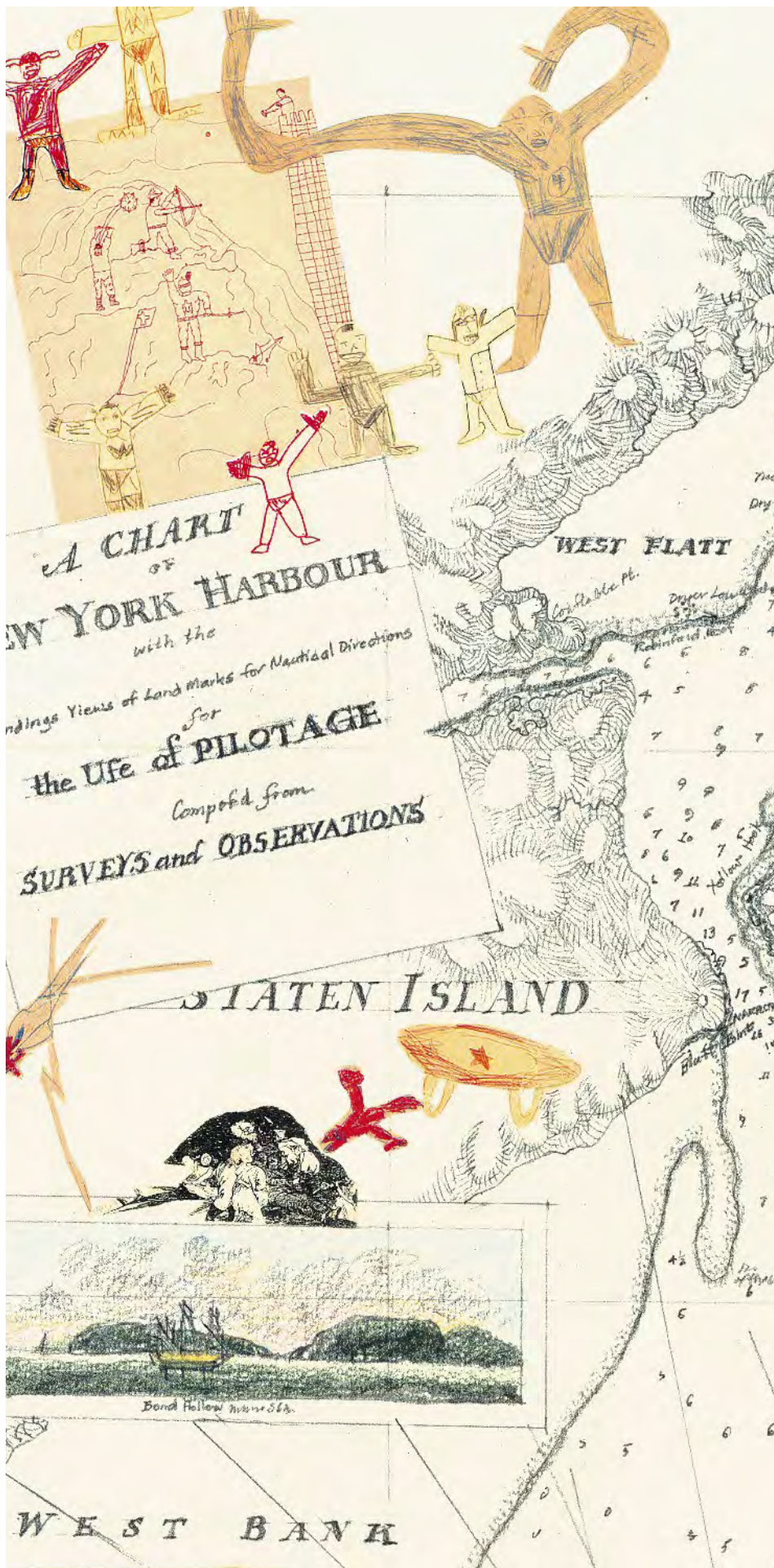




# Joyce Kozloff

*Cradles to Conquests:  
Mapping American Military History*

January 21-March 15, 2014  
Rowan University Art Gallery



Foyce Kozloff  
*Cradles to Conquests: Mapping  
 American Military History*

Rowan University Art Gallery, 2014

“A map could be the starting point, a structure for wide-ranging, diverse information, a web in which to weave other material.”

