

Environmental Autobiography

JEREMY ALFORD // FALL 2011

Hi

Throughout my life I have had the fortunate opportunity to travel and explore a variety of landscapes and cultures. This environmental autobiography organizes those experiences along a timeline continuum to show the areas I visited and at what ages I encountered them. The pages simply list the locations and conclude with my codified thoughts on how this lifetime of experiences has informed my approach to design.



Timeline

This graphic anchors the sequential progression throughout the autobiography and communicates the year, age and location of my travels.

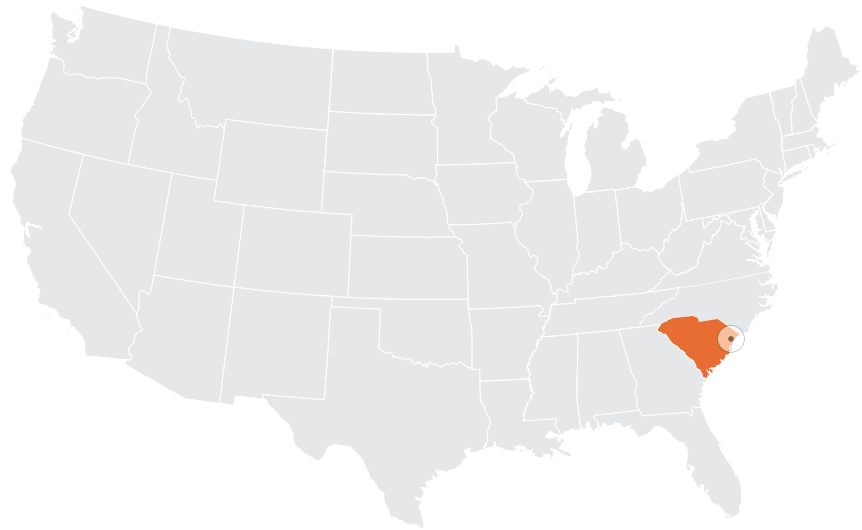


Extended dwellings

Several places have been called “home” through the years, and those locations are marked with this circle graphic, whereas cities and countries visited show only the country highlighted accompanied by a list.

