

Visual Essay

On Targets: Dropping in on American Bombing Ranges

The Center for Land Use Interpretation (CLUI)

Impact range targets in military training areas can be square, triangular, rectangular, circular, and linear. Some are designed to look like other things, like airbases, villages, convoys, industrial areas, surface-to-air missile sites, and are built out of old airoplanes, trucks, tanks, cars, buses, boats, tires, mounds of earth, and empty shipping containers. Some are meant to be bombed or strafed physically, others electronically.

The most focused type of target at these ranges, the classic target you might say, is circular, like a bullseye. Its simple geometric embrace of space defines a periphery, and centre. Though largely two-dimensional when seen from above, shown as a gallery they have a cosmological air, whether a planetary hard mass pulled in by gravity, or a solar gas in a sustained continuous explosion. The tension between being drawn inwards, toward the ground, and exploding outwards, is in equilibrium.

Some people say that these days everything is a target. These, however, undoubtedly are, and they are out there for the world to see, through internet-based satellite imagery providers like Google Earth. Like framed photographs on the wall, they narrow our attention, and ask us to overlook everything else.

Fig. 1: Avon Park Air Force Range, Florida.

Fig. 2: Boardman Bombing Range, Oregon.

Fig. 3: Dare County Range, North Carolina.

Fig. 4: Dugway Proving Ground, Utah.

Fig. 5: Eglin Air Force Range, Florida.

Fig. 6: Razorback Range, Fort Chafee, Arkansas.

Fig. 7: Navy Target 68, Imperial Valley, California.

Fig. 8: Barry M. Goldwater Range, Arizona.

Fig. 9: Melrose Air Force Range, New Mexico.

Fig. 10: Oscura Range, White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.

Fig. 11: Smoky Hill Air National Guard Range, Kansas.

Fig. 12: Superior Valley Range, China Lake Naval Weapons Center, California.

Fig. 13: Townsend Bombing Range, Georgia.

Fig. 14: Utah Test and Training Range, Utah.

