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Rowan Matthew Ogden
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**Reading the City:
East Austin**

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Supervisor:

David Shields

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**Reading the City:
East Austin**

by

Rowan Matthew Ogden, B Univ Studies

Report

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Dedication

Thank you to the dedicated Design Faculty—Dan, David, Gloria, Kate, Peter and Riley—and my classmates—Carolyn, Lindsey, Ryan, and Xi.

This report is dedicated to Kathryn Crocker and Wendy Ogden. I cannot express the gratitude I have for both of you. I thank my mother Wendy for continually pushing me to dream and my love Katy for standing with me through the process.

Abstract

Reading the City: East Austin

Rowan Matthew Ogden, MFA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

Supervisor: David Shields

My research trajectory focuses on creating graphic interpretations of the relationship between the urban landscape and the populations that reside within it. I use the term *reading the city* to indicate the process of selecting a focal point and connecting relevant information to it. By creating experimental mappings that connect the physical experience of the East Austin to relevant information contexts I seek to develop a series of design strategies that are appropriate for fostering a heightened awareness of the dynamics that shape the urban environment. In this context, graphic design functions as the primary tool for expressing these connections. This report explores the development of the *reading* process by summarizing conceptual precedents and eleven personal works, which were undertaken to explore the viability of the approach.

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INTRODUCTION

NO TRUE SECRETS ARE LURKING IN THE LANDSCAPE, BUT ONLY UNDISCLOSED EVIDENCE, WAITING FOR US. NO TRUE CHAOS IS IN THE URBAN SCENE, BUT ONLY PATTERNS AND CLUES WAITING TO BE ORGANIZED.¹

My research trajectory focuses on creating graphic interpretations of the relationship between the urban landscape and the populations that reside within it. By creating a series of experimental mappings that connect the physical experience of the city to relevant information contexts I have developed a series of design strategies that contribute to a heightened awareness of the urban environment. In this context, graphic design functions as the primary tool for expressing the connections that shape and influence place. Throughout this paper I use the term *reading the city* to indicate the process of selecting a focal point and connecting relevant information to it; a *reading* assists both the designer and the audience in cultivating a deepened understanding of the varied perspectives that create the urban environment. The process of reading is both experiential—a reading is selected by directly observing the phenomena of the urban landscape—and cerebral—a *reader* is making conceptual connections and reinforcing their observations with textual research.

Reading the city is a process that builds on the sense-making capacity that humans naturally possess. As infinitely curious creatures, humans are driven by the

¹ Grady Clay, *Close-Up, How to Read the American City* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) 11.

urge to understand the environment we inhabit. Lead by our perceptive capacity, we strive to apprehend the meaning of texts, signs, characters, relationships, and spatial constructions. To *read the city* is to grasp the meaning of a focal point by connecting it to context; it is the act of selecting, processing, documenting, connecting and expanding upon perceptive processes to promote understanding.

To clarify the process described above I have provided an example. A *reader*, walking through a residential district, notices that the housing stock varies greatly from one lot to the next; (s)he notices older, deteriorating homes sitting adjacent to newly remodeled homes with shiny automobiles in the driveway. After observing the pattern through several blocks, it becomes clear that the neighborhood is in transition. The observation of home discrepancy is made from the perceived experience of the urban landscape, however this observation becomes a *reading* when the walker finds evidence to explain the observation. In this case, (s)he locates a home price index finding that real estate prices have tripled in the neighborhood in the last five years. Such a process serves as a primer for a design intervention.

To create a conceptual framework for this design approach I have hybridized the methods inherent to photography and mapping. Photography is defined as a process of locating, framing and recording images. Mapping is “the ongoing process of plotting points and finding common terms of reference”² to mark features of a geographical area or a conceptual territory. As processes, both landscape photography and mapping are suited to gathering, compiling, framing

² Janet Abrams and Peter Hall, editors, *Else/Where: mapping new cartographies of networks and territories* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Design Institute, 2006) 12–13.

and presenting information;³ both are means for expressing complex information in a visual format, facilitating a deepened understanding and appreciation of the urban landscape.

Reading East Austin

This conceptual framework was created to guide a larger study of the cityscape of East Austin. Utilizing both photography and mapping as the primary processes, I have created eleven *readings* that explore a variety of elements present in the district. The *readings* are thematic studies, which range from poetic to quantitative; they should be considered as personal commentaries, inevitably imbedded with the subjective viewpoints that have emerged from my experience of East Austin in situ. The *readings* are the first step towards creating a larger dialogue about the urban landscape, an attempt to democratize the conversation about the growth and change of the city through time.

East Austin is a complex terrain shaped by misguided planning decisions that have created concentrated poverty, racial separation, and environmental inequality. In this landscape there exists a collection of multivariate perspectives that are continually shifting, evolving and decaying. It is a place in a continual state of flux and it is clear that there is a need to enlarge the dialogue about the planning and preservation of this unique urban space.

The eleven *readings* outlined in this paper are experimental mappings that explore how a designer can craft situational communications that prompt both a personal understanding of and a contribution to the perceived value of the East

³ Denis E. Cosgrove, *Mappings* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999).

Austin. The *readings* are designed to generate new questions and to develop an ongoing relationship to the changing terrain of East Austin.

CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL INFLUENCES

I have relied on the precedent works of many individuals to develop the practice of *reading the city*, however there are four individuals that have provided the appropriate conceptual entry points for defining my trajectory: Carl Sauer, a cultural geographer, J.B Jackson, a cultural geographer, Peter Hall, a design writer and critic, and Stephen Shore, a photographer. Although each of these esteemed practitioners operates from different intellectual perspectives, hybridizing key elements of their thinking has allowed me to develop my personal practice of *reading the city*.

In situating my research I have been inspired by the idea of the ‘cultural landscape.’ The concept of a cultural landscape was originated by Carl Sauer—the director of the ‘Berkeley School’ of Cultural Geography—and expanded upon by John Brinckerhoff (J.B) Jackson.⁴ Sauer’s view of the cultural landscape “stressed the agency of culture as a force in shaping the visible features of the Earth’s surface in delimited areas. Within [Sauer’s] definition, the physical environment retains a central significance, as the medium with and through which human cultures act.”⁵ Sauer emphasized a two-way interaction between both landscape and culture, insisting that culture was shaped by nature while nature set only the most basic limits on cultural choices. In his seminal essay *The Morphology of Landscape* he contends: “The cultural landscape is fashioned from the natural

⁴ Cari Goetcheus, “Exploring the boundaries of historic landscape preservation” (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation, Athens, Georgia April 11–14, 2007).

⁵ K. Bharatdwaj, *Physical Geography: A Landscape Appreciations* (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 2009).

landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result.”⁶

J.B. Jackson built upon Sauer’s definition of the *cultural landscape* by insisting that all landscapes were fundamentally cultural. Such a statement allowed him to more narrowly focus on exploring the cultural meaning of *vernacular* or unplanned landscapes.⁷ Jackson’s work helped to developed a postmodern stance on culture that proclaimed:

In any society there is not a single context but a series of contexts at a variety of scales [where people] depending upon access to power and other resources are differentially able to arrange and modify these different contexts.⁸

Jackson’s cultural landscape was:

a man-made composition of structures and spaces designed to serve the needs of its inhabitants, and when those needs—economic, social, ideological—change, then the landscape changes, not always to everyone’s satisfaction.⁹

Jackson’s relational and evolving landscape was continually being created and recreated through time. It emerged as both a positive and negative construction, but always in flux.

From the 1950s on, J.B. Jackson produced much writing highlighting the importance of “perceiving the symbolic clues to culture that lie hidden behind the

⁶ Carl Sauer, “The Morphology of Landscape,” in *University of California Publications in Geography*, 22 (1925) 19–53.

⁷ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

⁸ James Duncan, “The Superorganic in American Cultural Geography” in *Annals of the American Geographers*, 70 (June, 1980) 181–198.

⁹ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, “Of Houses and Highways” in *Aperture*, 120 (Spring, 1990) 64–71.

bare morphology of landscapes.”¹⁰ Jackson’s emphasis on “reading” or “decoding” the landscape conceptualizes landscape as a medium that holds and channels natural and cultural forces that can be identified and studied.¹¹

Theoretically, at least, we ought to try to read all landscapes, no matter who is responsible for making them. It is especially important to try to do that when we are trying to gain insight into the lives of ordinary, unlettered people. If we truly believe that landscape is a lens that lets us look into the lives of ordinary people, scholars must necessarily pay attention to the landscapes those ordinary people created.¹²

Inspired by Jackson’s notion of reading a landscape, I looked to the work of Peter Hall and Janet Abrams to further develop my process.

Hall and Abrams, exposed me to a myriad of alternative forms of mapping that have emerged in the last decade through the text *Else/Where: Mapping New Cartographies of Networks and Territories*, a compilation of essays and interviews that explore the many ways in which technological innovations are prompting the mapping of virtual and geographic terrain in radical new ways. Hall’s investigations and writing on mapping have influenced practitioners in many disciplines including design, cartography, geography, architecture, planning and the social sciences. In *Else/Where* the authors introduce the book by stating that:

Mapping has emerged in the information age as a means to make the complex accessible, the hidden visible, the unmappable mappable...Mapping has become a way of making sense of things.¹³

¹⁰ Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, 1984.

¹¹ Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, 1984.

¹² Chris Wilson and Paul Erling Groth, *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J.B. Jackson* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 89.

¹³ Abrams, Hall, editors, *Else/Where* (2006) 12.

The authors have provided an array of precedents, which demonstrate how artists and designers have co-opted the metaphors of cartography and geography to convey alternative presentations of the relationships forming in both the physical and virtual world. Advancements in technology have allowed the practice of mapping to grow laterally now including artists and designers. The maps presented in the book offer permission for a new generation of creators to explore social and spatial relationships from personal initiative rather than top-down directive.

In his lectures Mr. Hall has summarized an expansive intellectual framework, rich in precedent and example. In defining a map as a: Database, Tool, Reference, and an Argument, Mr. Hall invites a process-based approach to expresses complex relationships. He chooses speak about the activity of mapping rather than the map, which connotes an artifact rather than a process. The activity of mapping is defined as:

...a process which is ongoing, incomplete, and of indeterminate mutable form. Mapping refers to plotting points and finding common terms of reference with which to analyze data; it benefits from the lack of finality denoted by the word 'map'. Where maps measure and notate the world, mapping is, in the words of landscape architect James Coroner, a 'collective enabling enterprise', a creative act that describes and constructs the space we live in, a project that 'reveals and realizes hidden potential.'¹⁴

Such a framework invites exploration, collaboration, and agenda building. Mapping allows a designer to illuminate information by exposing natural processes, historical events, political interests and programmatic structures. Maps, in their ideal incarnation, invite the construction of the unknown or unconscious allowing the reader to merge reality with potential realities. In this way mapping is

¹⁴ Abrams, Hall editors, *Else/Where*, (2006) 12.

process that precedes planning or a design intervention; mapping provides a framework for approaching large problem sets that do not allow fixed solutions or fixed scopes. The conceptual framework of *reading the city* was directly influenced by the writings and lectures of Mr. Hall.¹⁵

My final general influence is Stephen Shore, an internationally recognized photographer, whose works often explore the American vernacular landscape. Shore, like contemporaries Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Frank Gohlke emerges from a tradition of American Landscape photography epitomized by Walker Evans. He arrived onto the international scene as part of an exhibition entitled *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*, which was curated by William Jenkins at the International Museum of Photography in 1975.¹⁶

Shore's landscapes are epitomized in *Uncommon Places: The Complete Works*.¹⁷ This influential work provides an important glimpse into the radically changing American West of the 1970s. Frequent cross-country road trips taken from 1973 to 1981 lead Shore to the many sites often multiple times. Using an 8" × 10" view camera, Shore framed and composed images of contemporary America. According to Shore:

the restrictions [of the camera] force conscious decision making. You can't sort of stand somewhere; it is exactly where you want to be...So what happens is that you develop a kind of taste for certainty.¹⁸

¹⁵ Peter Hall "The Art of Mapping." (Paper presented at Design Criticism MFA Lecture Series at School of Visual Arts, New York, December 7, 2010).

¹⁶ Robert Adams, *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (Rochester, New York: International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, 1975).

¹⁷ Stephen Shore, *Uncommon Places: The Complete Works* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

¹⁸ Aaron Schuman, "An Autobiography of Seeing: Stephen Shore's Uncommon Places," *Modern Painters*, Spring 2004.

The camera is capable of creating a “surreal density of information.”¹⁹ Such an approach prompts the processing of large amounts of information about the subject and the spatial relationships that describe the subject. Framing a scene is a type of visual analysis that prompts a photographer to connect his/her scene to a larger concept. With the simple click of the shutter, the camera instantaneously condenses all of the information into an incredibly saturated and detailed image, which takes a viewer only seconds to comprehend.²⁰ Shore’s work provides key criteria for approaching landscape photography with rigor, formalism and a keen attention to subject matter.

The convergence of cultural geography, mapping, and photography provides the foundation for my practice of *reading the city*. Carl Sauer, J.B. Jackson, and Stephen Shore have demonstrated that there is a great deal to be learned from experiencing the landscape directly. Walking through the city observing, collecting, and documenting is an exceptional starting point for informing one’s understanding of the *cultural landscape*; the experience also contributes important context that informs the formal research process.

The following chapters explore how specific design precedents and specific methods allowed me to develop my practice of *reading of the city*. Each chapter includes a brief introduction, key precedents and an explanation of my readings of East Austin.

¹⁹ Schuman, *Modern Painters*, Spring 2004.

²⁰ Schuman, *Modern Painters*, Spring 2004.

CHAPTER 2: BEGINNINGS

The work featured in Chapter 2 marks the entry into my research trajectory. The work represents the first phase of a continually evolving approach that is refined from experience, research and the influences of relevant design precedents. The readings in this chapter explore how language shapes the idea of place.

Precedent 1: Manhattan by Howard Horowitz, 1997

The work of Howard Horowitz was instrumental as a precedent for my work *Recovering History: Preliminary Readings of Place*. Horowitz, a professor of geography, is known for producing “word maps” which provide a universal and personal read of place. His best-known work is *Manhattan*, a densely packed celebration of the famous New York Borough. The poem is a carefully designed package of words that includes significant places in Manhattan from Spuyten Duyvil to Battery Park. The piece includes key elements of geology, ecology, history and infrastructure; it includes references to the distinctive cultural expressions of the island, such as festivals, sports, museums, performances, foods, and legends. An excerpt follows:

From Hell’s Kitchen walk to Broadway, buy tickets for “Showboat” or “Cats” —hey, the Knicks won at the buzzer in the Garden! See Macy’s flat parade, then gape from atop the Empire State, where mighty Kong took a fall. Diamond jewelers join fur-clad window shoppers as herds of jaywalkers cross against the light in the Garment District. Graffiti-scrawled boards near the Flatiron Building enclose pits of unconsolidated sediment Consolidated Edison must dig. Workers repair Gramercy Park cables, reroute Chelsea steam pipes, plug a burst main flooding streets by Union Square. (Tap water flows down from the Catskills in deep tunnels; garbage is hauled to a landfill at Fresh Kills.) The riverfront was filled for barnacle-crusted piers, and Minetta Brook wetlands became lots in Greenwich Village. A sweatshop horror: 146 locked-in women lost their lives in the

Triangle Shirtwaist fire. Watch skateboard demons cavort among panhandlers as old men play chess near the arch in Washington Square, N.Y.U. students, art film fans, coffee drinkers, & East Village poets crowd smoky joints on Saturday night; some cross (the Holland Tunnel) back out to New Jersey. Cheap gallery space is a memory in SoHo; cast-iron lofts rent high, as do TriBeCa warehouses.²¹

The composite of these words builds the shape of the physical geography while expressing the complexity of the cultural that shapes the place.²²

Horowitz's fondness of Manhattan is shared by taking his readers on a personal journey through the Borough using poetic language. Creating the work required him to cultivate a keen sense of the relationship between the geographic forms of the city and the language that expresses these forms. Honing this *language of place*²³ requires that the designer shape his/her own sense of the urban landscape by creating personal insight about it.

Reading 1: Recovering History, Preliminary Readings of Place, 2011

Reading 1 served as my preliminary investigation into the practice of *reading the city*. The project was proposed as a series of text-and-image sketches that examined the relationship of language and place. Like Horowitz I used language as the primary tool for expressing the histories that create the concept of place. Using historical accounts, encyclopedia entries, image archives, and maps I sought to

²¹ Howard Horowitz, "Manhattan," *New York Times* Opinion Section, accessed October 2, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/30/opinion/manhattan.html>

²² Katharine A. Harmon, *You Are Here: Personal Geographies And Other Maps Of The Imagination* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).

