



"Maybe we will finally be able to see the forest when we cut down all the trees." - Confucius, attributed



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## VACATION: DAUPHIN ISLAND ON DISPLAY AT CLUI LOS ANGELES



Some of the remaining houses on Dauphin Island.

CLUI photo

AN EXHIBIT ABOUT DAUPHIN ISLAND was on display at the Center for Land Use Interpretation's Los Angeles exhibit hall this winter, as part of the Center's *Coastal Islands: Fragments of America* program. The exhibit, titled *Vacation: Dauphin Island*, looked at the community there as a representative extreme of the architecture that has immersed in the hurricane and flood-prone Gulf coast.

Naturally, Dauphin Island is a dynamic, migrating sand bar, a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico, off the coast of Alabama. French settlers first named it "Isle Massacre," as it was littered with skeletons when they found it. Over the years this marginal land was claimed by France, Spain, England, and the Confederate nation. At the island's more solid eastern tip is Fort Gaines, guarding the mouth of Mobile Bay, into which Admiral Farragut charged in the American Civil War, famously uttering "Damn the torpedoes - Full speed ahead!" Following the Civil War, the island slowly became a community of leisure, with a summertime population more than five times larger than the year-round population.

Dauphin Island's remaining battle is with the ocean, whose hurricane winds and surging surf threaten to wipe its western half clean. The island was ransacked by hurricanes Frederick in 1979, Danny in 1997, George in 1998, and Ivan in 2004. Rebuilt homes, funded by FEMA-backed insurance policies, grow back on higher and higher stilts, floating like domestic hovercraft above the crashing waters. The latest round of storms, 2005's Dennis, Katrina, and Wilma, erased dozens of houses off the island, and left many of the surviving, damaged homes teetering, in limbo in a no-man's land. Dauphin Island, it seems, is another one of those places determined to go away. ♦



House on Dauphin Island.

CLUI photo

## LANDSCAPE INFORMATION CENTER PROGRAM CHANGES PUBLIC FACE OF THE CLUI



View of the Landscape Information Center at CLUI Los Angeles.

CLUI photo

THE CLUI CELEBRATED ITS LANDSCAPE Information Center development program with the creation of a regional exhibit at the Center's Los Angeles display space last Fall. The exhibit focuses on some of the compelling and dramatic elements of the Southern California landscape, and includes several projects that have been produced by the CLUI on the subject over the past few years, including *Emergency State: First Responder and Law Enforcement Training Architecture*; *Loop Feedback Loop: The Big Picture of Traffic Control in Los Angeles*; *One Wilshire: Telco Hotel Central*; *Curious Orange: Points of View of the Landscape of Orange County*; *Terminal Island*; *Ground Up: Photographs of the Ground in the Margins of Los Angeles*; and *Aerial Survey of the Inland Empire*. More regional programs are being prepared for the space.

In order to fit a lot of information into a small space, the exhibits have been converted to an electronic format, with images and text presented on a collection of screens installed in kiosks. High resolution CRT monitors have been used, giving the digitally acquired imagery their best look in their native habitat.

Also in the space are displays that enable visitors to tour hundreds of points of interest in Southern California, letting their fingers do the exploring on a touch-sensitive scalable map. Monitors and workstations allow access to other CLUI programs and exhibits, and allow access to the Center's Land Use Database, which covers the whole nation. A wall of brochures in the entrance provides information on points of interest across the country, as well as locally. The Center's book shop has an extensive "regional" section, featuring titles about the southern California landscape, as well as selected notable titles that explore landscape issues in general.

At the heart of the Landscape Information Center program is the establishment of regional Landscape Information Centers, or "LICs," at selected locations around the United States. In Troy, New York, the Center's northeast office will be opening a LIC this summer. A building currently undergoing renovations at the Center's Wendover, Utah complex will open as the LIC for the Great Basin area within a year's time. And new displays are under construction at the Center's Desert Research Station site, where, once completed, the publicly accessible building will be rechristened as the LIC for the Mojave Desert area.

The LIC program has been part of the conceptual framework for the Center for Land Use Interpretation since the inception of the organization. Though it has had a few different names over the years, the objectives have always been the same: to create a network of regional interpretive facilities that serve the public as a source of information about the built landscapes that surround all of us. The official announcement of the program comes at a time when the Center has finally secured the resources to perform the necessary work to implement the program. "It's been a slow process, but through the continued support of our friends and benefactors, we have been able to make the transition from just operating regional offices and assorted programs at disparate locations, to operating a network of Landscape Information Centers at these locations," said CLUI Director Matthew Coolidge. Announcements of the opening of other LICs will be made over the next few years.

The Landscape Information Center in Los Angeles is open to the public free of charge, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 12-5pm. The conversion of the public storefront space in Los Angeles to a Landscape Information Center does not exclude the use of the space for periodic presentations and exhibits about other aspects of the American landscape. Occasional special programs will be presented, as scheduling and resources permit. And one display wall hosts periodically changing, timely exhibits about land use issues and themes, such as the exhibit *Vacation: Dauphin Island*, currently on view. ♦

## CLUI KIOSK ON VIEW IN NEW YORK CITY WHITNEY MUSEUM PROVIDING SPACE THROUGH MAY 2006



CLUI touchscreen kiosk at the Whitney Museum in New York.

CLUI photo

THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN Art has generously provided temporary floorspace for a CLUI informational kiosk in their venue on Madison Avenue, in Manhattan. The kiosk contains a program, navigated by a touch-sensitive screen, that introduces users to the Center and its projects. Similar CLUI touchscreens have been sent to other museums and public display spaces domestically, and abroad.

The CLUI kiosk is part of the Whitney Museum's 2006 Biennial exhibition. After visiting the CLUI's operations in Utah and Los Angeles, curators from the museum asked the CLUI for the loan of a kiosk, similar to those they saw in use at other CLUI visitor centers. One was manufactured, and installed in their museum in February, 2006. At the close of the exhibit, the kiosk will move to the Center's Landscape Information Center in Troy, New York. ♦

## THE HENRY FORD EXPERIENCE

A VERTICALLY INTEGRATED INTERPRETIVE ASSEMBLY LINE



Richard Pell, of the Institute for Applied Autonomy, operates a robotic souvenir machine that makes molded statuette of Henry Ford at the Henry Ford Museum. CLUI photo

EVERYTHING COMES TOGETHER AT THE Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn Michigan. The museum is located at what must be the largest and most diversified corporate headquarters landscapes in the nation. The site covers several active Ford production and research industrial compounds, including one of their varied terrain proving grounds; the company's world headquarters office building; Henry Ford's estate, Fair Lane; a convention center; Ford's 90 acre historic park Greenfield Village; and the massive museum, with an Imax theater, where tour buses leave to take visitors to the nearby Rouge Plant, once the most famous factory complex in the world. From the birthplace of the corporate founder and the re-creation of his boyhood universe, to the current production site of the F-150 pickup truck, a visit to this microcosm of the American industrial macrocosm is revealing, entertaining, astounding, and inspiring. It is a place for exploration and discovery among a bounty of factoids, and a place to be processed through a state of the art, high-volume, industrial interpretation machine.



A Honda Civic (slightly ahead of a Ford Escort), leads a parade of cars spanning "A Hundred Years of the Automobile in American Life" exhibit at the Henry Ford. CLUI photo

The museum building is the place to begin, and to buy expensive tickets to all the attractions. The museum opened in 1929, as part of an educational complex imagined by Henry Ford himself. Though the Henry

Ford Academy still occupies a corner of the large building, the museum has taken over most of the floorspace, swelling with collections that focus on American material culture, with an emphasis on American innovation and invention.

Artifacts, implements, machines, and vehicles are clustered in several gallery zones on the museum's continuous open floor, arranged by themes such as agriculture, furnishings, early flight, power generation, railways, and clockworks. The museum is full of cars, of course, as any museum purporting to be about the last hundred years of America should be. The cars include the limousine that J. F. Kennedy was assassinated in (a Ford product); Charles Lindbergh's 1935 camping trailer (which he towed around the country quite a bit for 20 years, before he dropped it off at the Museum in 1957); and a 1950's vintage Oscar Meyer Weinermobile (though on a Jeep chassis, not a Ford product, this model did have tail lights from a Ford Thunderbird).



The Dymaxion House at the Ford Museum.

CLUI photo

One of the most notable artifacts in the museum is the only remaining prototype of the Dymaxion House, built according to Buckminster Fuller's design, by the Beach Aircraft company. The house is a gleaming metal spaceship, hanging on a central mast by a nearly invisible network of cables and cantilevers. Radiating from the mast inside are partitions dividing the circular space into two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a living room. Innovations include two tiny molded plastic bathrooms that were supposed to wash themselves, and a motorized vertical conveyor of shelves for clothing.

The Dymaxion House is just one of dozens of buildings that have been collected by the museum. The rest are outdoors in the adjacent attraction, a 90 acre historical park called Greenfield Village.

Greenfield Village is a unique kind of museum, where the artifacts are not housed in buildings, but *are* buildings. Though there are other historic villages composed of relocated structures, the moves are usually local, and the groupings relatively small. Greenfield Village is truly a nationwide collection of buildings, a transposition of historic sites from the east and west to the industrial suburbs of Michigan.

The idea for it is said to have begun when Ford's own birthplace, a small house in the farm country near Dearborn, was in the path of (of all things) road construction. To save it, he had it relocated to a new site, and decided to renovate it to match his childhood memories. This

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precipitated a wave of building collection, preservation and historical recreation that continued through his life, and continues to this day, at the nostalgic, anachronistic, fantasy town of Greenfield Village.

The buildings Ford collected represented a blend of personal and national history, perhaps appropriate for a man who had an impact on the nation unlike any other. In addition to his own childhood home, the village has a replica of the rural schoolhouse he attended. Ford also bought, moved, and reassembled on site the home of one of his school teachers, as well as that of a baptist minister and writer that influenced him, George Adams. He brought a 1790 log cabin to the village from Pennsylvania, as it was the birthplace of Williams Holmes McGuffey, the writer of one of his (and of millions of others') school textbook. He bought the homes of other writers he admired, and placed them in the village, including a 1823 house from New Haven, Connecticut, that belonged to Noah Webster, the dictionary pioneer, and the poet Robert Frost's Michigan house.

He relocated the boyhood home of his friend (the tire magnate) Henry Firestone, a large brick house built in 1828, from Ohio, and re-created the farm land that had surrounded it. In addition to these houses, he bought other buildings he thought were of significance: An 1840 courthouse from Lincoln, Illinois, that Abraham Lincoln once worked in; a 17th Century windmill from Cape Cod; slave's quarters from Georgia; from Santa Rosa, California, the garden office of the famous horticulturalist Luther Burbank; and from Dayton, Ohio, not only the circa 1875 home of the Wright brothers, but their legendary bicycle shop, a brick storefront building.

Nobody is as celebrated in Greenfield Village as Ford's friend and former boss, Thomas Edison. His relationship with Edison lasted through his life. Greenfield Village, and the museum next door, is largely a homage to Edison and the inventiveness, industry, and showmanship he mastered, and that Ford so admired. Among the Edison related structures at the village are buildings from the famous lab site at Menlo Park, New Jersey, including the original boarding house that housed the lab workers, and Edison's grandparent's house, built in 1815, which was relocated to the village from Ontario.



The Ford Rouge Plant., near Dearborn, once the most "vertically integrated" factory in the world.

CLUI photo

The final step in this epic interpretive triad is to board a special bus outside the museum for a visit to the visitor center at the Rouge Plant, a few miles away. After building the first assembly line car plant in Highland Park, north of Detroit, which produced the Model T, Ford built his next big plant along the Rouge River, near Dearborn. This became one of the largest and most revolutionary industrial sites in

the world. Construction started in 1917, and by the 1930's Rouge had 100,000 workers at the mile and a half long plant site, putting out a Model A car every 49 seconds.