—Joyce Kozloff

Considering the political complexities of Joyce Kozloff’s work on display in *Cradles to Conquests*, the ultimately utopian suggestion in her own assertion of maps as a “starting point” is meaningful. Certainly, the colonies and conflicts that so many of her works literally map speak to Kozloff’s long history as an anti-war activist, and reflect her disgust with the violence to which these maps’ information testify. But, so too is there a sense of the possibilities for hope and rebirth in her work. These sensibilities fuse in the very “cradle” named in the exhibition’s title: oddly large for a baby, oppressively small for an adult, *Rocking the Cradle* overlays a map of ancient Mesopotamia—painted in white and ethereal blues—with the stark, media-bold diagrams of the first ten days of the United States’ 2003 invasion of Iraq, as tracked each of those days in the *New York Times*. The cradle itself is modeled after a 19th century design, as if to mark that century when “modern” European imperialism’s increasingly violent clash with the Middle East’s declining, ancient dynasties would begin to haunt Western politics. Yet, the work’s playfully literal reminder that Mesopotamia has long been considered the “cradle of civilization” also speaks to the resiliency of humanity—not just the resiliency of our civilizations, but of our humanity itself, as most viewers surely find themselves compelled to lovingly rock it.

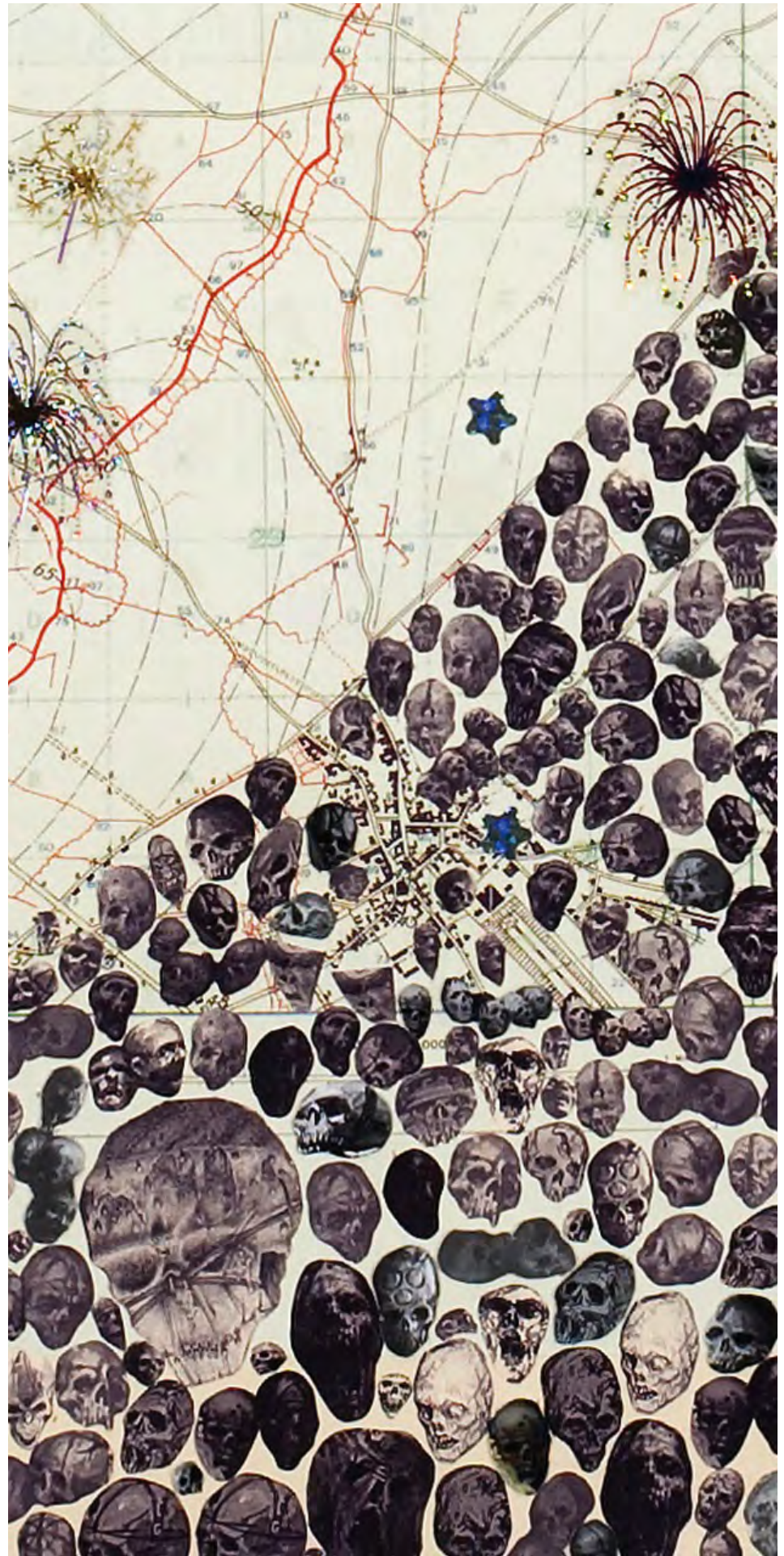
Kozloff first came to prominence as part of the Pattern and Decoration Movement, when in the early 1970s she began to convert her paintings inspired by Mexican and Islamic decorative art into ceramic tile installations. Her studio practice was developing in tandem with her dedication to feminist and anti-war activism; Kozloff’s gesture was not just a defiant return to a notion of beauty that had been summarily dismissed by the extremes of the period’s dominant, Minimalist and conceptual art, but the overwhelming Euro- and androcentrism of the same. On the one hand, her work drew attention to the parallels between the analytical, grid-based work captivating the 1970’s art world, and millennia of similar work from the history of decorative and utilitarian arts. On the other, this comparison also forced her audiences to ask questions about and act to reject the racist and sexist reasons for such distinctions—questions that Kozloff increasingly