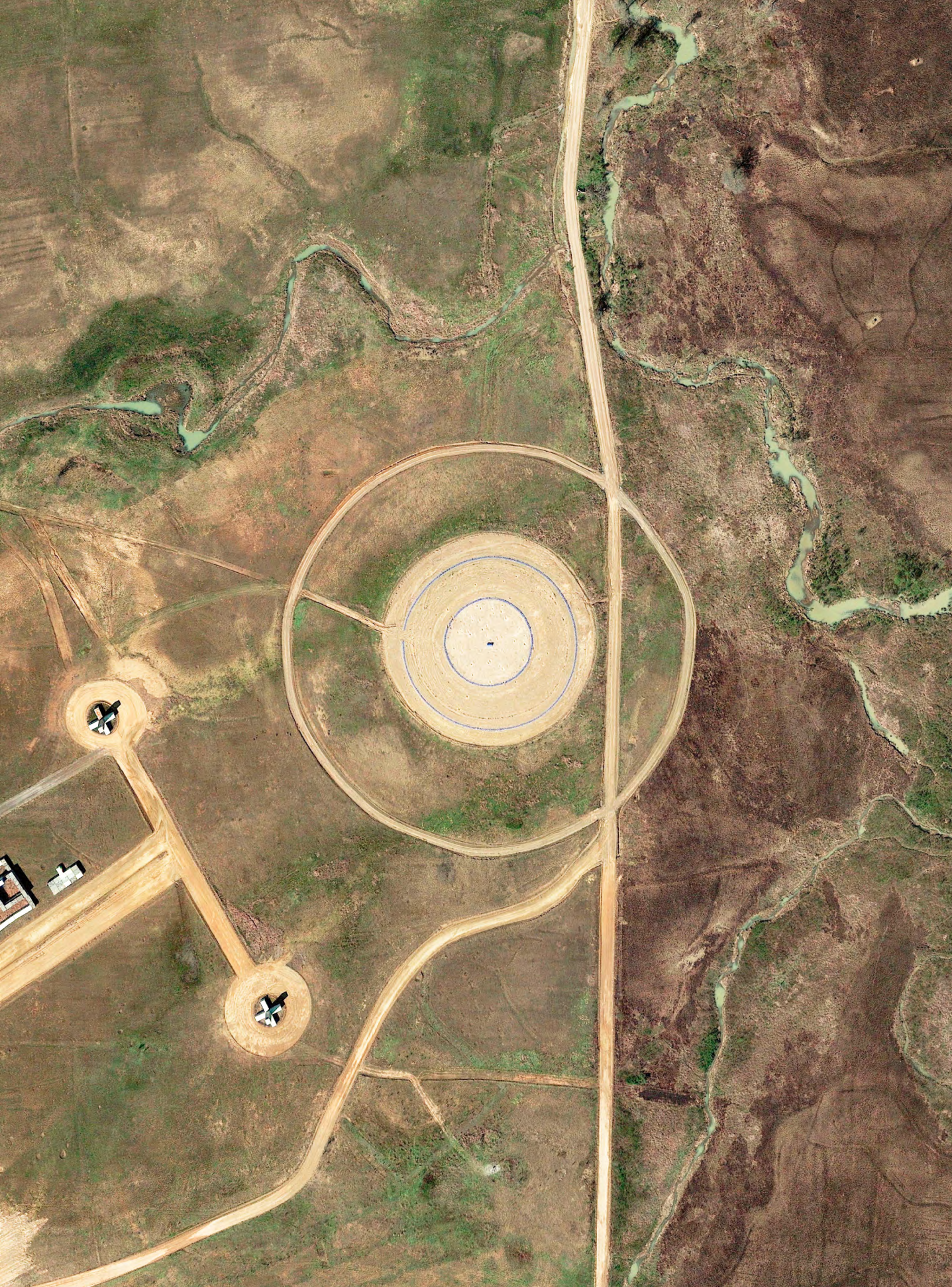


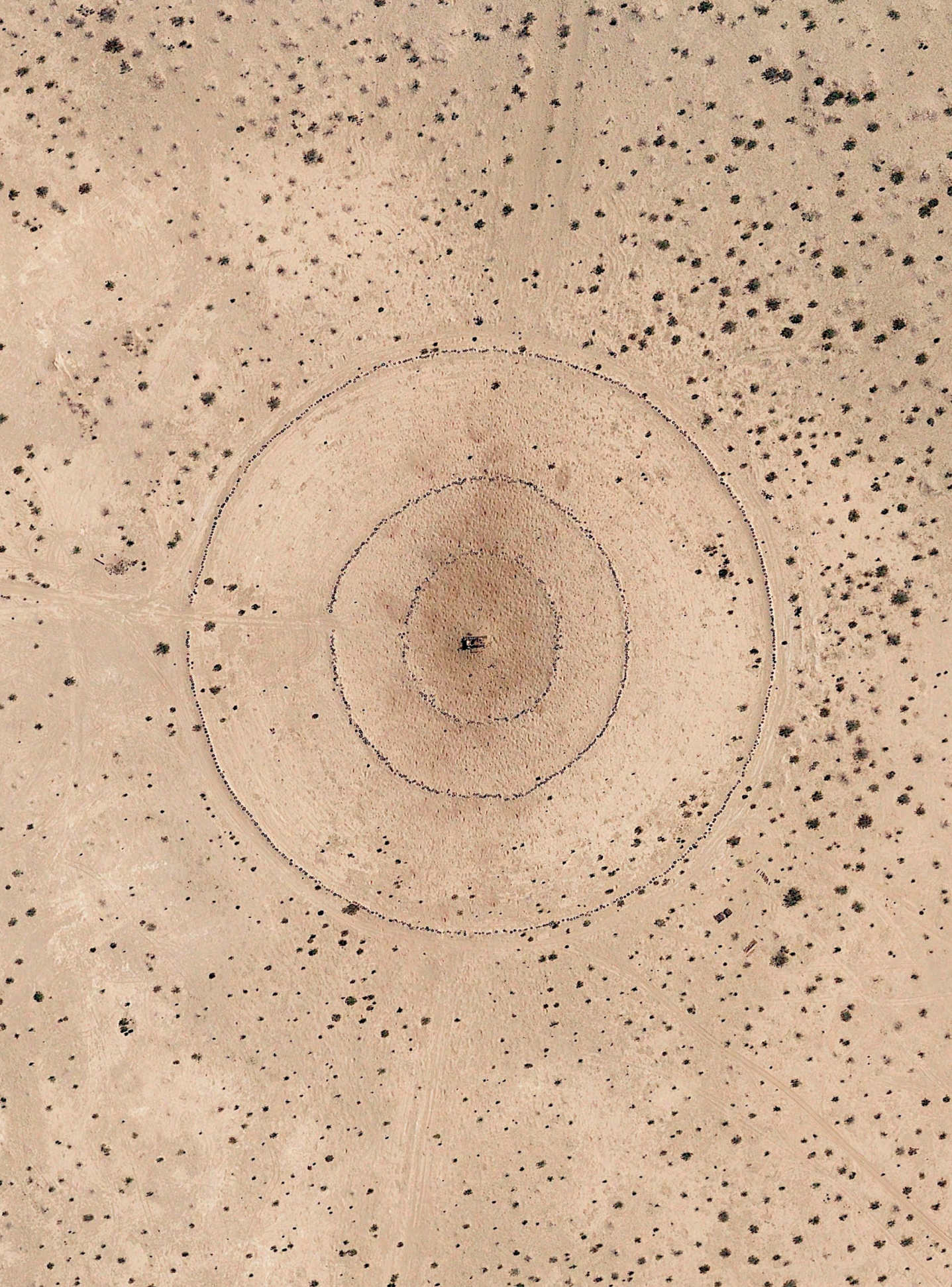


























Biography

The Center for Land Use Interpretation is a research and education organisation interested in understanding the nature and extent of human interaction with the surface of the earth, and in finding new meanings in the intentional and incidental forms that we individually and collectively create. We believe that the manmade landscape is a cultural inscription, that can be read to better understand who we are, and what we are doing. The organisation was founded in 1994, and since that time it has continuously produced public programs that include exhibits on land use, shown in its own network of exhibit facilities, and in public institutions all over the United States, and overseas. The Center has also published books and periodicals, conducted public tours, and hosted lectures. From the inception of the organisation, much of its activity has been focused on an online audience, where visitors to its website can freely access databases and archives.