The plant was a self-contained industrial world, where the cars were made literally from scratch. Raw materials came in by rail and by ship, much of it from Ford owned mines, quarries, and plantations, including the iron ore to be turned into steel at the on site blast furnaces, foundries, and mills, and the raw rubber for making tires at the site's tire plant. Everything, from glass to door handles, were made on site. It was as close to a complete industrial empire by a single company as has ever been achieved. Interestingly, this notion of "vertical integration" that Ford established at Rouge was never repeated by the company. Workers uprisings in the 1930's, trust-busting, unionization, World War II, Henry Ford's death in 1947, and other factors led the company to favor a more decentralized method, and the dozens of plants that the company later built were all specialized, and scattered around the state and region.

In the 1980's half of the Rouge site was sold to an independent steel company. Many of the older plants on site were dirty, outdated, and closed. By 1992, the only remaining car made there was the Mustang, which had atrophied from the stylish muscle car of the '60s to a middle of the road compact car, with less than 100,000 made that year. A low point for the Rouge came in the late 1990's when an explosion at the boiler plant killed six people, and injured many others. After that Mustang production moved to another plant.

In the last few years, the site has undergone a transformation. Many of the old buildings have been torn down, and a new showcase plant has been built, the Dearborn Truck Plant, which makes the F-150 pick-up, one of Ford's most popular and durable products. Rouge is still Ford's largest single plant, though it operates on only 600 of the Rouge's original 2,000 acres. 6,000 people work at the site, making parts for other Ford products, as well as the F-150. It takes twelve hours to assemble a truck, which travels along on a variety of conveyors through the plant, and the plant puts one out every sixty seconds, at the rate of 800-900 per day in two shifts.



The entrance to the factory visitor center.

CLUI photo

Some of this history is addressed in the Rouge Visitor Center, a new and elaborate tourist attraction, built along with the adjacent truck plant, that serves as a portal for plant tours. The visitor center is set up like an assembly line of sorts, with four separate and clearly marked Stations. Visitors first enter a holding area, where the contents of all the shuttle buses are collected. After a brief introduction by a greeter, and some video, the "raw product" is moved into the Legacy Theater, where an

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overview of the company and the plant is applied through a well-produced but fairly conventional three-screen static image and historical footage documentary voice-over cinematic method. Between the exit of Station 1, and the entrance of Station 2 is about twenty feet of empty space, that provides an airing out, before the next step.

The sign above Station 2 reads “The Art of Manufacturing.” In we go. Inside, Station 2 is a domed space, full of swivel seats, with multiple large screens surrounding the room. After being seated, visitors are warned of impending strobes and percussive sounds, and that they are about to experience what it is like to *become* an F-150 pickup. Then the dramatic orchestral music begins, and we are shown, in surround, in fact immersed, in the car making process, from the forging of engine blocks to the stamping of body panels, to the painting process. The theater has vibrating floors and blasts of heat, and jets of air and vapor during appropriate moments to heighten the effect. Then we experience the final assembly, and road test, and release: the F-150 heads out into the landscape (a shot made under the snowy Sierras in the Alabama Hills of the Owens Valley). Lights on.

Station 3 is reached through elevators, whose doors open up on a panoramic viewing area, an overlook, above the plant, showing, most prominently, “the world’s largest living roof” atop the new truck plant. In the other direction, the old Rouge sprawls to the river. Backlit canted plaques line the base of the windows like flower pots.



Visitors become the product at the Ford Rouge Plant Visitor Center.

CLUI photo

Back down the elevators to an intermediate level, Station 4 has a bank of video screens warning off photography for the following chapter, then a break area, with tables and vending machines. Beyond the fortification of the vending machines is the entrance of a sky bridge, that leads to the plant. Inside, we view the final assembly of F-150s from an open gallery that rings around above the “trim line,” where the windshields, doors, mirrors, and other trim are joined to the truck and its bed. It is unclear if the plant visit is part of a station or not. Perhaps by this time our interpretive assembly is complete, as we merge with the real thing, and are free to move about at our own pace, amid the canted plaques and touchscreens of the gallery. Buses heading back to the Museum leave every half hour. Plenty of time to peruse the gift items that are only available at the “factory store.”

When Henry Ford was 16 he left home and went to seek his fortune in the city. He found work with Edison’s Illuminating Company, in Detroit. Starting in 1892, when not at work, he tinkered with putting an engine on a four wheeled bicycle, in a small brick building behind the duplex he was living in. 41 years later, he built a version of this

small brick building at Greenfield Village, using some token bricks from the duplex for authenticity. The original site, 58 Bagley Avenue, is now the once grand Michigan Theater, haphazardly redeveloped into an indoor parking lot. This site has become an icon of the Motor City as a city made, then ruined, by motors. ♦



A couple of Fords in the Michigan Theater.

CLUI photo

## DIXIE SQUARE MALL R.I.P.?



CLUI photo by Steve Rowell

THE DIXIE SQUARE SHOPPING MALL, crowned by the CLUI in a 2003 exhibit as “The Best Dead Mall in America,” is coming down. The monument to ‘70’s commercial decrepitude, which after more than 20 years of abandonment, had evolved into a labyrinthian museum of decay, is, at the very moment of this writing, being bulldozed into piles, to make way for a new development.

The mall is (was) located in Harvey, Illinois, a suburb south of Chicago. It opened with great optimism in 1966, as one of the state’s first enclosed shopping centers. The rambling 800,000 square foot building housed over 60 stores, including the great retail anchors of the time, Sears and Montgomery Ward. Things went south relatively quickly for Dixie Square, and by the end of the ‘70’s the complex was shuttered. The swan song came a year later when the Blues Brothers, tearing through the margins of Chicago in the longest and most destructive cinematic car chase ever, careened through the mall, on their journey to Daly Plaza, at the center of the Chicago, like suburban marauders, making amends with the urban core.

Earlier this year, the 57 acre mall site was sold by the city of Harvey (which had owned it since 1983) to a developer called the Emerald Property Group for \$500,000. Demolition started in March. The developer will be building a new shopping mall on the site, and has already secured some of the new retail anchors for these times: Old Navy, Barnes & Noble, and Bed Bath & Beyond.

An exhibit, installed in the abandoned mall in 2003, featured the proposals from a NEA-sponsored competition for conceptual dead mall redesigns, organized by the Los Angeles Forum for Architecture. The exhibit is now being ground up amidst the mall debris, to be interred in a landfill. ♦

## THE LANDSCAPE OF CORN AND WHEN NOT A CORNFIELD IS A CORNFIELD



The Not a Cornfield site is, once again, not a cornfield, but is back to being just the Cornfields.

Steve Rowell photo

THE CORN IS GONE FROM downtown Los Angeles. The harvest was the last event in a nine month project known as *Not A Cornfield*, which involved planting 32 acres of corn in a former railyard brownfield near Chinatown known generally over the years, for some reason, as the Cornfields. *Not A Cornfield* was conceived by the artist Lauren Bon, as an artwork and as a nexus for a network of converging activities, events, lectures, screenings, and artforms.

The land, between the LA River and Downtown, is scheduled to become a state park. In the meantime, for less than a year, Not A Cornfield LLC took over the space, starting in the summer of 2005. The project brought in hundreds of truckloads of dirt to lay on top of the brownfield ground, then formed furrows, lined with irrigation pipe, and planted corn.

While the corn grew from July to November, *Not A Cornfield* became a social space, free and open to the public, with scheduled and unscheduled activities. Films were screened, talks and discussions were presented, music was performed, and people caroused, in clearings in the corn, and at the construction trailer (and yurt) compound at the entrance to the site. A central path, cut through the middle of the oblong field, enabled visitors to walk through a corridor of corn for nearly half a mile, towards the silhouetted downtown skyline.

As the corn aged, dried, and turned brown, it was like a Halloween maize maze in January. Openings and new paths were cut into the fields, some resembling crop circles. Some stalks were grouped into bushels, or "shocks," to help define large, circular galleries for events, and elaborate lighting was installed that mirrored constellations during the winter solstice. The corn was picked, and an estimated 137,694 ears of corn were hung on the fence along the commuter rail tracks.

When it was time to clear the field, a John Deere 9660 combine came in and mowed the field down, churning up the stalks into mulch that was raked, baled, and used to construct a monument, known unofficially as "corn-henge." The ears of dried corn were also fed into the machine and the decobbed kernels were decanted from the combine's hopper into large bins, then sifted, and bagged for distribution as seed corn to homeless shelters, community gardens, and correctional facilities.

While it is sad to see this unusual and dramatic physical and social artwork gone, it led us to ponder the larger ideas of corn in our lives, and in America. . .



Frito-Lay's Kern Plant, serving up cornchips to the Southland.

CLUI photo

### The American Landscape of Corn

*Portions of this essay were presented at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, as part of a public discussion about the Not A Cornfield project, given by Matthew Coolidge, of the CLUI, on a panel with artist Lauren Bon, and critic/curator Ralph Rugoff, on October 5, 2005.*

The lower 48 states of the USA is 1.9 billion acres in size. Of that, about 30% (600 million acres) is forested, another 30% (580 million acres) is grassland and rangeland used by cattle and such. 10% is called "nonproductive," from an agricultural point of view, places like wetlands and deserts. 20% is cropland (450 million acres). On this, corn is America's largest crop, covering 81.6 million acres, about one quarter of all crops, an amount that adds up to about 4% of the land cover of the Lower 48. This is about the same amount of land that is urbanized/suburbanized. This is also almost half of the world's production of corn.

80% of the corn produced in the USA goes to feed livestock, especially cows. The American livestock industry is the largest global consumer of corn, but 15-20% of our corn is exported to other countries, like Japan, where it feeds Japanese cows.

The biggest corn processor in the world is the Archer Daniels Midland corporation, headquartered in Decatur, Illinois. They have 205 manufacturing facilities worldwide, 13,000 railcars, 1,200 trucks, and over 2,000 river barges (said to be the largest fleet in the world) for moving their product around. Three distinct plants operate at the Decatur complex, connected to each other by pipelines. The East Plant at Decatur is probably the largest corn products factory in the world. It processes corn at a rate of 600,000 bushels a day. What's a bushel? 4 pecks. And a unit of volume, 1.2 cubic feet, about 35 liters. A semi tractor truck can carry 920 bushels.

Though the fuel additive ethanol has recently surpassed high fructose corn syrup as the largest non animal-feed use of corn, the largest direct consumption of corn by humans in the USA is by ingesting corn syrup. High fructose corn syrup is found in numerous processed food products in the United States, where, unlike in other countries, due to the economy of large scale industrial production by companies like ADM, it is a less expensive sweetener than other sugars, like cane and beet. The vast majority of corn syrup is not eaten, but drunk in the form of soda pop, of which 12 billion gallons are consumed every year in the United States. The average American drinks 15 fluid ounces of soda a day, with about 14 teaspoons of corn syrup in it. A 48 oz "big gulp" has a full cup of corn syrup. It adds up to about 70 pounds of corn syrup per person per year.

The largest supplier of corn syrup sweetened drinks is the Coca-Cola Company of Atlanta, with over 40% of the nation's carbonated soft drink market. Their biggest product, Coke Classic, is still the most consumed sweetened carbonated beverage in America. Coke's other brands include Sprite, Minute Maid and Nestea. Not far behind, with just over 30% of the market, is PepsiCo, headquartered in Purchase, New York, up the river from Manhattan. In addition to the cola rival Pepsi, the company owns Mountain Dew, Slice, the Sobe drink line, Gatorade, and Tropicana (there is a lot of sweetener in orange juice too).

Corn as solid, human food comes mostly in the form of corn chip snacks. About a billion bags of tortilla and tostada snacks are sold each year, as part of a \$2 billion corn chip industry. The Frito-Lay brand dominates the industry, with 80% of the market share. Frito-Lay, headquartered in Plano, Texas, was formed by a merger of Elmer Doolin's "Frito" fried corn snack company and Herman Lay's potato chip company, in 1961. Based in Nashville, Lay's company grew by purchasing production plants and distribution networks in the southeast, consolidating what was generally a regional industry of small local producers. By 1956, it was the largest potato chip company in the country, but even so, it had just over 1,000 employees. Lay was the exclusive distributor of the Frito snack, the primary product of Doolin's Frito Company, since 1945. As Lay's distribution network grew, so too did the popularity of Fritos. Following the 1961 merger, the company expanded its network to cover the whole nation.

