

Landscape of the Lowry Pueblo Communities

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

Overview

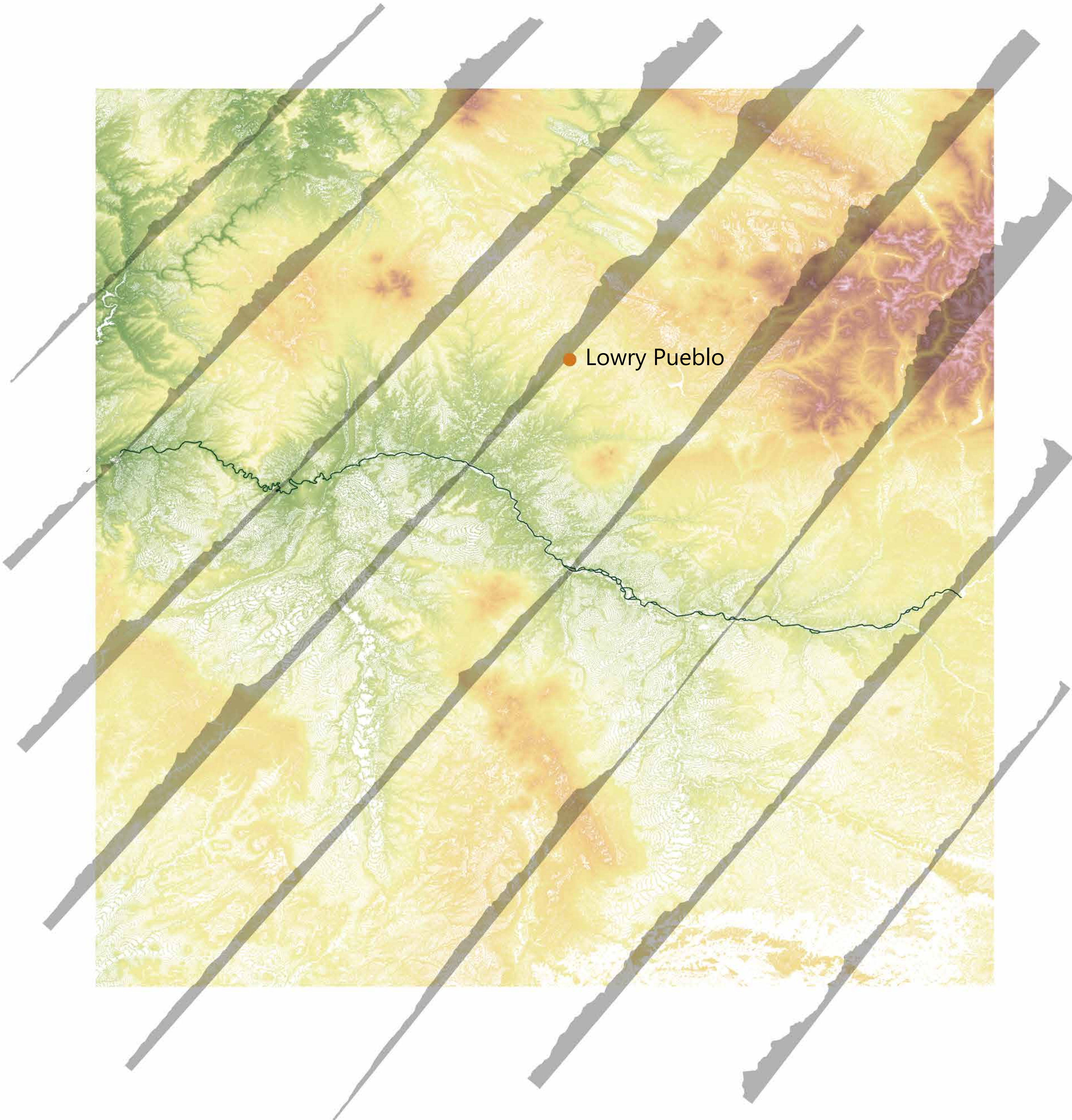
In spring of 2016, undergraduate students and faculty of the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, MD began a project of drawing and mapping landscapes in the Lowry Pueblo National Historic Landmark, working with local archaeologists and native representatives in order to record significant features and bring to bear a “new way of seeing”—and thinking—about this ancient terrain. Utilizing a distinctive set of design tools and methodologies, the MICA team is developing novel approaches that support disciplines like landscape archaeology.