²³ Rajend Mesthrie, "Language and Place." In *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 203–217.

immerse myself in a historical context that would give me a more complete understanding of the idea of Austin.

The primary source for four of the text-and-image sketches was the Wikipedia article on Austin.²⁴ The passage was chosen for its ubiquity rather than its scholastic merit. Wikipedia entries are relatively democratic writings created from the ideas and views of many users building a pluralistic account of the history of Austin.²⁵ My sketches reduced the Wikipedia passage to a set of proper nouns and historic dates. Most of the informational context was removed leaving only a residue of language that offered interesting insights into Austin's history. The exercise revealed that race has always been a significant factor in shaping Austin as a cultural landscape. The area of land now known as Austin was inhabited first by the Tonkawa, the Comanche and the Lipan Apache. In the 1700's Spanish Conquistadors built settlements, followed by Anglo-Americans moving from the Eastern United States into the frontiers of the West. African Americans came with the Anglo settlers as slaves and were eventually made free members of society.²⁶ As the decades have progressed social dynamics have shifted but the tension between races has remained embedded in the landscape.

Although many of the sketches were too oblique to be of great value, the design exercise allowed immersion into a research trajectory rich with possibility. The project began the process of generating experimental methodologies for

²⁴ "History of Austin, Texas." Wikipedia, accessed September 20, 2011, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Austin,_Texas.

²⁵ Dan O'Sullivan, "Wikipedia and the Nature of Knowledge" In *Wikipedia: A New Community of Practice?* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009) 125.

²⁶ "History of Austin, Texas."

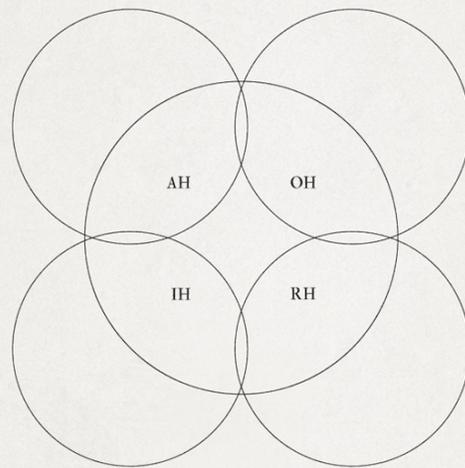
reading the city and created an enlarged sense of the information context that defined Austin.

Reading 1 prompted a survey of landscape photography with a focus on the urban environment. I chose to examine the work of Ed Ruscha, a conceptual artist, Lee Friedlander, a contemporary American photographer, and Mellisa Cicetti, an architect that uses photography for documenting place. The works of these practitioners were chosen as precedents for there definitive expressions of place.

THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM
IS TO CALL THINGS
BY THEIR RIGHT NAMES.

IF NAMES ARE NOT CORRECT,
LANGUAGE IS NOT IN ACCORDANCE
WITH THE TRUTH OF THINGS.

IF LANGUAGE IS NOT IN ACCORDANCE
WITH THE TRUTH OF THINGS,
AFFAIRS CANNOT BE CARRIED ON TO SUCCESS.



APPARENT HISTORIES (AH)
FACTUAL INFORMATION THAT IS READILY
AVAILABLE THROUGH STANDARD
RESEARCH CHANNELS

OBSCURED HISTORIES (OH)
HISTORICAL INFORMATION THAT EXISTS BUT
REQUIRES A SUBSTANTIAL EFFORT TO UNEARTH
OR RECOVER

IMAGINED HISTORIES (IH)
REFORMULATIONS OF HISTORICAL
INFORMATION THAT DOES NOT EMERGE
FROM FACTUAL EVENTS

REINTERPRETED HISTORIES (RH)
INFORMATION THAT RECOMBINES ELEMENTS
FROM APPARENT HISTORIES, OBSCURED
HISTORIES, AND IMAGINED HISTORIES

FIGURE 305

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Four types of histories / Four ways to see information or create information

Illustration 2: Selections from *Reading 1, Recovering History, Preliminary Readings of Place, 2011*



FIGURE RH 105
ORIGIN - PRESENT

A current Wikipedia history reduced to Proper Nouns and Dates
en:wikidata.org/wiki/History_of_Austin,_Texas



FIGURE RH 106
REMOVALS / NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY

A current Wikipedia history reduced to Proper Nouns and Dates
en:wikidata.org/wiki/History_of_Austin,_Texas

Illustration 3: Selections from *Reading 1, Recovering History, Preliminary Readings of Place, 2011*



figure AH 401
 PLAN OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN, 1839
 reference www.ci.austin.tx.us/library/ahc/briefhistory.htm

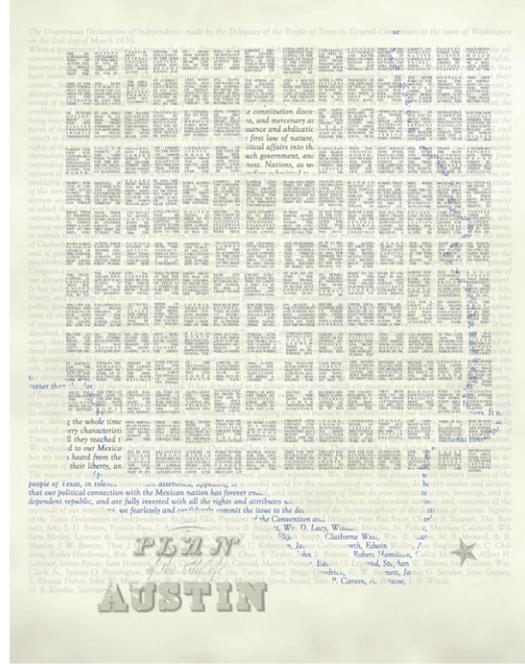


figure RH 401
 PLAN OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN, 1839
 reference www.ci.austin.tx.us/library/ahc/briefhistory.htm

Illustration 5: Selections from *Reading 1, Recovering History, Preliminary Readings of Place, 2011*

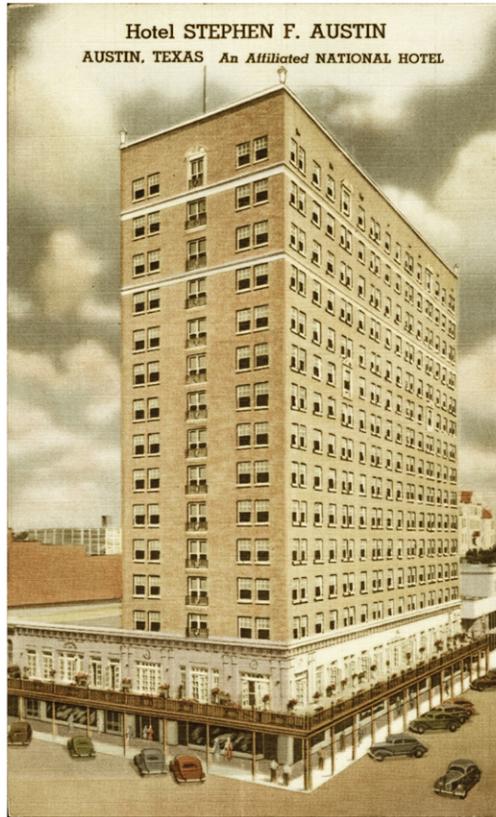


figure IH 201
FOUND POSTCARD - STEPHEN F. AUSTIN HOTEL
found ephemera



figure IH 201
APACHE HOTEL - CURRENT SITE OF THE STEPHEN F. AUSTIN HOTEL
reference CO 8993 / Austin History Center

Illustration 6: Selections from *Reading 1, Recovering History, Preliminary Readings of Place, 2011*



figure RH 101
THE CENTRAL BARBER SHOP
reference PICA 18518 /Texas State Library & Archives Commission

Illustration 7: Selections from *Reading 1, Recovering History, Preliminary Readings of Place, 2011*

CHAPTER 3: LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY AND A NOWHERE MAP

Photography is an essential part of my working method; it allows me to document my observations. As a process it informs my own understanding of a landscape and offers visible evidence that I can share with an audience. "Seeing", the act which occurs prior to photographing, is an acquired skill that requires patience and time, both prerequisites for understanding place. The precedents provided are exceptional examples of "seeing" the landscape; these works informed my attempt at transforming my "seeing" into another form of visual communication.

Precedent 2: Every Building on the Sunset Strip by Ed Ruscha, 1966

Ed Ruscha, an artist, is known for his keen ability to express a particular urban experience by combining vernacular language and iconic imagery. His large body of work encompasses painting, drawing, and photography and he is often praised for the playful manner in which he explores the banality of urban life. From his broad oeuvre I used the book *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, as a reference.²⁷

The book is a deadpan presentation of a landmark Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles. To create the images in the series Ruscha mounted a motorized camera to his vehicle, which allowed him to capture the buildings as he passed. The resulting composite presents Sunset Strip in a 27-foot accordion folded book with the pictures sequentially printed and labeled. The composite included buildings from 8024 Sunset to 9176 Sunset. Both sides of the street are depicted with even numbered side of the street at the top of the paper and the odd numbered printed upside down on the bottom of the page. Addresses and cross streets are labeled

²⁷ "Every Building on the Sunset Strip, Edward Ruscha," Walker Art Center Collections and Resources, accessed February 26, 2011, <http://collections.walkerart.org/item/object/8275>.

under the pictures in a running caption. The book can be read as a non-judgmental anthropological record of a small section of Los Angeles.²⁸

Precedent 3: Sticks and Stones: Architectural America by Lee Friedlander, 2004

A contemporary of Ed Ruscha, Lee Friedlander is an American master best known for his photographs of the American social landscape. He has spent the bulk of his career documenting and recording the built landscape of the cities and towns of America. His approach utilizes a square format camera allowing him to compress his readings of urban landscapes into nuanced visual presentations. He is fond of capturing buildings, streets, sidewalks, alleyways, avenues and back yards, often returning to a scene over the course of time.²⁹

In *Architectural America* we are presented with a novel view of the cultural landscape. The central premise of Friedlander's volume:

is that our view of American cities is generally obstructed, usually layered, and seldom anything like the simple clarity of an architectural rendering. Friedlander is probably best known for striving to reclaim the complexity of real sight from the ideal simplicity of media-generated visions of America. This is not an easy game to play with the camera, which is, of course, the main tool of the media he is critiquing. But he has been able to consistently violate and break through the flat field of photographic information, forcing us to look through scrims in the forms of fences and bushes, and to see in several directions at once through reflected transparencies and mirrors.³⁰

²⁸ "Every Building on the Sunset Strip."

²⁹ Lee Friedlander, *Sticks & Stones : Architectural America* (San Francisco: Fraenkel Gallery, 2004).

³⁰ "Lee Friedlander: Sticks and Stones and At Work." Museum of Contemporary Photography, accessed January 25, 2012, http://www.mocp.org/exhibitions/2005/03/lee_friedlander.php

Friedlander, acting as a visual author, presents a multivariate expression of the urban context. His images present places that are shaped and reshaped by their inhabitants over the course of time. He presents the urban environment with its many dysfunctions and imperfections helping a viewer see the collision of forces that create the modern urban context.³¹

Precedent 4: Marking the Land 1 by Mellisa Cicetti, 2004

Mellisa Cicetti, a Brooklyn-based architect, emerges from a tradition similar to both Friedlander and Ruscha. As a photographer her primary interest is the relationship between humans and the landscape. Much of her photographic work explores how human interaction changes the land.

Marking the Land 1, can be read as a trajectory through the landscape that is documented photographically. The work was completed on a road trip that took the author through the vast expanses of the Southwest from Santa Fe to Santa Monica. The photographs in the collection document rural sites, separated by hundreds of miles of space that have been impacted and marked by human intervention. Cicetti's photographs include the subtle human markings like fences, wires, and ruins. Her collection moves between seemingly abandoned landscapes and rural landscapes with barns, churches and gas stations.³² Like Ruscha and Friedlander, the photographs are often devoid of people focusing instead on the interaction between land and the built form.

³¹ Friedlander, *Sticks & Stones*, 2004.

³² Melissa Cicetti, *Marking The Land 1* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004).

The work by Ruscha, Friedlander and Cicetti acted as a primer for the second reading of Austin titled *Soft Map / To and From Another Nowhere Place*.

Reading 2: Soft Map, To and From Another Nowhere Place, 2011

Reading 2 was created to define a portion of the city using language as the data set. The work can be described as a commuter mapping project that is driven by the agenda of criticizing urban sprawl. A commuter mapping utilizes the daily commute as an opportunity to gather data and express it through a map.

At the time of the project my commute took me from North Austin (near Round Rock) to the University of Texas via surface roads. Often, I would sit in gridlock moving through some of the uninviting districts of the city. Driving through the endless blight of franchise burger stands, gas stations, tire stores, pawnshops, payday loan centers, and liquor stores, I felt the need to criticize planning choices which accepted intense urban sprawl, bleak corporate mini malls, and concentrated poverty.

I used a data gathering methodology, influenced by the work of Friedlander, in which I documented the drive from inside cabin of my car. By documenting my commute and using the photographs as a reference, I was able to quantify the visible language of the landscape. This language was transcribed onto a scaled map creating a description of this area of Austin.

The final project was presented as two sets of nine 11" × 17" panels that were organized as a 3 × 3 grid. One set of panels indicates the language of my personal commute, while the other set are axioms for creating a “nowhere place”—a landscape devoid of meaning or value. The mapping is a dead-pan documentation

of the American urban landscape. The work serves as a visual interrupter, prompting the viewer to “see” and question their surroundings, rather than settling for the proliferation of urban landscapes that offer little nourishment or beauty; it is unfortunate that we have come to expect our cities to be chaotic, littered places we must expediently move through on our way to more worthy destinations.

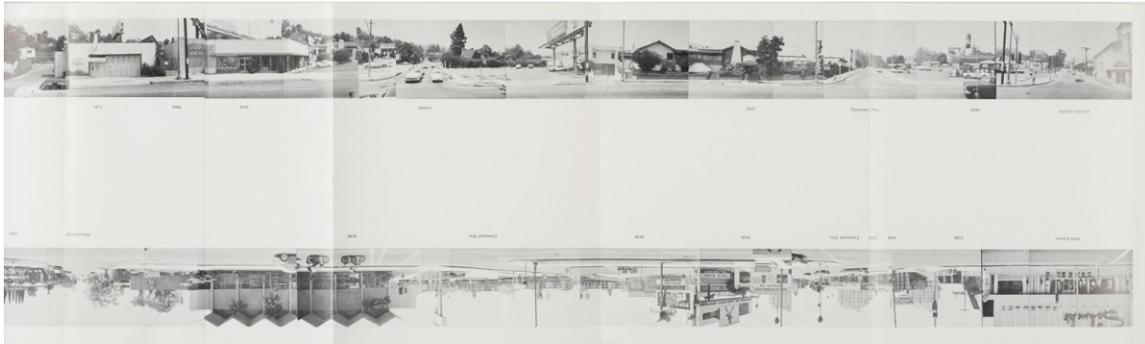


Illustration 8: *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* with detail by Ed Ruscha, 1966 (Precedent 2)



Illustration 9: Selection from *Sticks and Stones: Architectural America* by Lee Friedlander, 2004 (Precedent 3)