Frito-Lay owns the three most popular corn chip brands in the country, Fritos, Doritos and Tostitos. They also own Rold Gold pretzels, Lay's potato chips, Ruffles, Funyons, and Cheetos. The company operates hundreds of distribution centers and dozens of plants across the country, where they manufacture most of these products together. Frito-Lay is consolidating their production, moving more activity to their largest and most technologically advanced plants, including those at Lynchburg, Virginia; Bakersfield, California; Fayetteville, Tennessee; and Jonesboro, Arkansas; as well as at some older, but high-performing plants in Killingly, Connecticut; and Perry, Georgia. Currently, Frito-Lay's plant at Frankfort, Indiana is the largest "salty snacks plant" in the world.

Notably, since 1965, Frito-Lay has been owned by PepsiCo. Nothing makes you thirsty like a cornchip. ♦



A compression of the rural and urban, the corn of Not A Cornfield encroached on the skyline of Los Angeles. Not a Cornfield LLC photo

## LOS ANGELES GROUND ZERO A STUDY OF EAST COAST VS WEST COAST



Los Angeles' Ground Zero, with the palm trees of Playa Vista.

CLUI photo

A LOOK AT THE WEST Coast's World Trade Center Ground Zero, located in a lot in Los Angeles, near Culver City (for the moment), makes for an interesting study in the contrast between the two big American cities, their respective landscapes, and the differing versions of culture that they represent.

Built as a set for Oliver Stone's latest film, which is called, simply, "World Trade Center," LA's Ground Zero is a 1 to 1 scale re-creation of the original, recreating one acre of the 16 acre New York Ground Zero site. It was built on land that is part of Howard Hughes' old aircraft plant, which was intended to become Dreamworks' new movie studio, but has just remained a former aircraft plant instead. This was where Howard Hughes took off from for his last test flight, crashing his plane into a couple of houses in Beverly Hills, nearly dying. Since the closure of the plant, the hangars and open spaces have been used nearly continuously as a film production location. It has housed everything from the *Titanic* to *The Planet of the Apes*. And now, Ground Zero.

In New York, the Ground Zero is sort of negative space, a below grade excavation - the city is a fully built three dimensional landscape after all. In Los Angeles, land of surfaces, the pit was simulated by building walls up from the ground's surface, creating a positive space. The walls, appropriately, are made of stacked shipping containers, the architectural digits fashionable to modernist designers, and in great supply, due to the Port of LA/Long Beach's imbalance of trade with Asia, a product of our consumer culture.

LA's Ground Zero is made for a fictional film, while in NY Ground Zero is an artifact, a documentary remnant from a real event. In LA Ground Zero was intentionally and painstakingly created from scratch, with new materials - crews built thousands of beams out of styrofoam, and made contorted rebar out of foam rubber; an additive process. In NY, the site was made by clearing away waste material that had cluttered randomly on the site by the chaos of collapsing buildings; a reductive process. Ephemeral and transitory, the west coast Ground Zero will go away, while the New York version will continue to be a sacred shrine. But LA's Ground Zero will have an impact too, a lasting impression, as only big Hollywood movies can, and will have an effect on our memories and history, whether we like it or not.

*Like the original, the LA site is off limits to the public, and heavily guarded. The film will be out in August, maybe by September 11. In the meantime, at the moment, views can be had from the bluffs above, between the gaps of some of the monopoly homes of Westchester. ♦*

# SEEKING PERSPECTIVE

A VISIT TO THE GETTY VILLA



Foreground and background, structure and infrastructure: two ways of sitting depicted at the Getty Villa. CLUI photo

*After several years and \$275 million dollars, the Getty Villa has opened again to the public, the "largest art event" in Los Angeles this year. Just as we reported, in 1997, on the opening of the new Getty Center, that great cultural acropolis in the hills of Brentwood, we visited the "neo" classical Villa for a preview in January, a few weeks before it opened to the public, and are submitting the following report.*

RISING UP OUT OF THE parking garage, visitors catch just a glance of the site, entering quickly into the Entry Pavillion, a rectangular box of a space, with high walls, evocative indeed, as the architects intended, of an archeological excavation. Encouraged by a greeter, we boarded an elevator that took us out of the pit, and into an open vista which serves as an orientation station for visitors. It overlooks the main features of the site: the amphitheater, the main entrance of the museum, the coffee shop, the Ranch House. In front of us, an interpretive plaque laid it all out.

Descending into the main building, it is immediately clear that this is a masterpiece of technical museumology. The details feel as solid as if the whole place were carved out of one megalith. The classical sculptures seemed renewed in their crisp curatorial frames. We soon became seduced by the infrastructure at the Villa: the door hinges, the dataport covers in the floor, the touchscreen enclosures, and the fiber optics in the display cases. The objects in the museum look good because of these things, this enchanting exhibition of faultless hardware. From the tiniest coin in the tiniest vitrine to the mock-up of the Herculanum Villa itself that houses the galleries, to the lavishly landscaped grounds that surround the buildings: the Villa is a Russian doll of a museum, a display case within a display case within a display case.

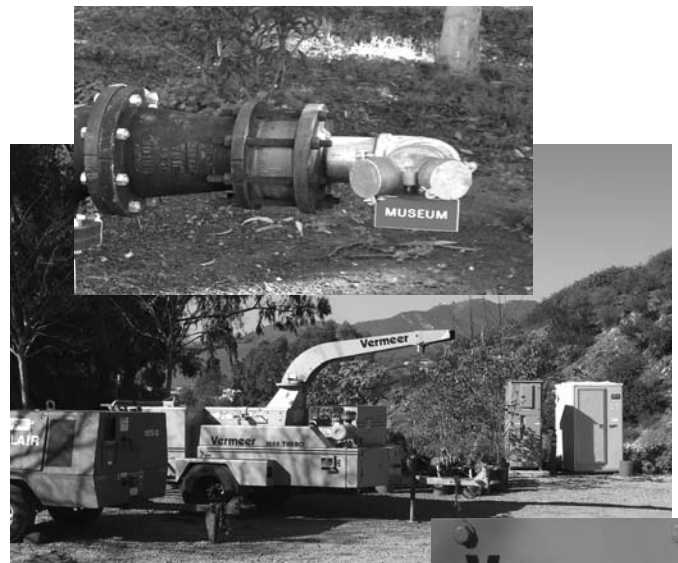
Heading past the custom exit signs, out the back door, past the exposed water and gas shut off valves near the service entrance, past the loading docks with their open maws, past the magnificent battery of vents of the Villa's air plant, we sought the edge, the back of the backspace, to find the final layer of infrastructure for this 64 acre meticulous macrocosm. Following electrical cables strewn on the ground, up a path behind the Ranch House (the building that J. Paul used to live in) that is now a UCLA Conservation Research Center, this overgrown path seems forgotten, from another time - perhaps J. Paul walked up this path during moments of lone contemplation? The path follows a small dry stream bed, or is it a drainage rill slope, then peters out in thickets of eucalyptus litter. Higher and higher we climb until finally: the perimeter road. The cyclone fence across the road is barbed, and old, this has been the limit for a while. We look at the backs of signs that say "No Trespassing Private Property Trained Service Dogs In Use," facing out. This is the end of the Villa.



The perimeter road around the back side of the Getty Villa.

CLUI photo

The perimeter road encircles the back part of the property. It is like a corridor through a gallery of infrastructural artifacts: utility vaults in the ground, with lids labeled "security," indicating a network of buried cable; the DWP water meter, the water connection to the outside; steerable weatherproof security cameras on poles; portapotties for maintenance crews; landscaping equipment sheds; portable air compressor trailers; and stainless steel irrigation control switchboxes, poking out of the ground like blank and mute interpretive kiosks.



Some of the incidental "new world" exhibits along the Villa's perimeter road, including a Vermeer 1800 Turbo brush chipper.

CLUI photo



Finally, perspective. The service road reaches the highest point of land on the property, offering views of the Villa below, and of the ocean beyond. It echoes, for a moment, San Simeon, that other private house and dreamscape of a wealthy man, hell bent on collecting things, built north of Los Angeles, in hills overlooking the Pacific Ocean, which was opened, over his dead body, to the public. A place J. Paul Getty visited once, as a guest of Hearst's, perhaps laying the seed for this version. But the Villa's production value makes it more than a spectacle of one man's unfettered accumulations. It is as strong an argument as has been made yet of the incongruity of the old world's place in America. ♦

## ST. LOUIS

SPANNING THE MIDDLE OF AMERICA



An apogean view: peering out from the cramped space at the top of the St. Louis Arch. CLUI photo

ST. LOUIS IS IN THE middle of America. It is north/south/east/west. It is at the end and beginning of the Missouri River, and on the Mississippi waterway between the Gulf and the Great Lakes. As early as the legends of Lewis and Clark, we know St. Louis as a gateway between the East and the West, a notion so boldly reasserted (posthumously) by Eero Saarinen in 1965. From the historic prose of Mark Twain, the city is a river town, and steamboats connected it, lazily, to the south. In later years, with locomotives and industrialization, St. Louis became stitched to the industrial Midwest (which is, geographically, really the north-east).

Overall, Missouri may be the most in-between state, sharing its border with many different states and regions: the Great Plains on its west side (Kansas and Nebraska, Oklahoma); the Midwest on its north and east side (Iowa and Illinois); the South on its south side (Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky). The federal census has placed the population center for the nation in Missouri since 1980. Meet me in St. Louis. Indeed!

Though its gotten alot harder to meet people in St. Louis: The city lost half of its population due to outmigration between 1950 and 1990. Once the fourth largest city in the country, St. Louis was ranked as the 49th largest after the 2000 census. But that might be changing, as the general trend of redeveloping inner cities continues. As it stands today, the economy of St. Louis is service, followed by industry. The largest private employers are the health care company BJC, Washington University, and retail companies (grocery, fast food, and Wal-mart). The largest industrial employer, by far, is Boeing, which has at least 15,000 people working in a number of research and production centers (including their "secretive" Phantom Works) next to St. Louis Airport. The next largest is DaimlerChrysler, with around 7,000 employees. Other automotive companies are also major employers in the region, as is the agricultural biotechnology giant Monsanto, which has its world headquarters at a sprawling campus out on Lindbergh Boulevard.

It may be instructive to look at St. Louis, this center in the middle of everywhere, by carving an arc around its edge, the city's official and unofficial limits. The effect is twofold: it takes into account its suburban fringe, to the west, as well as its eastern core, along the Mississippi. It performs a circumnavigation and a cross-section, interpretive urban transects from within and without. By looking at a selection of some points of interest within this realm we can learn not just about the landscape, but about the economy and culture of this classic city, this American gateway, and American center.

## Sites on the Edge of St. Louis

One way to approach a city is by leaving it. In St. Louis this means heading beyond the I-270 beltway that represents the edge of the metropolitan bowl. One gains distance, while going deep into the milieu of the fringe, as it is on the edge where many land uses, pushed out of the denser developments, thrive, like a bubble emerging from a crack. But with the rapid growth of the suburbs, what was once outside has now been absorbed into the spreading fractal expansion of medium-density-ville, the edge city. For the most part, this is a second generation landscape, where virgin land, developed for rural functions, is now giving way to the demands of increased populations and added value. Farms become housing cul-de-sac networks, dumps become parks, quarries become underground office parks, and the spoiled grounds of toxic industries are collected and isolated in architectonic tombs. This is the new and future landscape of America.



The path to the top of the radioactive waste mound at Weldon Spring is a rocky road. CLUI photo

The **Weldon Spring Mound** is one of these architectonic tombs, one of a few dozen built by the Department of Energy across the nation, to enclose the remnants of nuclear industries associated with cold-war weapons construction. It is a 45 acre trapezoidal mound containing the demolished remains of what was once the largest explosives plant in the nation, along with soil and other materials made radioactive by the plant's later function as a uranium ore processing center. Next to the mound is the Weldon Spring Site Interpretive Center, operated by a contractor for the DOE, to process visitors to the site. Out the back door of the center is a trail that climbs the bare mound of coarse rip rap. At the top is a four sided overlook, with four canted plaques that describe the construction of the mound, and point out the townsites where people lived before they were evacuated for the construction of the plant. Higher than tree level, the top of the mound provides a good view of the surroundings, which are an overgrown wildlife area concealing scattered storage igloos and roadways of the former ordnance works, the most developed part of which is still off limits, and used as a military training area. Weldon Spring is a pyramid of our subatomic, technological, postnuclear age.

