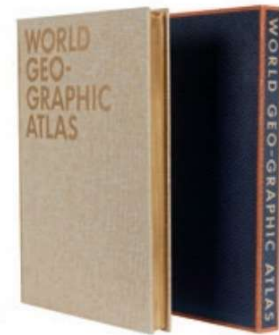


ARTS & EVENTS

ATLAS LOVED

This summer, the Aspen Institute celebrates Herbert Bayer's groundbreaking rendering of the world as he saw it in 1953.



When Bauhaus artist and Aspen icon Herbert Bayer unveiled his *World Geo-Graphic Atlas* in 1953, he broke the mold and set a new standard for the old-school mapmaking genre. Just as the painter and naturalist John James Audubon upended the world of ornithology in 1820 when he released the first volume of *The Birds of America*—an audacious attempt to not just catalog but to produce beautifully hand-painted, life-size watercolor renderings of every winged creature on the continent—Bayer's *World Geo-Graphic Atlas* is far more than just another collection of maps.

His 368-page visual marvel is, as the book's subtitle states plainly, "a composite of man's environment." It's a groundbreaking work of graphic design and data visualization that includes 120 full-page maps, 1,200 smaller maps, and more than 4,000 illustrations and drawings with minimal text. It tells the story of every state in the United States and the countries of the world—along with the known universe—with often granular and fascinating detail on astrophysics, agriculture, economics and, yes, geography.

The atlas was also a prescient environmentalist work, with a final chapter devoted to

"Conservation of Resources" that anticipated many of the concerns of the modern sustainability movement.

"Destruction of resources is as old as mankind," Bayer wrote, "but it is the special characteristic of the 19th and 20th centuries: no problem confronting the world today is more vital than conservation and wise utilization of natural wealth."

As the world contemplates and grapples with the specter of climate change, Bayer's work is especially resonant. To that end, the Aspen Institute's Resnick Center for Herbert Bayer Studies, which opened in 2022 (and where I manage educational programs), commemorates the 70th anniversary of the atlas's release this summer with a campus-wide celebration that will include *World Geo-Graphic Atlas* gallery presentations at the Paepcke Memorial Building and Doerr-Hosier Center, which will also house a massive recreation of Bayer's *Outside-In Globe* sculpture—an eight-foot-diameter walk-in globe that invites viewers to see the world as one.

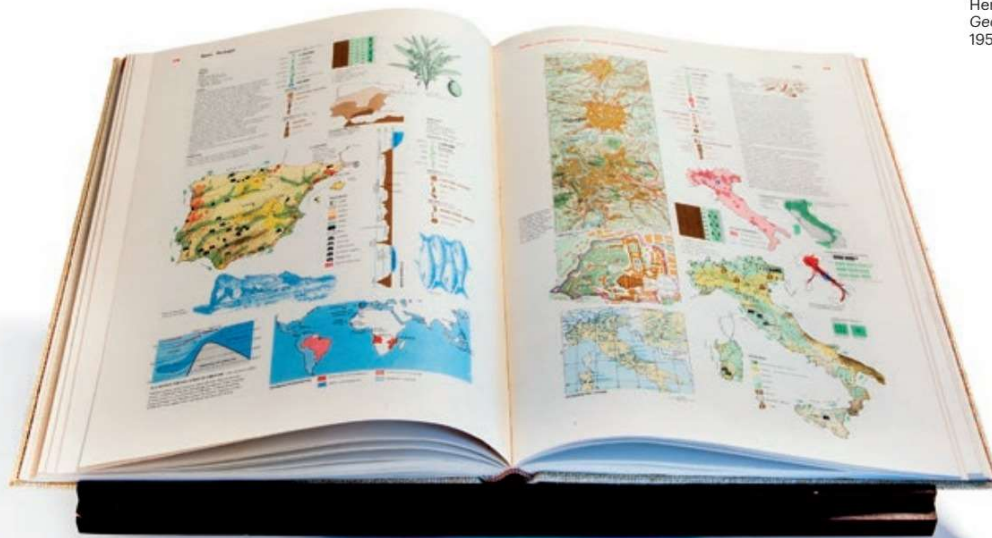
In 1947, Aspen Institute and Aspen Skiing Company founder Walter Paepcke commissioned Bayer to create an atlas updating one that his Container Corporation of America

had published in 1936—challenging him to accurately depict a global society remade and borders redrawn by World War II. Paepcke also brought Bayer to Aspen to design its aesthetic as they remade the all-but-abandoned old mining town into a ski destination and would-be utopia built on the foundation of Paepcke's "Aspen Idea."

The atlas was Bayer's creative focus in his Aspen workshop over the next five years—a pivotal period in the town's rebirth and in Bayer's role shaping it. The atlas years also included the founding of the Institute and Aspen Music Festival, completion of Bayer's first building on the Institute campus, and the opening of Lift One on Aspen Mountain.

Just 30,000 copies of the atlas were produced in its only printing, and none were sold commercially. Instead, Paepcke gifted them to Container Corporation clients and world leaders in addition to public schools and libraries. Still cited in graphic design classes, Bayer's influential work transformed the style of geographical atlases and popular scientific illustrations.

The exhibitions (thebayercenter.org/exhibitions) open in June and are expected to remain on display until the summer of 2024. -AT



Herbert Bayer's *World Geo-Graphic Atlas*, 1953



Danish Artists
Backhaus, Brown
and Egevaerk

“VALKYRIE”
June 15 – July 26

Inspired by the women of Norse mythology,
symbolized in glass and wood boats

“Herja”

Blown and carved glass
with fumed oak hull

RAVEN
GALLERY

433 E. Cooper Avenue, Aspen 970.429.4297 ravengalleryaspen.com

