba:chu Yalanne are now the San Francisco Peaks, Ts'u:ya:la are shown as the Sangre de Cristo Mountains above Santa Fe, and the list goes on. For many Zuni, these names are foreign and disorienting. In some cases they are also a direct denial of our history and our presence on the land, for along with the new names and new maps came new assumed ownerships and control of our territories and resources.

Before serving as Director of the A:shiwi A:wan Museum, I was co-director of the Indigenous Communities Mapping Initiative, providing mapping assistance to indigenous communities in North America and Hawaii. It was during that work that I saw an immense movement among indigenous communities to create maps using computers. I recognize computerized maps are very practical and are a standard within and across many professions. If I ever needed to
provide a map in court, in addition to drawing one myself I would probably produce computerized maps because they are so commonly recognized in legal proceedings. But I wonder if computerized mapping and mapping offices could sometimes create unintended gatekeepers for a community’s geographic knowledge. What if a map’s audience is not familiar with all the lines, numbers, and orientations of computer-generated maps? As an artist, albeit an interrupted one, I knew there must be another way to dignify and represent our mother earth.

After I came to the A:shiwi A:wan Museum, it became clear to me that even though I am Zuni my knowledge of Zuni place names and locations was incomplete, and many other Zunis were in the same predicament. I know from experience it can be embarrassing, or worse humiliating, when you aren’t familiar with the places you are singing or praying about. I also know some families are single parent families, and some may have lost members that could share or pass on this sort of knowledge. For many of us, pieces of Zuni culture were missing, and for a variety of reasons we were unable to find a suitable source to understand our cultural landscape.

We Are of This Place

The Zuni community is arguably one of the world’s great centers of art. At least one person in practically every household is actively and consistently creating art. In what some might consider a dry and dreary environment, we embellish and embroider the simplest things. We enjoy the sound, look, and feel of beautiful things, and we try to look our best especially during many social and ceremonial events that occur throughout the year.

So it would make sense to say art is a Zuni common denominator. If that is the case, why not make maps in a way that inserts Zuni artists into the mapping process? And to assure that Zuni cultural sensitivities are addressed, why not include cultural advisors as well? In 1996 twelve Zuni advisors gathered at the A:shiwi A:wan Museum to resolve how artists and cultural advisors could make maps that would serve as learning tools for the Zuni community. At the front of these discussions was what not to map. Zuni religious knowledge, including some place name knowledge, is not open or accessible to everyone, even at Zuni. Access to such knowledge is partitioned by gender, initiation, and other special circumstances. Only certain Zuni religious groups or individuals know the locations of some sacred sites, and we certainly would not describe these places in our maps. Revealing these places would go against Zuni rules of religious confidentiality and discretion and would doom our work, not to mention our reputations.
After nearly a year of conversation and negotiation, the advisors decided the first three maps would depict the Zuni Village, Zuni Reservation, and general Zuni region. The maps were commissioned through a process that included a request for proposals that went to all known Zuni two-dimensional artists. As part of the proposals, pencil sketches were also requested from the vying artists, to see if they could create maps that would be unconventional and conceptual, and with enough realism to be recognizable. Based on their artistic abilities, understanding of the concept of map art, and willingness to work with advisors, Geddy Epalooe, Ronnie Cachini, and Edward Wemytewa were chosen to create the village, reservation, and regional maps, respectively. This basic process for selecting artists was used as the map art movement continued with new maps and new artists. The first three maps were spectacular and made a huge impact on the people who saw them. We had never seen maps of our lands like these before. These beautiful maps portrayed areas the advisors believed all Zunis should know about and did so without revealing culturally sensitive locations.

We were so inspired by these maps we decided to make posters of them with place names printed over important sites. But we soon learned that each map could potentially include hundreds of places to label. How could we reproduce the beautiful maps as posters without making the maps too busy with text and compromising the art? The advisors solved the problem by selecting only a limited number of places to be labeled. Spelling the place names raised another dilemma. Until only recently Zuni had no written script. Today the international phonetic alphabet is used to create a Romanized script of Zuni words, but the list of spelled words is limited. In the process of labeling sites for the posters, several place names were written for the first time, leading the advisors to stress the importance of pronouncing and spelling the places correctly. One of the advisors, Wilfred Eriacho, a retired Zuni language educator, prepared correct spellings for each labeled site. With place names completed, the posters were printed and given away free to Zuni households, school classrooms, and tribal programs.

