

Mapping It Out

by Marcia Beckett - Artwork by Mary C. Nasser, Karey Kessler and Tofu

Maps are used to find a destination, plan a journey, show points of interest and chart geography. Many contemporary artists are using maps and map-making as a creative tool for expression. Some artists are drawn to the colors, shapes and lines in a map. Others are interested in the political, historical and geographical meanings inherent in maps while some artists choose to use maps to document travels and locations of interest or use maps as a symbolic or metaphorical element. Painting and drawing your own maps can be an excellent way to document parts of your life or a journey you have taken.

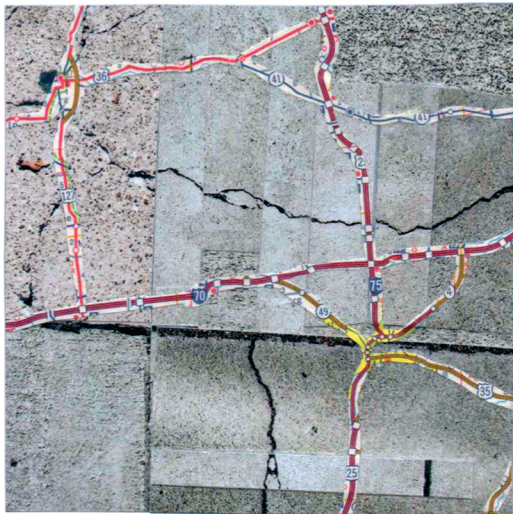
FEATURING magazine caught up with three artists who use maps as inspiration and elements in their mixed media art: Mary C. Nasser, Tofu and Karey Kessler. Each of these artists explores the use of maps in their own way to tell a story or make a statement.

When Tofu has a new idea for a piece, he will usually do a small version of it first. His work is labor-intensive, so before he tries out new material and patterns he has learned that it is best to work small first. "As an artist, it's frustrating to put a lot of time and energy into a piece that you end up not liking yourself. Ironically though, artists can be their own worst critics.

Part of Tofu's process is to always be on the lookout for new materials for mixed media pieces. He scans the thrift stores and yard sales, and he is not above peering into boxes left on the street. At vintage paper fairs, he sticks to the bargain tables. "When you cut stuff up, you can't pay too much for it."

The most important turning point in his artistic life was when he figured out that art was what he was *supposed* to be doing. Knowing you need to be an artist is one thing – figuring out how to do it is an entirely different issue. Like most artists, Tofu finds it is an ongoing challenge to make ends meet. He dared to quit his day job and has so far managed to keep a roof over his head. He combines part-time and full-time work with freelancing and all sorts of things to make it work.

Currently, Tofu is working on a new series of travel-themed pieces. All of these will be part of a solo show that will be a site-specific installation at Glamarama: "one of the best, if not the best, non-traditional art venues in San Francisco."



Art by Tofu

Tofu

Tofu is an artist living in San Francisco, CA. He has always used old maps in his collages and incorporated map-based ideas into his art. In 2011, Tofu started an interesting large-scale piece called the *2011 Project* where he created a map of the year. The work is made up of 365 individual, mixed media pieces, each 4x4 inch in size. With a good dose of self-discipline, Tofu created a unique piece of art each day during 2011 and was able to try different styles, materials and concepts.