



When you're taking off, like, in a rocket, at Cape Canaveral, there must be a rearview mirror where you see the launch site, the big paved surface and outbuildings, the space center campus, all surrounded by wetlands and water. It's not really organized in shapes that are definitely "human"; it's all odd shapes, specific, that aren't so earthly. They're shapes that arise because of utility, so they belong to a universal language of functionality. A mile up you see the suburbs; the grids that are very human, and the curvy planned developments that are recently human. The swirly wetlands, keys, coastline, are very earthly, but don't matter to you at this moment, they're just the elements of Earth tumbling over each other, settling in the place of least resistance while all the plants adapt to their surroundings and the little animals just do their thing amongst the plants. I mean, it's fun to identify nature shapes from above, especially something so recognizable like Florida. But we didn't construct that shape, and it's not really your main focus; it's not the mark of your species on your planet. You're going off into space towards other planets, maybe to look for signs of life, or just clues left behind.

The patterns we make on the planet are pretty cool, but those are usually parts of cities, and cities are always changing shapes and expanding. From space, cities are... you'd definitely recognize Venice, which is a nature/human hybrid shape, but it's not a symbol you could sit and draw. Washington D.C. is a clear shape, but it only exists on political maps, and not from space. Walled cities are fabulous shapes, and forts, also, usually spiky, with even edges and angles, which can be qualities of good symbols. Symbols that can be seen from space, you know?

So you're on the way to the moon, right. It's a big sphere, fabulous, covered in round craters, perfect. We're going to build something on it, and it should be something identifiable, something kids can draw. I know I could draw the basic concept of the Eiffel Tower and... I'm imagining what this thing looks like in elevation, but really I want to keep thinking about things in plan, from above, FROM SPACE. The people of Dubai got it, almost. They knew about making their mark on Earth.

The Pentagon, a pentagon; The Pyramids, pyramidal; the old Apple Headquarters (oh it's not the present day because in the present day you would not seriously consider a role in space exploration); a circle, don't know enough about ancient American rock drawings, humanoid. Stadiums are ellipsoid variations... ok stadiums should be perfect but are odd now because our sports fields (baseball) are such weird shapes and otherwise clear forms have to contort around them. The Coliseum in Rome was perfect and the SUPERDOME in New Orleans is still one of the best examples on earth of a space-scale symbol-building. Baha'i temples are all nonagons.

Spiral Jetty, Tree Mountain, Double Negative. Spaceship Earth, The Atomium, The St. Louis Arch, Mines, Wells, Reservoirs, Agriculture, Auroville, and Crop Circles, what are those Foundations, Piers, Pylons, Power Plants, Landfills, Dams, and Canals, Dikes, Walls, Roads, Bridges, Tracks, Tunnels, Pipelines, Powerlines, these aren't... these are all just lines. We've built great lines.

Sometimes when you're in nature, especially the beach, where you're given an endless supply of material, at your fingertips, you start playing. Little circles with your finger. Arrange 4 shells in a square. Catalogue 12 stones in 3 rows of 4 in descending order of size.

Like zoom in to the structures of coral, and find fractals in ferns and Fibonacci sequences in sunflowers. Mollusks build 1.618 spiral shells that last well beyond their deaths.

Footprints in the snow
Make that mark
Shovel that path dude
So we all can walk

Hottest year in history
Best plan your ruin
That unnatural monument
There's a storm a brewin'

On Earth there are wetlands and salt flats and the oceans so just build an island. Or just ignore the Earth, the setting doesn't matter, only the shape matters. The Earth will blow away so the shape takes form to support itself. The form will last forever, is alone in space and has no direction. If it is perfect it can be any size. You know, the atom as the universe.

I'm in space and I see more spheres and I cannot compete with spheres. Big panorama of Space. I put my thumbs and forefingers in the shape of a rectangle 6 inches in front of my face, creating a viewfinder. I need a frame for this. I make nice compositions of stars, seemingly always presentable, perfectly random, with infinite asymmetrical balance. I start imagining straight lines connecting the brightest stars: there are wonky rhombuses, a kinda OK hexagon, a pretty good hourglass/bowtie that I made from connecting 2 triangles, with the brightest star in sight at the center. I focus on the purest rhombus, a lozenge, like a squished diamond, where the sides and angles are pretty equal. It's over to the left. I imagine this line drawing filled with white, set off against the black of space. I spin The lozenge on its long axis and it makes this nice form, I'm sure it has a name. I put down my hands and memorize this form. I practice looking away and then quickly jerking back to the left, and after 10 minutes I can find The Form without having to look for it or refocus.

Further by David Salkin