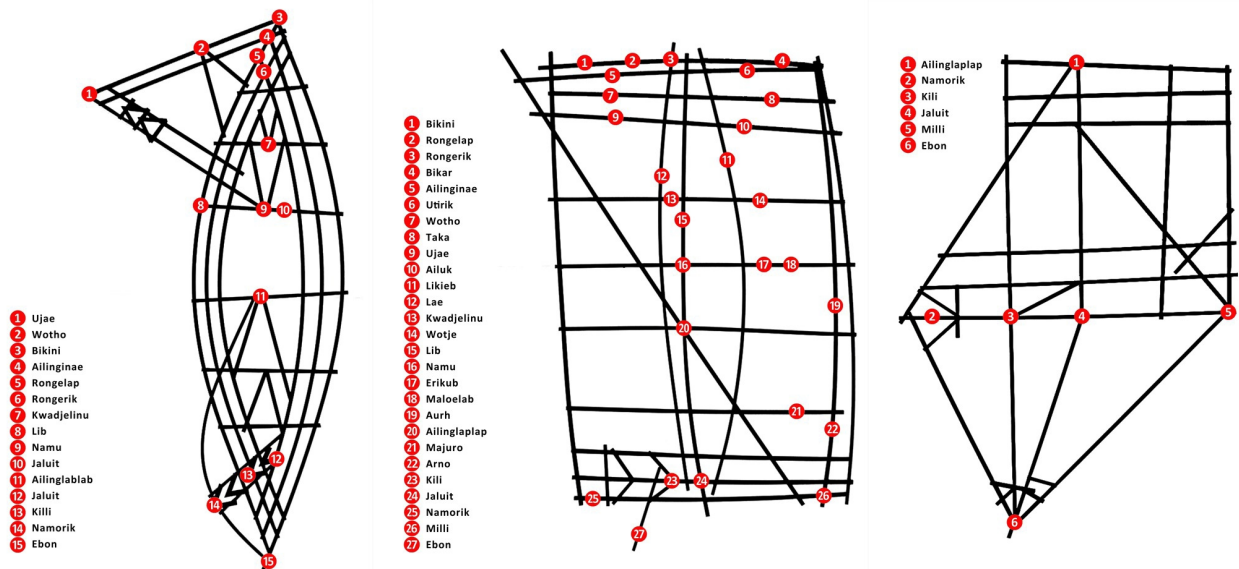


## MEMORY MAPS

Maps are a link between all cultures, as tools for orientation, are synonymous with projections, longings, wanderlust, expeditionary desire. Alexander von Humboldt was not only a pioneer of this science and art, who created comprehensive maps on his expeditionary journeys, he was also a collector of maps. The artistic concept establishes a dialogue between Western and non-Western civilizations, emphasizes their equivalence, puts our view of artifacts from other cultures to the test, examines the significance of form and color. The work also brings to light complex connections between art, cultural history, colonialism and ecology.

The installation "Memory Maps" consists of three autonomous elements that correspond with each other. The overall sculpture is a filigree, three-dimensional, abstract drawing in the air space, which enters into a dialogue with the geometry of the architecture and stands out formally and colorfully in the bright rooms. It is suspended from the ceiling in the central middle airspace on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the stair hall and opens up various views and linear intersections, can be experienced in different ways from the corridors, galleries, stairs. "Memory Maps" explicitly refers to the unique stick maps of the Marshall Islanders in Micronesia, points to a culture and landscape that is disappearing and at the same time to the collections in the house, because those three stick maps are in Berlin's Ethnological Collection.



Stick maps are subject to a special philosophy, they are not nautical charts in the Western sense. They do not show the navigator the way, but the method of how best to reach the destination. The Marshall Islanders created these maps from experience about atmospheric and geographic relationships of their habitat, and then navigated the boat between the atolls/islands without these maps, only with the abstract idea about the conditions. They are "memory navigation instruments," memory aids and orientation aids that provided information about the wave formations, wind and water currents encountered between the atolls and islands. The handy, fragile constructs are composed of wooden sticks of varying thickness; the islands in the Marshall Archipelago are designated by snail shells on the grid.

"Memory Maps" translates the three stick maps from the Berlin South Sea Collections into an abstract formal language, associates direct references to European Modernism to contemporary art. The primary colors red - yellow - blue each identify a map of sticks; they are spectral colors that reflect the prismatic of the elements water, air, light. The sculptures are classic light metal constructions, painted in color; the location of the islands and atolls is marked in each case by circular metal discs.

In order to convey this complexity of the artistic work and the background to its creation to the audience of the Humboldt Forum, a workbook is part of the art project. The publication is to be produced in collaboration with scientists and historians, as there is a complex history behind those fascinating stick maps. Originally, this specific knowledge about the "memory navigation instruments" was passed down orally from generation to generation, but the culture of stick maps has been largely lost in Micronesia today. However, during a visit to the Marshall Islands in 1897, Corvette Captain Winkler succeeded in gaining the trust of Chief Lojak on Jaluit Atoll. The latter's maritime expert Laumanuam deciphered the charts for him, and these notes by Winkler are reproduced in the publication. However, the Marshall Islands are also significant in colonial history, as they were the first colonial territory in the Kaiserreich, part of the German colonies in the South Pacific, called Deutsch-Neuguinea (1886-1914).



The territory of the Marshall Islands includes Bikini Atoll, where nuclear weapons tests were conducted by the USA between 1946 and 1958. The ecological catastrophe is hitting the Marshall Islands particularly hard, because the thousand-plus islands rise on average only two meters above sea level and are particularly affected by climate change, threatening to disappear completely in the next few years.