In the spring of 2003, Cabinet magazine announced the acquisition of a small plot of land in Luna County, New Mexico. Dubbing the scruffy turf "Cabinetlandia," this gesture was a mischievous play with farcical utopian ambitions, linking a barren plot of desert with another purchase—2000 acres on the planet Mars—and with Gordon Matta-Clark's Reality Properties: Fake Estates (1973). The following year, San Francisco-based artist Matthew Passmore erected a structure on Cabinetlandia—a permanent archive for the magazine, designed to withstand the brutal extremities of the area, but in 2005, disaster struck. After days of torrential downpour, Cabinetlandia and the archive lay in ruins.

As with any national disaster, where some see tragedy others see opportunity. The time was ripe; I knew we must invade while the nation was on its knees... The next and obvious step was to assemble an army—foot soldiers to carry out the invasion. Enter the Land Arts of the American Southwest, a joint program of the University of New Mexico and the University of Texas at Austin. Each year, under the direction of instructors from both institutions, undergraduate students make a westbound pilgrimage, stopping at interminable sites (like Smithson's Spiral Jetty) and creating their own ethereal earthworks along the way.

I decided to contact Chris Taylor, the instructor in charge of the Texas component of the Land Arts program, and gauge his interest in collaborating—to invade Cabinetlandia in order to construct an ARTLIES archive atop its remains. Not only was Taylor game, he decided to make the project part of the following semester's curriculum.

What ultimately befell Taylor's army—ironically—were the same natural forces that devastated Cabinetlandia. Unable to complete their mission, the Land Arts students did what any well-trained army would do: they improvised. In this instance, failure could not have been more fortunate or poetic, conceptually speaking, confirming that although physical boundaries or logistical barriers may prevent movement and faculty, no one has power over the wind—or the ideas that ride on its invisible tide.

1 http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/10/NMclaimIntro.php.

Without the collusion of many individuals, this collaboration would never have come to pass, but ARTLIES wishes to specifically thank Chris Taylor, Jimmy Luu, Cynthia Tobis, Sina Najifi and Cabinet magazine for their effort and support.

The audio component of Projecting ARTLIES into the Void can be accessed online at www.artlies.org.
During 2003 in preparation of "Issue 10-Property," Cabinet magazine of Brooklyn, New York, acquired, sight unseen, Deming Ranchettes Unit 35, Block 4, Lot 8, a half-acre plot of land located about ten miles east of Deming, New Mexico. They named the property Cabinetlandia for use as a remote project space. In 2004 Matthew Passmore designed and built the Cabinet National Library consisting of a three-drawer filing cabinet set into the earth between a swale and berm. A 2005 guestbook entry by Steve Rowell indicates the susceptibility of the Library to local conditions and the complications of flooding, silting up, and mold. In the summer of 2006, I visited the site to assess its current situation and confirm the viability of its use for the ARTL!ES archive.

I n 2006, Land Arts of the American West was asked to create an ARTL!ES ‘archive’ at Cabinetlandia, a borrowed piece of land near Deming, New Mexico. The site is part of the Deming Ranchettes, desert scrubland throughout Luna County that was speculatively divided into 87,000 half-acre residential lots and sold in the 1960s. Bound by a major east-west railroad to the north, the voided subdivision containing our site is bisected by Interstate 10. Its original dirt roads have become faint shadows tracing property lines across an expanse of open horizon. This seemingly empty Chihuahuan Desert basin appears as a zone to traverse on your way between places. Void is the essential character of this place. Its transient nature and the ambulatory mode of Land Arts investigation prompted a dispersed response to the project. Instead of making a static container, our goal was to locate the actual issues within the landscape and archive the stories, or lies, returned in that exchange. After considerable difficulty with the weather and local site conditions, we spent three days distributing the printed history of ARTL!ES in and around Deming—finding, and being found by, people willing to talk. Through this process unpredictable events ensued, like the invitation of the Kretek twins, ranching sisters in their seventies, for our entire crew of seventeen to join them for an evening at the Rio Mimbres Country Club. Before dinner, Geraldine and Gurtrude’s good friend ‘Hawk,’ a lifelong cowboy and circus performer, treated us to a rope trick demonstration—in the dining room. Once all the issues were located, the recorded stories were edited and compiled for broadcast on the site. A portable tower was built to project ARTL!ES into the void, to broadcast the stories of Deming into the desert, towards the passing traffic, and back into the landscape that produced them.

PROJECTING ARTL!ES INTO THE VOID

Foucault: locate the space left empty by the author’s disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings this disappearance uncovers.”

Jarrod Beck
Land Arts of the American West is a studio-based field study program dedicated to the investigation of land arts practices from precontact Native American to contemporary Euro-American cultures. Each fall we spend over fifty days in the field traveling about 8,000 miles to live and work throughout the southwest. Land Arts is a collaboration between Studio Art at the University of New Mexico and Design at the University of Texas at Austin, and is funded in part by the Lannan Foundation and Andrea Nasher.

In the October of 2006, we arrived at Deming after thirty-three days in the field, roughly two-thirds the way through our itinerary, visiting places like Chaco Canyon, the Center for Land Use Interpretation’s Wendover complex, The Lightning Field and the Very Large Array. After our six days here, we headed south to Mata Ortiz, Mexico, and then completed our fieldwork at Otero Mesa.

“Movement defines this place, yet the space remains static. Routes of transportation straddle the land, as trains, airplanes, and automobiles move quickly past. But this place is not a destination – It lies somewhere between A and B, not a point, just a patch of scrappy desert that comes and then is gone so quickly as the highway speeds away.”

Cynthia Brinich-Langlois
The 2006 Land Arts participants involved in this project were students Jarrod Beck, Cynthia Brinich-Langlois, Christine Casaus, Nicole E Danti, Chappell Ellison, Sean Lopano, Alexandra Lopez Iglesias, Jimmy Luu, George Morrow, Joseph Mougel, Tanisa Sharif, Andrew Towl, Jennifer DePaolo VanHorn, and Emmalee Young; program co-directors Bill Gilbert and Chris Taylor; and guest William L. Fox.

Our collaborative project was produced under the direction of Chris Taylor. Special assistance in editing and compiling the sound came from George Morrow, and the graphic design of this layout from Jimmy Luu.

Photographs by Chris Taylor, Chappell Ellison, Joseph Mougel, and Jarrod Beck.

The site/non-site sketch of the field and gallery installation showing the exterior projection and interior control.

... the world is so huge why not stories from this town in the middle of nowhere in the middle of absolutely the last place on earth anyone would go and they love us and we love them and how did we make this happen and thank god we did because it proves that you can do anything you want and damn it this is still America and how did we get so separated from this, our roots our people just everyday life and the time that endures it doesn’t resonate any longer yet it still endures I guess in a cave or at least in the dark recesses of our collective minds we just don’t share but this, this proves something...

Nicole E Danti

11 OCTOBER

Compiling stories and building the broadcast tower at camp. Drive out to the site crossing the ‘bridge to nowhere’ to project into void. Drive back to camp with sound playing and light flashing. Pack up for Mexico.