Another site of this new mound building culture is 15 miles south of Weldon Spring, near the town of Eureka. Located on a bend of the Meramec River, the once nationally notorious town of **Times Beach** is now encased in low grass covered mounds in a newly designated parkland. The community of Times Beach started in 1925 as a promotional program of the St. Louis Times newspaper. For a payment of \$67.50 you got a six-month subscription to the paper, as well as a lot in a newly platted recreational area on the scenic Meramec. Over the years, the

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The community of Times Beach, before being removed.

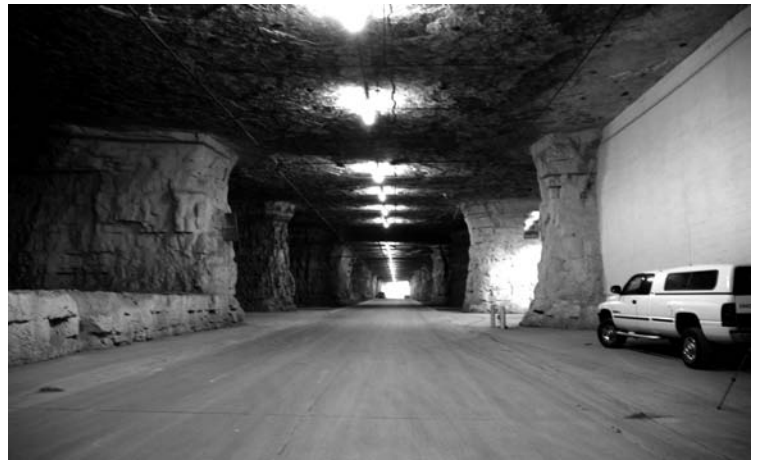
Image courtesy of the Route 66 Museum

community changed from a party village with 13 bars to a year-round working class town of 2,000. In the early 1980's it was discovered that the contractor hired to control dust on the dirt roads of the town had, on numerous occasions, used spent motor oil that was loaded with dioxins from a chemical plant that once made Agent Orange. As the investigation grew, so did concern in the community. In the last days of 1982, after being flooded by the river, which was a common event at the low-lying Times Beach, the residents were evacuated, never to return. The town site was declared a toxic wasteland, and the government bought the properties under the new Superfund law. After nearly ten years of being emptied, all the houses and their contents were bulldozed into piles, along with the cars, swingsets, and everything else. An incinerator was constructed at the site, to burn the most toxic material (another source of controversy when hazardous materials were brought from elsewhere to be incinerated there). The clean up and incineration took several years, and cost over \$200 million. Once one of the most famous Superfund sites, the town site is now the Route 66 State Park. All that remains of Times Beach is few test wells, a street grid that is slowly becoming overgrown, and the unmarked mounds that contain the demolished town and the incinerator.



Many of the munition igloos at the Tyson Research Center have been creatively reappointed. CLUI photo

The **Tyson Research Center** is a multifaceted landscape of mystery and diversity. It is a heavily wooded and hilly 2,000 acre fenced property next to Interstate 44, a few miles from Times Beach. Originally a defense site, it is now owned by Washington University, which uses it primarily for environmental research programs. The land was developed as a weapons assembly, storage and training facility by the military during WWII. Structures included 52 munition storage bunkers and several other storage and administration buildings, as well as firing ranges. Used through the Korean War, and known as the St. Louis Ordnance Plant, it was transferred to the University in 1963. Many of the military structures remain on site, abandoned and overgrown, though some have been repurposed for use by the university. Old grain storage sheds are used by the Museum of Transportation for automobile storage. Another tenant on site is the Wild Canid Center, a wolf shelter and research facility that was founded by Wild Kingdom's Marlin Perkins (which holds public howling events on Halloween.) The now pastoral grounds of Tyson are scattered with the enigmatic forms of research infrastructure, the remains of military use, and remnants of art projects sporadically made on the grounds by students and faculty.



The underground office park at Bussen Quarry.

CLUI photo

The fringes of most cities have their share of quarries, where rock, cement, gravel, and sand are extracted from the ground to build the roads and buildings of the city. St. Louis has several, but none as interesting or hospitable as the **Bussen Quarry** on the outside edge of the Interstate 255 beltway, on the Mississippi River. The Bussen family owns and operates three quarries in the region (including the Antire quarry across from the Tyson Research Center). The 500 acre pit and plant site at the river location is one of the oldest and busiest in the region. It started operation in 1882, supplying crushed rock to the Army Corps of Engineers for river construction projects. With rail and waterfront running next to the quarry, Bussen also operates a shipping terminal for bulk products. But it is the underground architecture that is the most unusual part of the site. The company has excavated space inside one wall of the quarry pit, and created an subterranean office and warehouse development, with hundreds of thousands of square feet of rentable space. The project, called Bussen Underground Warehouse, has several tenants, including fur and food storage companies, which save on refrigeration bills in the naturally climate controlled space.

North of the quarry, heading inside the interstate beltway, going north along the river, towards the city's center, on the eastern edge of the city

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and state, one passes through the hospitals and cemeteries of **Jefferson Barracks**. In the early days of the nation, this was a major military outpost for westward expansion. The barracks was a logistics center for troops and supplies heading into the Mexican War, the Civil War, Indian conflicts, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine War, World War I and World War II. Many famous military men like Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, U.S. Grant, and William T. Sherman all served here at some point. The barracks was also the site of the first successful parachute jump from an airplane, in 1912. Jefferson Barracks operated from 1828 to 1946, and is now mostly a historic park.

North of the barracks is a major discharge point for the wastes of the city. It is here that the River Des Peres spills into the Mississippi, a drainage channel for the surface run-off for much of the city. This is also the location of the **Lemay Treatment Plant**, one of the largest of the eight water treatment facilities in the city operated by the Municipal Sewage District, which manages all the city's wastewater, serving an area of approximately 524 square miles.



The hulking remains of the Lemp Brewery are part of the landscape of beer in St. Louis. CLUI photo

One of the most prominent presences on the waterfront south of downtown is **Anheuser Busch**. The corporate headquarters of the nation's largest beer company is in a sprawling complex of brewery and distribution buildings, the flagship of the twelve breweries that the company operates across America. The company has 50% of the beer market in the U.S., with Budweiser far and away the King of Beers. Brewing has been a major industry in St. Louis for over 100 years. Near Budweiser, the hulking industrial gothic complex of the former **Lemp Brewery**, once one of the largest breweries in the world, has been repurposed into storage, offices, and other businesses. Adam Lemp started making lager beer in St. Louis in the 1840s, using natural limestone caves around Cherokee Street for cold storage ("lagern" means to keep or "store" and lager beer took off in the mid 1850s as it was more stable and storable than other types). The Lemp family grew the company into the third largest brewery in the nation, in the early 1900s, and made the first domestic beer to be distributed coast to coast. Tunnels connected the brewery, the family mansion, and the much expanded caves into an underground network, which the Lemp family developed further by building an underground ballroom and a swimming pool. The company shut its doors abruptly soon after prohibition, and the complex was bought by a shoe company that used only portions of it. Parts of the cave system were opened briefly as a tourist attraction, but then were abandoned as well. The five block brewery complex was sold to a redeveloper in 1992 for \$200,000, but not too much has happened. Today, much of the site is unoccupied and

the storied underground corridors and caves remain out of sight, with entrances sealed off, except in a few places.

Across a small park from Budweiser is a curious federal agency, located in a former arsenal. This is the primary office of the **National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)**, outside of the Washington DC area. At least a few hundred people work there, conducting the mission of the NGA, which is to support the defense and intelligence communities with georeferenced information about things of interest in the world. Put another way, NGA is the lead agency in the American intelligence community for identifying targets and putting them on the map. In the language of the NGA itself, their mission is "to provide timely, relevant and accurate geospatial intelligence in support of our national security. Geospatial intelligence is the exploitation and analysis of imagery and geospatial information to describe, assess and visually depict physical features and geographically referenced activities on the Earth." The NGA is the new name, since 2004, for the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, which was created in 1996, and was itself the new conglomeration of the Defense Mapping Agency, the Central Imagery Office, the National Photographic Interpretation Center, and the imagery elements of the National Reconnaissance Office, Defense Intelligence Agency, and the CIA. The motto of the agency is "Know the Earth...Show the Way."

On the opposite end of the spectrum, and just a little further up the shore from the NGA, is one of the nation's most visible and renowned landmarks, the **Gateway Arch**. Despite its intrusive Mount Rushmore-like psychic prominence, its modernist minimalism and astounding size make it one of the most memorable and remarkable public sculptures, period, and the progenitor of the metallic forms built on rediscovered downtown waterfronts across the country. In 1947, Eero Saarinen's design for the arch won the competition for a memorial to the Louisiana Purchase and Westward Expansion, planned for the site next to the Mississippi River. Yet it took nearly 20 years for the project to be built. Construction finally started in 1961, the year Saarinen died. Underneath the arch is an extensive visitor center and the **Museum of Westward Expansion**.

North of the Arch, the city's industrial shoreline blossoms, starting with the spectacular old dirty gothic Union Light and Power Company plant, which is still generating steam for some of the buildings in the area.



Fixing the inclinators at the top of the Gateway Arch.

CLUI photo

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Jefferson, in the middle of the radiating galleries in the Museum of Westward Expansion.  
CLUI photo

Most of the industry in this old industrial part of the city, known as Near North, is in flat industrial buildings that ignore the river entirely, connected by the highway and railway instead. Soap and cleanser manufacturing are some activities that continue to operate here. The large, riverfront **Proctor and Gamble plant**, for example, makes all of the company's Cascade and Mr. Clean products in North America. Despite the monumentality of these industries and the mighty Mississippi, it is the **floodwall**, a continuous barrier running the length of the city's waterfront atop the existing levee, that dominates the waterfront. The wall, made of steel and concrete, is indicative of the relationship between the city and the river. The wall is a barrier to keep the river out of the city, that also serves to keep the city – and its people – away from the river. The wall is perforated with occasional open steel doors, permitting bicyclists and others with momentary glimpses of the river, and providing passage in between the land that would be spared, and that which would be lost, should the flood wall ever be called into action. Some of the bulk materials companies and scrap yards do have physical links to the river, narrowed down to conveyors and pipelines that span the top of the flood wall, to provide a connection from riverside dock to plant. But for the most part, this river city of America is oddly cut off from and disinterested in the river.



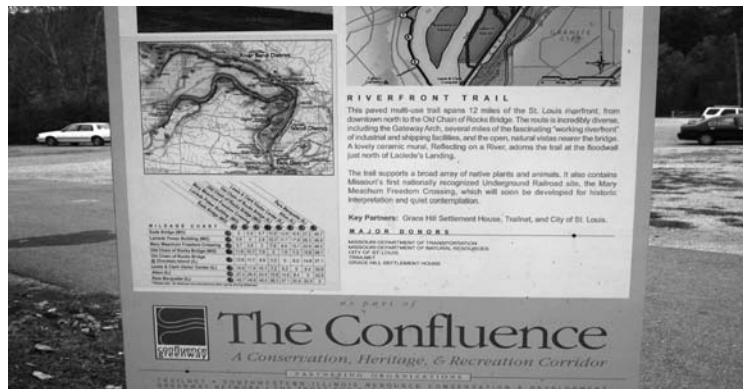
One of the gates in the floodwall that separates the city from the river, for better and for worse.  
CLUI photo

One grand exception is the **Chain of Rocks Park**, located at the north end of this waterfront transect between the interstate beltway. The Chain of Rocks is a shallow part of the river, where the river widens, and a limestone ledge breaks the surface. A canal on the Illinois side of the river allows boat traffic around these low rapids. The bridge that was



The municipal water supply intake in the Mississippi, on the left, upstream of the city, visible on the right, as seen from the Chain of Rocks Bridge.  
CLUI photo

constructed here in 1929 was a famous toll bridge for cars along Route 66, and closed in the 1960s. The bridge is also unique for having a turn, 22 degrees, along its span, in the middle of the river. It also provides a view of the old water intake structures for the water supply of the city. In 1999, it was reopened and is now the second longest pedestrian and bicycle-only bridge in the nation. Lined with historical plaques, it is part of the new **Confluence Greenway**, a large scale conservation, heritage, and recreation redevelopment program, that is connecting the site of the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi, several miles north of the bridge, and downtown, using the new bike trail along the river's flood wall. At the river confluence itself, a major park and recreation area is being established. The city is discovering its riveriness after all.