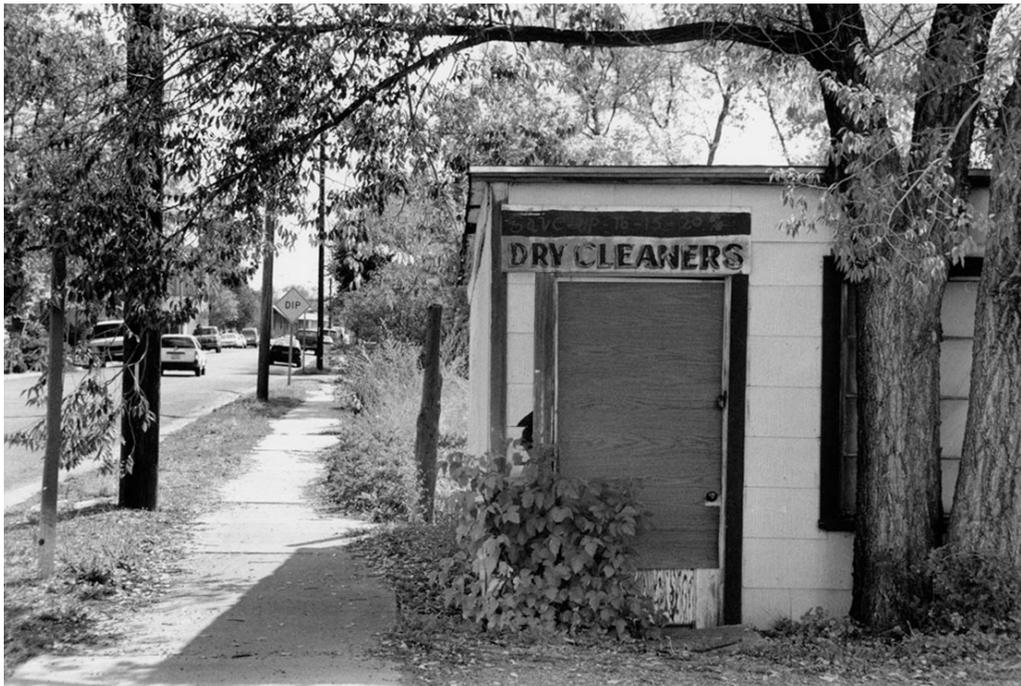


Illustration 9: Selections from *Marking the Land 1* by Mellisa Cicetti, 2004
(precedent 4)



Illustration 10: Selections from *Reading 2, Soft Map, To and From Another Nowhere Place, 2011*

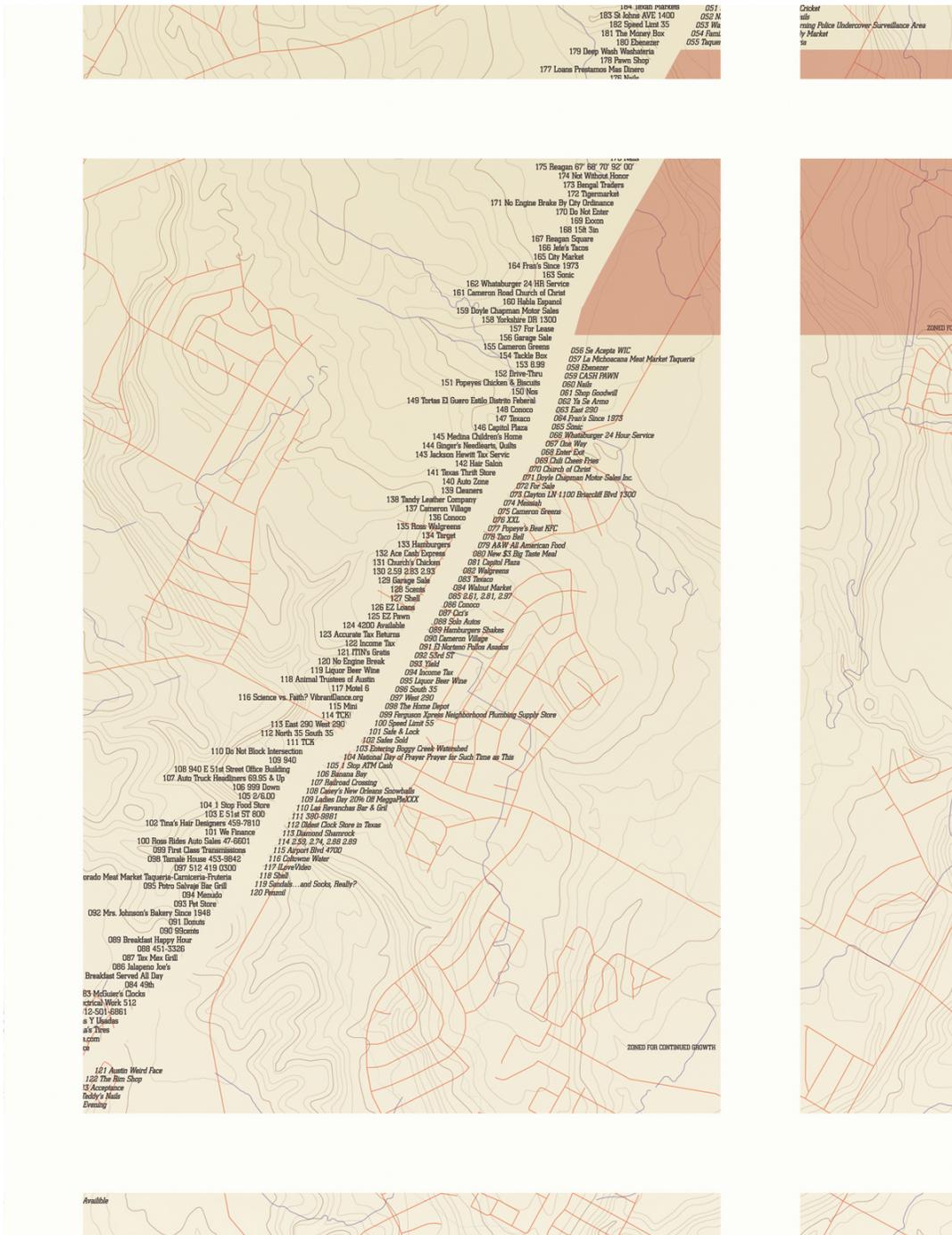


Illustration 11: Detail of Reading 2, *Soft Map, To and From Another Nowhere Place, 2011*

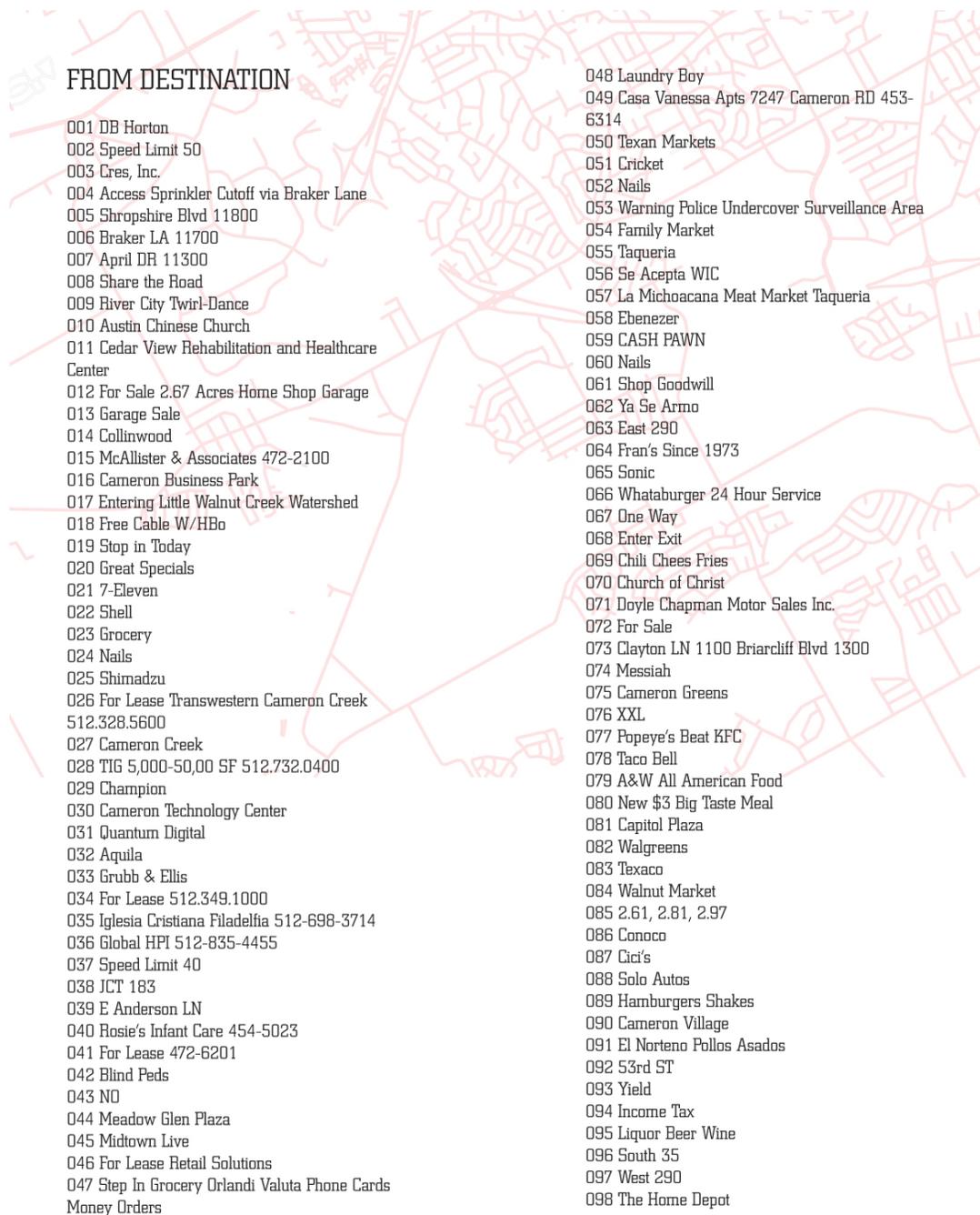


Illustration 12: Detail of Reading 2, Soft Map, To and From Another Nowhere Place, 2011

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPING THE READINGS

Influenced by the work of Alison Barnes, a designer focused on alternative mapping strategies, and Denis Wood, a radical geographer, I was able to continue the developing my working process. The projects emerged from a process that included site observation, photo documentation and graphical presentation. The three projects in this chapter highlight *readings* of different elements of East Austin including: unofficial communications, human continuity within the population, and the Interstate Highway.

Precedent 5: Geo/Graphic Mapping by Alison Barnes, 2003

Alison Barnes, a graphic designer, uses mapping as a design strategy for her work *Geo/graphic Mapping*, which she completed while attending the London College of Communication. Her project explored the cultural landscape of New Basford, an area north of the Nottingham City Center. New Basford is a typical English inner city area suffering from unemployment and urban decline.³³

Working from an anthropological standpoint, Barnes located and documented the many instances of graffiti created by the residents of the area. By recording and mapping this layer of *unofficial* language she developed a series of visual artifacts that delineate the relationship of language to place. The final works, which are presented on translucent paper stock to allow multiple maps to be overlaid, offer the viewer an unexpected experience of the landscape. The viewer is given a window into the personalized communications that have been

³³ "Online portfolio of Alison Barnes," Alison Barnes, accessed June 27, 2011, <http://alisonbarnesonlineportfolio.tumblr.com/#4683838579>

left in the landscape including: insults between rival neighborhood groups, personal feuds, hopes for the future, individual narratives and political expressions. Barnes' mappings expose the nuanced experience of a demographic that is unlikely to share their personal viewpoints more explicitly.³⁴

Reading 3: East, City as Information Environment, 2011

East: City as Information Environment is a series of mappings created by completing a thorough documentation of the unofficial communications of East Austin. For the project, I designated East Austin as an *information environment*—a physical or virtual space where information is generated, received and experienced³⁵—and my role was describing this layer of localized information.

Working in a defined boundary, limited East to West by I-35 & Comal Street and North to South by 7th Street & 3rd Street, I photographed over 900 examples of *unofficial* communication, including graffiti, murals, stickers, signs, artworks, and political protests. To categorize this collection of material I used a typological framework, which arranged the documentation as Sanctioned or Unsanctioned (*without official permission*) and Commissioned or Un-Commissioned (*made without authorization*). To further articulate this typology, I have provided two examples of Unofficial Communication: A hand-painted sign belonging to the owners of a local food truck on E. 6th Street with the text “*the vegan yacht is open right now*” was categorized as Sanctioned and Commissioned because its use was legal and the owner commissioned an employee to make it. A second example is

³⁴ Russell Bestley, *Visual Research* (Lausanne, Switzerland: AVA Publishing, 2007).

³⁵ “Information Environments.” London College of Communications, accessed April 16, 2012, <http://www.informationenvironments.org.uk>.

the spray-painted “Blacktino” found on multiple sidewalks on E. 6th and E. 7th Street. The graffiti was the result of guerilla-advertising campaign for the film *Blacktino*;³⁶ this form was categorized as Unsanctioned and Commissioned because the illegal graffiti was paid for by film promoters as part of a marketing effort.

Creating a typology to classify the communication artifacts facilitated a deepened understanding of patterns of communication and lead to a more focused mapping of frequently occurring graffiti in the area. The second phase of the study mapped over twenty different “graffiti tags” by geographic location and quantity. After documentation was completed additional information gathered online by searching through *Flickr* photo libraries. The process was documented with additional mappings that suggest that “taggers” with a substantial geographic presence also have anonymous fan groups that follow their clandestine activity online. The mappings express a correlation between the quantity of graffiti in physical space and its popularity in virtual space.

This research prompted the discovery of Denis Wood’s personalized mappings of place.

***Precedent 6: Everything Sings, Maps for a Narrative Atlas
by Denis Wood, ongoing***

Denis Wood, a geographer and co-author of *Making Maps*, has provided many key examples of radical place-based mappings. As a professor of environmental psychology and design at the College of Design at North Carolina State University,³⁷ Wood began an extensive mapping project of the Boylan Heights

³⁶ “*Blacktino*: a film by Aaron Burns,” Aaron Burns, accessed March 15, 2011, <http://www.blacktinomovie.com>

³⁷ “Maps,” Denis Wood, accessed February 3, 2012, <http://www.deniswood.net/maps.htm>.

neighborhood in Raleigh, North Carolina. Although the collection of maps from *Dancing and Singing: A Narrative Atlas of Boylan Heights*, have not been formally published, the maps from the collection have become touchstones for alternative cartographers, geographers, and designers. The Boylan Heights maps provide an intimate view of the layers of human interaction and behavior that shapes the urban landscape.³⁸

Wood's mappings are experimental *readings* of place, which explore everything from underground infrastructure to the location of Halloween pumpkins located throughout Boylan Heights.³⁹ They have prompted a new generation of place-inspired maps (see Alison Barnes *Geo/Graphic Mappings*) that seek to move beyond the normalized conventions of cartography. Wood's methodologies utilize straightforward and low-tech approaches, such a counting and collecting, that fosters a pluralistic view of the nuances and idiosyncrasies specific to place. He has created a method of mapping that anyone with the impetus and time can re-create. The design of such maps prompts a viewer to make their own maps and contribute to the narrative that is continually unfolding in one's localized landscape.

Like Ruscha, Friendlander and Shore, Denis Wood is creating an expansive dialogue about the everyday realities of the urban context.⁴⁰

³⁸ "Denis Wood: A Narrative Atlas of Boylan Heights" Making Maps: DIY Cartography, accessed April 20, 2012, <http://makingmaps.net/2008/01/10/denis-wood-a-narrative-atlas-of-boylan-heights>.

³⁹ Harmon, *You Are Here*, 2004.

⁴⁰ Harmon, *You Are Here*, 2004, 104.

Reading 4: Narratives of Human Continuity, 2011

Inspired by Wood's ability to *read* the unseen features of place, I began looking for ways my mappings could connect me more deeply to the history of the Eastside. I began by documenting the built environment, simultaneously looking for ways to connect the names of Eastside residents to the architecture they occupied. The temporal connection of person to place informed the direction of next mapping.

Reading 4 is a mapping of a segment of the population in East Austin from 1920 to 2011. The mapping was designed as a tool for connecting the names of Eastside residents to their historical addresses. The connections are the beginning of a historical record that seeks to recover the many Obscured Histories (embedded narratives of place that require substantial effort to recover) of the neighborhood.

My interest in Obscured Histories stems from the belief that such narratives are crucial building blocks of just and pluralistic societies. The inclusion of these narratives in a citywide history prompts the community to recognize contributions of each level of society. The mapping is a starting point for creating relevant historical narratives that include the racially marginalized members of the Austin community.

To create the work I arranged a data set that was generated by transcribing the names of residents, businesses and industrial sites that had physical addresses in East Austin from 1920 to 2011. This data was recovered from *Polk's Morrison & Fourmy Austin City Directory*,⁴¹ then organized by placing each name in a column that was sequenced by address numbers. Appropriate spacing allows each of the

⁴¹ R.L. Polk, *Polk's Morrison & Fourmy Austin City Directory 1922* (Austin, Texas: R.L. Polk & Co., 1922).

names to run horizontally from 1920 to 2011. By organizing the data set in this manner a pattern of human continuity emerges.