The working method, which employs hand drawings, watercolors, photographs, digitalized drawings, GIS maps and 3D computer terrain reconstructions was developed in the MICA undergraduate course entitled “Gods, Graves, and Scholars: Archaeological Method and Theory for Artists, Art Historians and Designers.” Team-taught by Prof. Katie O’Meara of the Department of Architectural Design, and Prof. Joe Basile of the Department of Art History, Theory and Criticism, the course has been training MICA artists and designers in archaeological field work and also in how to employ their unique skills observing archaeological environments. Based on the premise that drawing and mapping are ways of thinking about objects, spaces and places—ways that are distinctive from other approaches—the goal of the MICA team is to depict how landscapes in the Lowry region may have developed over time: making visible the modern developments that have altered the environment while tracking the natural landmarks that are significant today but also likely held significance for the Ancestral Puebloan inhabitants of a millennium ago.

Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore MD
Professors Katie O’Meara and Joseph Basile “Gods Graves and Scholars: Archaeological Method and Theory for Artists, Art Historians and Designers”, Spring 2017 and Summer 2017 interns: Elizabeth Ewing, Esther Kim, Ty Skeiky and Zi Xu

In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, Anasazi Heritage Center, Dolores CO
Vincent MacMillan, Archaeologist, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument

Topography of Lowry Pueblo Communities

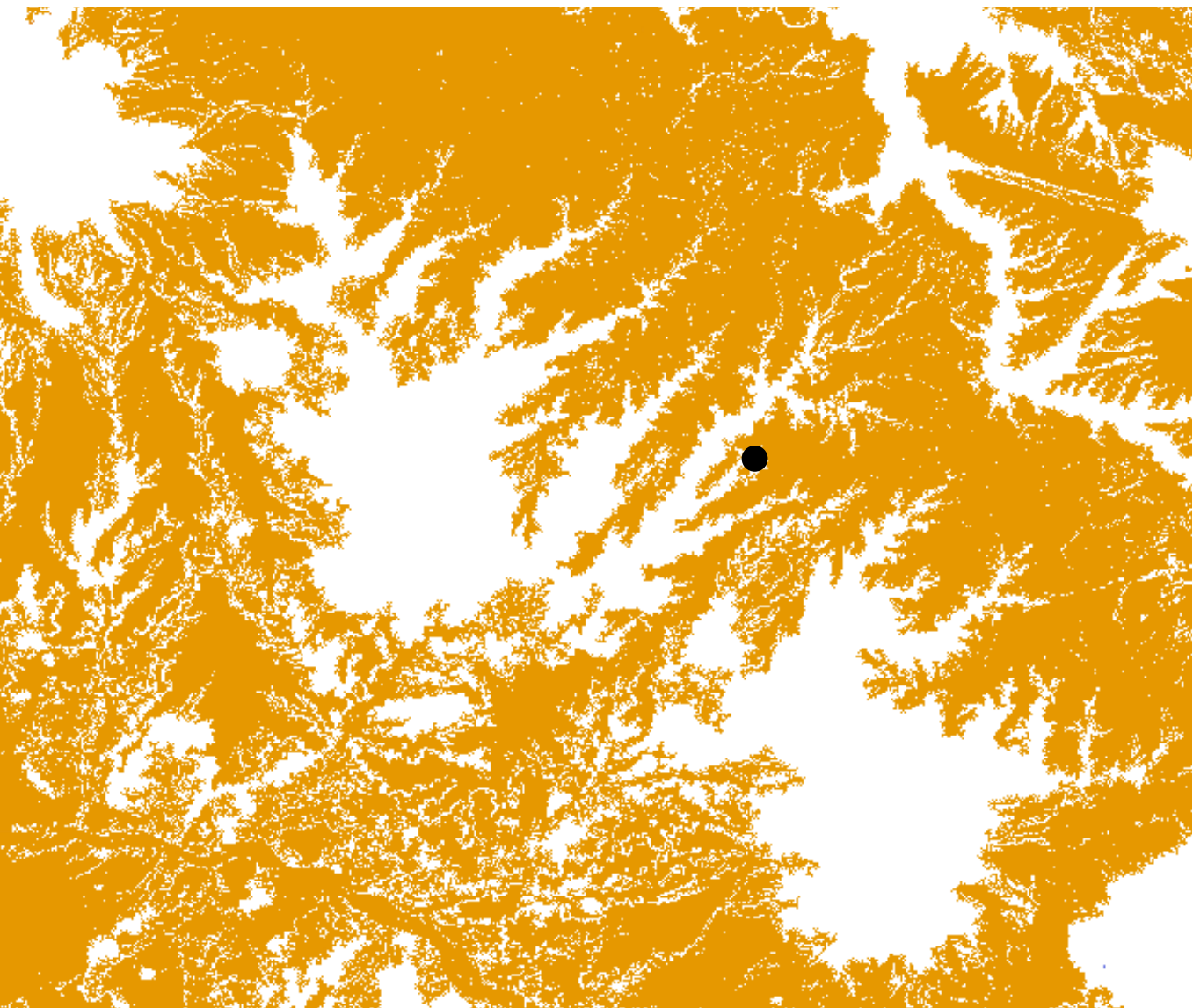


Esther Kim and Katie O’Meara, Topography of the surrounding region of Lowry Communities. Colors indicate elevation with green at the lowest and burgundy at the highest points. The series of grey section profiles show the changing elevation profiles across the San Juan River Valley.