Sign at the Confluence Greenway.

CLUI photo



Field trip having lunch on the Town Mound at Times Beach.

CLUI photo

*This report on St. Louis was made possible by the "Looking for St. Louis" program, organized by the CLUI and Jane Wolff of Washington University. The program included a two day investigative tour of the city, led by the Center's Matthew Coolidge. Thanks especially to Dave Larson of the Tyson Research Center, Robert Cassily, and Mark Bussen, of Bussen Quarries for their help, opening their land up for us. ♦*

## CEMENTLAND

A LANDSCAPE OF POSSIBILITY



The rambling remains and mounds of dirt at St. Louis' Cementland.

CLUI photo

CEMENTLAND IS THE MOST REMARKABLE place in the whole of St. Louis, for what it is, and what it may become. It is a former cement plant which is being transformed into a postindustrial landscape of exploration, fear, mystery, experimentation, and fantasy. Located on the northern edge of the city line, near the river, Cementland has several large concrete silo towers and huge shed structures that were left to decay by the cement company that once operated there. The site was purchased several years ago by Bob Cassily, the visionary madman behind the hugely successful and boundary-busting City Museum, in downtown St. Louis. If his museum is any indication of what is to come at Cementland, then watch out, America.



The City Museum is in an old shoe factory, now filled and adorned with artifacts from the region, creatively fused, metamorphosed, and arranged.

CLUI photo

The City Museum, opened to the public in 1997, contains a network of hand crafted spaces that wrap through, over and into three floors of the ten-story former shoe factory like a three-dimensional random labyrinth. Around each corner is who knows what. At times integrating elements of the factory (like the spiral shoe slide that runs through it) into the spaces, at other times boring holes through it, or slicing rooms into smaller and smaller spaces, it is an architect-less architecture of accretion, excavation, and evolution. Each environment is an expository riff on form and materials, materials that were found and repurposed, clustered and flayed, from industrial remnants, to parts of other buildings, to fully formed period environments. Tight spaces shaped like dinosaur guts, galleries of gargoyles, aquariums, monstrous mosaics, plazas, stalagmites, chutes, slides, caves, chambers, mezzanines. Outside, visitors can walk through an assemblage of elevated gangways, aircraft fuselage, spiral staircases

and a stone belltower. Above it all, a cantilevered schoolbus dangles off the edge of the roof of the building, like a diving board. It's a building made of buildings and remains, a museum of parts, from everyday life, and from the city itself (including some landmarks even), integrated into chaotic collisions, bordering on sublime order, bound by the matrix and vision of its creator, Bob Cassily.



Bob Cassily explains the latest vision for Cementland, as depicted by a small scale model, from atop a five story mound of imported dirt.

CLUI photo

At Cementland, Cassily is taking these notions out on a densely developed and decayed 56 acre industrial site. For six years, Cassily says, he has been dumping 100 loads of dirt a day, building up earthen ramps that lead to the tops of the silos, half burying some of them in the process. Between structures, he plans on making a suspension bridge composed of old city buses, hooked together. Then there is the flood: he plans on creating wetlands and lakes that flow in and out of the basements of the hulking structures. Or maybe canals that loop through the property. Inside another space, a gallery of working, dying machines, like industrial dinosaurs. The 250 foot tall silo could have a spiral staircase on the outside leading to the top where visitors drop objects onto targets in the pool at the bottom. People could crawl through the tunnels, through the dirt and the ruins. Places where it is pitch black and uncertain. Once completed, or close enough, this industrial playground would be completely open to the public, with an admission charge to support it.

The building of it, though, he is paying for himself, without the help of banks or investors. Cassily, who is in his 50s and is a long time St. Louis resident, has bought and sold real estate at the right times and places in the city over the years, and is now selling condos on the upper floors of the City Museum to raise money for Cementland. Though working without any permits (the city actually issued a stop work order on his dirt dumping six years ago, though it has continued unabated for as many years), Cassily continues his outlaw tactics, but has upped the ante, and is now, ironically, backed by the political capital that the once outlaw City Museum brings (it is a major attraction in the city, with around half a million visitors a year). So it is quite likely that this, or some version of Cementland, will occur, at some point. Or maybe it already has. Cementland is already a landscape of optimism, renegade energy, and that most precious of all realms: possibility.

*Cementland is surrounded by a berm, so you can't see much from the outside, and it is not open to the public. While Cassily would be reluctant to invite the world to come visit the construction site, he would also be the last person to stop you from trying.* ♦

## REPORT FROM NEW ORLEANS

NOVEMBER 5, 2005 - TWO MONTHS AFTER KATRINA



Wrecked billboards are the first sign of the damage, on the way to New Orleans. CLUI photo

**Approaching the city:**

THE DEBRIS IN THE MEDIAN intensifies in the approach to New Orleans from the east on Interstate 10. The billboards along the rural interstate hang like effigies, their empty frames bent and contorted in the direction of the wind. Some are collapsed all the way, dead ads, next to the road, like felled redwoods made of tubular steel. All the high pole signs of the gas stations and fast foods along the freeway are blown empty of their plastic faces. The freeway is genericized. You have to guess the brand of business by the shape of the frame – as if it matters. They are mostly still closed anyways.

Truck-hauled-in trash - and mud and trees - are being bulldozed into mountains of waste, behind the suburbs' broken shopping plazas. The parking lots are full of debris, the car dealerships full of dirty cars in uneven rows.

The I-10 causeway across Lake Pontchartrain is down to one lane in each direction, because the westbound bridge is all broken up. Soon after the hurricane, they used parts of the westbound bridge to repair the eastbound bridge. Above, cranes are dangling swinging pilings, lowering them into place for the hammers to pound them into the muck. Then there is a pause in the view, as the road makes a sort of landfall, running on its roadbed through the Bayou Sauvage, with its curtain of low scrub that lines the road - the big empty before the Big Easy.

Interstate 10 flies through the city, a platform providing a transitory overlook through the wreckage. During the flood, the elevated freeway served as an emergency exit for the low down city. The onramps and offramps became the beachhead, destinations for countless boat trips by rescuers ferrying stranded survivors, and refugees, some paddling their way out of the rotten soup in emptied refrigerators.



Abandoned boats are clustered at the onramps to the freeway.

CLUI photo

**Downtown:**

The streets are active with cars and pedestrians, though many businesses remain shuttered, including the big Harrah's casino across from the "World Trade Center." Plywood covers the damaged windows of many glass office towers and hotels in the central business district. The Superdome, once a superlative architectural and engineering landmark and the pride of the city, is now a hollow hulk, associated mostly with the squalor it held during the great human tragedy of the flood.

Like the city's downtown, the adjacent French Quarter was also spared from the flood, and is active again, though a bit haggard. Many of the buildings are tagged as unusable due to roof damage and rot, and many of the stores and bars are still closed. The smell of rotten carpets flows out of stairwells, and taped up refrigerators are out on the street, waiting to be picked up.



The "bathtub ring" indicating the water level runs across much of town.

CLUI photo

Moving away from these points of high ground, the floodwater level becomes clear: a brown stain with a yellowy brown water surface line emerges on vertical surfaces as the ground level falls, an even, horizontal bathtub scum line drawn on the walls and fences. It runs throughout the portions of the city that were under water like a great unifying relic, a ghost of the water that was there. The line runs along the walls of above-ground graveyards, along the concrete upslope of overpasses, along the bases of light poles, through trailers in driveways, along the interior walls of homes and businesses, and through countless ruined parked cars. Just about every building where this line is above the doorway's threshold is abandoned and foetid. Tens of thousands of them. The line reaches higher and higher up the walls as the city's streets sink lower and lower below sea level, until it leaves the roofs of the buildings that were once fully submerged, mud caked on their shingles.



Cars piled up to form a wall blocking street access to St. Bernard Parish.

CLUI photo

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**St. Bernard Parish:**

St. Bernard Parish, just east of the city, is one of the worst hit areas. It is a police-controlled zone of ruin. Cars have been piled up to block road access, restricting entry to check points. Piles of trashed furnishings are mounded outside every house, and every house is wrecked, front doors open, refrigerators, now biohazards, out on the street for pickup. A few garbage trucks roam the muddied debris strewn streets, but their efforts seem futile in this landscape of reeking garbage and rot. Strip malls, fast food restaurants, Home Depot, Staples, all rotten inside. Humvees with armed soldiers driving all over.



The interior of a flood-ravaged McDonald's in St. Bernard Parish.

CLUI photo

A Walmart Supercenter parking lot is a relief center, powered by generators, full of insurance company catastrophe team RVs with satellite hookups. Nearby, a yard outside the port administration area is now a military base and law enforcement center called Camp Premier, named, it seems, after the party rental company that is supplying the tents and other temporary furnishings.

**Into the breach:**

The industrial canal breach in St. Bernard parish flooded the lower 9th Ward. Visitors are not permitted in the area near the breach, unless they had homes there or are insurance adjusters. Inside this zone visitors are driven to their destination in vans, and are not allowed outside. Two months later, they are still finding the dead amongst the ruins. ♦



The Industrial Canal breach, showing the peeled-back sheet piling of the levee wall that failed, and the wreckage of the Lower 9th Ward in St. Bernard Parish beyond. CLUI photo

**FEMA TRAILERS**

GIVING A NEW MEANING TO RE-CREATIONAL VEHICLES



The Purvis Mississippi logistics yard, about 100 miles from the disaster zones. CLUI photo

FOR THE PAST FOUR OR five months, around 100,000 trailers ordered by FEMA from several RV companies have been flowing out of factories in the north, bound for the ruined cities of the south. The trailers are specially built for FEMA, assembled quickly, with few frills and features. They generally cost about \$10,000 each, much less than their consumer counterparts. The trailers made by Pilgrim International in Indiana, for example, have only four small windows, one on one side, and three on the other.

As of February, 2006, according to the New York Times, 72,000 have been installed and occupied, at their place of need, mostly in trailer parks set up in parking lots on government land, or on private property, next to their owners' ruined houses.

The FEMA trailer program seems to have been more successful than their mobile home program, the other part of FEMA's \$4 billion emergency "manufactured housing" program for hurricane victims. While the trailers are considered vehicles, the mobile homes, larger and more expensive than the trailers, averaging \$34,000 each, are considered buildings. As a result, federal law prevents them from being installed in flood plains, the very places where they are most needed.

This and other siting problems at the local level, as well as problems with FEMA's bureaucracy, has meant that in February, 2006, of the 25,000 mobile homes ordered by FEMA, only about 2,700 have been installed, and that most are still in logistics yards, already falling apart. Over 10,000 are at one site alone, covering the landscape at a former military airfield in Hope, Arkansas. America's largest mobile home park, inhabited by no one. ♦



Boondocking in Athens AL. Many FEMA trailers were brought by conveyor belts of dueling pickup trucks, going back and forth from the RV factories in the Midwest to logistics yards like Purvis. CLUI photo

# LIFE ON THE LINE AT DERBY LINE, VERMONT

PART OF THE ONGOING CLUI INVESTIGATION  
INTO THE BORDERLANDS OF THE USA

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES ARE PLACES OF abrupt transition, where a conceptual cartographic line can manifest itself physically in many ways. Along the US/Canada border, it is often in the form of a low fence or a cut-line through the trees, running along the path of the border. If roads head to the border in a perpendicular fashion, from either side, and do not hit a natural obstacle like a river, they are usually blocked by earthen berms, posts, guardrail, or overgrowth. If the road goes through the border, it usually has an inspection station, one for each country, on either side of the line.

In the case of the town/s of Derby Line, Vermont/Stanstead, Quebec, the border runs right through the community, cutting through the street grid, and even buildings as well, creating an unusual international zone, where behavior is affected in some interesting ways.