The mapping indicates an elaborate web of connection throughout the district; the repeated appearance of surnames through the decades reveals many residents that had family ties to the district for up to 70 years. This mapping also begins to tell the story of business and industrial sites, which were fixtures in the neighborhood. A viewer of the map sees the names of individuals that have spent the majority of their lives in East Austin. Finally, the mapping creates a framework to develop more complete historical narratives using methods such as ethnography, oral history, or additional historical research.

Reading 4 lead to additional research into the history of the Eastside. I was able to locate the East Austin Environmental Justice Project and a paper by Elizabeth Walsh that indicated that social fabric of East Austin was engineered with policy and strategic planning. The paper states that blatantly racist laws were drafted by the Austin City Council to force African American residents to move from enclaves throughout the city to consolidate on the Eastside. This resource made it clear that an understanding of the history of East Avenue and the development of I-35 became was necessary.⁴²

Reading 5: A Tale of Two Cities

Connecting the histories of I-35 and East Austin was a key strategy for understanding the area. *Reading 5* visually documents this connection by

⁴² Elizabeth Walsh, "A History of East Austin," UT-Austin School of Architecture, accessed January 11, 2011, <http://soa.utexas.edu/work/aejp/historyofeastAustin.htm>

graphically communicating the role the Interstate Highway played in defining East Austin.

I-35 is considered the historic racial division of the city. The migration of African Americans to the Eastside was prompted by the Austin City Plan of 1928, also known as the Koch plan.⁴³ In the 1950's, the development of the I-35 replaced East Avenue, further galvanizing this historic racial division with a massive physical infrastructure that acted as both a psychological and physical barrier to the members of the community.

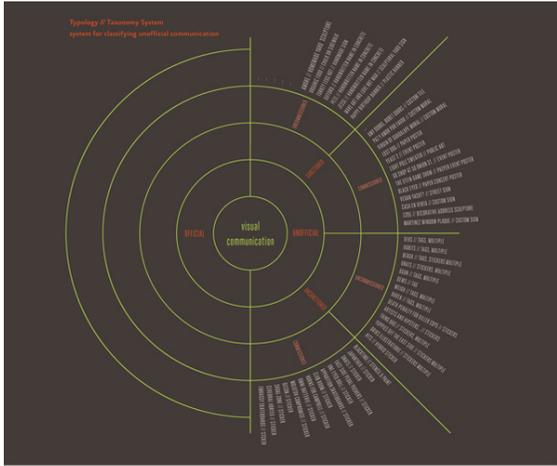
To describe the essence of this narrative I reduced text down to the most basic components while still allowing a portion of this narrative to remain present. The final work is an arrangement of white text on a black background with the "I" from the word "Austin" creating the form of the Interstate, separating the characters of the word "Austin" in the same manner in which the interstate separates the city. A secondary headline indicates the date the Interstate Highway was completed in Austin.

Working from *Reading 5*, I chose to further define the role the I-35 played in shaping East Austin. I turned to the work of the renowned planner Kevin Lynch to accomplish the task.

⁴³ Phillips, Alberta, "Proof of Austin's past is right there —in black and white," Statesman.com, accessed April 11, 2012, www.statesman.com/opinion/proof-of-austins-past-is-right-there-in-78440.html.



Illustration 13: Selections from *Geo/Graphic Mapping* by Alison Barnes, 2003 (Precedent 5)



TYPOLGY SYSTEM

The information graphic at left documents a conceptual system for organizing communication types. The graphic visually diagrams the dichotomies that are the framework for the typologies. One of the most challenging aspects of creating an appropriate set of typologies is the vast array of communications that occur in an urban area. Previous systems have been discarded as new forms emerged in the environment. Most fully developed taxonomies exist for categorizing graffiti but this particular study included other forms of communication.

Of note is a taxonomy created by Evan Roth:
<http://evan-roth.com/graffiti-taxonomy-paris-info.php>
<http://evan-roth.com/graffititaxonomy/>

TYPOLGY SYSTEM



Illustration 14: Selections from *Reading 3, East, City as Information Environment, 2011*



20

4TH STREET
IH-35 – COMAL

SANCTIONED AND UNSANCTIONED COMMUNICATIONS

Dirty face
 custom sticker // *unsanctioned & uncommissioned*
 Jesse Garza
 handwritting on private property // *unsanctioned & uncommissioned*
 Gang Side
 sign // *unsanctioned & uncommissioned*

Come And Take It
 custom flag // *sanctioned [?] & commissioned*
 Casa en Venta
 sign // *sanctioned & commissioned*
 Happy Birthday
 manufactured sign // *unsanctioned & uncommissioned*

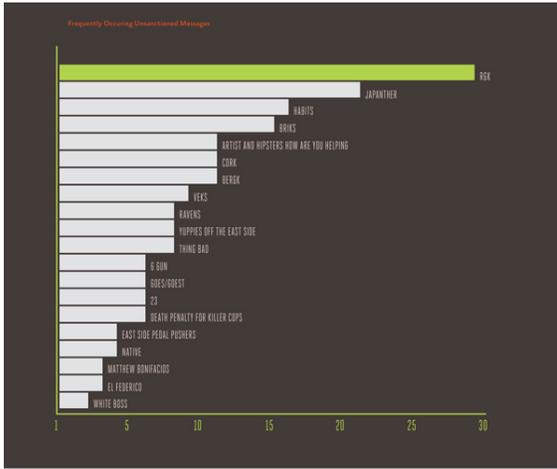
East Side
 graffiti (gang style?) // *unsanctioned & uncommissioned*
 Horns for Campbell
 custom sticker // *unsanctioned & commissioned*
 Artists and Hipsters
 custom sticker // *unsanctioned & uncommissioned*

TYPOLOGIES

21



Illustration 15: Selections from *Reading 3, East, City as Information Environment, 2011*



FREQUENTLY OCCURRING UNSANCTIONED MESSAGES

VEKS	9 documented instances	EAST SIDE PEDAL PUSHERS	4 documented instances
HABITS	23 documented instances	JAPAN'THER	27 documented instances
REK	29 documented instances	NATIVE	4 documented instances
6Gun	6 documented instances	RAVENS	8 documented instances
BERGK	11 documented instances	GOES/GOEST	6 documented instances
CORK	11 documented instances	EL FENERCO	4 documented instances
DEATH PENALTY FOR KILLER COPS	6 documented instances	MATTHEW BONIFACIOS	3 documented instances
YUPPIES OFF THE EAST SIDE	8 documented instances	BRIKS	21 documented instances
THING BAD	8 documented instances	WHITE BOSS	4 documented instances
ARTIST AND HIPSTERS HOW ARE YOU HELPING TO GENTRIFY EAST	13 documented instances	AUSTIN	11 documented instances

FREQUENTLY OCCURRING MESSAGES

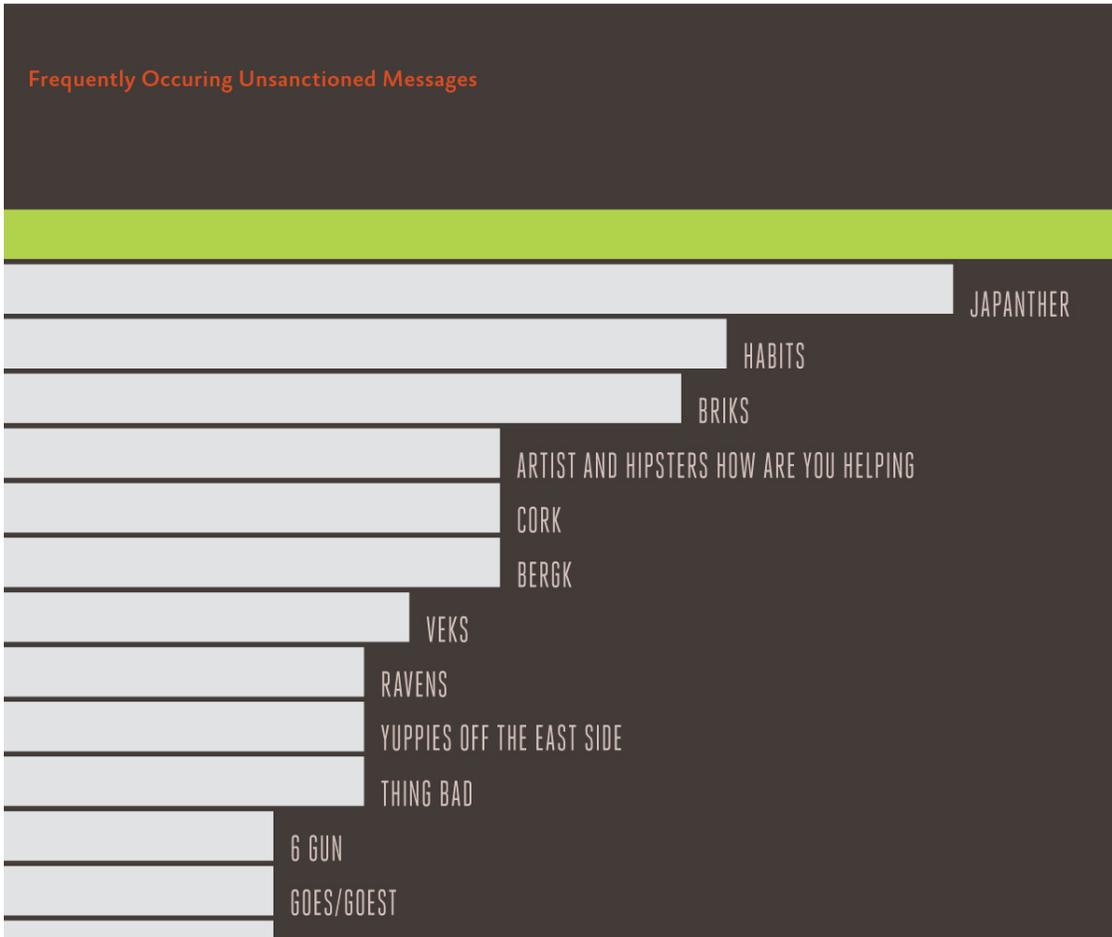
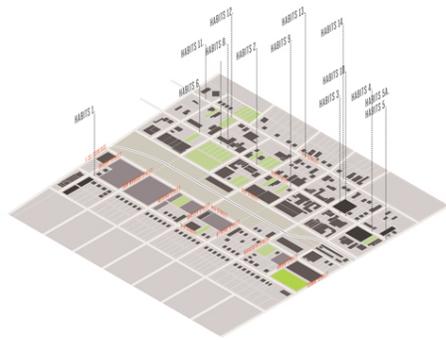


Illustration 16: Selections from *Reading 3, East, City as Information Environment, 2011*

HABITS DOCUMENTED COMMUNICATIONS



GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

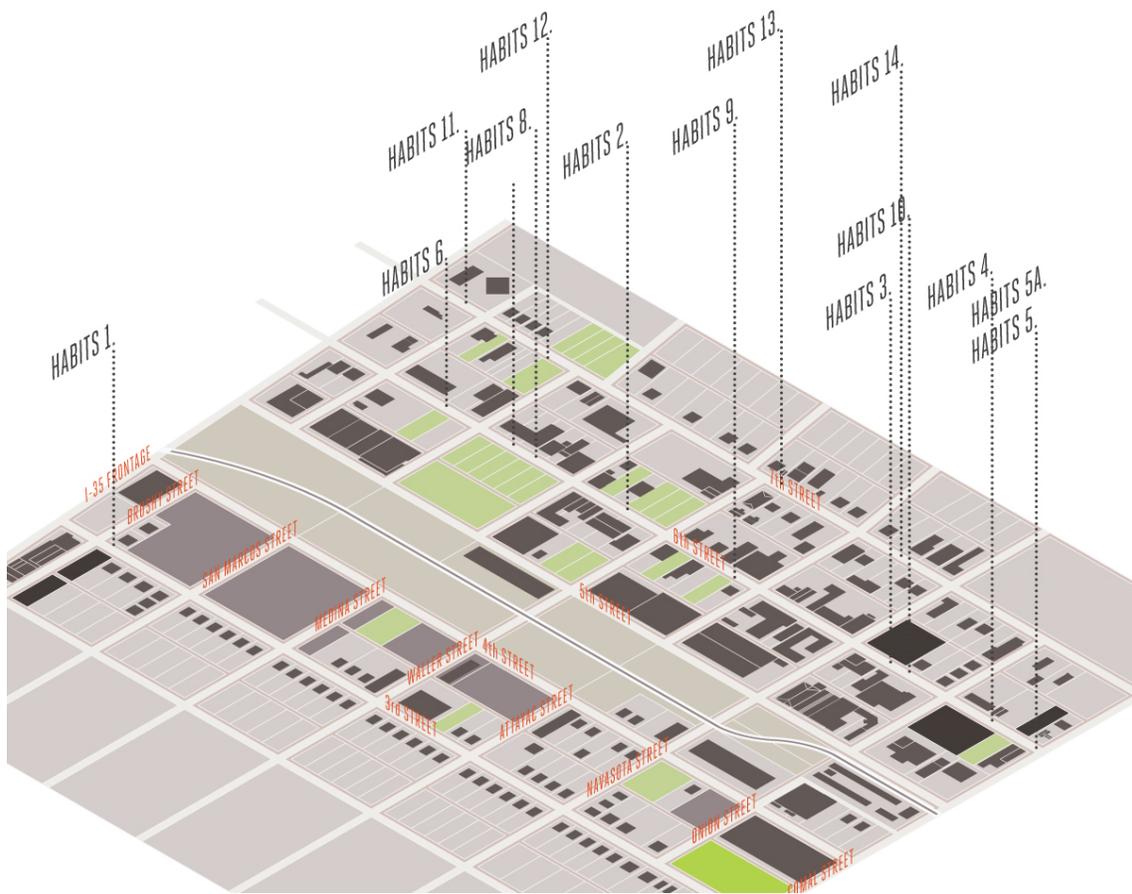


Illustration 17: Selections from *Reading 3, East, City as Information Environment, 2011*

VEKS VIRTUAL ASSOCIATIONS

VEKS TRACKED THROUGH FLICKR LIBRARIES

Wet Paint Opera
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/7872947@N04/5182356976>
 Cornelius Suttner
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/10800223@N07/4663549623>
 Drawnoid Man
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/26936744@N06/4640512342>
 PR Pete Rangel
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/5577132@N00/5094021433>
 The Steel Chariot (catalog of unofficial communication)
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/23657066@N07/4768351706>
 Sweet James (catalog of unofficial communication)
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/9877996@N00/5138496033>
 dagmonosis Dagnar Onasis
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/33457990@N05/1164920430>
 COLON BLOW Rich James (catalog of unofficial communication)
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/10461048@N04/4594142065>
 Rainier Beer 12oz
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/271166399@N03/3869221277>
 Antifinder 12 Broaden UglyFace
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/29924713@N07/3773666576>

36

VEKS TRACKED THROUGH FLICKR LIBRARIES

portland Tags: 50 veks 43 kyt 40 graffiti 30 dtc 7 rtm 6 portland xvae olympia 5 kill eastbay freight
 olympia your graff twb 4 eatfuk rain oregon huge california television stlouis art graf missouri
 eastbay tags 3 bombing urban louis
 urban louis austin st 2001 stl kytwb eat fuk paint streetart oakland rust hd trains crews fuck all
 habits exvae habits pirate lurking 2002 grotesque nyc gros veksy reefer tunnel 503 street lurk
 nyc words eatfuck northwest pir8 2008 diar spaler sticker relaps gro rip washington eat-
 northwest fucker gomer eksvae texas traveling pdx tour streak vx1 ef nation rgk dac 2003 sp cavs
 texas 206 squire chino rifle odie stem wall vent minneapolis naka much newyork holyroller
 minneapolis weboleum ve seez pastime thighmaster chariot tag leroy bio andrethegiant twist selo
 westcoast hellbent zen san grunts westcoast amaze ende moose
 seattle seattle chant overconsume kake braer lewse trails cn hoax relae gnosis allseeing bonus
 osaka olywa black westernfruitexpress railcars tase obey goldenwestservice heaven tens body
 aneheim dsense katsu osaka quack spraypaint aneheim spray throwup stayhigh149 rollingstock
 ny myth puzl smog midwest prb fullbleed rival tyco armn 1996 640 carl kids gore vor ethic
 canadianational joz reefers writing ovie kaws chino3 ny artist canadiannational benching meser steel hm
 tx flyid door newyorkcity mo knife pacificnorthwest tx jew rivel autorack htf caspo cost
 brooklyn sprinkles railfan fr8s abide spesh hell znc 2004 cast ibd rich blen semen dope boxcars
 letters saze skypage oly giz easy harvey 357 railroad mucho 26 brooklyn ceaver spain
 devils shepard blazing train ptown zone web thesteelchariot wa rosecity large fairey en-
 sue wildstyle belt ripe white or sanjose edec fend stdr duel kiloe atx sph throwie empty
 inside blief jose naughty just arcadia