began to address in her published writing as well as her visual art, which in 1975 would lead to her co-founding of the *Heresies* publishing collective.

By the end of the decade, this conflation of Kozloff's activist, artistic, and critical practices grew as she embarked upon a series of wildly successful public art projects that began in the 1980s, inviting audiences to both appreciate and critically consider the patterns and rhythms of (and in) everyday life. It was in these projects that cartography began to enter into her practice. Presented with plans and diagrams from the many communities invested in the project, each piece, she said, "would start to develop in my mind—how it would be perceived by the viewer, its scale, its content, the way it would resonate visually." And, once she returned to focus on her more traditional studio practice in the 1990s, maps took on an increasingly important role in her work. After several decades of border crossing—creating work and teaching in communities across the U.S., as well as research and residencies overseas—the appeal of tracking, historicizing, and marking one's place in the world seems logical. Her ironically authoritatively titled *Knowledge* series, for example, included repainted globes with wonky, impossible, comically incorrect maps of the world from historical models that simultaneously represent the familiar, disorienting effects of travel and the problematic desire to fix that experience as a kind of objective, cartographical fact.

However, after the attack on the World Trade Center—blocks away from her home in Manhattan—and subsequent American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, her cartography took on a new, more urgently political tone about the United States' role in these *mappae mundi*. Kozloff's references to navigation and mapmaking—disciplines about the naming and claiming of places—had always drawn attention to the manipulation of the boundaries and names of nations, cultures, and regions. And, her active participation in American anti-war organizations and protests since the Vietnam era fueled a critical stance toward American military aggression that found its way into her recent work well before 9/11, perhaps most ambitiously in her breathtaking, walk-in globe entitled *Targets: a 9-foot-diameter sphere of wood mounted canvases depicting paintings of every country bombed by the United States from 1945 to the work's creation in the year 2000*. But, with the country's new wars in 2002 and 2003, Kozloff's cartography became more aggressively contemporary, and more achingly soul searching.