The maps were so popular a second series was commissioned depicting Bandelier National Monument, the Four Corners area, the Grand Canyon, and Journey of Zuni Ancestors to the Land of Everlasting Summer. This was followed by a third series representing a theme of water and waterways on the Colorado Plateau. A fourth series details the Zuni relationship to the Grand Canyon, and the fifth renders the fantastic sites known to most people as Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde.
The artists represented in these works are a who's who of Zuni painters and include a nineteen-year-old emerging artist and some established “masters” in their sixties and seventies. Two women, Mallery Quetawki and Ermalinda Pooacha-Eli, are represented in this collection as well. Both are talented artists who work in a variety of media. They bring a thoughtful woman's view to the collection and have several on-going projects that we will learn more about in the near future. While clearly demonstrating their artistic styles on paper or canvas, these artists in interviews with Jennifer McLerran describe here, in their own words, how they were inspired to make their art and what they came away with as participants in the map art movement.

Interestingly, many of the artists had never been to the most distant places they were commissioned to paint, and consequently they and the cultural advisors journeyed to the areas together so the artists could observe and explore the sites while being informed of the roles the sites play in Zuni history. On a couple of occasions an airplane was hired to take artists to areas difficult to access so they could see the sites from the air and experiment with perspective and landscape textures in their paintings. Levon Loncassion's watercolor, Tribes of the Rio Grande; Geddy Epaloose's Middle Place; and Edward Wemytewa's Waterways are examples of paintings completed with the help of aerial vantages.

**Accelerating a Movement**

The A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center's map art collection is helping to accelerate a movement in art as well as a movement to reverse distortions of our history. It is a movement that is at times slow and halting, a movement that faces political, cultural, and economic obstacles. But it has begun.

The Zuni map art concept asserts that mapping is not limited to technicians. The art is distinctly Zuni and is consistent with Zuni abstraction of nature and its arrangement. The art also mirrors the way we compartmentalize knowledge and represent complex relationships. And these maps are like relatives, like aunts and uncles that entrance us with narrations of places they have been to or heard about. This art holds something that transcends Western modernism and speaks to our own continuous search for the essence of Zuni.

The map artists and advisors are advancing an idea that carefully created maps will help our people understand where we came from and why our culture is associated with places far away from our reservation circumstance. And we can do this in a pleasing way, on our own terms, using our language and Zuni aesthetic sensibilities.
The map art process has enabled Zuni artists and advisors to retrace the footsteps of our ancestors. Within the experience, we shared and cultivated a phenomenal spirit of experimentation and collaboration. These maps are intended for a Zuni audience, but as the advisors have pointed out, the maps are also strategic and therefore can serve a powerful role to inspire non-Zuni audiences and awaken awareness of Zuni perspectives. As tools that help set the record straight, we see these maps as a means to mutual understanding and peace making; the spaces between metaphorical lines, between paintings, and between narratives are spaces for opportunity and performance. I believe these maps will lead to new understandings either by formal agreements or simple appreciation of a Zuni worldview.

The rest of the world may still want their conventional maps, but to evolve as a global society we need to challenge what is conventional and legitimate. We also need to challenge standards and notions that tell us what a map should be.

I believe careless maps are a defeat for everyone. Perhaps native people have been the first to accept the price of careless maps. If that is so, Zuni artists are in a unique position to respond. Essentially, Zuni map art is a collective, revisionist effort to elaborate Zuni history and cultural survival independent from the non-Zuni narrative, and do so in a lovely and appropriate way.

*Jim Enote is the Director of the A:shiwi A:wan Museum and Heritage Center at Zuni, New Mexico.*
Zuni artists and cultural advisors at Ribbon Falls. Photograph by Jim Enote.
Cultural Advisor Statement

Octavius Seowtewa

I started working with the [A:shiwi A:wan] museum when they first started the map art [project] a couple of years back. Working through the Zuni Cultural Preservation as a ZCRAT member got me involved with a lot of these places, but it was just information that was stored in archives and not used for the betterment of the Zuni people; and so, when I was introduced to this concept of making map art, I thought this was the avenue that I was looking for to get that information out.