Pairs: 40 kyt,veks 37 graffiti,veks 35 graffiti,kyt 27 dtc,kyt dtc,veks 24 dtc,graffiti 6
 graffiti,olympia olympia,veks portland,veks kyt,olympia 5 freight,kyt

Users: The Steel Chariot 6 funkandjazz 5 Cornelius Suttner 3 Prison Food

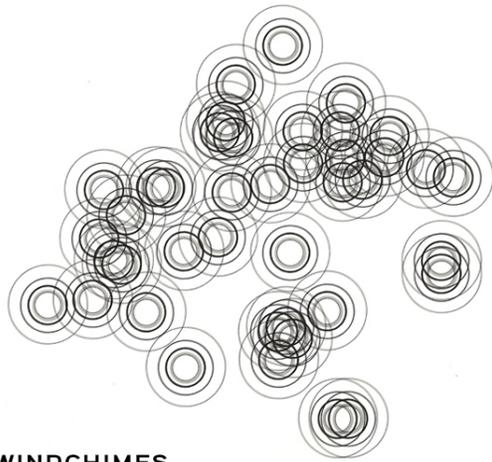
37

VEKS TRACKED THROUGH FLICKR LIBRARIES

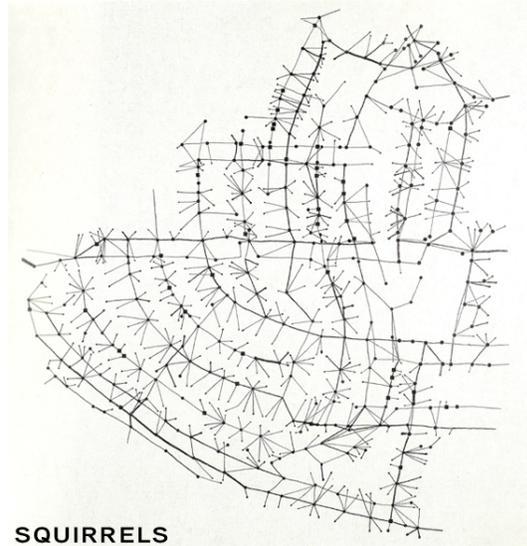
Tags: 50 veks 43 kyt 40 graffiti 30 dtc 7 rtm 6 portland xvae olympia 5 kill eastbay freight
 your graff twb 4 eatfuk rain oregon huge california television stlouis art graf missouri
 tags 3 bombing urban louis
 austin st 2001 stl kytwb eat fuk paint streetart oakland rust hd trains crews fuck all
 exvae habits pirate lurking 2002 grotesque nyc gros veksy reefer tunnel 503 street lurk
 words eatfuck northwest pir8 2008 diar spaler sticker relaps gro rip washington eat-
 fucker gomer eksvae texas traveling pdx tour streak vx1 ef nation rgk dac 2003 sp cavs
 206 squire chino rifle odie stem wall vent minneapolis naka much newyork holyroller
 weboleum ve seez pastime thighmaster chariot tag leroy bio andrethegiant twist selo
 hellbent zen san grunts westcoast amaze ende moose
 seattle chant overconsume kake braer lewse trails cn hoax relae gnosis allseeing bonus
 olywa black westernfruitexpress railcars tase obey goldenwestservice heaven tens body
 dsense katsu osaka quack spraypaint aneheim spray throwup stayhigh149 rollingstock
 myth puzl smog midwest prb fullbleed rival tyco armn 1996 640 carl kids gore vor ethic
 joz reefers writing ovie kaws chino3 ny artist canadiannational benching meser steel hm
 flyid door newyorkcity mo knife pacificnorthwest tx jew rivel autorack htf caspo cost
 sprinkles railfan fr8s abide spesh hell znc 2004 cast ibd rich blen semen dope boxcars
 letters saze skypage oly giz easy harvey 357 railroad mucho 26 brooklyn ceaver spain
 devils shepard blazing train ptown zone web thesteelchariot wa rosecity large fairey en-
 sue wildstyle belt ripe white or sanjose edec fend stdr duel kiloe atx sph throwie empty
 inside blief jose naughty just arcadia

VEKS VIRTUAL ASSOCIATIONS

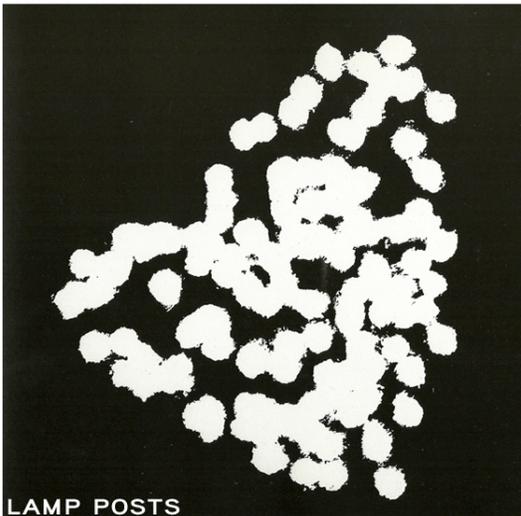
Illustration 18: Selections from *Reading 3, East, City as Information Environment, 2011*



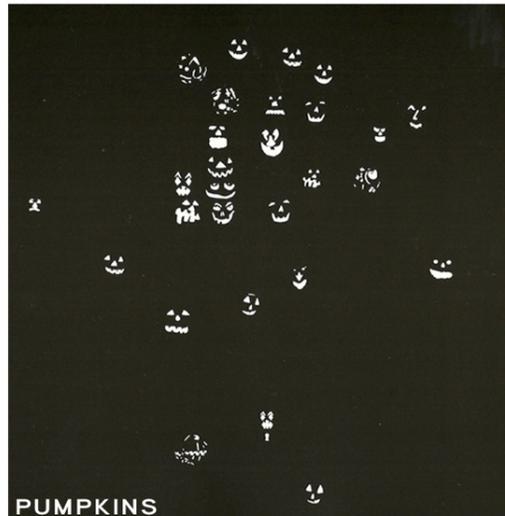
WINDCHIMES



SQUIRRELS



LAMP POSTS



PUMPKINS

Illustration 19: Selections from *Everything Sings, Maps for a Narrative Atlas* by Denis Wood, ongoing (Precedent 6)

EAST 7th AVENUE

1920	1930	1940	1951	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2011
802 S. A. ABRAHAM									
804 JOHN LA TOUF									
805 ALEX MONSERVAZ									
807 JOSEPH BENAIDES									
808 MARTIN GARZA									
REAR JUAN VELOZ									
811 AUGUSTINE BALDERAS									
812 PEARL REGISTER									
813 ANTONIO D GARZA									
813.5 TONY'S TAILOR SHOP									
814 G. C. ROBINSON									
816 E. S. RIOS									
818 GEO BAGGETT									
818.5 GEO JAMES									

1940

7th and East Avenue

802	S. A. ABRAHAM
804	JOHN LA TOUF
805	ALEX MONSERVAZ
807	JOSEPH BENAIDES
808	MARTIN GARZA
REAR	JUAN VELOZ

811	AUGUSTINE BALDERAS
812	PEARL REGISTER
813	ANTONIO D GARZA
813.5	TONY'S TAILOR SHOP
814	G. C. ROBINSON
816	E. S. RIOS
818	GEO BAGGETT
818.5	GEO JAMES

1952

7th and East Avenue

802	SAM A. ABRAHAM
804	JOHN S. VA
812	VACANT
813	ANTONIO I
813.5	TONY'S TAI
814	JOHN DAY
816	ERNEST S.
818	VACANT
818.5	VACANT

Illustration 20: Reading 4, Narratives of Human Continuity, 2011 (with detail)

EAST 7TH AVENUE

1920	1930	1940	1952
7th and East Avenue	7th and East Avenue	7th and East Avenue	7th and East Avenue
805 VACANT	805 MARGARITA JUAREZ	802 S. A. ABRAHAM	802 SAM A. ABRAHAM
807 ANDRÉS ALVAREZ	807 A. M. ALVAREZ BAKER	804 JOHN LA TOUF	804 JOHN S. VAETH
809 MATTIE SHAW	809 MATTIE SHAW	805 ALEX MONSERVAZ	
REAR CLITO ALVAREZ	REAR R. HAWKINS	807 JOSEPH BENAIDES	
811 THIS MUSCRO	811 GEORGIA HAMMOND	808 MARTIN GARZA	
812 ALBERT MILLER	812 L. D. SHIPP	REAR JUAN VELOZ	
813 ELIZABETH HUDSPETH	813 A. D. GARZA	811 AUGUSTINE BALDERAS	
		812 PEARL REGISTER	812 VACANT
814 AMADOR CANDOLAS		813 ANTONIO D GARZA	813 ANTONIO D GARZA
		813.5 TONY'S TAILOR SHOP	813.5 TONY'S TAILOR SHOP
		814 G. C. ROBINSON	814 JOHN DAYWOOD
		816 E. S. RIOS	816 ERNEST S. RIOS
818 MRS. N. D. SAPPINGTON	818 J. J. GREMMINGER	818 GEO BAGGETT	818 VACANT
	818.5 J. L. CARR / ROY STERNBERG	818.5 GEO JAMES	818.5 VACANT
7th and Brady	7th and Brady	7th and Brady	7th and Brady
900 H. V. ALEXANDER	900 GEORGE ZEGUR	900 GEORGE ZEGUR	900 GEORGE ZEGUR
901 AUG ZANDER	901 MRS. MARY ZANDER	901 MRS. MARY ZANDER	901 VACANT
902 A. T. SCOTT	902 MRS. LIBRADA REYES	902 MRS. NEOMI COLUNGA	902 MRS. NEOMI COLUNGA
903 CARL WALKER	903 CARL WALKER	903 CARL WALKER	903 VACANT
904 G. P. ALTEN	904 ANDREW M. ALVAREZ BAKER	904 ANDREW M. ALVAREZ BAKER	904 PEDRO ALVAREZ
			904.5 GLOBE OPTICAL COMPANY
905 W. E. FANNIN	905 W. E. FANNIN	905 E. VANILLA FANNIN	905 VACANT
906 HERMAN FEHR	906 C. N. SANDIFER	906 ERNEST GRIPP	906 FERNANDO G. CANTU
907 MRS. MARTHA SCHROEDER	907 MRS. MARTHA SCHROEDER	907 W. C. ATTAL	907 ALF C. ANZALDUA CHIRPACTOR
908 E. K. SCHULZ	908 E. K. SCHULZ	908 E. K. SCHULZ	908 E. K. SCHULZ
910 HARRY KIRKMAN	910 VACANT	910 JOSEPH J DAYWOOD	910 LEE F. HELLO
911 J. W. MORREY	911 J. W. MORREY	911 MRS. LETITIA MORREY	911 CHAS B. PICKLE
912 ALBERT JABOUR	912 MIGUEL ABREYDONDO	912 ALBERT JABOUR	912 VACANT
			912.5 VACANT
913 J. W. MORREY JR	913 J. W. MORREY JR	913 JOHN MORREY	913 JOHN W. MORREY
914 R. D. BRASS	914 EUSTACIO CEPEDA	914 MILED LATOUS	914 ROBERT NICHOLAS
916 T. J. MCGEE	916 E. C. EMMONS	916 A. W. MURCHISON	916 NICK NICHOLAS
918 H. B. BEHNHAM	918 JOHN NICHOLAS JR	918 JOHN NICHOLAS	918 JOHN J. NICHOLAS
7th and San Marcos	7th and San Marcos	7th and San Marcos	7th and San Marcos
1001 E. T. HOUSTON	1001 E. T. HOUSTON	1001 THOS RUIZ	1001 ALBERT G. LANE
1002 C. C. WEBB	1002 THIS LOUIS	1002 THIS LOUIS	1002 LOUIS ELIZ MRS.
1003 F. G. FISK	1003 W. T. LIVESAY	1003 FRED M. JABOUR	1003 JOE A. BARNON
1004 Wm. WELLEN	1004 PAUL REYES	1004 EUSTACIO CEPEDA	1004 HUIÑO RODRIGUEZ CARL'S SAW & LAWN
1004.5 J. M. GAIN	1004.5 MRS. DELPHINA TORRES	1004.5 MRS. NATIVIDAD OVIEDO	1004.5 MRS. NATIVIDAD OVIEDO
1006 THIS CUNEO	1006 J. H. DELFS	1006 MRS. FANNIE DELFS	1006 VACANT
1006.5 MRS. C. C. SIVENSON	1006.5 VACANT	1006.5 DOMINGO JUARES	1006.5 MRS. LUPE BARRIENTES
1007 J. L. MAYHALL	1007 W. H. STARR	1007 SAMUEL AZAR	1007 MRS. GLADYS AZAR
	1008 THOS AGUIRRE	1008 PETER RESENDEZ	1008 BARTOLO GARCIA
	1010 MRS. ALFRIEDA JOHNSON	1010 AUG J. CHERICO	1010 ARISTEO RUIZ
		REAR R. W. FENNEL	
		1011 RUDOLPH G. LEDESMA	1010.5 MARCUS GALVAN
		1021 PAUL MELENDEZ	1011 CARRIE LEDESMA
			1021 MANUEL DIAZ HALLER TREE EXPERTS
			1022 MRS. ALFRIEDA L. JOHNSON
7th and Waller	7th and Waller	7th and Waller	7th and Waller
1200 MRS. SARAH CRUMLEY	1200 D. F. RIDDELL MACHINE SHOP	1200 VACANT	1200 JACOB SILBERSTEIN REAL ESTATE
1202 ANNE SWAN		1201 NOBERTO LOPEZ GROCERY	1201 GREEN & WHITE GROCERY
	1203 CHAS TURNER	1203 FRANCISCO CAMACHO	1202 PARSONS GARAGE
			1203 FRANCISCO D. CAMACHO
	1204 J. T. MATTHEWS	1204 GAVINO MENDEZ	1204 GENERO BROINES
1205 TEMPLE WASHINGTON	1205 LAURA DREAR	1205 LAURA DREAR	1205 MRS. LAURA DREAR
1207 MAGGIE FIELDS	1207 VACANT	1207 TONY ZAPATA	1207 VACANT
1208 C. F. MANN	1208 CHAS MANN	1208 MRS. SOPHIA A. MANN	1208 FREDK. D. GARNER
1209 MRS. M. I. ALLEN	1209 JOHN PRADO JR	1209 GALINDO CRUZ	1209 J. PACHECO
1210 JAS LEE	1210 EVA GILMORE	1210 MRS. RUTH A. ABRAHAM NURSE	1210 FERNANDO G. SANCHEZ TAILOR
		MORRIS A. ABRAHAM	
1214 J. W. DUNCAN	1214 J. W. DUNCAN		1210.5 LAWRENCE SALAS
1216 DR. E. W. D. ABNER	1216 MRS. S. NIETSCHK		
7th and Comal	7th and Comal	7th and Comal	7th and Comal
1600 C. D. HOLLINGSWORTH	1600 GENERAL JACKSON	1600 SAVANNAH JACKSON	1600 SAVANNAH JACKSON
	1601 E. B. MAYS	1601 EUG MAYS	1601 EUG MAYS
1602 W. H. HART	1602 REV. I. H. STRONG	1602 BENJ WROE	1602 MRS. ALICE R JONES
1603 SAMI CLEVELAND	1603 D. H. HUNTER	1603 DENNIS H. HUNTER	1602.5 MATTIE CRENSHAW
1603.5 BESSIE LAWRENCE	1604 J. W. HURT	1604 JASPER HURT	1603 ANNIE S. HUNTER
1604 J. W. HURT	1605 S. HANCOCK / JOS MESH / THIS VEAL	1605 ODIE BROWN	1604 JASPER W. HURT
1605 NETTIE HANCOCK			1605 MRS. CEWILLA H. BROWN HAYDENS BEAU
1606 JOHN BOOKMAN	1606 ERNEST BANKS	1606 STACIE KING	1606 VACANT
1606.5 VACANT	1606.5 JAS MOORE	1606.5 ANNIE MOORE	1606.5 LIGA G. HANCOCK
1607 RICHARD ELLISON	1607 T. E. BROWN	1607 THERESA JONES	1607 MOLLIE E. BROWN
1620 DR. BRADSHAW CLARK	1620 LEAH BRADSHAW	1620 ERNESTO D. BUIE	1620 ERNESTO D. BUIE

Illustration 21: Detail of Reading 4, Narratives of Human Continuity, 2011



Illustration 22: *Reading 5, A Tale of Two Cities, 2011 (with detail)*

CHAPTER 5: THE PHOTO ARCHIVE AS A MAPPING

Continued research into the development of I-35 in Austin led to the discovery of historical photos of East Avenue and provided the impetus to document the interstate as a key element of place. I turned to Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* and Raymond Mohl's *The Interstates and the Cities: Highways, Housing, and the Freeway Revolt* as guiding frameworks for *Reading 7* and *Reading 8*.