In the two sided town of Derby Line/Stanstead there are two streets that cross the line without any checkpoints. Technically, any time anyone crosses the international line, they are subject to having to report, in person, to a port of entry inspection station for the country they are entering. This makes traffic on the streets that cross the line without a checkpoint, Maple Street/Rue Ball and Pelow Hill/Rue Lee fairly light, as it is more convenient to cross at Main Street/Rue Dufferin, where checkpoints are often set up for "drive thru" service.

Pedestrians on the sidewalk are also technically required to report as soon as they cross the line. Visiting someone on the other side of the line, even if the building is next door, means walking around to the inspection station first, or risk being an outlaw. Playing catch on Maple Street/Rue Ball would be an international event, and would break no laws presumably, so long as each time the ball was caught, the recipient marched over to customs to declare the ball.

When the international line crosses through a building, a different set of rules applies. Residents of the small apartment building in Derby Line/Stanstead do not need to report if they cross the line inside the building. They only need to report if they leave out the side of the building that opens on to a different country than the one they entered the building from. The building's interior ends up being an international space, a bubble in the otherwise nearly infinitely thin international line.

The most prominent building on the line is the Haskell Free Library and Opera House. It was built intentionally on the border in 1901, as a gift to the community, and a symbol of international harmony. The entrances, one leading into the library, and the other heading up the stairs to the opera house/theater, however, are in the United States.

And though there are no restrictions on movement within the building, the placement on the border can lead to complications. The planning of a recent renovation project at the Library/Opera House took three years due to the conflicting construction, fire safety and historic preservation regulations of the two countries. Some of the public bathrooms, for example, sit on the border that runs diagonally through the building, and plumbers from the US and Canada had to be involved to make sure the work met their respective building codes. A fire escape for the theater was located on the Canadian side, but had to be recognized by the

Americans, even though it wasn't in their jurisdiction. If there were a fire in the opera house, then the evacuees would have to head immediately to the immigration station up the road.

The line painted on the floor inside the library and opera house is more than just a novelty. Apparently it was required in order to show which portions of the structure and furnishings would be covered by the separate Canadian and American insurance policies. ♦



From the west the international border enters the library's reading room at the corner bay window. . .



. . .dividing the World Book in half, depending on how it is shelved. . .



. . .and makes an inquiry at the reception desk an international exchange.



Upstairs, the theater has a line running diagonally across the seating area. The stage is in Canada. CLUI photos

## STATE IN FOCUS: ALABAMA

THE CLUI FALLS INTO THE DEEP SOUTH IN 2005



The Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, Alabama, a town that is still steeped in the Southern exotic. CLUI photo

*Every year the Center takes one state to focus in on and study in depth. For 2005 it was Alabama. This time the Center's normal staff of researchers were assisted by a group of graduate students from the Curatorial Practice Program at San Francisco's California College of the Arts.*

THERE STILL ARE COTTON FARMS in Alabama, but now the state's largest agricultural outputs are forestry products and peanuts. Chicken is the largest farm product (only Arkansas makes more "broilers"). Despite its reputation, it is only the 7th poorest state in the USA in per capita income (it is beat out by Mississippi, West Virginia, New Mexico, Arkansas, South Carolina, and Montana). Alabama has 4.4 million people, 71% of whom are white, 26% are black. 100 years ago it was about half black. One in six people (750,000) live in "mobile homes," whatever that means. It is also one of most "provincial" places in the USA – people tend to live near where they were born. As a result, folkways and localized, regional culture is strong, as frequent flourishes of unique folk art and crafts attest.

Economically, Alabama is an industrialized state now. Its largest industry, in financial totals, is automobiles. The north has some large TVA power plants and dams that spurred federally supported industry in the 1930's and 1940's, such as fertilizers and explosives, and which laid the foundation for a high-tech industrial belt that is still strong today, centered around Huntsville. The north central part of the state has a number of major steel and pipe manufacturers, though Birmingham's steel industry no longer dominates the regional economy (the landscape around the city has many former – and some active – steel plants). Birmingham, the largest city in the state, now has a service economy, with the headquarters of a number of national corporations, such as Healthsouth, Liberty National Insurance, and the three big southern banks: Amsouth, Regions, and Southtrust. Birmingham also has the headquarters for a few major engineering firms, such as Rust International, Herbert International, BE&K, Brasfield and Gorrie, and Blount International. These companies, like some of their out of state competitors Bechtel, KBR, and Fluor, build infrastructure and industry around the world. Supporting deal-making businesses such as these is a string of 18 golf courses, spread out from Huntsville to Mobile.

Other pockets of affluence and industry include a major munitions plant and arsenal at Anniston; a still active textile industry, which includes one of the nation's leading sports clothing manufacturers, around Alexander City; the State Universities at Tuscaloosa and Auburn; isolated and periodic massive car plants and wood product plants; and fancy vacation communities along the shores of Alabama's small stretch of coastline. Most of the land of the state is like the rest of the South: slightly rolling hills with fields and some forests, scattered with post-war housing, condensing on the edges of small towns, with gas stations, fast food, and shopping centers, then a few blocks of a worn, old main street at the core.

## Selected Points of Interest in Alabama



A dramatic walk-through public sculpture in Kelly Ingram Park.

CLUI photo

## Kelly Ingram Park

A cluster of notable civil rights attractions is located next to downtown Birmingham, around Kelly Ingram Park, a city block sized park that is itself the site of a major event in the nation's civil rights struggle. Across from the park is the 16th Street Baptist Church, a center for the city's black community, made famous in 1963 by a KKK bombing that killed four young girls. Across the street from it is the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, perhaps *the* national museum on the subject of civil rights. The Institute's primary function, it seems, is to use its state of the art displays to educate legions of high school students on the history of the 1950's and 1960's movement, in one of the most unsubtle display environments imaginable. In the park itself are some sculptures commemorating events that occurred there in 1962, when the police were sent into the park to arrest protesters who had been gathering there in response to the imprisonment of Martin Luther King, Jr., who had been put in jail for protesting the police beatings of the bus bound Freedom Riders. At the park, the police were photographed using violent acts, with dogs, nightsticks, and fire hoses, often against children. These images and the events they depicted were ultimately to have a positive effect on civil rights policy at the national level.

## Joe Minter's Yard

Joe Minter is a visionary artist who has created a sculpture park of American history in his backyard. Using lumber, dolls, lawn ornaments, doors, and other found materials that he shapes, paints, assembles, and writes on, Minter has created a walk through "African Village in America," as he sometimes call it, a "reclaiming of the telling of history." The sculptures are like exhibits in a museum, each telling a different part of a historical story about civil rights, compassion, and his-

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The Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, as recreated at Joe Minter's yard in Birmingham.  
CLUI photo

torical and current events, nationally and locally. There is the unbuilt bridge at Gee's Bend, and the famous built bridge at Selma; a memorial to the 2004 tsunami victims; and a commentary on the 9/11 attacks. Minter usually greets visitors if he can, and helps to make his park come alive. His place is the last house on the block, and abuts one of the main historic black graveyards in the city, where hundreds of tombs buckle with neglect.



Ruins of Republic Steel at the Wade Quarry, Birmingham.

CLUI photo

### Wade Quarry

Wade Sand & Gravel Co. operates a quarry amidst the ruins of a steel plant of the kind that once made Birmingham the industrial center of the new South. The hulking forms of the coke ovens and coal elevators, which are the only remains of a much larger complex once owned by Republic Steel, share space with the active conveyors and grey rock piles of the quarry. Amidst the mixture of industrial forms are a number of artworks, as the Wade family, who own this hyper-industrialized land, has established an informal residence program for artists to work at the site. The town of Thomasville, next to the plant site, was the company town built for the plant workers, and has identical but incongruous houses, designed originally for a plant in Pennsylvania. The homes are privately owned now.

### Sloss Furnace

The Sloss Furnace is a former pig iron plant near downtown Birmingham that used to supply iron for the pipe industry of Alabama. It has been turned into a preserved landmark, open to the public. The impressive remains of two large blast furnaces, as well as the tunnels,

corridors, chambers and galleries around them, are open to exploration. One of the furnace areas is still used for creative iron casting projects. Concerts and other public events are held at Sloss as well, and the annual Halloween "haunted factory" experience is superlative. Sloss is one of the few remnants America's formidable iron and steel industries that is truly open to the public.



A "temporary" display about the controversy in the lobby lists the Ten Commandments, and blocks a plaque, mounted in the wall, that depicts the U.S. Bill of Rights.  
CLUI photo

### State Court House

The State Court House in Montgomery, Alabama's capital, was made famous by the controversy that emerged around a two and a half ton stone monument with a tablet listing the Ten Commandments, which was placed in a prominent spot in the lobby of the building, in 2001. The separation of church and state issues it raised divided the nation, and was a national media story for a few years, as court cases battled it out. The National Guard was even called in to protect the monument at some point. The monument is currently in storage, out of public view, though its former prominent location in the lobby is an obvious vacancy.



Hank Williams Museum, Montgomery.

CLUI photo

### Hank Williams Museum

The singer Hank Williams has several attractions devoted to him in Alabama, his home state. These include his boyhood home in Georgiana; the restored Kowaliga cabin where he wrote "Your Cheatin' Heart;" a statue of him in a park across from where his funeral was held in Montgomery; and his grave, in Oakwood Cemetery. His career in the national limelight lasted for just a few years, yet this sickly, southern white guy had nearly as much impact on American popular music as Elvis. He brought the blues to country music, and died alone, of an overdose of alcohol and pills, in the back seat of his Cadillac at the age of 29. The Hank Williams Museum in Montgomery displays that Cadillac, along with the contents of the suitcase he had with him, and the light blue suit he was wearing at the time of his death.

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### Gee's Bend

One celebrated remote place in Alabama is Gee's Bend (famous at least in the arts and crafts worlds). It was here that, due to the isolation and creativity of its denizens, a unique form of quilt patterning emerged, based on African traditions, yet cut, literally, from American cloth. Composed of about fifty of the women of the community, the quilters collective at Gee's Bend has had their work shown in museums around the country. Most of the quilters are direct descendents of slaves who were brought to work on what started out as Mr. Gee's plantation, on a bend on the Alabama River. Though today Gee's Bend is officially called Boykin, it is still remote, located at the end of what remains one of the longest dead-end roads in the state.

### Bryant-Denny Stadium

Arguably, college football may be more avidly followed in Alabama than any other state. The temple of the sport is the state university stadium in Tuscaloosa. The Bryant-Denny Stadium is home of the University of Alabama football team, ominously named The Crimson Tide. Built in 1929, the colossal stadium holds 83,818 people. It was originally named after a university president (George Hutchenson Denny), but in 1975 the Alabama state legislature renamed the stadium "Bryant-Denny Stadium" to commemorate the accomplishments of the team's coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant. Bryant achieved legendary status in football by leading Alabama to the national championship six times, and setting the record as the (up to that time) most successful coach in college football history with a record of 323 wins out of 424 games. Bryant, who coached at Alabama for 25 years, is no doubt the primary reason for Alabaman college football zeal. A museum dedicated to Bear Bryant is located a few blocks from the stadium.



A treatment site at the "largest chemical waste dump in America."

CLUI photo

### Emelle Hazardous Waste Mound

Waste Management Incorporated's Emelle Treatment Facility, located in the remote Sumter County, in western Alabama, is one of the largest toxic waste dumps in the United States. At its peak, the facility received almost 800,000 tons of waste per year, coming mostly from US states outside of Alabama, and military bases overseas. Though the landfill is lined, and a leachate filtration system helps to keep toxic materials on site, some tests have reported traces of water contamination in nearby towns. Protestors argue that the location of the facility is a product of "environmental racism." Sumter County is one of the country's most impoverished regions with one-third of the residents living below the poverty level and over 90 percent of the residents in the area are black. In the 1990s, a state tax on waste deposits and a series of federal regula-

tions resulted in a 85 percent decline in the amount of waste buried at the landfill each year. The site is still accepting wastes, and will have to maintain the collection on site for decades, if not centuries, to come.