Just going to some of these places that I've known about, giving information to the staff and the artists . . . opened up a new interest of building from that and including some of the other sites that are not—were not—mentioned or not even talked about . . . like Navajo National Monument, Canyon de Chelly—you know, those were sort of off limits because . . . they're part of the Navajo tribe, Navajo Nation homelands. But, after I did some consultation work with the Navajo National Monument, I brought that information back to Jim [Enote]; and, after he looked at the sites that were there, we decided to make . . . a trip to see what was actually out there. And that first trip was overwhelming. To see one of the sites—Betatakin, especially that first one that we went to—was so identical to Mesa Verde, Canyon de Chelly and all the others that . . . we could use that information to educate our own people because they've heard about these places; but, because information wasn't readily available to the tribe or the tribal members, it was something that was just put on the back burners or just mentioned a few times. So, working . . . just with the Historic Preservation Office opened up my eyes on what we need to do.

. . . I think we're now in the process of getting that information out in a way that—instead of putting it in books, because there's a lot of information out in books—but have people to grasp and look at the sites without actually being there. And then the interpretation from the artists themselves was so overwhelming that some of the things that are not mentioned were picked up by the artists. And, so, when we did have meetings, they'd bring their paintings in and—because I've made numerous visits to the sites, I had a little information, that, generally, "You left this out" or, you know, "Can you change this?" And,
with this open dialogue with the artists, we didn’t have any problems of getting the whole information out . . . through the map.

[T]he art themselves, they’re beautiful, but they have a purpose now. They have a deeper meaning, because our oral history is very complex. And, because it’s passed on from generation to generation . . .

[N]ow that we’ve got the open door with the Park Service . . . we can go into areas that the public aren’t allowed to go. So, when we got that opportunity, we try and maximize on that information. And . . . it snowballed into all this perfect information . . . that we wanted for our grandchildren. And I think that was the main thought—why I wanted to get involved with the map art [project] . . . our people here . . . now that they’re so involved with computers and electronics, that that information is disappearing. So, with this type of information that we have, we’re opening a whole new door for our kids and their grandkids . . . we’re now connecting some of the dots to our oral history with these places.

[T]hey’re grasping not only the written information, but now . . . they have a chance to look at places where they’ve just heard or read about . . . we can have them look at it, we can tell them where it’s at. It’s hard for people to . . . grasp the vastness of the [Grand] [C]anyon. But I think Ronnie [Cachini’s work] is a good example of . . . all the different sites and even the quartz mine, the Supai Man. Things like that . . . were never mentioned to the Zunis, but now we have that information. We’ve always known about the hematite mine. There’s been documented information about people going there to collect the red hematite—red ochre. And things like that that were collected in the canyon, but quartz and even the salt was never mentioned to us; but now, going through all these trips, I’ve made fourteen trips within the canyon, so every time I make a trip I’m gathering new information that can be used for the map art. And, so, when we did take the artists down [the river] I could see in their eyes that, you know, in fact, they did mention that they were given that information. They were told when they were growing up about what was there in that Grand Canyon, especially where we emerged from, and now they had the chance to actually be there. And just looking at their eyes and . . . just trying to get in their minds what they were thinking, but it took a while for them to start talking about it . . . they just wanted to take everything in.

[W]e never had books about where our ancestors traveled, but they left the marks there . . . for future generations to tie themselves back into these same sites that our ancestors used. And it’s like a book or information that they left behind to tell us that “Yes, we were here, and your people are part of this area.” And, if we can identify or interpret . . . the petroglyphs, pictographs, then it just . . . makes our oral history, our migration history, that much more . . . solid.
It gives it . . . more depth because we have this information that was left behind, and we're . . . utilizing all of that information in the map art [project].

[And] now that we have this understanding within the parks, they're getting to understand that we do need to look at those areas and maybe give our own insight or give them the information about what that paint is, or how it was put on there, because they weren’t using paint brushes and they used to use mitts made out of rabbit skin to put the whitewash and the paints on it. So, with that type of information, the Park Service [is] getting valuable information from us. But, then, we're also getting good information back, so I think it’s getting to be a good working relationship with all the parks. And, now that [they] are finding out what we're doing or what type of information we're giving out, their open door policy is helping both the Park Service and us.

I've had two grandfathers that had a lot of information and I still go back to some of their words when I talk about things or trying to give the right information to whoever wants to . . . know about Zuni or understand Zuni. Because of them, I've got so much information . . . with their help and their wisdom . . . I look at things and I think about it and . . . tie things together, and look and say “I think this is what it's saying.”

