


# Smooth Space: Rhizomatic Design Strategies in Interstitial Space

Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb

INFORMATION MATRIX: Syllabus

30 August 2006

	<p><b>Effective Dates:</b> 30 August 2006 – 8 December 2006</p> <p><b>Meeting Time:</b> 8:00AM-12 Noon MW</p>	<p><b>Location:</b> Art 1.202a and...?</p>	<p><b>Instructor:</b> <b>Riley Triggs</b> Office: ART 1.210 Email: riley@austin.rr.com Office Hours: MW 1-2 and by appointment</p>
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*Perhaps the immobility of the things that surround us is forced upon them by our conviction that they are themselves and not anything else, by the immobility of our conception of them. -Proust*

## Course Objectives:

- To develop an individual, self-aware and self-motivated trajectory and methodology for designing.
- To clearly define (then smooth) the territories of the design activities of research, writing and production.
- To clearly define (then smooth) the territories of design, everyday, practice and theory.
- To introduce Critical Theory as a source for design action.
- To develop Critical Thinking as a design tool.

## Methodology:

Several methods of design action will be discussed along with examples of their outcomes. Course objectives will be accomplished through written and visual explorations clearly defining an identifiable territory or territories in 'the world', then smoothing through acts of sensitive, rhizomatic design. The class will use a holistic approach to design, so it will be a combination seminar, studio, and lecture class. Various methods for design production covered early will be available for use by the students during the rest of the course.

## Territory of Inquiry:

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in their book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, propose the trans-historical relation between two conceptualizations of space: the *smooth* and the *striated*. The **smooth space**, the space of nomadic trajectories, is likened to the Japanese game of *Go* where individual pieces "territorialize and deterritorialize" fluid spaces; **striated space** is likened to European chess, where pieces "code and decode" spaces. The striated space, the formalized / coded space of a state, seeks to "parcel out a closed space for people, assigning each person a share and regulating the communication between shares". This is manifested in the state's efforts to make clear divisions of labor, classifying subjects, ordering and controlling as a coded map. According to Deleuze, a striated space exists only in relation to an unstable smooth space, and that while striation seeks to encode the flows of people, goods (and *desires*) of this space of nomadic

trajectories, the smooth space seeks simultaneously to de-territorialize the striated matrix of social order. Not as a policy, but as a potential, for the volatile smooth **space of desire** can erupt anywhere in a striated space. (Dr. Thomas Mical, *THE STEALTH LANDSCAPE OF TOKYO*)

Paul Virilio speaks about the differences between the *smooth* and the *striated*: "In **striated space**, one closes off a surface and 'allocates' it according to determined intervals, assigning breaks; in the **smooth**, one 'distributes' oneself in an open space, according to frequencies, and in the course of one's crossing". As there is no permanence in the conceptualization of smooth space, its boundaries are non-existent, and **detrterritorialization** takes place.

### **There are places | *in between* | territories.**

There is a place that exists between the territories of design and of the everyday. In this class we will explore the area *in between* **design, everyday, practice and theory [DEPTH]**. It is a **fuzzy interstitial place** whose **locus** is one of **desire**, but whose position is always shifting within culture, history, science, technology, and politics, making its location a quantum-like probability instead of a certainty. As designers, this **locus of desire** emerges from our struggle in/with/for/against the **everyday**. Industrial designer Enzo Mari identifies the moment this locus comes into existence when "what's around us makes us want to strangle the designer."

The act of design tends to territorialize the environment. Moving within the interstitial space of DEPTH **detrterritorializes** activities and creates more than thresholds for communication among the territories; it creates a smooth or smudged area in which to operate. Here exists *ma*, or the place *in between*. *Ma* is a Japanese character indicating an awareness of time and space through "the enclosure, the treasuring, or the layering of something that gives light and nurtures." It is the act of recognizing a space, giving it an emphasis and expanding upon it, and exploring all the possible ways of perceiving what that space means. By concentrating on the space *in between* DEPTH, the differences and sameness-es become more readily apparent, allowing for a more informed, personal reterritorializing of design.

We may begin to look for a **locus of desire** in secretive places of intimacy marked by the routine, repetitive and cyclical where transgression and resistance to design as a marketable commodity is possible. The **design of everyday life** is a process where solutions exist as fragmented questions and **discrepancies in reality** are as common as there are participants in the process. The **process of living** makes us all designers of the everyday. We sculpt our spaces with patterns of movement and relationships; we develop and disseminate design theories through our interventions and interactions; our practices are inherently contradictory leading to new opportunities for questioning our own design theory.