Precedent 8: The Image of the City by Kevin Lynch, 1960

Kevin Lynch, a Professor at MIT, laid important theoretical groundwork for understanding urban spaces from an empirical standpoint. His seminal text, *The Image of the City*, emerged from a five-year study of urban spaces in Boston, Los Angeles, and Jersey City. Guided by the concept of “legibility”—the recognizable patterns that organize an urban environment—Lynch created a sequenced approach to frame his research. Beginning with fieldwork and observation in three cities he built a substantial photo archive of the existing conditions of these environments. He then conducted a series of interviews with city residents that focused on their individual perceptions of the urban environments.⁴⁴

Lynch's innovation was the empathetic position he took in a series of interviews with city residents that allowed him to see the city from the perspective of its residents. The combination of both fieldwork and interviews formed the basis for identifying a set of five key elements: Paths, Edges, Districts, Nodes, and

⁴⁴ Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Boston: MIT Press, 1960).

Landmarks. Lynch believed that these elements are universal to all urban contexts and the relationship between them creates the legibility the city.⁴⁵

Lynch defined Paths as the “channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves.”⁴⁶ Edges are “the boundaries that separate one region from another, the seams that join two regions together, or the barriers that close one region from another.”⁴⁷ Districts are the “medium-to-large sections of the city.”⁴⁸ Nodes are “points within the city, strategically located, into which the individual enters.”⁴⁹ Landmarks are “point-references that often remain external to the individual.”⁵⁰

Because cities are vast and layered constructs, which can be perceived from multivariate perspectives, a clear framework for *reading* them becomes essential. Lynch’s framework of legibility is just as useful for understanding the contemporary urban context, as it was when he conceived it some 50 years ago. Using Lynch’s definition of the *Edge* I began *Reading 6*.

Reading 6: Existing Conditions, Views of the edge, 2011

Reading 6 was devised as a site analysis and visual mapping of the existing conditions along I-35. The project was intended to provide a visceral experience of

⁴⁵ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1960.

⁴⁶ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1960, 47.

⁴⁷ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1960, 47.

⁴⁸ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1960, 47.

⁴⁹ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1960, 47.

⁵⁰ Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 1960, 47.

the formidable *Edge* of East Austin. Like Michel de Certeau,⁵¹ I chose to walk a length of the interstate, experiencing the concrete landscape on foot, from E. 7th Street to Lady Bird Lake.

Over the course of six site visits I observed the condition of the landscape and noted my own personal experiences within it. For the first three visits I chose to use the sidewalks adjacent to I-35 frontage road, traversing the edge like a normal pedestrian. In the last three visits I became more daring, deciding to travel along I-35 embankments and on the shoulder of the highway. Such a trajectory was complicated and dangerous but it allowed me to experience I-35 in a radical way. The photo documentation from six site visits allowed me to create an archive of over 200 images, with views of I-35 from multiple perspectives and angles. Photographs were taken from the ground, from embankments, from the center-line and from underneath the interstate. The consistent variable of the images is the subject, the time of day and the camera lens used in each visit (18-105mm). The archive was presented in both print and digital formats. The selected images are available in a Public Google Archive⁵² and printed versions were displayed as a 2 × 3 grid of six images each with dimensions of 17" × 24". The archive presents a diverse documentation of the *Edge* of East Austin.

To build upon the *reading* I felt it was important to reframe image selections from the project into a different design context.

⁵¹ Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," In *The Practice Of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 91-110.

⁵² "Edge Conditions," Rowan Ogden, accessed April 11, 2011, <https://plus.google.com/photos/116881059362015588778/albums/5661315192598627121>.

Reading 7: Existing conditions, Writings on the interstate, 2011

Further research into Interstate System led me to a paper by Raymond A. Mohl, a historian at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Mohl contends that Interstates in addition to being transportation systems also have the divisive effect of splitting cities along racial lines and destroying disadvantaged neighborhoods. In his paper *The Interstates and the Cities: Highways, Housing, and the Freeway Revolt*⁵³ prepared for the Poverty and Race Action Council, methodically charts the history of the Interstate System in America and its effects of city planning in Post war America.⁵⁴

Reading 7 presented an excerpt from *The Interstates and the Cities* paper in a two-panel poster that was intended to connect Mohl's research on Interstate Systems to a localized example in Austin. The poster presents a writing excerpt in columns that are visually connected across a scaled drawing of I-35. Images of I-35 were selected from *Reading 7* to further impart the experience of the site, as it is seen from the ground.

Although I do not believe the project is entirely successful the concept behind it is worth pursuing further and the connection between my Interstate photo archive and Mohl's work is relevant. The experience with these two approaches prompted me to examine additional methods for communicating the social conditions present in East Austin.

⁵³ Raymond A. Mohl, "The Interstates and the Cities: The U.S. Department of Transportation and the Freeway Revolt, 1966-1973," In the *Journal of Policy History* 20, (2008): 193-226.

⁵⁴ Mohl, "The Interstates and the Cities," 193-226.



Illustration 23: Selections from *Reading 6, Existing Conditions, Views of the edge, 2011*

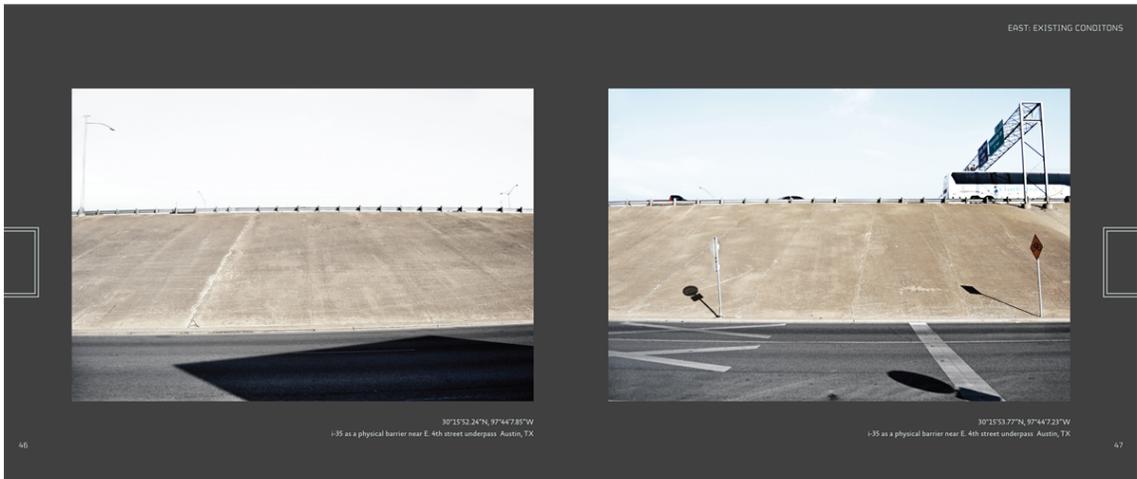
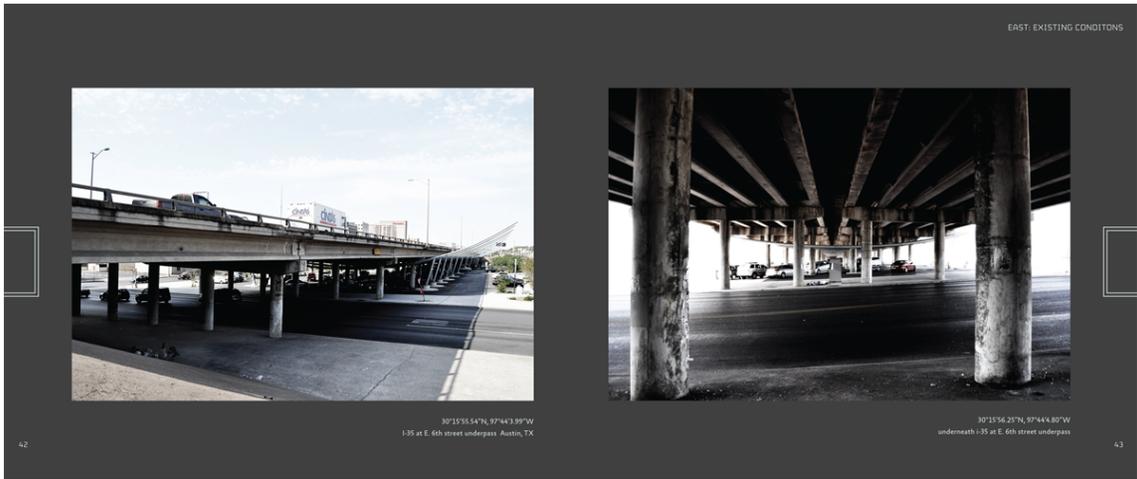


Illustration 24: Selections from *Reading 6, Existing Conditions, Views of the edge, 2011*

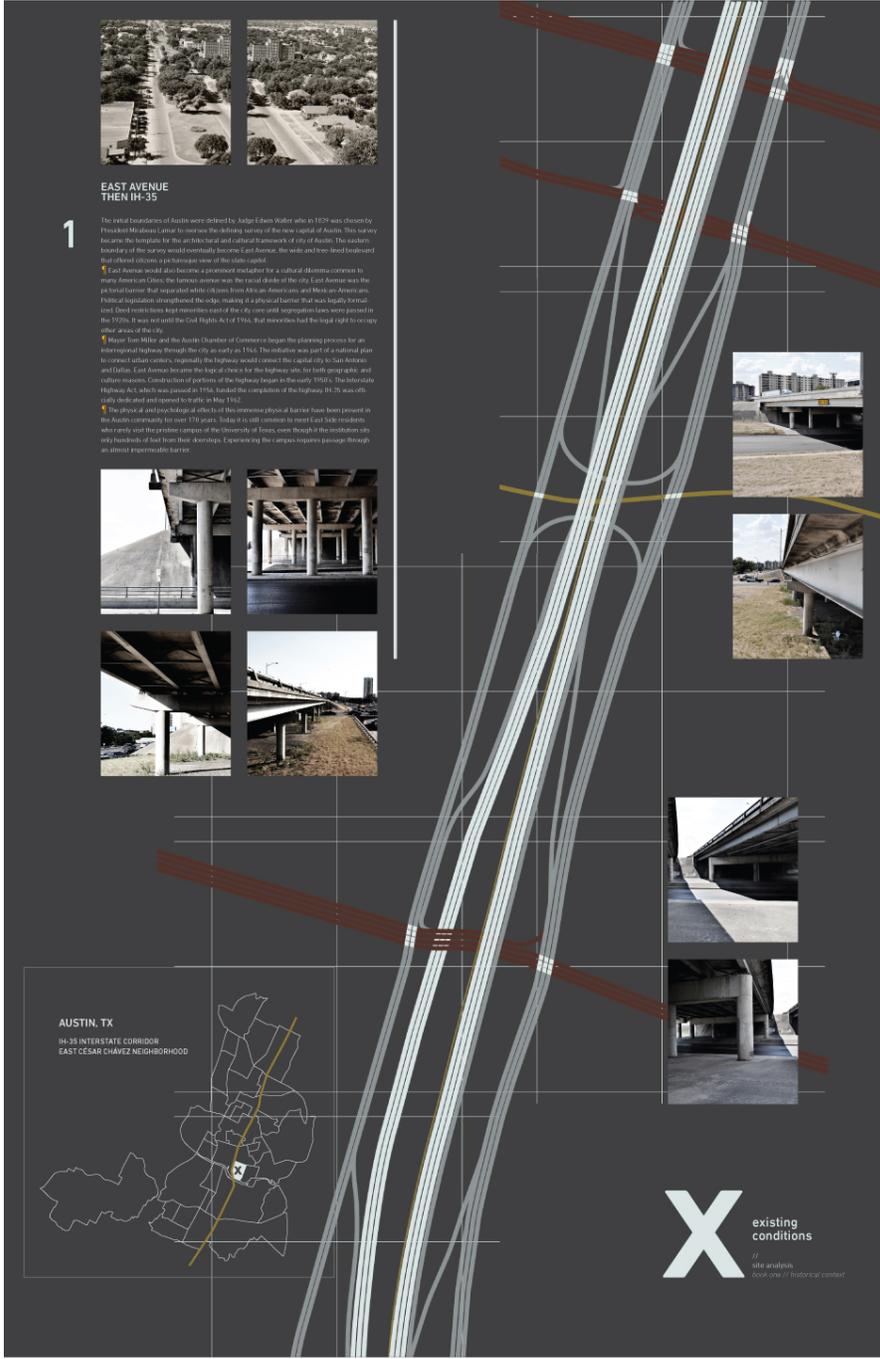


Illustration 25: Reading 7, Existing conditions, Writings on the interstate, 2011 (panel 1)

2 THE INTERSTATES AND THE CITIES

As an urban center experiences dramatic change in the decades after the Second World War, these changes included the massive deconcentration of central city populations, the shift of economic activities to the suburban periphery, the demoralization or suburbanization of multi-unit residential housing, and a rapid increase of population that left many of the largest American cities with a majority Black population well before the end of the twentieth century. Various growth policies contributed to these large-scale changes, with an array of federal policies, public housing programs, and urban renewal support schemes. Closely connected to these powerful urban transformations was the construction after 1956 of the national interstate highway system, a 42,500-mile network of high-speed, limited-access highways that linked cities across the country. When policy makers and highway engineers determined that the interstate highway system should penetrate to the heart of the central cities, they made a fatal decision, but also a purposeful one. Indeed, the interstate system's urban expressways, or freeways, did not merely connect the cities but they opened through residential neighborhoods and isolated urban centers of urban territory, ostensibly to facilitate automobile transportation, if not some apparent but equally obvious and policy-makers' explicit objectives.

As a result, road expressway construction to connect low-income and especially Black neighborhoods in and out of the city, the physical and social landscapes of the post-war period.

As a result, road expressway construction had an impact on the Black population of the United States in the construction of the interstate highway system. Virtually completed over a fifteen-year period between the late 1950s and the early 1970s, the new interstate highways had powerful and almost inevitable consequences for metropolitan areas: the completion of urban expressways led very quickly to a new segregation of urban and suburban space. The new highways linked central cities with sprawling suburban suburbs, facilitating automobile transportation while contributing to the creation of new city centers. While it takes of course, and it took, substantial time to work through the process of suburban shopping malls, office parks, and residential subdivisions, as well as the same time, urban expressways throughout being established were city residents' concentration in their cities toward the city cores, destroying low-income housing in a vast and unprecedented scale. High-mobility car changes, shopping, and access camps created enormous areas of dead and useless space in the central cities.

The bulldozer and the wrecker's ball went to work in urban America during the war for a wide range of public and private schemes for urban redevelopment. The new expressways, which eventually carried the cars and suburban families throughout the nation. This complete system was a gaping public works program, but it is now apparent that freeway construction had enormous and often negative consequences for the cities. As Richard Kirk (Oxford has noted, "for the next twenty years more funds in urban areas were poured toward suburban areas than the federal highway program."

Highway promoters and builders overcame the new interstate expressways as a means of clearing urban blight and creating urban centers. These plans actually date to the late 1930s, but they were not fully implemented until the late 1950s and 1960s. Massive amounts of urban blight were destroyed in the process of building the urban sections of the interstate system. By the 1960s, federal highway construction was demolishing 37,000 urban housing units each year, urban renewal and redevelopment programs were destroying an equal number of mostly low-income housing units annually. The amount of destruction, reported to the U.S. House Committee on Public Works conducted in 1965, was astonishingly large, depicting a whole Alan A. Johnson has noted by the



mid-1960s, when interstate construction was well underway, it was generally believed that the new highway system would "create a massive level of destruction before a final compromise." A large proportion of these demolished were African Americans, and in most cities the expressways were routed through Black neighborhoods.