[Zuni Map Art is] historical. It's very important that we're doing this, not only for the museum but for the Zuni people and for the rest of the world because we have artifacts that are out there in England, Japan, Canada, Switzerland . . . and some of the artifacts are incorporated in the paintings. So, you know, it gives us more leverage to deal with the museums now that we have this information.

I'm glad we have Jim that had the foresight to do something like this. I've always wanted a different avenue to get that information out, not only to the people that are going to the parks but our own people, too, because as I mentioned that some of them don't have the opportunity to make a trip down the canyon; and, when I came back there was a lot of people that grilled me for information, and now we have the paintings. And I can turn around and say, "Remember I was telling you about this? Remember I found this there?" And, so, it's there now and . . . we have these artists that are gifted that . . . have their own way of painting.
The map art paintings are educational tools for our community people and also for outsiders to see through Zuni eyes. Within the Zuni language, the English language, the translation of both of those sometimes gets lost within translation. But within a visual form, it’s right there, it’s right in front of you.

Within the village, it really kind of helps also promote art and promote how powerful art is to a lot of kids here. And I think it really opens a lot of their eyes and their imagination into a lot of the places that are important to us and how they can convey that. Knowing what’s sensitive, knowing what’s not, and what’s appropriate they can convey their culture through different types of art forms. But beyond the village, I think it really shows the Zuni’s presence in a lot of these areas. I know before we started this whole painting series, the Zuni presence was barely mentioned. Now, with paintings like these, outside people can see how important these places are and what the relationships are to Zuni.

The museum helped a lot because we provided a lot of outreach on all these paintings through different schools and different sites to make people aware that these places are important, especially for our community. I think that’s where it really helps—that we had a museum here to get all that information out so people know that these places are important. People would never have a chance to see places like the Grand Canyon or Mesa Verde, Chaco Canyon, Navajo National Monument. They can actually see those areas if they come to the museum or if they come in and see all the trips that we’ve taken and see all our photos—not just the paintings but the photos that we have—the resource that the school, the community and non-community members can use as a resource.

Every meeting, every trip, every discussion that we had, we always came out of it with something new. I grew up knowing some of what was being discussed. But specific places were very new to me. Our emergence and migration history, I kind of grew up with a lot of that teaching within my family. So I kind of already had that background and that interest, but just taking site visits to these areas, it was something very new.
[For the artists] . . . Ronnie [Cachini, for example] . . . I just wanted to get
him more of the Colorado Rivers, the headwaters of the Colorado Rivers, the
tributaries and all the way to the ocean. Getting those maps and getting the
different angles, different pictures through books, through on-line research . . .
so I did a lot of that research . . . [W]e took a lot of pictures and . . . made
copies for the artists so they could use them in their painting. . . . One of the
biggest highlights for me was doing the research.

We wanted to get to areas that were as intact and undisturbed as possible
. . . like Inscription House, which is closed off to [most] visitors, and we made
that hike and it was a very long and very hot hike. . . . We also had different
cultural advisement, like Octavius . . . would tell us what came from that area.
And one of the more interesting things I heard at Inscription House was . . .
feathers [were found] that were in the order that we use here, and also reeds
that were used in cigarettes . . . that made it very significant, because that's
what we use here today in a lot of our ceremonial offerings. . . . Each place had
something like that, either . . . an artifact or a spring . . . where our ancestors
used to collect water, drink water. And these sites that we visited we know . . .
the ancestors of our people still occupy those areas.

. . . Working with students and . . . doing a lot of the cultural education
here at the museum . . . I can actually say "Yeah, I've been to this area . . . "
It weighs more with the kids when you can actually say "I've been here. I've
done this. I've experienced how difficult it was." Or "I felt that presence of our
ancestors in these areas . . . " And we can kind of relay that to our community
members, not just kids . . . and say "This is why it's important to us" and "This is
what I felt. This is what I experienced then" and "This is what we did when we
were there."

. . . I've noticed that every presentation that I've done in the classrooms
or anywhere else . . . some of the photos that we have from all our trips and
the experiences that we have really brought the presentation to life. And it's
kind of hard to imagine having teen-age kids all be quiet during class, during
presentations, but so far that's the reaction that we've got during presentations
that we've done.
I think at this time in the world everything is so fast, people are moving so fast, days come by and go so that we tend to forget our roots and what really makes us. And so I think we see other people, tribes, going one direction, sort of trying to look out for financial interests, and we are kind of stuck trying to hold onto one part of our lives and yet trying to keep up with the rest of the world, and that's like a struggle, but then that is what makes us. So I think it's important that this project came about because it really gives the younger generation an idea of history and different sites that were used in history.