### Old Cahawba

Old Cahawba is a complex and mysteriously evocative place, an encapsulation of much of the state's history, and a place that is, apparently, a place to leave. It began as a major Native American village, with a palisade wall and a large mound inside. Briefly, it was Alabama's state capital (1820-1826). Before the Civil War, it was a thriving river town, a major distribution point for cotton shipped down the Alabama River from the fertile "black belt" to the port of Mobile. Some thought that it would become a port town as popular as New York City, but with its constant flooding and lack of connecting railroads the city could not survive. It became a ghost town shortly after the Civil War. Today all that remains in Cahawba are several old street signs, an abandoned plantation home, a few slave quarters, and bits of rubble outlining where homes and businesses once stood, marked by interpretive plaques. Abandoned trailer-homes indicate the last attempt by individuals to inhabit Old Cahawba, fishermen and hunters from the late 1980s, who have, like the other former denizens, mysteriously departed.



Static display at U.S. Space and Rocket Center.

CLUI photo

### U.S. Space and Rocket Center

Soon after World War II, rocket research at the Redstone Arsenal, near Huntsville, transformed the landscape and economy of northern Alabama, making the region one of the world's most important centers for space technology. Today, the results of these federally supported activities has created a belt of affluence, based on high tech industries. The center of the space programs in the region is NASA's George C. Marshall Space Flight Center, established by the federal government in 1958 to develop rockets for space travel, and to continue the research of rocket pioneer Werner von Braun, who directed the Center for many years, and who first moved his lab to the arsenal grounds from Texas in the 1940s. It is still one of NASA's primary laboratory complexes, and houses activities related to propulsion technology, space travel, and space station habitation. Extensive displays at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, the large visitors center created by NASA, with local foundations and business interests, include over 1,500 pieces of rocket and space hardware, models, dioramas, interactive kiosks, and films that depict and describe the official story of the American conquest of space, and the role that the Marshall Space Flight Center and Werner von Braun had in making this possible.

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Rural Studio's Community Center in Mason's Bend.

CLUI photo

### Rural Studio at Mason's Bend

Mason's Bend is a small community surrounded by the vast fields of Hale County, one of the poorest counties in the United States. This is where the late Samuel Mockbee started Rural Studio, a hands-on architecture workshop for graduate students at Auburn University. Since 1993, Rural Studio students have designed and built houses and other structures with the families of Mason's Bend. The buildings are imaginatively designed, and are built with unconventional, inexpensive, and recycled materials (the church in Mason's Bend is made out of rammed earth, with a shimmering wall of car windshields that cascade from the roof to the ground). Though the idea of bringing innovative, contemporary architecture to areas like Mason's Bend is an important aspect of Rural Studio, the success of their projects are ultimately measured by how much they honor, involve, and benefit the people they are created for. Mockbee's dream of this "architecture of decency" lives on through the continued expansion of Rural Studio, which has completed internationally acclaimed projects with several other communities in Hale County and beyond. Though based at Auburn University, on the other side of the state, the "campus" for Rural Studio is a few miles down the road from Mason's Bend, along the main street through Newbern.

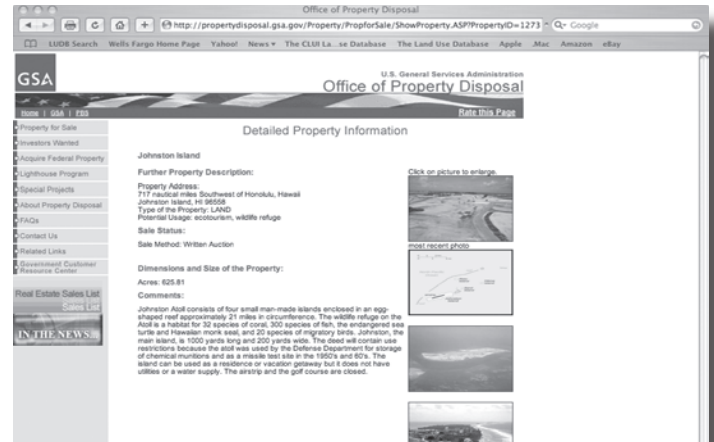
*Thanks to the members of the Curatorial Practice Program class at CCA, Kathleen Brennan, Kalia Brook, Alex Burke, Joyce Grimm, Audrey Marrs, Jessica Martin, Nancy Meyer, Dina Pugh, Aislinn Race, and Roopesh Sitharan for assisting with the Center's Focus on Alabama, and for helping to enrich the Center's Land Use Database, one state at a time! ♦*



Rural Studio students at work in the rural studio in Newbern.

CLUI photo

## UNUSUAL REAL ESTATE LISTING # 6384 JOHNSTON ISLAND



Web page listing Johnston Island for sale.

JOHNSTON ISLAND, A REMOTE AND uninhabited island in the Pacific, was listed for sale to the general public recently.

Rock Southward, of the federal government's General Services Administration (GSA) Office of Property Disposal, Pacific Rim office, who is handling the property, said that it is not immediately available however, as he is still waiting on the official Report of Excess from the Air Force that will release the property for sale. He says he set up the web page listing for the property as a "teaser," a common practice for the GSA, used to gauge interest in a potentially available property. Southward says he removed the listing after a few days, however it remains visible on the web at: <http://www.propertydisposal.gsa.gov/Property/PropForSale/ShowProperty.ASP?PropertyID=1273>

The GSA says that they have received several tentative offers for the property, which the listing described as a "residence or vacation getaway," with potential usage for "ecotourism." The offers, Southward said, were pretty high. He thought perhaps potential bidders were unaware that all buildings had been removed, there were no functioning utilities or water supply, the runway was iffy, the golf course disintegrated, the seawall containing the nuclear waste dump was insufficient, and that nearest services of any kind are over 700 miles away.

### Can they really sell Johnston Island?

Johnston Island is one of the most remote and industrially exotic places on earth. After World War II, due to its remoteness, it was used by the defense department for some of their most dramatic and dangerous operations and experiments, and was the site of biological weapons tests, a prototypical chemical weapons incinerator, and a few explosive nuclear accidents. A few years ago, nearly all the buildings were torn down, and the island was evacuated. Today it is a scab of concrete, slowly being covered in bird droppings.

Johnston is located more than 718 miles away from its nearest neighbor, Hawaii. The island is the largest of four islands that make up a small atoll, formed and enlarged over the years by blasting, dredging, and filling with coral. Originally, the atoll consisted of the 42 acre Johnston Island, the 10 acre Sand Island, and a coral reef. By 1964, Sand Island had more than doubled in size, and two new islands were created, 25-acre Akau Island, and 18-acre Hikina Island. Johnston Island enlarged significantly to its current size of 625 acres.

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Records of Johnston Atoll date back to 1796, when the islands were sighted by a Boston-based American ship. It was officially “discovered” in 1807 and named Johnston, after a ship’s captain. In 1858, it was annexed by the United States, as part of the Guano Act. Mountains of bird droppings were mined from it over the following decades, primarily for the production of gunpowder. In 1926, President Coolidge established it as a bird refuge (perhaps to help replenish the guano). In 1934, President Roosevelt placed the atoll under the control of the Navy, and construction began that transformed the islands. As a remote outpost in the Pacific, the atoll became an important landing strip and refueling center. During World War II, it was a supply center for submarines, and was shelled by the Japanese. After the war, in 1948, the atoll was transferred to the Air Force, and a series of dramatic land uses began.



Johnston Island: a slab of concrete in the Pacific.

Image USGS

Since 1946, atmospheric nuclear testing in the Pacific was centered around Bikini and Enewetak Atolls, where most bombs were exploded from towers, from barges or ships, or dropped from airplanes. In August 1958, the first two nuclear shots were conducted at Johnston Island, as part of a group of 35 nuclear tests in the series code-named Operation Hardtack 1. In 1962, Johnston was used for a series of nuclear tests as part of Operation Dominic, which included the only U.S. test of an operational ballistic missile with a live warhead. For this test a Polaris missile was launched from a submarine, and traveled 1200 miles through space and the atmosphere, until detonating 11,000 feet above the ocean near Johnston. Also that year, the newly constructed rocket launch pad at Johnston was used for a number of extremely high altitude nuclear tests. On June 20, during “Starfish,” the Thor rocket engine cut out a minute after launch, and the missile was intentionally destroyed, at 30,000 feet. Large pieces of the rocket, including some plutonium-contaminated wreckage, rained down on the atoll. The test was repeated in July, and the rocket successfully flew to the highest elevation ever for a nuclear detonation (248 miles above the earth). Impressive light displays of the “artificial aurora borealis” lasted for several minutes, and were visible from the military outpost at Kwajalein Atoll, 1,600 miles away. The electromagnetic pulse from the blast knocked out street lighting in Oahu. A few other “nukes in space” tests were conducted from Johnston that year, including the Checkmate test, during which a rocket launched warhead detonated 91 miles above the earth, and, exploding in the unrestrictive atmosphere-less void of space, was observed as a “green and blue circular region surrounded by a blood red ring” followed by “blue-green streamers and pink striations developed that lasted half an hour.”\*

On June 3, 1962, nuclear test “Bluegill” was launched from Johnston by a Thor rocket. Five minutes after launch the tracking system failed, and 10 minutes after launch, the missile was destroyed by the range safety officer. Another attempt was made on July 25, “Bluegill Prime.” This time the missile engine malfunctioned while the missile was still on the launch pad, and the explosion destroyed the launch complex and spread plutonium all over the area. The launch complex was rebuilt, and much of the radioactive material was collected and disposed of on

the edge of the island. A few months later, on October 15, during a third attempt, “Bluegill Double Prime,” the rocket booster failed 90 seconds after launch, and the rocket began tumbling out of control and had to be destroyed, causing some radioactive debris to fall back on the island. Eleven days later, a fourth and this time successful attempt was made, “Bluegill Triple Prime” and the rocket detonated 31 miles above the earth, causing more strange atmospheric effects. Later that year, what is generally considered to be the last of the atmospheric nuclear tests conducted by the U.S. took place at Johnston. This low yield airburst shot tested the Nike Missile system, a system of short range nuclear missiles that was soon installed around many American cities. The Limited Test Ban treaty went into effect in 1963, banning nuclear testing in the air, underwater, or in space. Even so, Johnston Atoll was maintained in a state of readiness, as the place to resume atmospheric testing, should the nation decide to do so anyways. This mission for the island continued until 1993. By that point the island’s role had changed primarily to the storage and destruction of chemical weapons.

Chemical weapons have been stored on Johnston Island since 1971, when the Army started moving them there from Okinawa. By 1985, when the directive came from Congress to destroy all the chemical weapons in the U.S. arsenal, Johnston was home for 6.6% of the nation’s stockpile. It was decided that the best way to destroy the weapons, many of which were old, leaky, and unstable, was to incinerate them as close to the storage site as possible. A new technology had to be developed to remotely handle the shells, and to transform their contents into vapor and ash. The process was first developed and put into production at Johnston Atoll, where the EG&G corporation, which had also engineered most of the nuclear weapons tests over the years, built the nation’s first chemical weapons incinerator. After going online in 1990, over 400,000 rockets, bombs, projectiles, mortars, and mines containing chemical weapons were “deactivated” on the island. Other projects have taken place on the island in the last 50 years, the details of which are only partially known to us. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, Johnston was the site for the government’s first operational anti-satellite program, which involved nuclear rockets ready to launch from Johnston to knock out enemy satellites. Also, beginning in 1964, a series of open-air biological weapon tests was conducted at Johnston Atoll. The American strategic bio-weapon program tests involved a number of ships positioned around the island, upwind from barges loaded with rhesus monkey test subjects that were exposed to agents dispensed from aircraft.

The last of the chemical stockpile at Johnston was destroyed in 2000, and the chemical weapon destruction facilities were closed down in 2002. In 2004, the last of the resident personnel at the island left, and just a few workers remained, demolishing the rest of the buildings. The island was supposed to be cleaned up and leveled by the Air Force, and transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a bird refuge. The Fish and Wildlife Service, however, has refused to accept the island, as there are unanswered questions about the environmental conditions there. Some 60,000 cubic yards of radioactive debris from the nuclear testing period remains buried on one end of the island, and will be radioactive for generations. And the aging seawall that protects the island from the ocean’s waves is expected to last, perhaps, for another 50 years. The Air Force though is eager to be rid of it. So they are hoping that a direct sale of the island will indeed occur soon, made possible by the GSA’s excess government land disposal program.

