

Joyce Kozloff charts physical and diplomatic terrain, creating places, real and imagined, to dramatize the intersections of culture and politics. *Joyce Kozloff: Uncivil Wars* incorporates US Civil War battle maps - created by officers and soldiers from both the Confederate and Union armies - to depict a history that is currently still contested. Viruses erupt throughout the battle maps, reflecting the pandemic that locked down state, national, and international borders, symbolizing the viral racism and xenophobia that permeates our country. Barbara Pollack, in her conversation with the artist, notes that Kozloff has “a knack for picking maps that are historical but coincide with contemporary issues.” Pollack then points out that “about 620,000 soldiers died in the U.S. Civil war over 5 years, almost the same as U.S. deaths from Covid in the last year.”

Meticulously copying the information held in each map, Kozloff turns them into expressive works by building up painterly surfaces with rich, saturated colors, as in *Battle of Appomattox Court House* (2021), where the armistice was signed. Pinks, oranges, and greens explode across the canvas, and while the viruses abound, Kozloff’s treatment evokes fireworks, suggesting both the horrors and sadness of war, and the relief and jubilation of its ending. *Battle of Shiloh* (2021) is a swirling mass of viral infection in gorgeous, iridescent putrescence, reflecting the bloodiness of that battle. And the viruses in *Battle of Fredericksburg* (2021), a classically gridded painting, look strangely like the mines and grenades employed during the war.

After Kozloff’s 2021 *Uncivil Wars* exhibition at DC Moore Gallery, she created a series of six smaller paintings, a coda to the earlier ones, also based on period maps of other Civil War battles. But this time, she overlaid them with masks that we were all wearing during the Covid epidemic. They had become a battleground between red and blue America, often divided across the Mason-Dixon Line. Judith Solodkin, Solo Impression Inc., utilizing a digital sewing machine, attached the masks and embroidered the paintings’ surfaces with a wide range of programmed stitches (from sharp, aggressive lines of battle to meandering patterned borders). The sutured masks evoke, for the artist, faded sepia photographs of bandaged rebel and Union soldiers in American history textbooks. *Battle of Richmond* (2023) is a target, indicating the encircling and strangling of the southern capital = signaling the failure of the Confederate insurrection.