Age 0-17

Conway, South Carolina

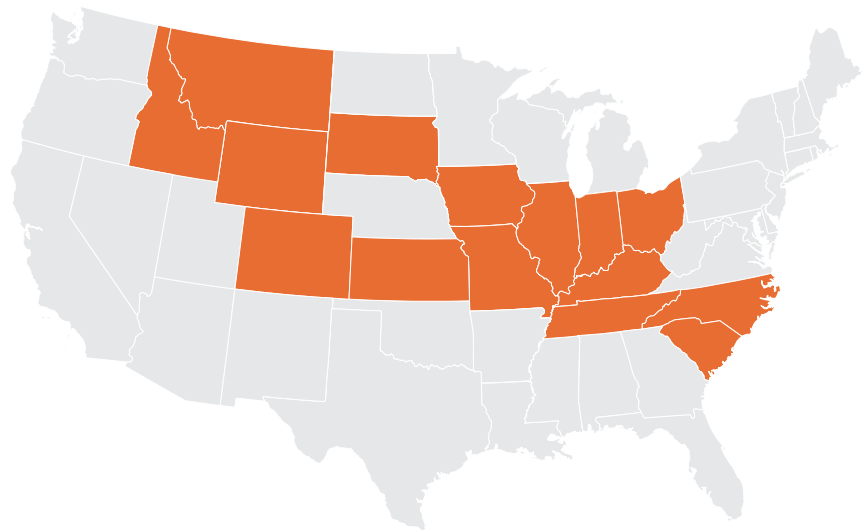


1978-1995

1984

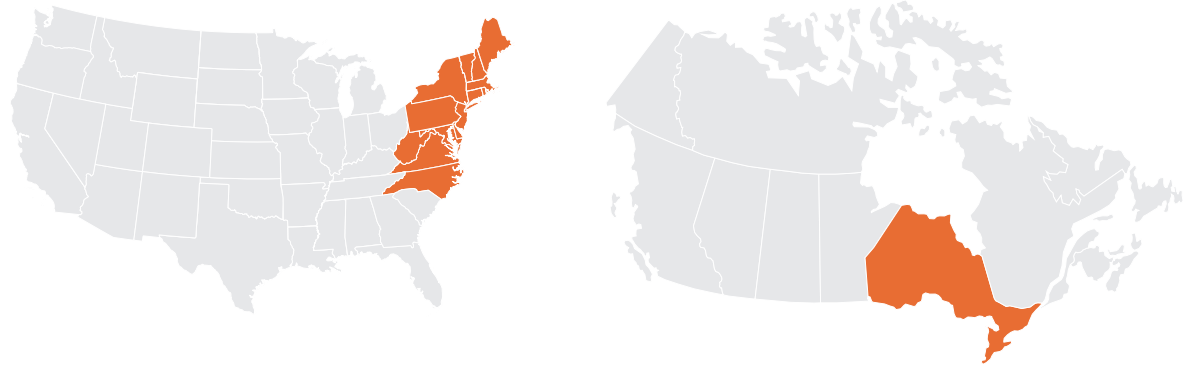
Age 6

North Carolina
Tennessee
Kentucky
Ohio
Indiana
Illinois
Iowa
South Dakota
Montana
Idaho
Wyoming
Colorado
Kansas
Missouri



Age 7

North Carolina
Virginia
Maryland
District of Columbia
Pennsylvania
Delaware
Rhode Island
New York
Connecticut
Vermont
New Hampshire
Maine
Ontario, Canada

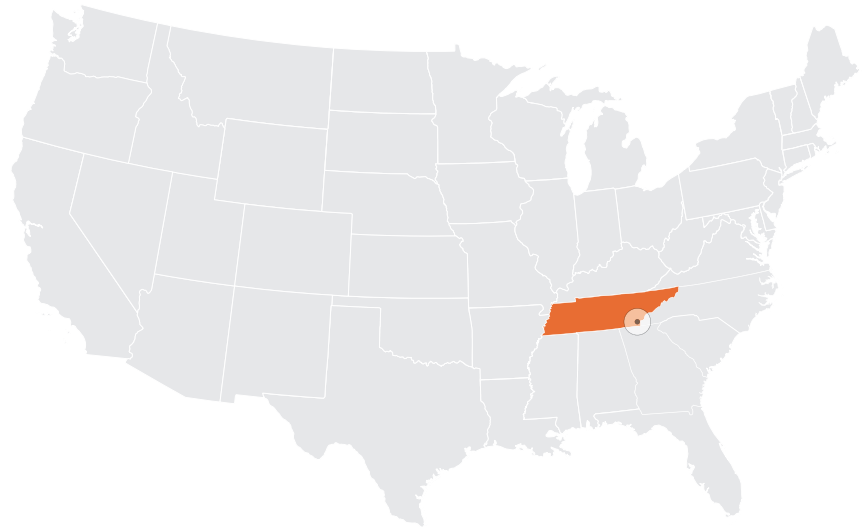


1985

1995-1998

Age 17-19

Cleveland, Tennessee



Age 19

Matamoros, Tamaulipas (Mexico)