Indeed, with her *Boys' Art* series that developed in tandem with the earliest days of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, her work became more personal as well, as she juxtaposed her son Nik's childhood superhero drawings with maps of sites from military history and



*Manifest Destiny III*, detail, 2008, collage on paper

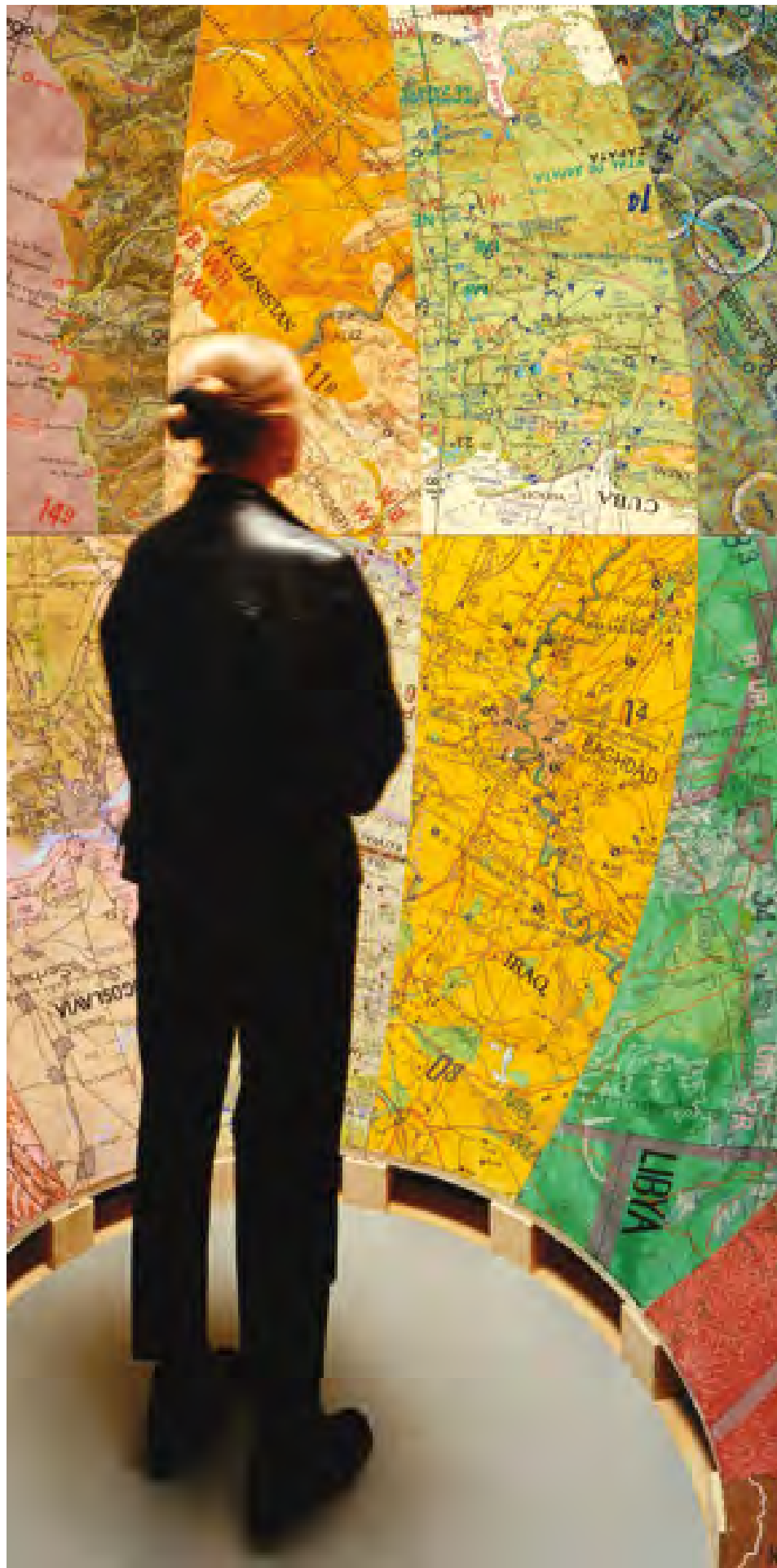
war inspired work by art history's "bad boys"—Francisco Goya, Edouard Manet, George Grosz—to critique the roles of patriarchy and imperialism in response to these wars being effectively sold to the country as “child’s play.” But, it seems telling that this series was followed by *Rocking the Cradle*, with its hopeful undertones suggesting the possibilities for what a different kind of nurturing might bring to the future.

