

CARTOGRAPHIC DESIGNER

# Artist Statement

Fedir Gontsa

Cherkasy, Ukraine · [fedir.gontsa.com](http://fedir.gontsa.com)

---

For over ten years I have been making maps. And all that time I have been doing essentially one thing: trying to understand space and give it a form that others can read.

This interest appeared long before cartography. It began with a childhood fascination with archaeology, which later led to a brief period of work in the field — and from there came the ability to read the traces of what is no longer there, and to reconstruct a whole from a fragment. Then came architecture. It taught me to read space: to see its structure and inner connections, to understand how parts assemble into a whole. And it showed me that technology and art are not opposites — that precise calculation exists so that space can speak in its own voice.

Research into the ruined and lost landscape parks of the Cherkasy region brought all of this into a single practice: the reconstruction of space that now survives only as a hint in the terrain, a document, or a memory. I try to hold on to what disappears first — the *genius loci*, the spirit of place. Hence the theme that runs through all my work: mapping not only what is, but also what is no longer there.

Today this work is inseparable from data. Satellite imagery, open geospatial datasets, OpenStreetMap, interactive web maps — these are the material I build from. I deliberately rely on open tools and open solutions: they keep the work transparent, reproducible, and independent of closed systems. Technical precision is not an end in itself. It is a condition of honesty — a map must hold up against its source.

I use everything modern technology offers, but I do not reduce a map to it. A technically flawless map, on its own, remains a reference:

it shows, but says nothing. A map becomes a story when it carries intent and emotion — when science and art work together. Like any work, it must be truthful. And precisely for that reason it takes a position: the honest choice of what to show is already a statement.

A map is made to last. In time it becomes a source in its own right — one through which the historians of the future will read our age. So honesty is needed not only here and now: it will be asked of the map later too, by those who read it as evidence of its time. This takes different forms. A reconstruction for a book must create a convincing illusion of reality, so the reader can imagine themselves inside the event. A documentary map must record every detail needed to read it accurately. The tasks differ. Honesty does not.

Raw data all shouts at once — a map gives it an order in which the essential can be heard. Every map begins with a choice: what to show and what to leave outside the frame, which connections to make visible, what to leave unsaid. The work lies in that choice — not in decorating data, but in giving it a form in which a person sees what would otherwise stay invisible: the scale of a phenomenon, its limits, its absence.

I deliberately call myself a cartographic designer, not a cartographer. This is not about a lack of credentials. It is about emphasis: form matters to me no less than content.

To take space — and the spirit of place, so easily lost — and give it a form in which it can be read. In the end, that is what all my work is about.