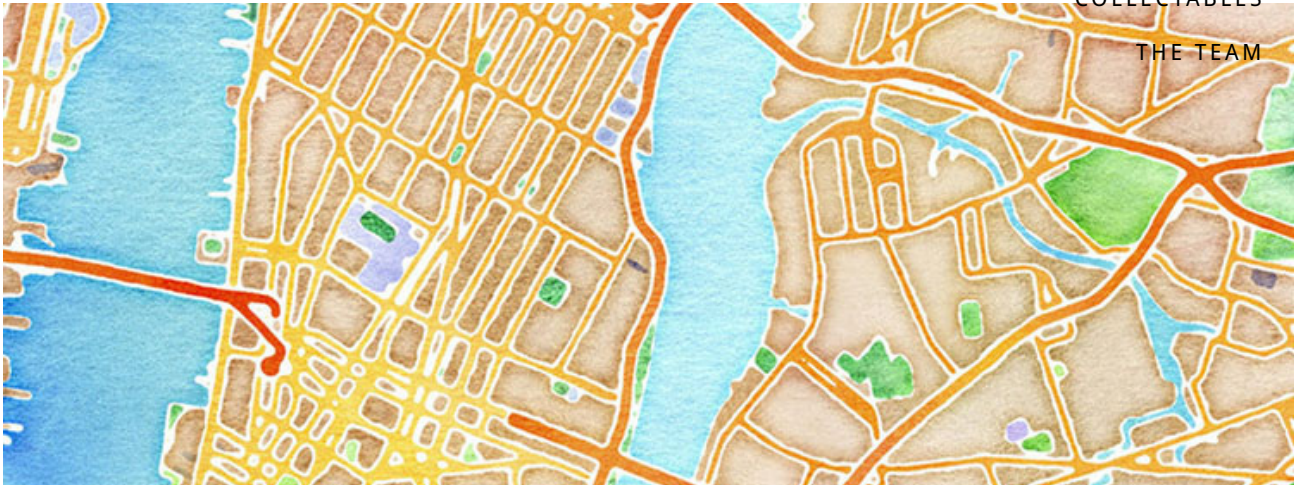


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Maps that spark the imagination

By Maptia, Co-founder Team

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At Google HQ they have wooden posts naming their conference rooms after famous explorers like Francis Drake, Magellan, Shackleton and others who were the brave and heroic explorers of uncharted lands. When these men first set forth in their ships there were new continents waiting to be discovered and new cultures, new people, new tastes, new sights, and new sounds waiting to be experienced. Those days are long gone. We have explored some of the deepest rainforests and most barren ice caps on the planet and those few remarkable places as yet unseen by human eyes have been mapped by the satellites in our sky. We have created an alternate reality and representation of our world that can now be held in the palm of our hands, in which we are the iconic blinking blue dot at the centre.

What would the spirits of Drake or Magellan make of these satellites flying around in our skies, are they the 21st century explorers? What would they make of these utilitarian maps which we consult on a daily basis to find our way around? Would

they be proud of this legacy or would they feel that something more human, more tangible, had perhaps been lost along the way in creating such an objective representation of our planet?

Historically, maps have always been products of the imagination - powerful forms of visual storytelling. They can tell us about what exists in the world, what matters in it, and where we belong relative to it. Alex Berger of [Virtual Wayfarer](#) told us,

“ Maps are more than just tools, they are visual representations of our story as we traverse this world.

— Alex Berger

Jodi Ettenberg, prolific blogger at [Legalnomads](#) and author of the [Food Travellers Handbook](#), also shared her thoughts on maps with us.

“ Maps are works of art, put together from the trailing threads of our imagination...a window into our wider universe.

— Jodi Ettenberg

And these more human, more subjective maps are still being created. As we wrote previously [here](#), there is in fact a whole world of mapping quietly growing beyond the Google and Apple power struggle that has taken the media spotlight. A world that is far more defined by personal geographies and by the feelings that are attached to space and place.