And, as these wars have ebbed, “surged,” and eventually shifted into the uncharted territory of our current, post-war warfare of drones and electronic surveillance, much of Kozloff’s work has traversed this spectrum between criticism and hopefulness—in *Navigational Triangles*, all at once. In this series of paintings, several works repeat the rather disturbing statistic of contemporary warfare: “In World War I, 9 out of 10 deaths were soldiers. In today’s wars, 1 out of 10 is a soldier.” The imagery pairs coolly rational, military charts of contested areas like Pakistan and Palestine alongside otherworldly renderings of our earth based on photos from the Hubble Space Telescope—at once stressing how easily that sense of distance might lead to the invisibility of the real people, neighborhoods, and monuments that actually exist there in micro, while awing viewers with the simultaneous reality of the vastness and beauty of our universe in macro.

Returning to the origins of Kozloff’s cartography in her public art projects, it seems important to note that she first turned to maps so that, in her own words, she might confront “each problem, each site, each city, as a new beginning.” Kozloff’s work in the Rowan University Art Gallery asks audiences to map, contextualize, and accept responsibility for America’s ongoing military history. But, the exhibition also proposes that with precisely this kind of reflection “each problem, each site, each city” might inspire us to action toward a “new beginning”—one that breaks the cycles of history she depicts, and which Kozloff dares to hope humanity might one day refuse to repeat.repeat.

—Maria Elena Buszek, 2014

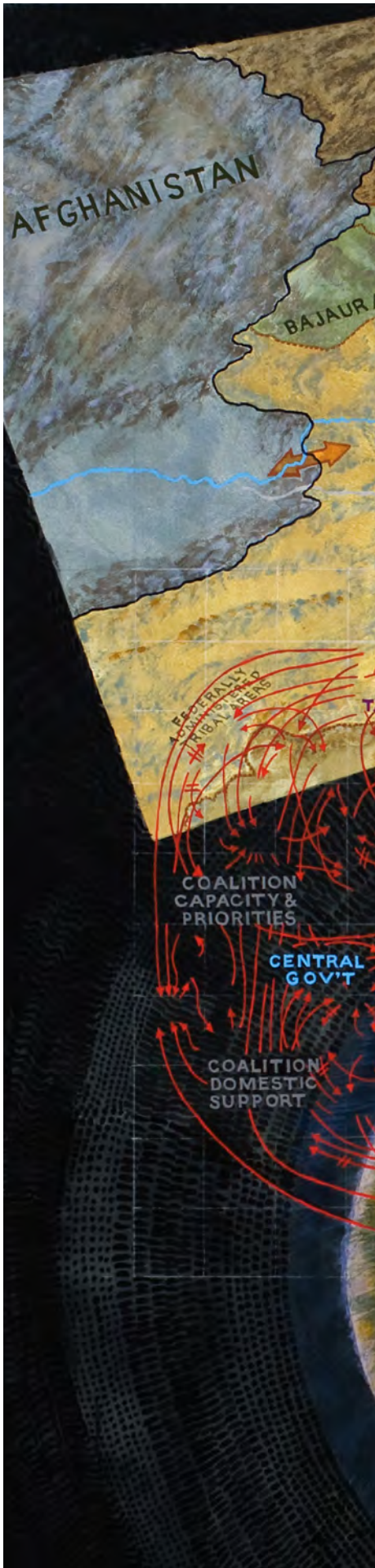
Maria Elena Buszek, Ph.D., is a scholar, critic, curator, and Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Colorado Denver, where she teaches courses on Modern and contemporary art. Her recent publications include the books *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture and Extra/Ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art*; contributions to the anthology *Punkademics: The Basement Show in the Ivory Tower* and the exhibition catalogue *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States*; and articles in *Art Journal* and *TDR: The Journal of Performance Studies*. She has also been a regular contributor to the popular feminist magazine *BUST* since 1999.