We hear these site names and place names in prayers, songs, and repeatedly, but you can only visualize in your head what it actually looks like and maybe you might not—you probably shouldn't for your own safety—visualize some of them. But you can't help but to. And this is like a tool to bridge that gap—oral history and visual history. So, I think we're doing a pretty good thing, doing justice in that way.

My paintings, in particular, I try to take significant elements, objects and incorporate them into my paintings. And these objects are most basic but yet most important. For example, one object is the sun, and that's how it all began, this whole history and up to the present day... a basic element, the sun, but so important at the same time. Without his calling, the people wouldn't be where they are today... they call it the Zia symbol, but it's not. It's the sun—the Father Sun.

You learn from other artists around you. The artists I'm currently involved with in this project are artists that I actually looked up to when I was still younger than teenage years. I looked up to the artists that are involved in this project, and that's inspiration in itself to even... have your name mentioned amongst this circle of artists.

The focal point on the [Grand Canyon] painting is... Ribbon Falls and the other sites that outline it... So you have Ribbon Falls in the middle. Above it is Upper Ribbon Falls, where actually they migrated from when they came up. And they built just above. So that's depicted, along with basic designs, sort of a map of how the Grand Canyon, the Colorado River, is in relation geographically to Zuni. Just to give the audience an idea that there is still that relationship there, and it's not that far if you think about it.
[Referring to another painting] I titled that Kya'na, which is that spring right on the top right corner, and that is named Kya'na. So that and the sites around it is how you would—how I would interpret it in English. . . . It's a spring, and there's several other springs outlying that spring. . . . [And] the deer are significant to that site because it is another form of Shalako. . . . As research and study, I usually use photographs just to get the scale, light. Sometimes I just do it on my own, I don't study, but on that painting I did. The [photos] come from the archives here. This is always the place to go when you need research. . . .

Ronnie Cachini really helped me get over the second half of that painting . . . as an artist, he's a good advisor. And it's kind of good to get advice from an artist because you know they're talking from a perspective of an artist. . . . probably without him helping me, it wouldn't have come out. It would have come out different. . . . He gave me a lot of insight in the area, stories, background, what things meant, and that really finished the painting.

[On one trip it] . . . really helped because Octavius [Seowtewa] and Curtis [Quam] both accompanied me. [And another trip] we did . . . a flyover . . . that was cool.

[For the Grand Canyon trip] there's no words to explain that. It was cool . . . . It was something that I . . . could only dream of. . . . Of course, you could only imagine what it would be like and think and try to get that feeling, but nothing as close as actually seeing it and feeling what it felt like. It was very moving to visit some of these sites.

. . . My [influences were] teachers here, family members, uncles that used to paint in high school, just looking at their work, painting, watercolors. Different teachers I had in middle school in Zuni and also high school in Flagstaff. . . .

Well, I hope it [Zuni Map Art] helps people . . . know that this area was first inhabited by the Zuni people and should not be claimed by other peoples as their own. . . . And I also hope that the audience, when they see these paintings, get an idea of [how] we're really rich in our beliefs and our culture, history, and we really can back it up. We're showing you that it's not a story. It's history. . . ."

I want my audience to feel my paintings . . . it's going to be different for a Zuni to visualize, or see my painting and take in that information. It might mean more to them than it does to anyone else, but I'm okay with that. That's what this project is for . . . down the line you're gonna know that you were involved in a great project—this one. . . . We are probably the first to do this, so people can only copy.
Geddy Epaloose, Malona: Idiwana’a (The Middle Place), 2006. Acrylic on canvas, 33.5 x 43.5 in.
Geddy Epaloose, Chimik'yan'ka dey'a (Ribbon Falls), 2010. Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 in.
Duane Dishka, Journey of the Zuni Ancestors to the Land of Everlasting Summer, 2008.
Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in.
Ronnie Cachini, Ha'n Awan Dehwa:we (Our Land), 2006. Acrylic on canvas, 33.5 x 43.5 in.
Clayton Edackie, Grand Zuni Flood, 2009. Acrylic on canvas, 33 x 43 in.