Whilst there is unquestionable potential in the creation of [Google map mashups](#) to share curious perspectives of places, it would be a stretch to refer to any as 'works of art, put together from trailing threads of the imagination', as Jodi so eloquently put it. This is because most current mapping platforms are restrained to thinking within the confines of road and place-name geography, and when we try to add a

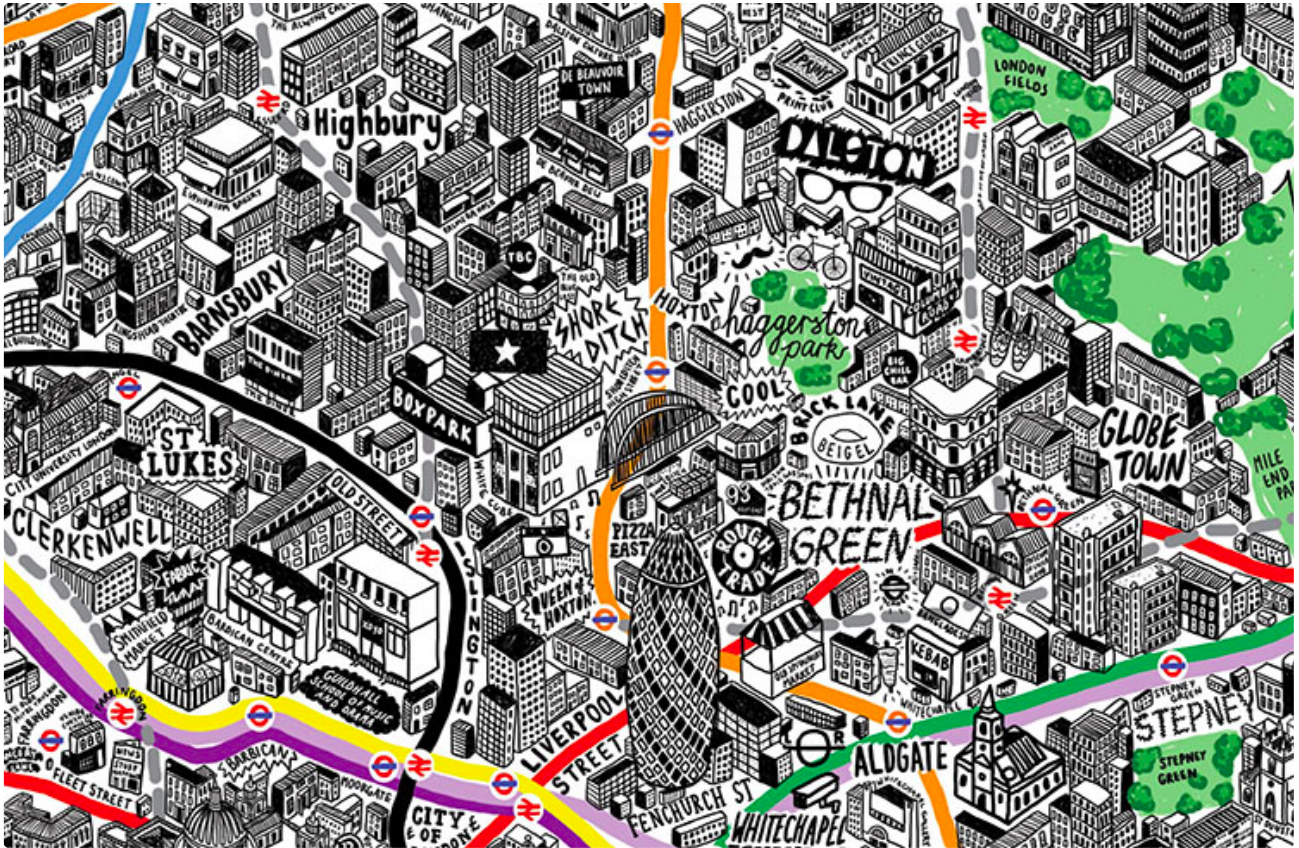
layer of emotional human data we are reduced to clustered pins or overlapping thumbnails.

Contrast your average Joe's Google map mashup with these inspiring examples created by some of modern cartography's pioneers. For instance, this wonderful [watercolour map series](#) was created by the talented [Stamen](#) team who have combined the painstaking effort of OpenStreetMap volunteers with an element of artistic surprise. Look at how the fading watercolour of the river delightfully overlaps with the city contours.



Another example is these quirky hand-drawn city maps. Below is an extract of a

glorious map of London by [Jenni Sparks](#). Her annotations reveal characteristics of the city that you simply wouldn't find on traditional maps. You can view the full London map in all its glory [here](#) and her equally fascinating map of New York [here](#).



Below you can see an extract from a beautiful 'Film Map' - based on the style of a vintage LA street map and featuring over 900 film titles. It includes districts dedicated to Hitchcock and Cult British Horror movies. The talented team at [WeAreDorothy](#) have also created a hugely popular 'Song Map' which you can view [here](#).