*Targets, detail, 2000, acrylic on canvas with wood frame*



American History: Going Global, detail, 2004, etching, collage, and watercolor on paper



## About the Artist

A major figure in both the Pattern and Decoration and the Feminist art movements of the 1970s, Joyce Kozloff began to focus on public art in 1979, increasing the scale of her installations and expanding the accessibility of her art to reach a wider audience. Since the early 1990s, Kozloff has utilized mapping as a device for consolidating her continued interests in history, culture, politics, and the decorative and popular arts.

Recent solo exhibitions of Kozloff's work include *Joyce Kozloff: Navigational Triangles*, DC Moore Gallery, New York (2010); *Joyce Kozloff: Co+Ordinates*, Trout Gallery, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA (2008); *Joyce Kozloff: Voyages + Targets*, Spazio Thetis, Venice, Italy (2006); and *Joyce Kozloff: Exterior and Interior Cartographies*, Regina Gouger Miller Gallery of Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA (2006). Kozloff's work has been included in countless important group exhibitions, including *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, National Museum of Women in the Arts, MoMA P.S. 1, and the Vancouver Art Gallery (2006); and *Shifting the Gaze: Painting and Feminism*, The Jewish Museum, New York, NY (2010). Most recently, Kozloff's work has been included in the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art's *The Map as Art* (2013), and will be included in *Jersey Women Now: Contemporary Visions*, George Segal Gallery, Montclair State University, NJ, and in *Women Choose Women (Again)*, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ, both exhibitions opening in 2014.

Kozloff has served on the Board of Governors of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture from 1998 to 2012. She was on the Department of Art Advisory Board at Carnegie Mellon University 1992–1998, the Board of Directors of the College Art Association 1985–1989, and the Advisory Board of the Public Art Fund 1984–1986. She was awarded the Jules Guerin Fellowship/Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, Italy, in 1999–2000.



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## Curatorial Statement

*Cradles to Conquests* is a selection of works completed between 2000 and 2010 that reference imagined and historical global militaristic events. The works utilize collage, cartography, and mapping as a narrative extension of Joyce Kozloff's decorative arts sensibilities and her work as a feminist and anti-war activist. The intention of this exhibition is to focus more directly on the works that dramatize the emergence of the United States through the lens of its military engagements and exploits in the name of expansion and national interests.

Ironically, Kozloff's mapping series makes use of practices widely viewed as gender-specific—appliqué, weaving, pattern, decorative—to challenge and question the authority and dominance of a patriarchal culture.

—Mary Salvante, Curator

## Acknowledgments

We are honored that Ms. Kozloff selected Rowan University Art Gallery as the venue for her first one-person exhibition in New Jersey. A special thanks to Heidi Lange and DC Moore Gallery for accommodations and thoughtfulness throughout the process. Thank you to Maria Elena Buszek for her incredibly insightful essay, and finally to Tom Kloskey for brochure design. Also, *Cradles to Conquests* would not have been possible without the generosity of the many private collectors who loaned works to this exhibition.

*Cradles to Conquests* is made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. All images are courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York, NY.

The cover image is *Rocking the Cradle*, detail, 2003, cradle with acrylic.

Photo credits. Kevin Noble: *Rocking the Cradle*; *The Middle East III, the Fight for Northern Pakistan*; *Manifest Destiny III*; *American History: Going Global*. Jon and Anne Abbott: *Targets*.



201 Mullica Hill Road  
Glassboro, NJ 08028  
[www.rowan.edu](http://www.rowan.edu)