The class will move from defining moving targets of **desire and design** through an exploration of the everyday to defining a locus of desire and acting upon it through a studio project. The **semester long project** will be the **detrterritorialization** of a space/place that is real/virtual and/or political / social / ideological through a design[ed] intervention. Final form of the project is determined by the project itself, but will include carefully crafted written material that becomes an integral part of the project. Students will be asked to identify a

[possibly shifting] **position** for their **locus of desire** and to develop an appropriate methodology with which to act on their desires in the form of a deterritorializing intervention in a space/place.

**We are in search of "thick design" (as Enzo Mari calls it) or design that has DEPTH, which begins when there is no model to copy and produces designs that "are" versus those that "seem".**

**Grading:**

**5% Participation** (class discussion, presentations, attendance)

Discussions may occur via email and in class to give everyone a comfortable venue for expressing their ideas. The course is about class time, so attendance is absolutely crucial to success.

**50% Design Writings**

Writing assignments will be built upon the entire semester through an additive, crafting process that will be a part of the final 'studio' project. This process will be broken into progress reviews of the written material at critical junctures. Emphasis is placed on the final completed text. **This class fulfills a requirement for a substantial writing component.**

**45% 'Studio' Projects**

A series of vignettes that illustrate the theories discussed in class plus a final project that of a design intervention meant to deterritorialize (or smooth) the space of a given territory. Again, emphasis is placed on the final product as a summation of the entire semester of thinking and doing as evidence of a motivated **process.**

All projects must be turned in complete and **on time.** Late projects will be penalized by as much as one letter grade per class meeting.

**Each letter grade carries a specific meaning:**

**A** means *outstanding* work. The work shows innovation and a significant depth of understanding of the project requirements. The project has been fully developed and well communicated graphically. Generally there has been an unusual or unique concept employed which enhances the solution. The full potential of the problem has been demonstrated.

**B** means *good* work. Project solutions have exceeded all requirements of the project statement and show an above average depth of understanding. The project demonstrates an above average clarity of idea, execution and presentation.

**C** means *average* work. The project solution adequately satisfies the project statement but generally lacks some depth of understanding and development. The overall project lacks innovation and craft is just adequate.

**D** means *poor* work. The problem solution is extremely weak and lacks depth, understanding and innovation. Craft is weak and inappropriate to the class expectations.

**F** means *unacceptable* work. The project does not resolve the problem statement. The work shows a lack of understanding and demonstrates skill inappropriate to this class.

**X** Incomplete: An incomplete will be given in only rare cases, and for non-academic reasons.

### **Research Material:**

A strategy for deterritorializing design, everyday, practice and theory, will be presented through readings and then discussed in class. Films (where an inherent distrust of the heroic and formally fashionable (design) are evident) will be used as examples of navigating *interstitial space*, as well as developing our own critique of and sensitivity to the *everyday*. These will be used as a point of departure for the student's own research trajectory. It will be expected of each student to develop his/her own body of research materials from which to produce a coherent position in his/her writing in order to produce an intelligent, clear design project. A partial list of material to be drawn from and considered:

### Readings

Marx/Engle, *Das Capital*

Kracauer, *Mass Ornament*

Gomez-Perez, *Architecture and the Crises of Modern Science*

Benjamin, *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*

Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*

*Street Smarts and Critical Theory*

Stephen Ross, *More-than-ness*

*Dwellings*

Situationist International Manifesto

Anonymous, *Drifting with the Situationist International*

Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*

Dr. Thomas Mical, *The Stealth Landscape of Tokyo*

Hathaway, *Manifesto for Cyborgs*

Horkheimer Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*

Baudrillard, *Simulations*

Massumi, *Politics of Everyday Fear*

Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*

Ben Highmore, *Dwelling on the Daily*

*Wabi-Sabi*

Bruce Mau, *An Incomplete Manifesto for Growth*

Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

Superstudio, *Life Without Objects*

Paul Virilio, various

### Films

*Playtime, Crumb, The Cruise, Wonderland, The Way Things GO, Tokyo Drifter, The Fly, Bladerunner, James Burke Connections.*

### **Academics**

Academic policies can be found in the University Catalogues available through the Office of the Registrar and online at: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/>. Be sure to review the University policy on scholastic dishonesty if you are not already. It can be found at the Student Judicial Services web site at <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>. Since this class involves a certain amount of research and is a substantial writing component, strict guidelines for noting sources in an academic and professional manner will be enforced.