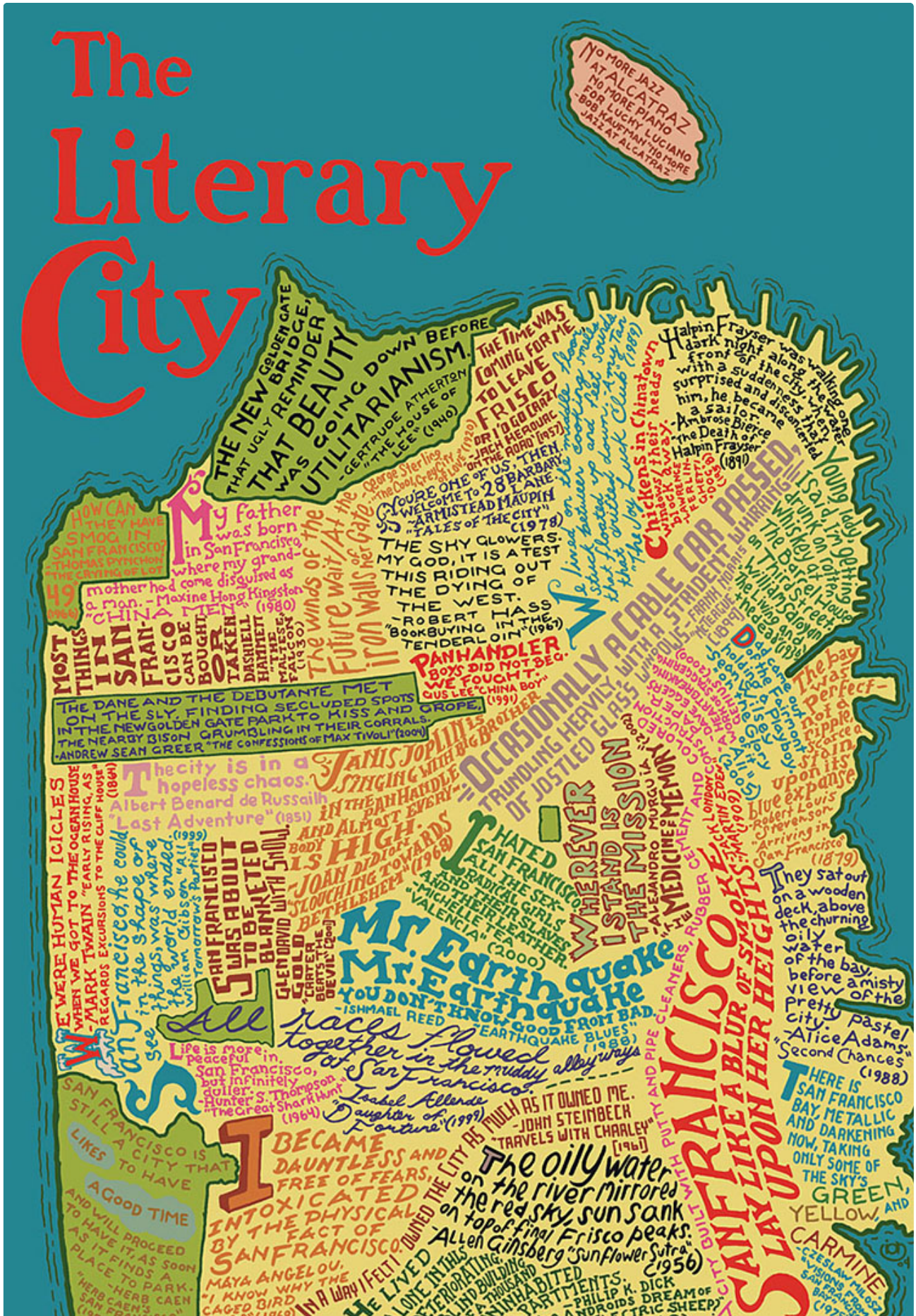


We can't even imagine the sheer number of man-hours that went into creating Simon Schuetz's [surf trip map](#) and [snow map](#) that you can see below. It comes complete with awesome illustrations for each country and over 1000 surf spots named. We are very excited to see what he comes up with for his upcoming travel map.



And finally, from Mark Twain to John Steinbeck, the map below provides a stunning tribute to California's most enchanting seven-by-seven square miles. For a more detailed breakdown of the authors and their works included see [Maria Popova's post](#) over at BrainPickings.

NO MORE JAZZ
AT ALCATRAZ
NO MORE PIANO
FOR LUCHY LUCIANO
- BOB KURTMAN NO MORE
JAZZ AT ALCATRAZ



We hope you enjoyed browsing some of these more beautiful and unusual maps, and for more cartographical inspiration you can check out our '[Maps Maps Maps](#)' board on Pinterest.

🕒 25 January, 2013

📍 Welwyn, UK

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