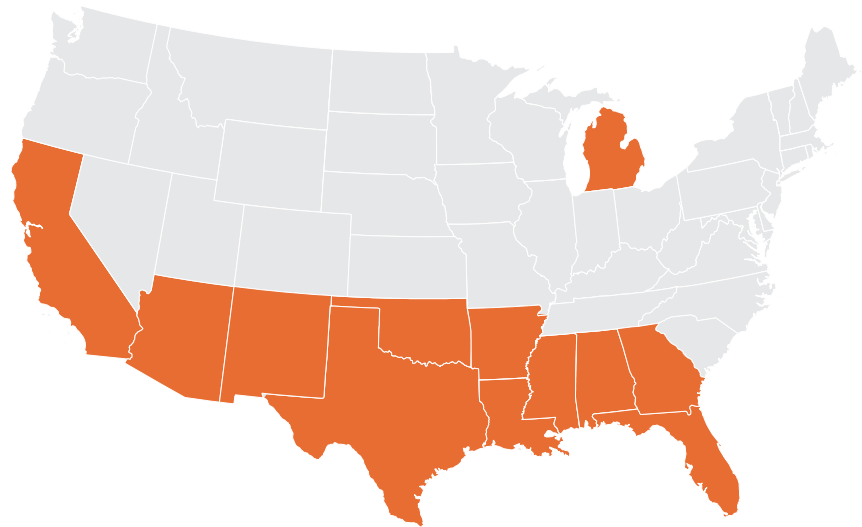


1997

1997

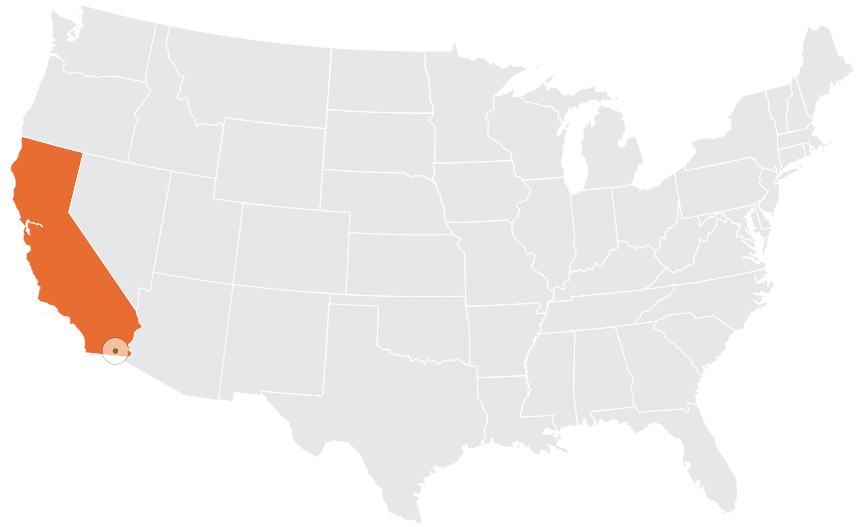
Age 19

Michigan
Florida
Georgia
Alabama
Mississippi
Arkansas
Louisiana
Oklahoma
Texas
New Mexico
Arizona
California