**If you think you might be plagiarizing, you probably are.** Make the information your own and use appropriate quotation and citing standards for the words of others.

**Accessibility**

Upon request the University of Texas at Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. More information can be found by contacting the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY or online at: <http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/ssd/>.

**Subject to Change**

With the exception of the grade and attendance policies, parts of this syllabus are subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

**Design Faculty Note**

The Design Faculty has many other commitments to the University in addition to their teaching responsibilities. The faculty are available to you several hours a week as well as during office hours. You should try to conduct your class business during these regularly scheduled hours. Arrangement to meet with faculty outside of these hours should occur only in unusual circumstances.

# Boundaries:

## Do Robots Dream of Electric Sheep?

### Assemblages as complexes of lines

#### INFORMATION MATRIX: ASSIGNMENT

20 September 2005

1	<b>Due Dates:</b> Pinup to produce revision: 8AM, 27 September 2006 Final to turn in for grade: 8AM, 2 October 2006	<b>Product:</b> 1 Diagram, high Adonis factor.	<b>Format:</b> 13x19 minimum computer-generated, printer output
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"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function." -F. Scott Fitzgerald

Diagram (map?) a territory of the intersection of Barton Springs and Lamar. Choose one territory to explore in diagram, with an eye towards producing a lengthy research paper about that topic next.

Look at the complexities of the social/political/spatial relationships of the intersection and the territories adjacent to it that not only help mark the boundaries and help to define the intersection as a territory of its own, but that are also territories that are affected by the intersection as a territory that overlaps/connects/gathers other territories. [The intersection may be seen as a sort of interstitial space *in between* territories. It is the space left over *in between* the different territories that bound it.]

- The definition of intersection should be used both very narrowly, and very broadly at the same instant.
- In choosing a territory, nothing is too small; bigness comes from knowing that everything has in it the whole world at once.
- Be pedantic *and* enlightened.

TMI: Assemblages are produced in the *strata*<sup>1</sup> and operate in zones where milieus become decoded: they begin by extracting a **territory** from the milieus. Every *assemblage* is basically territoriality (with content and expression) that is cut and carried away by *lines of deterritorialization*. You are attempting to define *assemblages* present at the intersection first through the visual representation/extraction of its **territories** (then ultimately, by introducing a line of flight, to deterritorialize it and to produce a moment of smooth space within that territory later in the semester.)

<sup>1</sup>*Strata* are moments of general thickenings of the Body of the earth; areas of molecular and molar: accumulations, coagulations, sedimentations, foldings. *Strata* contain many diverse forms and substances and a variety of codes and milieus.

Bonus Tip: Always keep your language (both visual and written) as **simple** as possible in order for your message to be as **complex** as possible.

# Territories:

## Knowledge is power.

### Territories as complexes of understanding.

## INFORMATION MATRIX: ASSIGNMENT

23 October 2006

2	<b>Due Dates:</b> Thesis Sentence: 30 October, 2006 Finished paper: 6 November 2006	<b>Product:</b> (1) 12 page (minimum) research paper	<b>Format:</b> 8.5"x11" computer-generated, printer output, 1.5 line spaced, 12 point Helvetica or Arial font.
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"Get your facts first, then you can distort them as you please." – Mark Twain

"There is a fine line between fishing and just standing on the shore looking like an idiot." – Steven Wright

"The greatest challenge to any thinking is stating the problem in a way that will allow a solution." – Bertrand Russell

"Reading made Don Quixote a gentleman. Believing what he read made him mad." – George Bernard Shaw

"A point of view can be a dangerous luxury when substituted for insight and understanding." – Marshall McLuhan

"All relationships of people to each other rest, as a matter of course, upon the precondition that they know something about each other." – Georg Simmel

Research your territory at the intersection of Barton Springs and Lamar. Choose one territory to explore in a 12 page research paper, with an eye towards producing much information and insight into that territory that the casual observer would never know. You will need a tight, concise, pointed thesis sentence in which to frame your investigation. It should be a defining statement about your territory. Think about your territory as a territory, not as a subject, as you research and write. You are still trying to simply define your territory by knowing (and telling) as much about the territory as you can fit into 12 (minimum) pages of text.