As the GSA’s representative for Johnston, Rock Southward would be in the difficult position of selling a place that the EPA has called “unfit for habitation.” Meanwhile, unauthorized wildlife has moved in already, and their guano is, again, piling up. ♦

\*For an account of many of the American atmospheric tests see [nuclearweaponarchive.org](http://nuclearweaponarchive.org). For footage of nuclear launches at Johnston, see Peter Kuran’s film *Nukes In Space*.

## BOOKS NEW TO THE SHELVES OF THE CLUI LIBRARY

MANY OF THESE TITLES ARE AVAILABLE FOR SALE FROM THE CLUI SHOP AT WWW.CLUI.ORG

**Interpretative Centers: The History, Design and Development of Nature and Visitor Centers**, Michael Gross and Ron Zimmerman, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Foundation Press, 2002

An examination of the forms, techniques, and architectures of these increasingly common, single purpose, and sometimes sophisticated structures. Visitor Centers are so often considered with postmodern irony that much of their richness and artistry is missed. This book of mostly captioned photographs is written for the interpretive trade, and is meant to stimulate and encourage better design by highlighting a few dozen of the best recent work in the field, such as the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump interpretive center in Alberta.

**In the Desert of Desire**, William L. Fox, University of Nevada Press, 2005

Another surprising, idiosyncratic humdinger from left field that lands right on target from Bill Fox, the prolific poet and sage of the Big Empty. Here he looks at the current state of the arts in Las Vegas, from Steve Wynn's art collecting practices, to the showmanship of Zumanity, and makes it seem important to the rest of the world. This is no outsiders fear and learning from Las Vegas, this is a smart dissection of this important like-it-or-not place, from someone who knows their way around. Contrary to popular belief, Las Vegas is NOT going away any time soon.

**Infrastructure: A Field Guide to the Industrial Landscape**, Brian Hayes, Norton, 2005.

This book landed in our library like a bomb. Here are the main chapters: Out of the Earth, Waterworks, Food and Farming, Oil and Gas, Power Plants, The Power Grid, On the Road, The Railroad, Bridges and Tunnels, Aviation, Shipping, and Wastes and Recycling. 520 pages, and hundreds of color photographs by the author over the past 15 years. Its only problem is also its highest achievement: its broad scope and large size. If each chapter were a separate book, then maybe it really could be a "field guide" and not the encyclopedia that it really is. None the less, this book is a landmark, and should be absorbed by everyone, no matter how long it takes (we are still chewing).

**LIC In Context: An Unorthodox Guide to Long Island City**, Paul Parkhill and Katherine Gray, Furnace Press, 2005

A useful, surprising, and unconventional street guide to 54 points of interest in the urbanscape that lies in the shadow of Manhattan.

**Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage**, Heather Rogers, New Press, 2005

A history and analysis of the main channels of the waste stream - hauling, dumping, landfilling - and the reasons why we generate so much of it in the first place. Garbage is a fairly new invention, connected with mass production of things made out of paper, plastic, metal, and glass. In the last 30 years, Americans have doubled the amount of trash we collectively generate, and now packaging - not even really a product itself - takes up around 30% of landfill space. The author also argues that while recycling makes us feel better, the majority of the contents of those carefully sorted curbside bins ends up in landfills anyways. And making us feel better about our waste, even if it involves donations to Goodwill, actually supports and sustains our consuming behavior, rather than addressing it.

**Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash**, Elizabeth Royte, Little Brown and Co., 2005

A personal journey of discovery along the waste stream, this one starts with a quantified study of the author's own domestic waste habits, heads out the door into the DSNY truck route, to the transfer station in Red Hook, to the incinerator in Newark, and the landfills of Pennsylvania. Along the way, she tells the story of waste handling, solid and liquid, and the people she encounters along the way that operate the various parts of the disposal machine.

**Greetings from the Salton Sea**, Kim Stringfellow, Center for American Places, 2005

Like we say on the back cover, "Kim Stringfellow's odyssey into the Salton Sea excavates cultural relics and treasures that surprise and astound. She weaves the fragments, tatters, and shards that she found into a salty tale that makes one nostalgic for the sea's future, something that seems always around the bend. She has adds an eloquent new exhibit to this museum of Decay."

**Quonset Huts: Metal Living for a Modern Age**, Julie Decker and Chris Chieffo, Princeton Architectural Press, 2005

Its about time someone made a new book about this common and sensible architectural form, something that is found all over the nation, and is used in so many different ways (Quonsets may in fact be the closest thing to a "national" architectural form). This is *the* book on the subject. Another gem from Princeton Architectural Press.

**Underground Buildings: More than Meets the Eye**, Loretta Hall, Quill Driver Books, 2004

The most complete overview of the variety of underground building types, mostly in the USA. Includes pretty much every type of enterable architectural structure underground (but not infrastructure), from shopping concourses, libraries, to the Manhattan gold reserves. In its scope it covers the spectacular and the mundane, as some underground spaces are just like above ground spaces, but without windows.

**The Works: Anatomy of a City**, Kate Ascher, The Penguin Press, 2005

Clear, nearly child-like illustrations depict and describe a full range of urban infrastructure, using New York City as the example. Road, rail, subways, freight, ships, air cargo, power transmission, water supply, liquid and solid waste treatment and removal, and even a Manhattan-wide pneumatic tube network (in use until 1953) are discussed with great simplicity and clarity. Like a David Macaulay or Richard Scarry book, but purely for adults and with more clinical, digitally produced imagery.

**River Days: Exploring the Connecticut from Source to Sea**, Michael Tougas, Appalachian Mountain Club Books, 2001

From the isolation of the Fourth Connecticut Lake, a beaver pond in northern New Hampshire, 300 yards from the Canadian border, to the Interstate 95 overpass at Old Lyme, Connecticut, near the river's discharge into Long Island Sound, the Connecticut River is New England's Mississippi. This book, written in the first person, is an account of the author's segmented journey down the river in kayaks and canoes. It is replete with descriptions of the human and natural history of the regions along the river's banks, and has practical information and maps of use to other canoists, kayakers, or other travelers floating through this wet and muddy New England corridor.

**The Stray Shopping Carts of Eastern North America: A Guide to Field Identification**, Julian Montague, Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2006

There is something innocent about shopping carts, these simple little creatures of commercial conveyance. They are designed for such a limited and single-minded function, to live their lives within one store, and out to a parking lot. But oh how they roam, when commandeered by renegades. They seem to end up all over the city, so common that they are often seen, but hardly noticed, an ethereal, nearly substanceless, ubiquitous urban form, like a pigeon. There is something tragic about the many ways they meet their demise, submerged in fetid urban drainage, or buried in the brush of brownfields. Many of us might have thought about something like this book, but the author, Julian Montague, thought about it the hardest, and then went and did it. Hundreds of images and a tight classification system to aid in identification. ("Class/Type B/20," for example, is a "true stray" - as opposed to a Class A, a "false stray" - that is "marginalized" and buried by a bulldozer).

# THE CENTER FOR LAND USE INTERPRETATION PUBLISHING PROGRAM

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## CLUI PUBLICATIONS

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A guidebook to the San Francisco Bay margins. 110 pages, b&w photographs.

**The Chesapeake Bay Hydraulic Model** **\$5.00**  
An illustrated history of this remarkable engineering accomplishment, the largest indoor hydraulic model in the world, now abandoned. 1998, 30 pages, b&w illustrations.

**Commonwealth of Technology: Extrapolations on the Contemporary Landscape of Massachusetts** **\$7.50**  
Sites in Massachusetts with an emphasis on the role of technology in the landscape. 1999, 80 pages, b&w photos.

**Hinterland** **\$7.50**  
Catalog of the 100 sites featured in the 1997 CLUI exhibit: Hinterland: A Voyage into Exurban Southern California. 2004 reprint, 112 page, b&w photos.

**The Nellis Range Complex** **\$15.00**  
A characterization of the largest restricted landscape in America, with a selection of 54 points of interest. The subject of a 2000 CLUI program which included an exhibit and 2 day bus tour program, around the perimeter of the Nellis Range complex. 2006, 109 pages, b&w photos.

**The Nevada Test Site: A Guide to America's Nuclear Proving Ground** **\$15.00**  
The only book available that describes in detail the nation's foremost weapons and R&D field test facility. Praised by both antinuclear activists and Dept. of Energy officials! 1996, 60 pages, with fold-out map and over 100 illustrations and original CLUI photographs.

**Nuclear Proving Grounds of the World** **\$3.00**  
A report on the primary nuclear test sites across the globe, and the hundreds of other sites where single nuclear blasts took place on, under, and above the earth, in the former USSR, USA, Africa, Australia, Pacific Ocean and elsewhere. 1998, 30 pages, illustrated.

**One Hundred Places in Washington** **\$15.00**  
100 exemplary land use sites in Washington State. 1999, 102 pages, illustrated.

**Points of Interest in the California Desert Region** **\$7.50**  
Over 100 interesting places in the California desert, with visitation information. 2000, 60 pages, illustrated.

**Points of Interest in the Great Salt Lake Desert Region** **\$7.50**  
Published in 2004, this book is an updated edition of the 1996 CLUI publication *Around Wendover: An Examination of the Anthropic Landscape of the Great Salt Lake Desert Region*. 40 sites in this remarkable area are examined.

**Points of Interest in Ohio** **\$5.00**  
35 superlative sites from the Center's Land Use Database, selected for an exhibit at the Contemporary Arts Center of Cincinnati, Ohio in 2002. 45 pages, illustrated.

**Points of Interest Around the Old Wendover Airfield** **\$7.50**  
An inexhaustive investigation of current content. A walking tour of the old WW II airfield in Wendover, Utah, and the Center's exhibit halls and facilities in the area. 2005, 10 page booklet, b&w illustrations.

**Points of Interest in the Owens River Valley** **\$10.00**  
Dozens of interesting places in the Owens River Valley region, the scenic and compelling back space of California. Illustrated with photographs from the CLUI photo archive.

**Route 58: A Cross-Section of California** **\$15.00**  
Illustrated tourbook to this remarkable, 210-mile roadway. A perfect weekend-long trip from Los Angeles. revised edition, 80 pages, illustrated.

**Subterranean Renovations: The Unique Architectural Spaces of Show Caves** **\$5.00**  
Examines underground built structures and depicts some of the best tourist cave environments in the United States, with contact and visitation information. 1998, 38 pages, illustrated.

## CLUI CD-ROMS

**Antarctic 1: Views Along Antarctica's First Highway**  
CD-ROM of the CLUI exhibit, with text by Bill Fox. Includes clickable map of McMurdo Station. Works on Mac and PC's **\$20.00**

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An interactive version of the NTS Guide on CD-ROM. Features clickable maps and over 100 original CLUI photographs, in color. **\$20.00**

**The Nellis Range**  
A CD-ROM interactive exhibit featuring Nevada's Nellis Range and AFB and environs. This CLUI exhibit and tour took place in the Fall of 2000. **\$20.00**

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## HOW TO ORDER

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## editorial commentary

This is the 29th issue of the Lay of the Land. We'd like to be able to update our readers on a more regular basis, but it seems that doing things and talking about them are more mutually exclusive than anticipated. Think of it, maybe, as the antidote to the blog. This issue conveys some of what we have been up to, such as the extensive research into southern states, St. Louis, and other Midwestern places. But much of what we have been doing will present itself at a future date (such as projects in New York), or is less interesting to talk about in a newsletter (like the "strategic planning" we have been figuring out and our internal electronic storage and web server upgrades). We have also been working on a publication, called "Overlook: Exploring the Internal Fringes of America with the Center for Land Use Interpretation," to be published this fall by Metropolis and Distributed Art Press, a full-color photo book that will help the Center's projects and ideas reach a wider audience, after all, it is all about *increase and diffusion*, so long as its not too diffused in its increase!

Thanks, as always, to all of you, for *being there*.

-Lay of the Land Editors

# THE LAY OF THE LAND

WINTER 2006

THE CENTER FOR LAND USE INTERPRETATION NEWSLETTER

"Dedicated to the increase and diffusion of knowledge about how the nation's lands are apportioned, utilized, and perceived..."



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