Age 19-24

Imperial Valley, California



1998-2003

2003-2004

Age 24-26

Bristol, Virginia



Age 25

Belize City & San Ignacio, Belize



2003

2004

Age 26

Reykjavik, Iceland

London, England

Vienna, Austria

Sofia & Shumen, Bulgaria

Zagreb, Croatia

Stuttgart, Frankfurt & Esslingen, Germany

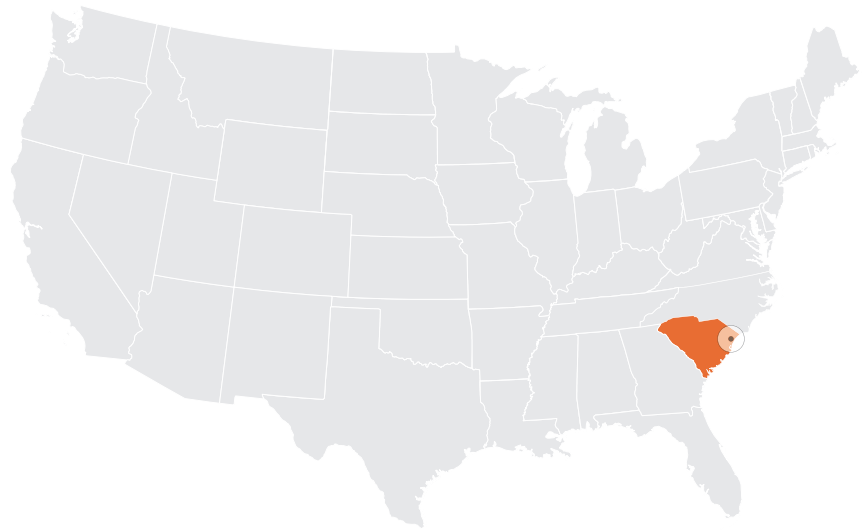
Zurich & Spreitenbach, Switzerland

Paris, France



Age 26-33

Grand Strand, South Carolina

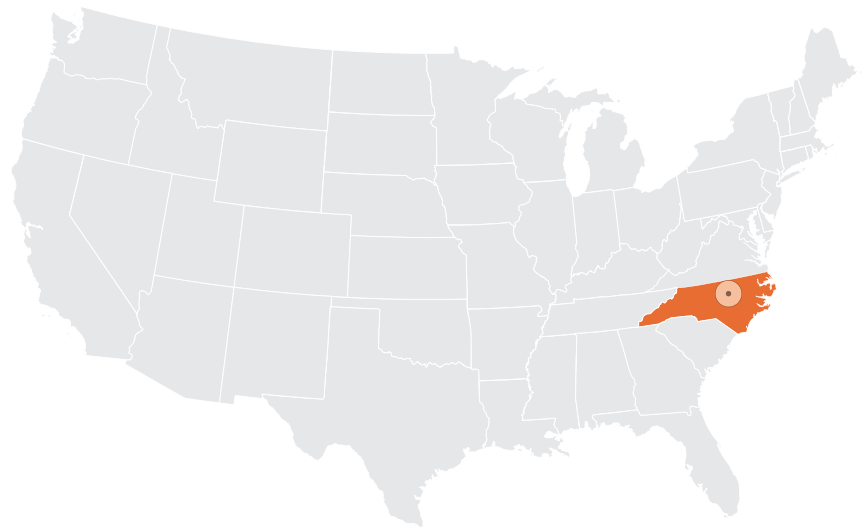


2003-2011

2011

Age 33

Raleigh, North Carolina



Thoughts

Throughout my life, I have had the good fortune of traveling. My narrative began in the South Carolina low country where I grew up in a coastal environment along the Grand Strand. In my very impressionable youth, my family took two-week trips to a variety of U.S. states in both my sixth and seventh years. First, we traveled west and then up the eastern coast. These journeys opened my eyes to the variety of landscapes which exist in the United States. On the western trip, I vividly remember the landscape shift from dense trees to the plains, but I will never forget the first sight I had of the majestic Rocky Mountains on our approach to Colorado. We visited the Smokey Mountains of Appalachia annually as a family, but they were altogether different from the mountains of the American west. On our east coast trip the following year, I felt the deep historical roots of those areas due to the places my family visited and went into another country for the first time on our visit to Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. Both of these trips took me to large cities, deserts, mountains and miles and miles of plains. I saw that the world was larger than my densely wooded coastal environment.

My first relocation from South Carolina was to Cleveland, Tennessee, located in the southeastern part of the state. It is here that I first lived among mountains and enjoyed hikes and seasonal changes much more notable than the ones along the coast. Theology was the focus of my academic pursuit there and where I began to contemplate the relationship of my religious beliefs and how I viewed the world. I find that one of the most unique things in all of life is how people express their religious beliefs through architecture and language. I have visited austere chapels, storefront churches and magnificent cathedrals and have found that my religious inclinations are affected by the varying architecture.

My time in Cleveland paved the way for travel to Mexico and many of the United States, especially the road across the southern part of the country. In the summer of my nineteenth year, I made my first trek across the southern states and into California. I would make this arduous road trip three times before finally relocating to the Southern California desert. The desert is a place of contemplation. It is where life is more subdued and seasons are marked by winds from Santa Ana more than by obvious landscape changes. This climate was my home for five years, and the most lasting personal effect of my time there was that I learned to see people through a different lens. My home region of South Carolina is filled with racial tension, yet this area was different. In the Imperial Valley I was the minority. The population was 80% Hispanic and I experienced what it feels like to be marginalized. It was difficult to get employment because I was not bilingual. I also experienced the way larger families

gather and was able to partake of cultural celebrations much different from my own region. I observed the value of families in their culture and was gratefully accepted into many as extended family.

My last season of working in a religious organization before returning to school to study fine art and graphic design was in Bristol, Virginia. This was a return to the mountainous climate and I enjoyed the pleasures of what seemed to be piercing green and distinct seasonal changes. It was in this position that I was afforded travel, first to Belize, then to Europe for three weeks. The trip to Europe was probably one of the more catalytic experiences of my life. I had never seen such disparate geography as I observed from the lava of Iceland to the beautiful topography of the Alps and Bulgaria. It was in Zurich that I first stood face to face with paintings by Van Gogh, Renoir and Monet, and the impression awakened my dormant passion for the arts. It was this trip that solidified the next season of my life and what has further led me to the study of architecture today.

Not long after returning from Europe, I began plans to relocate to my beloved home in the low country and begin my formal studies of art and design. After seven years back at home by the coast, the move to Raleigh has great similarities to my first move to college sixteen years ago in 1995. Much has transpired since that first relocation to Cleveland, Tennessee, but I see that this new beginning, much like the one in 1995, brings with it great possibility for transformation.

To me, design is powerful and transformative. It encompasses all the senses, and my experiences of places, cultures, climates and culinary differences have given me the luxury of multiple perspectives. I will constantly be growing in my worldview as I continue to live, study, and experience life, but I am thankful for the journey so far. As a result of my life journey, I think about the way people feel and experience life. I consider social class since I am now the first graduate student from a family that has not traditionally had access to higher education because of financial means. As best as I can, I see everyone on the human level and worthy of dignity regardless of socioeconomic or societal status. After visiting Europe, I realize that space is a premium and that the consumerism and entertainment focus of America can be a barrier to rich community and vitality of life. My intention is to use design to enhance life with respect to the cultural differences and beliefs of people. I have seen that the world is filled with variety and that many avenues of design need to be explored to meet the challenges of respecting who people are and how they view the world.