

# in America

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## Françoise Schein at Bette Stoler

Much of Françoise Schein's work of the last few years has involved a search for new modes of map-

making. In a variety of mediums and forms her art has explored the diagramming of contemporary spaces and events for which conventional maps are increasingly inadequate—the new abstract dimensions of circuits, whether composed of data, light, energy or systems of transportation and circulation. In her recent show, she confronted the difficulties involved in representing the complexity of the contemporary city.

Rather than construct a fixed image of the city, Schein's latest mixed-media pieces experiment with ways of multiplying our experience of an urban terrain. One inspiration for these pieces is the Chinese *dazibao*, a public-information wall. Thus, Schein's light box titled *Dazibao for the City of Peking* (32 by 24 by 5 inches) is a kind of palimpsest on which she develops a notion of the city as a nexus of flows of information. Within this densely beautiful work, a multilayered assemblage of historical, scientific, social, topographical and technological elements generates new viewpoints from which to consider the city.

On a glowing field painted brick red, illuminated by lights coming from behind, a drawn and etched plan of the old city of Peking and a map of its modern subway system overlap. Painted

in silver across the surface of both are various Chinese constellations. Visible through holes in these maps are fragments of other diagrams of stars as well as depictions of quarks—an intersection of the most ancient and the newest representations of man's comprehension of matter. Finally, built over the piece is an abacus, a grid that forms a set of coordinates. The whole work resonates with an interpenetration of ancient and modern modes of knowledge, movement, work, apprehension of the stars and the seasons here conjoins with mathematics and an evocation of contemporary technologies.

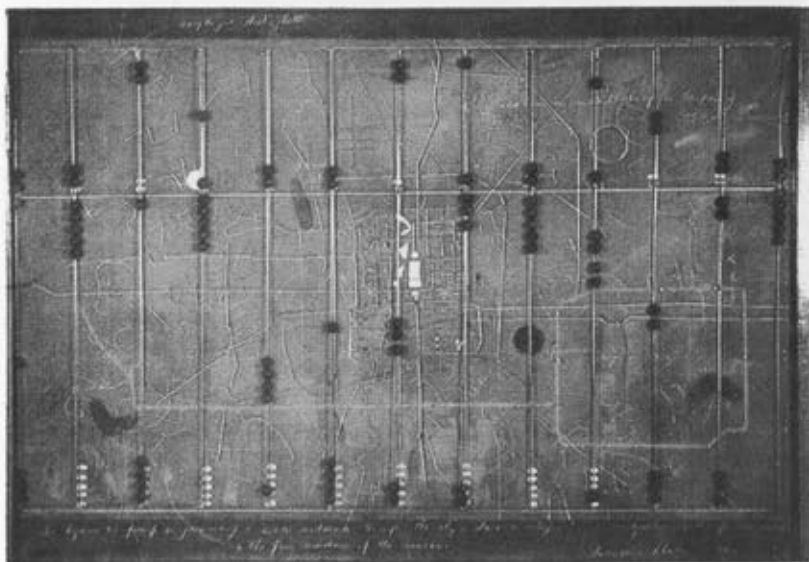
Another light box, *Model for a Dazibao for the City of Stockholm* (32 by 24 by 6 inches), also presents a translucent surface of maps and plans of urban systems. It juxtaposes the present-day contours of this northern city and its harbor with references to the abiding importance of the sea, the sun and the climate in its history. But here, the traditional map is merely one unit in a larger syntactical format, because the piece incorporates elements like a miniature television set and a digital clock, the topographical dimensions of the city coincide with other, nonspatial structures.

Schein, who was trained as an architect, has consistently

sought ways to present her work on a public scale (her subway map of New York City embedded in a Greene Street sidewalk is one such realized project). Each piece in this show was a model for a much larger sculptural mural installation.

If the light boxes, at least in their maquette size, have a lapidary clarity reminiscent of Cornell, Schein's *Time Zone* presents a harsher and more imposing vision. An 8-by-14-foot copper, aluminum and wood model for a World Trade Center project (if undertaken, the final work will be twice this size), *Time Zone* is a wall-mounted, global panorama composed of a chaotic patchwork of schematic maps of what are predicted to be the world's 12 largest cities in the year 2000. Thick, irregular and twisting vertical strips of metal run across the piece to indicate the 24 time zones; at the top of each strip is a clock set for a particular zone. The disturbing force of the work lies in the unsettling incompatibility between the precision of the 24 clocks and the proliferating disorder of the maps beneath them. Clock time seems hopelessly inadequate amid the overlapping simultaneity of a mutating "world city." The disjunction of these systems, along with the rusting metallic colors of the work, suggests a dystopian image of the fin-de-millennium.

—Jonathan Cray



Françoise Schein: *Peking Dazibao*, 1986, mixed mediums, 32 by 24 by 5 inches; at Bette Stoler.