Destroyed or blighted low-income housing in the state and federal road building agencies. The federal Bureau of Public Roads and the state highway departments believed that their business was to finance and build highways, and that the social consequences of highway construction were the responsibility of other agencies. As one federal housing official stated with dismay in 1962, "It is the impression that regular passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act... is accompanied with the destruction of many communities. Indeed, during most of the expressway building era, little was done to link the interstate highway program with public or private housing construction or even with relocation assistance for displaced families, businesses, or community institutions, such as churches and schools."



The victims of highway building tended to be overwhelmingly poor and Black. A general pattern emerged and persisted to state and federal highway officials and by private agencies such as the Urban Land Institute, of using highway construction to eliminate blighted neighborhoods and redevelop valuable commercial land. This was the position of Thomas H. MacDonald, director of the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) during the formative years of the interstate system. Combating blight with highways was also the policy of New York's influential builder of public works projects, Robert Moses. Highway builders were clearly conscious of the social consequences of interstate road creation. It was quite obvious that neighborhoods and communities would be destroyed and people dispersed, but they were thought to be an acceptable cost of creating new transportation routes. In linking economic development of the cities, and connecting inner city land to more accessible or more productive sites, highway builders and other road developers had a common interest in eliminating low-income housing and, as one industry spokesman said in a 1963 highway program "open for higher and better uses."



The federal government provided most of the funding for interstate highway construction, but state highway departments, working with local officials, selected the actual construction routes. The consequences of state and local route selection was that urban expressways could be used specifically to carry out local race, housing, and residential segregation agendas. In most cases, moreover, the fear of exclusion of people from central city housing triggered a rapid reorganization of residential neighborhoods. Many Black population pressures on limited inner-city housing resources meant that state and federal freeways linked neighborhoods of transition, generally working class white neighborhoods, on the fringes of the inner city, where new and better housing was already forming, other than that a few whites began moving to the suburbs, and as Blacks migrated out of the South to the urban North. However, interstate expressway construction speeded up the process of social ghetto formation, helping to create the sprawling, densely populated ghettos of the modern American city. Official housing and highway policies, taken together, have helped to produce the much more racially concentrated and socially segregated landscapes of contemporary urban America.

The Interstates and the Cities: Highways, Housing, and the Tragic Result
 by Thomas H. MacDonald
 Department of History
 University of Delaware and Birmingham
 Research Report (Poverty and Race
 Research Action Council - 2002)



Illustration 26: Reading 7, Existing conditions, Writings on the interstate, 2011 (panel 2)

1960s. Massive amounts of urban housing were destroyed in the process of building the urban sections of the interstate system. **By the 1960s, federal highway construction was demolishing 37,000 urban housing units each year;** urban renewal and redevelopment programs were destroying an equal number of mostly-low-income housing units annually. The amount of disruption, a report of the U.S. House Committee on Public Works conceded in 1965, was astoundingly large. As planning scholar Alan A. Altshuler has noted, by the



Illustration 27: *Reading 7, Existing conditions, Writings on the interstate, 2011*
(panel 2 detail)

2 THE INTERSTATES AND THE CITIES

¶ American cities experienced dramatic change in the decades after the Second World War. These changes included the massive **deconcentration** of central city population, the shift of economic activities to the suburban periphery, the **deindustrialization** or redistribution of metropolitan manufacturing, and a racial turnover of population that left many of the largest American cities with a majority black population well before the end of the twentieth century. Various government policies contributed to these large-scale changes, such as tax and mortgage policies, public housing programs, and urban redevelopment schemes. Closely connected to these powerful urban transformations was the construction after 1956 of the national interstate highway system, a **42,500-mile** network of high-speed, limited-access highways that linked cities across the country. When policy makers and highway engineers determined that the new interstate highway system should penetrate to the heart of the central cities, they made a fateful decision, but also

Illustration 28: *Reading 7, Existing conditions, Writings on the interstate, 2011*
(panel 2 detail)

CHAPTER 6: DATA READINGS AND TIMELINES

Reading 8 and *Reading 9* utilize data and a historical timeline to connect relevant contextual information to the East Side. I relied on the work of Bill Rankin as starting point for appropriate geographical data mappings. His work informed *Reading 8*.

Precedent 10: Chicago Boundaries by Bill Rankin, 2009

The impetus to create visual communication that explicitly conveyed the social conditions of the East Austin lead me to the work of Bill Rankin, an Assistant Professor of the History of Science at Harvard. Mr. Rankin is multitalented practitioner that is well known for his mapping entitled *Chicago Boundaries*.⁵⁵ The map uses block level census data and ArcGIS to paint a picture of the racial composition of Chicago. Rankin's map gives the viewer a clear sense of the racial composition of the city. The work also prompted many designers and cartographers to visualize census data in radical new ways.

Reading 8: Data Landscapes, 2011

Reading 8 is a quantitative information visualization that utilizes Census Block data from 2000 and 2010 to create a snapshot of the social landscape of East Austin. Using data as raw material for expressing the relationship between race

⁵⁵ Bill Rankin, "Chicago Dots," Radical Cartography, accessed March 9, 2011, <http://www.radicalcartography.net/index.html?chicagodots>.

and income the *reading* is presented in final form as eight large format panels, which can be read individually or as a grouping. The panels allow a viewer to observe the shifts in the racial and financial compositions of the population by comparing the changes over a ten-year time period. The work creates a quantitative narrative that informs the viewer of the condition of a social landscape in the midst of significant transition.

The design methodology for *Reading 8* utilizes a variety of graphic techniques including graphs, charts and three-dimensional informatics that prompt comparative analysis. For visual consistency a standardized color-coding system is used throughout the project. A key consideration for the work was the adherence to visual communication standards that reconnect the data to its geographic origins; this process converts the data into useful information adding an important layer of communication to the larger narrative of East Austin.

Reading 9: Austin, Timeline, 2011

To further augment the group of *readings*, I chose to create a timeline of Austin with an information layer that highlighted historic events that were relevant to the Eastside. As a tool the timeline allows for the rapid sequencing of historical information. The work was designed to allow a viewer to quickly digest the historical context of the both the city and the district. Creating the work allowed a necessary personal synthesis of a large body of historical research that had accumulated while working on the previous *readings*.

The timeline is presented in its final form as a single panel measuring 24" × 88", with historical information organized along the spine of a helix. The mapping organizes historical information in tight packages, which are color-coded allowing

the visual extraction of the individual timelines of East Austin, Austin and the United States. The work is an alternative to a written history and seeks to illuminate key temporal events that shaped the culture of the city.

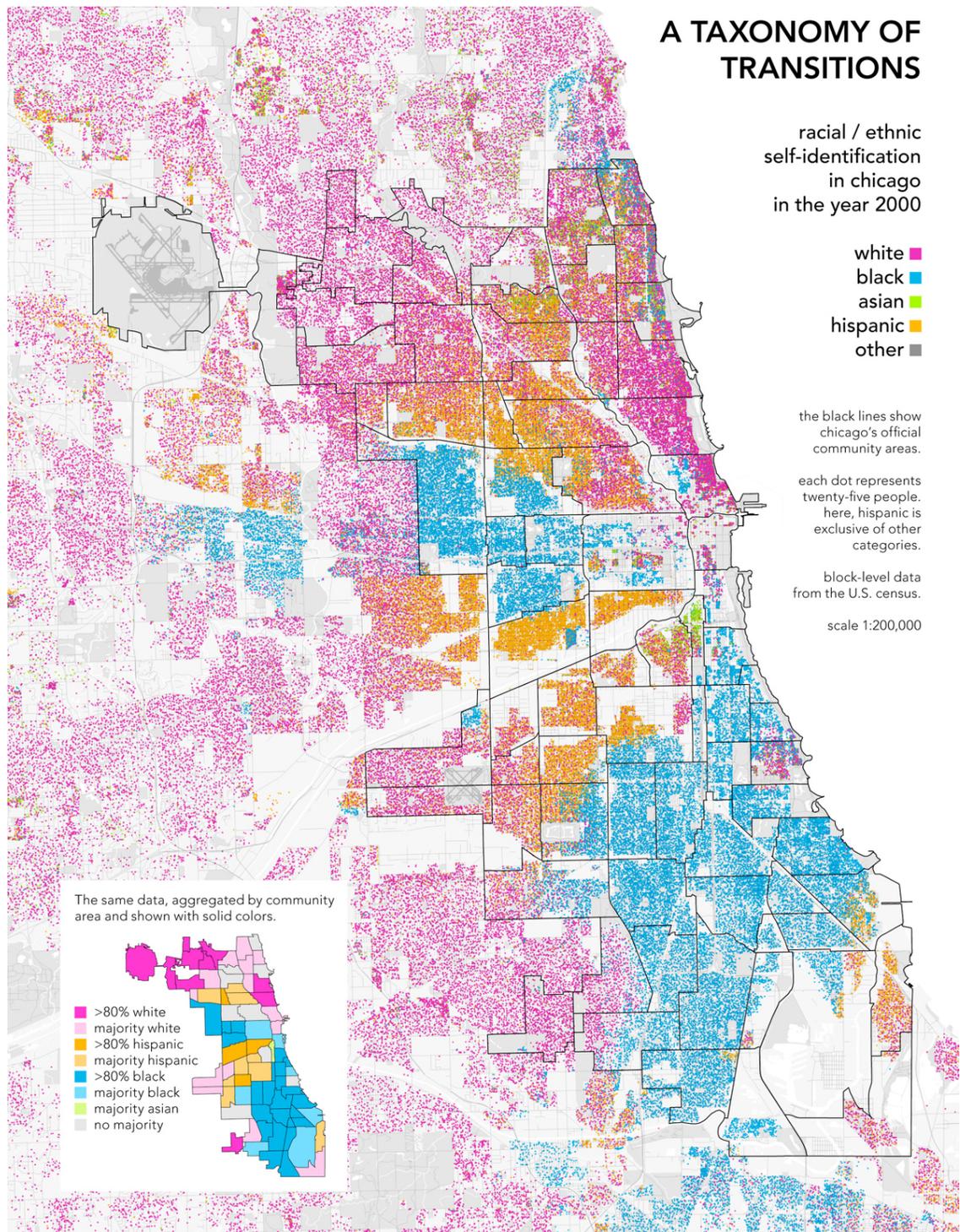


Illustration 29: *Chicago Boundaries* by Bill Rankin, 2009 (Precedent 10)

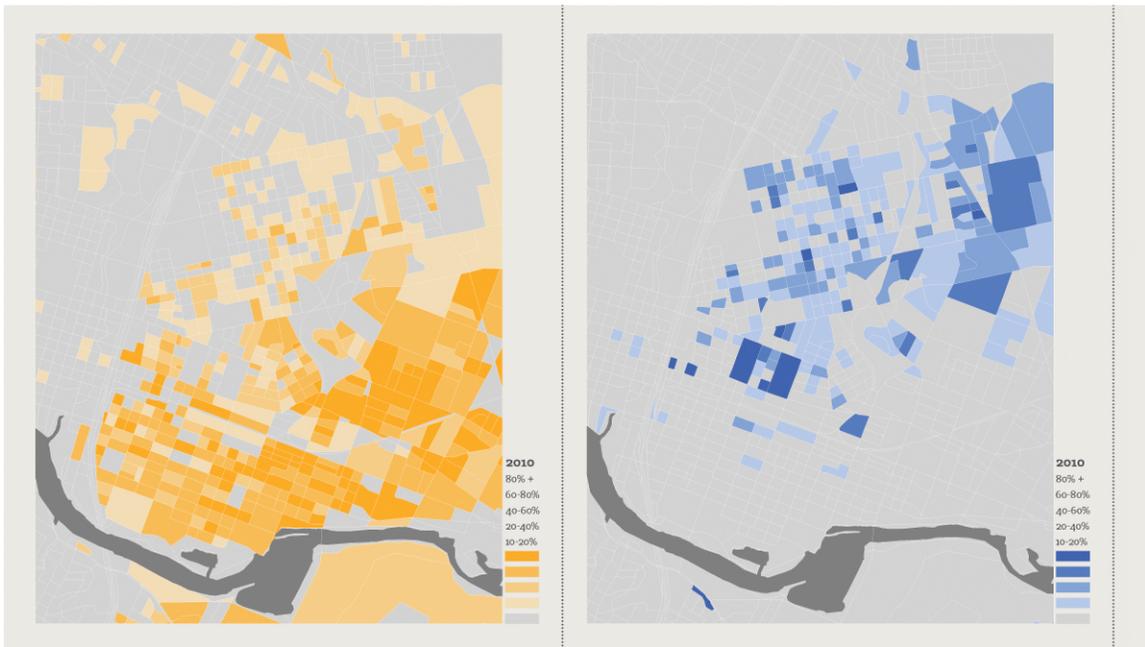


Illustration 30: Selections from *Reading 8, Data Landscapes, 2011* (with detail)

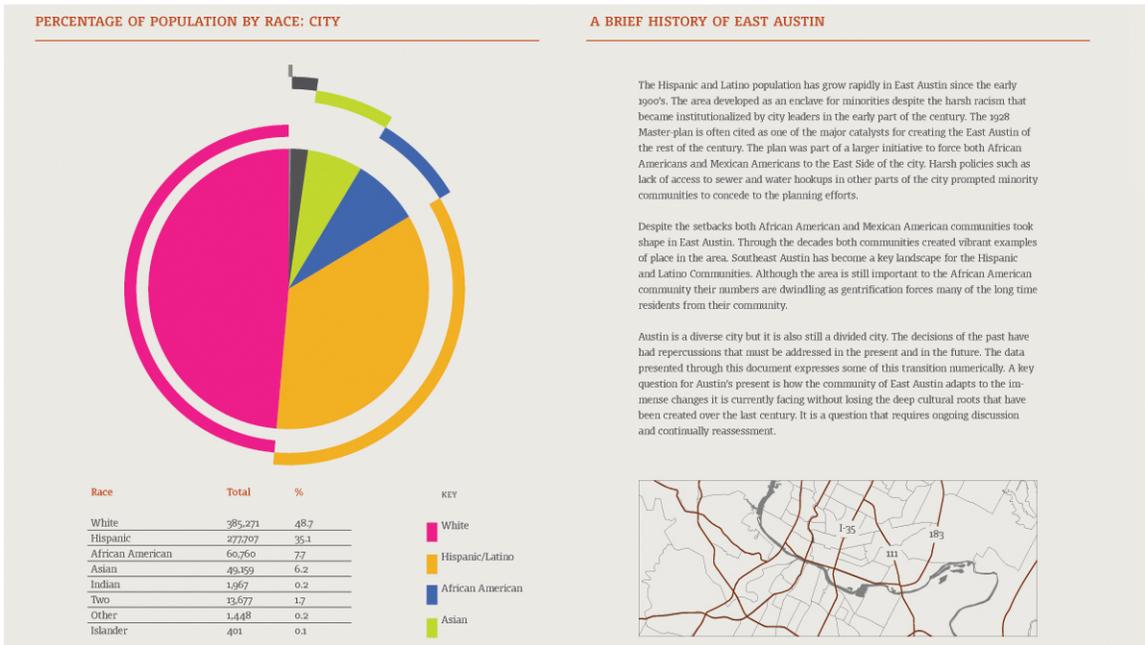
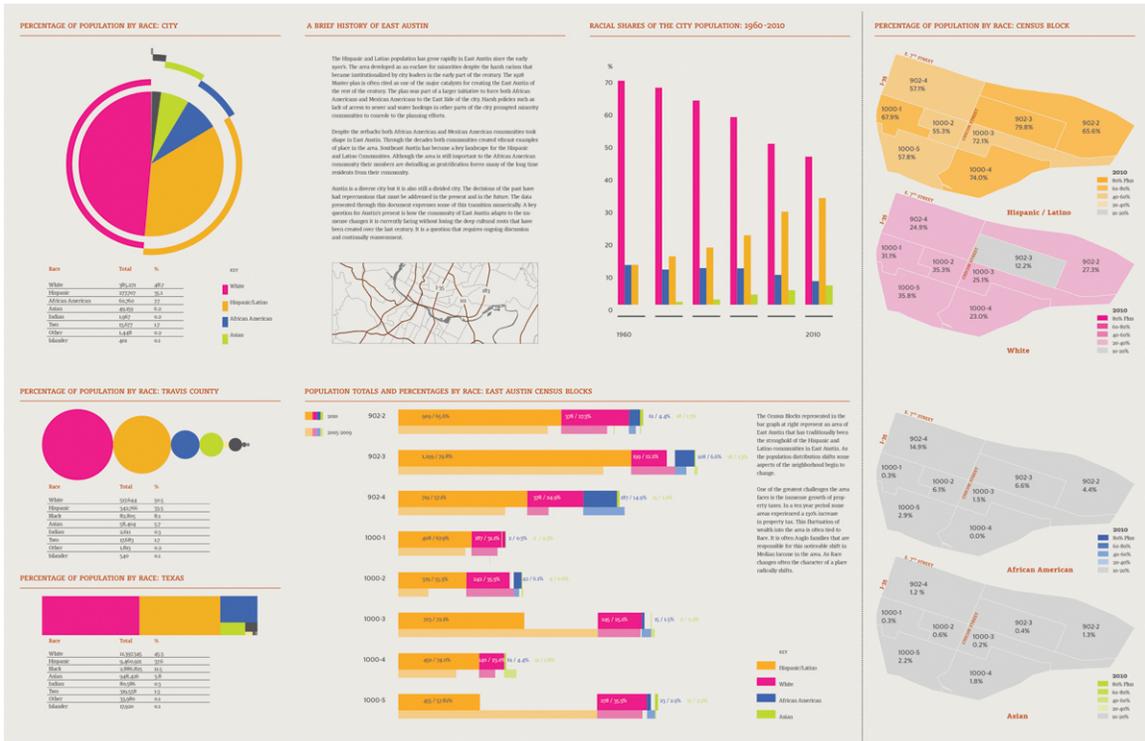