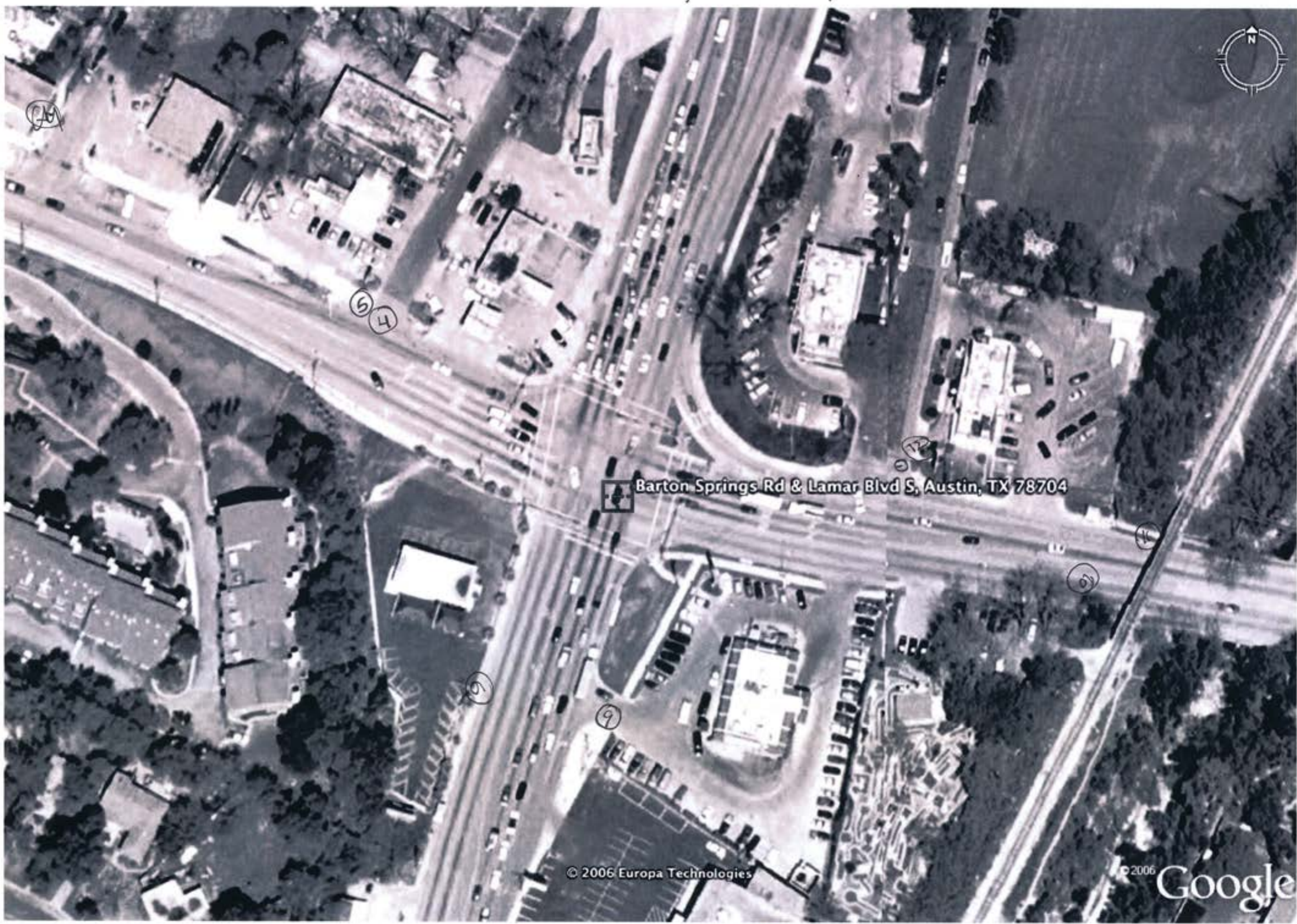
- The definition of territory should be used both very narrowly, and very broadly at the same instant.
- In writing about your territory, nothing is too small; bigness comes from knowing that everything has in it the whole world at once.
- Be pedantic *and* enlightened through that pedanticism.

Consider this paper as setting the stage of the *Everyday* – a place where *Design* may occur.

Bonus Tip (*repeated*): Always keep your language (both visual and written) as **simple** as possible in order for your message to be as **complex** as possible.

territories exist in the everyday. do not ask for attention  
like out of balance

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Jol



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Barton Springs Rd  
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