Illustration 32: Selections from Reading 8, Data Landscapes, 2011 (with detail)

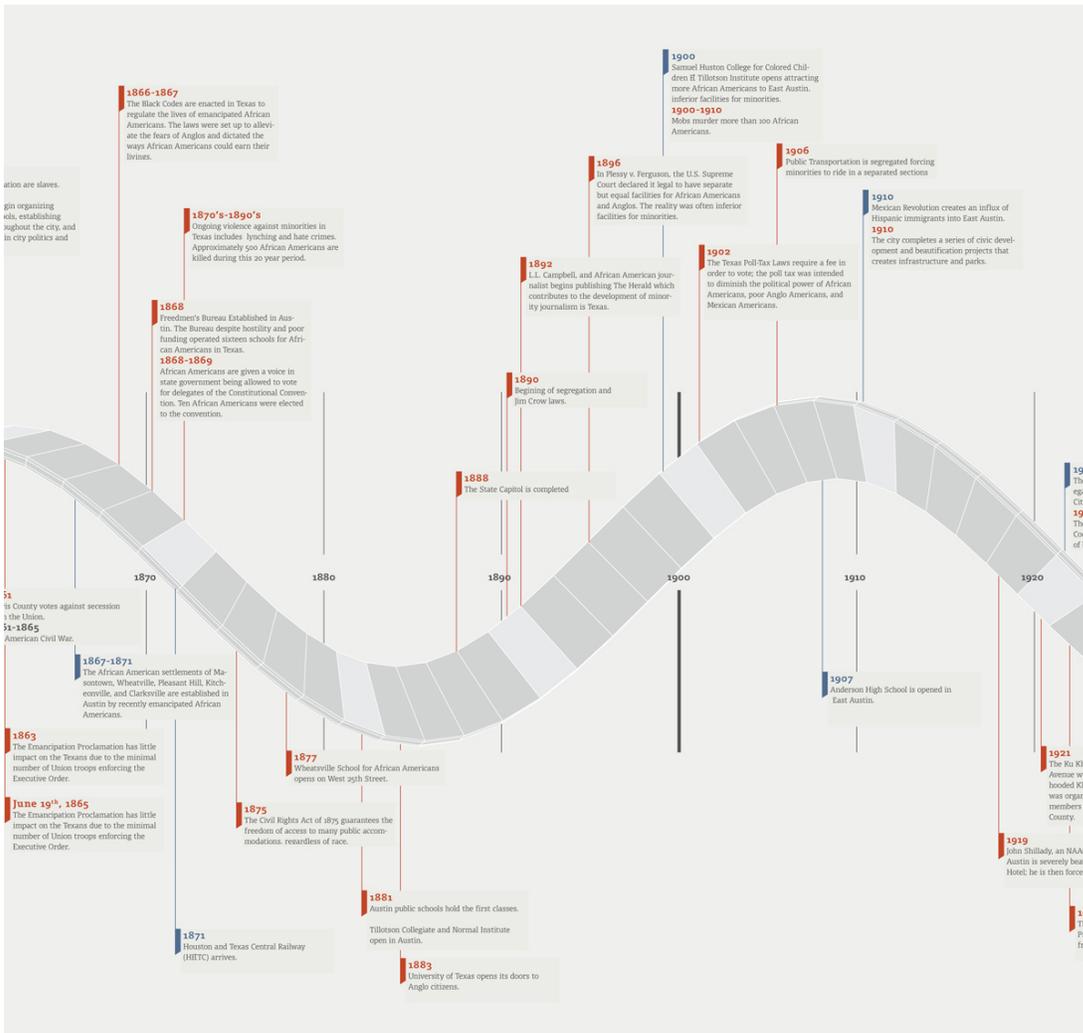
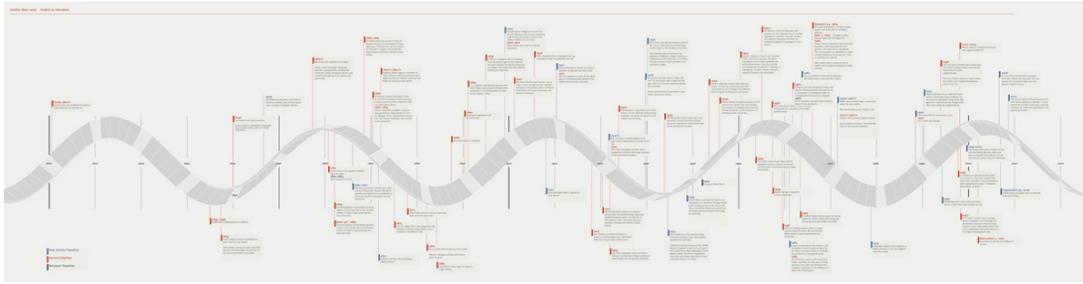


Illustration 33: Selections from *Reading 9, Austin, Timeline, 2011* (with detail)

CHAPTER 7: VISUAL AUGMENTATION

The *readings* in this chapter focus on methods for augmenting a visual image with relevant information. Both of the projects featured, utilize the research from *Reading 4* to create a snapshot of the current state of the Eastside. *Reading 11* was created to provide reference to historic Eastside businesses, while *Reading 12* focuses on residential property.

Precedent 11: Stroom Goes Underground, by Lust, Netherlands, 2006

The practitioners at Lust, a design firm in Netherlands, have an aptitude for creating visually intriguing maps, which express the atypical characteristics of the urban context.⁵⁶ *Stroom Goes Underground*, a map created for Architecture Day 2006, highlights the concealed sights located throughout The Hague. The mapping, presented on black, overprints elements that include parking lots, underground rivers, archeological sites and underground architecture.⁵⁷ It is an intriguing piece of communication collateral that makes the unseen evident and invites a viewer to experience the city from a new perspective.

The map inspired me to approach *Reading 11* with similar intent. I worked to expose the unseen elements of East Austin through a nuanced mapping of place that made the hidden history of the district visible.

⁵⁶ Carolyn Knight, "Environmental Design," In *Diagrams: Innovative Solutions for Graphic Designers*, (New York: RotoVision, 2009), 106–107.

⁵⁷ Macarena San Martin, "Maps," In *Diagraphics* (New York: Harper Design; 2011), 80–81.

Reading 10: Augmented Reality, Portraits of Signs that No Longer Exist, 2011

Reading 10 is a project that is intended to simultaneously present the existing conditions of East Austin with a visual reference to past conditions. The project utilizes the research completed for *Reading 4* to compose an image catalog that playfully includes re-creations of the historical business signage that previously occupied each site. The images are intended as situated histories that invite a viewer to explore beyond the surface of a place by seeing the landscape of two temporal realities simultaneously.

Like many of the previous readings, the project methodology included landscape photography and the use of historical references. Historical photographs of business signage are used as the starting point to recreate small placards, which were inserted into the scene with help from a collaborator. My collaborator holds each sign in an appropriate position, while her hand and arm act as a visual interrupter that prompts the viewer to question the visual presentation. The final work emerges as a text and image relationship⁵⁸ subtly expressing that place is an amalgamation of the historical layers of the past.

Reading 10 inspired further work into spatial documentation and again I relied on the work of Kevin Lynch as a reference.

⁵⁸ Katherine McCoy, "American Graphic Design Expression: The Evolution of American Typography," In *Design Quarterly* 149, (1990) 3-22.

Precedent 12: Perceptual Form of the City by Kevin Lynch, 1954-1959

The Kepes-Lynch Photo Collection is part of the research Kevin Lynch conducted, now housed at MIT as the *Perceptual Form of the City*.⁵⁹ The collection includes a thorough photographic documentation of Boston neighborhoods, which was completed by Lynch and his assistant Nishan Bichajian. The collection is a portion of the site analysis that led to the seminal theories, which materialize in *The Image of the City*. The collection contains approximately 2,000 black & white photographs of the urban environment during the mid-1950s prior to urban renewal.⁶⁰ The collection directly influenced the development of the photographic portion of *Reading 12*.

Reading 11: Houses with Histories, 2011

Reading 11 is a photographic typology that includes an information overlay. The project utilizes research from *Reading 4* to frame the built environment of East Austin in a unique manner. A photographic typology is a “suite of images or related forms that is shot in a consistent, repetitive manner. For the images to be fully understood they must be viewed as a complete series.”⁶¹ While the typology is a common method in the photographic disciplines, the hybridizing of a typological approach with information design is an unexplored territory in the field of design.

By combining historical occupancy data with photographs of the neighborhood, I created a framework to see multiple aspects of the landscape with

⁵⁹ Kevin Lynch, “Perceptual Form of the City: Gregory Kepes & Kevin Lynch,” MIT Libraries, accessed February 17, 2011, <http://libraries.mit.edu/digital/lynch/index.html>.

⁶⁰ Lynch, “Perceptual Form,” accessed February 17, 2011.

⁶¹ Kristine McKenna, “Photo Visions,” *The Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 1991, accessed August 21, 2011, http://articles.latimes.com/1991-12-29/books/bk-1709_1_photo-essay.

one glance. Upon closer inspection the viewer notices the photographs of the residences are obscured by a screened image overlay that serves to lighten the printing of the image substantially. The screened overlay indicates the relationship the image shares with its historical record. If the history of the home is entirely known no overlay appears leaving a fully visible photograph. If very little data is available only a small portion of the photograph can be seen in full resolution. In short, a known history leaves the landscape visible.

Like previous *Readings*, the work invokes the value of historical knowledge in the experience of the landscape and gives informational grounding for the localized architecture in East Austin.



Illustration 34: *Stroom Goes Underground* by Lust, Netherlands, 2006 (precedent 11)



Illustration 35: Selections from *Augmented Reality, Portraits of Signs that No Longer Exist*, 2011



Illustration 36: Selections from *Augmented Reality, Portraits of Signs that No Longer Exist*, 2011



Illustration 37: Selections from *Perceptual Form of the City* by Kevin Lynch, 1954-1959 (Precedent 12)



Illustration 38: Selections from *Reading 11, Houses with Histories, 2011*

1600 EAST SEVENTH STREET

7th and Comal



GENERAL JACKSON — SAVANNAH JACKSON

OCCUPIED FROM 1930-1960



GILBERT AND EVA G. RODRIGUEZ.

OCCUPIED FROM 1990-PRESENT



Illustration 39: Selections from *Reading 11, Houses with Histories, 2011*

1611 EAST SEVENTH STREET



EMMITT MIGUEL

OCCUPIED FROM 1952-1960



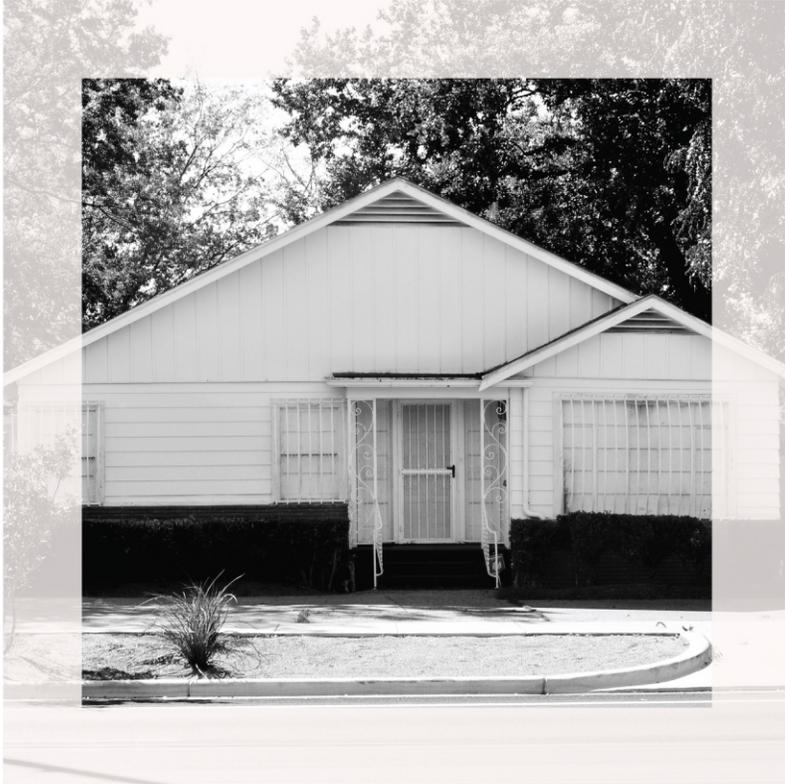
FLIM VAUGHN—WILHELMINA VAUGHN

OCCUPIED FROM 1970-1980



Illustration 40: Selections from *Reading 11, Houses with Histories, 2011*

1609 EAST SEVENTH STREET



FRIENDLY R. RICE—VONNYE RICE GARDNER

OCCUPIED FROM 1940-2011

Illustration 41: Selections from *Reading 11, Houses with Histories, 2011*

CONCLUSION

The focus of my graduate work has been the development of a process-orientated approach for *reading the city*. By defining a *reading* as the selection of focal points that are connected to relevant information, I have created a design process that begins with observing cultural landscape, moves to documenting key findings, continues to research, and finishes with visual communication. This arc of process assists both the designer and the audience in cultivating a deepened awareness of the varied perspectives that create the urban whole. The process of *reading* is both experiential and cerebral, optimizing for the possibility of an enhanced perception of the urban context.

This process is appropriate for the contemporary design climate where practitioners face an excess of information and data rather than a shortage. By observing first, the approach relies on innate perceptive abilities for analysis and comprehension. This direct experience then informs the research trajectory.

Critically speaking, much of the work created in this trajectory will require further refinement and rationalization, however the projects serve the purpose of allowing me to connect to a conceptual terrain that is often beyond the scope of a graphic designer. Most importantly the experience of the work has lead me to a point where I must reach beyond my own *readings* to connect to others who share the desire to positively intervene in the landscape of East Austin. The move towards connection-building will prompt additional exploration, new questions, and an ongoing commitment to the subject of place.

As I neared the end of the study—eleven thematic *readings*—I was able to experience how this work could affect others. I began forming relationships with several long-term residents of the Eastside, most notably Ms. Vonnye Rice

Gardner, the daughter of Mr. Friendly Rice, a prominent educator and civil rights leader. The work provided the opportunity to create a friendship with her that deepened my understanding of the research through a direct connection. I found Ms. Vonnys Rice Gardner to be a living treasure; she is a bridge to the history of East Austin and her willingness to share her insights with me made the work a worthwhile endeavor. Her response to *Reading 4* was very different than most of the previous viewers because the work focused on a history she had lived through.

This experience with Ms. Gardner helped me to see the potential of further developing the practice of *reading the city*, and sharing the findings with practitioners in other disciplines. Critical analysis of the process could lead to more specialized methods that could be utilized in both the academic and professional realms. The potential of the study is the development and articulation of the process. As others utilize these frameworks new information or narratives can surface. The *reading* process could also potentially become part of a curriculum in other disciplines.

The value of the *reading* process is its potential as a preparation for positive design intervention. The *reading* can provide the necessary context for a designer to approach an intervention from an informed perspective. If practiced appropriately the process leads to more questions than answers but the pursuit of these questions initiates a process that ultimately serves to enrich the urban landscape.

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VITA

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This report was type by the author.