Intent

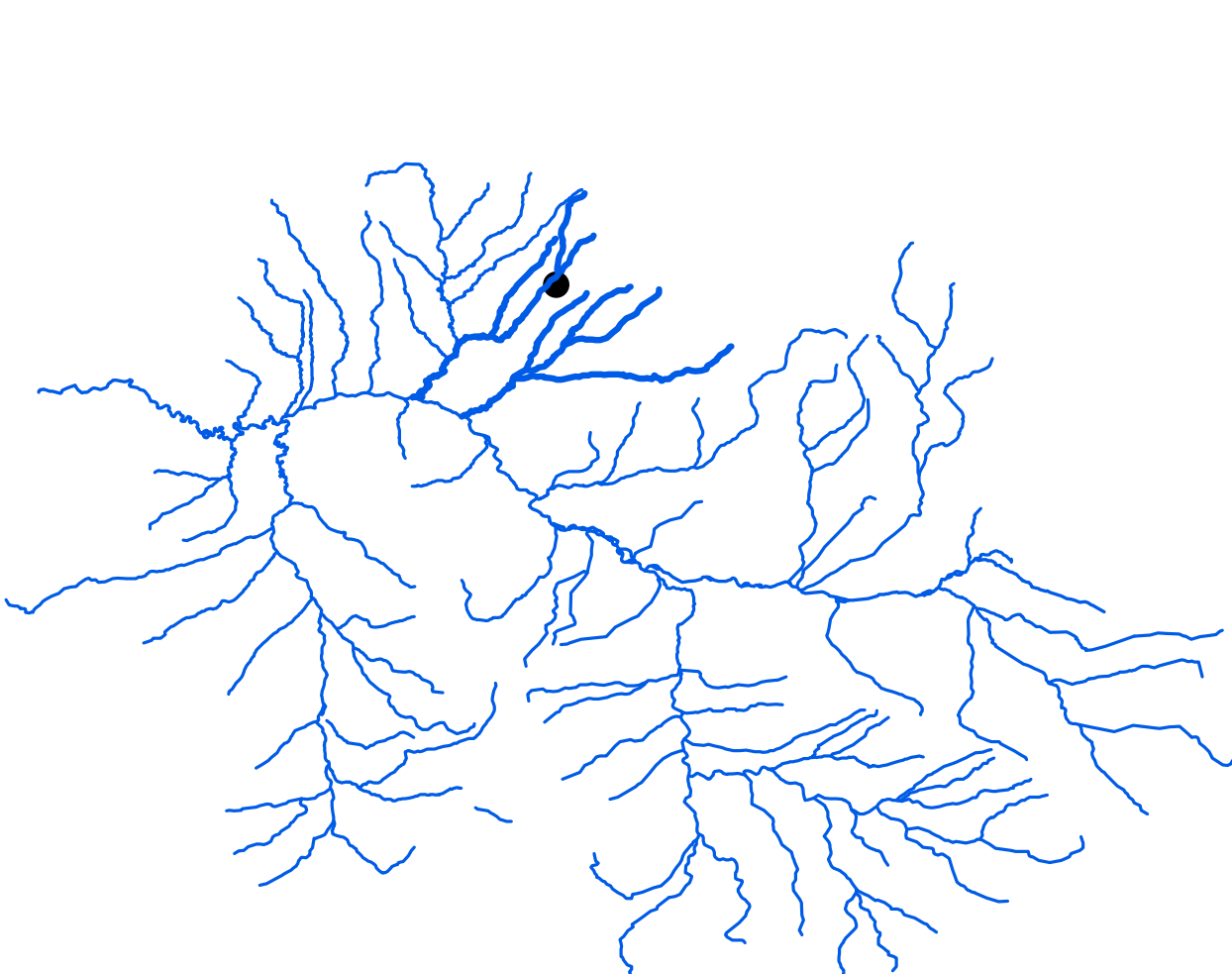
Overall, the work aims to illuminate connections between individual archaeological sites and communities, the importance of natural features, resources like water and food-producing land, and critical landmarks; all the while assisting the BLM in managing this cultural setting within the working landscape of Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, fostering greater respect for the Lowry environment and the native persons who have lived here continuously for thousands of years. Students in the course study on-site for a week in the spring; subsequently, faculty-led research teams have continued the work in the summer through professional collaborations with archaeological and cultural resource management projects.

Arable Land



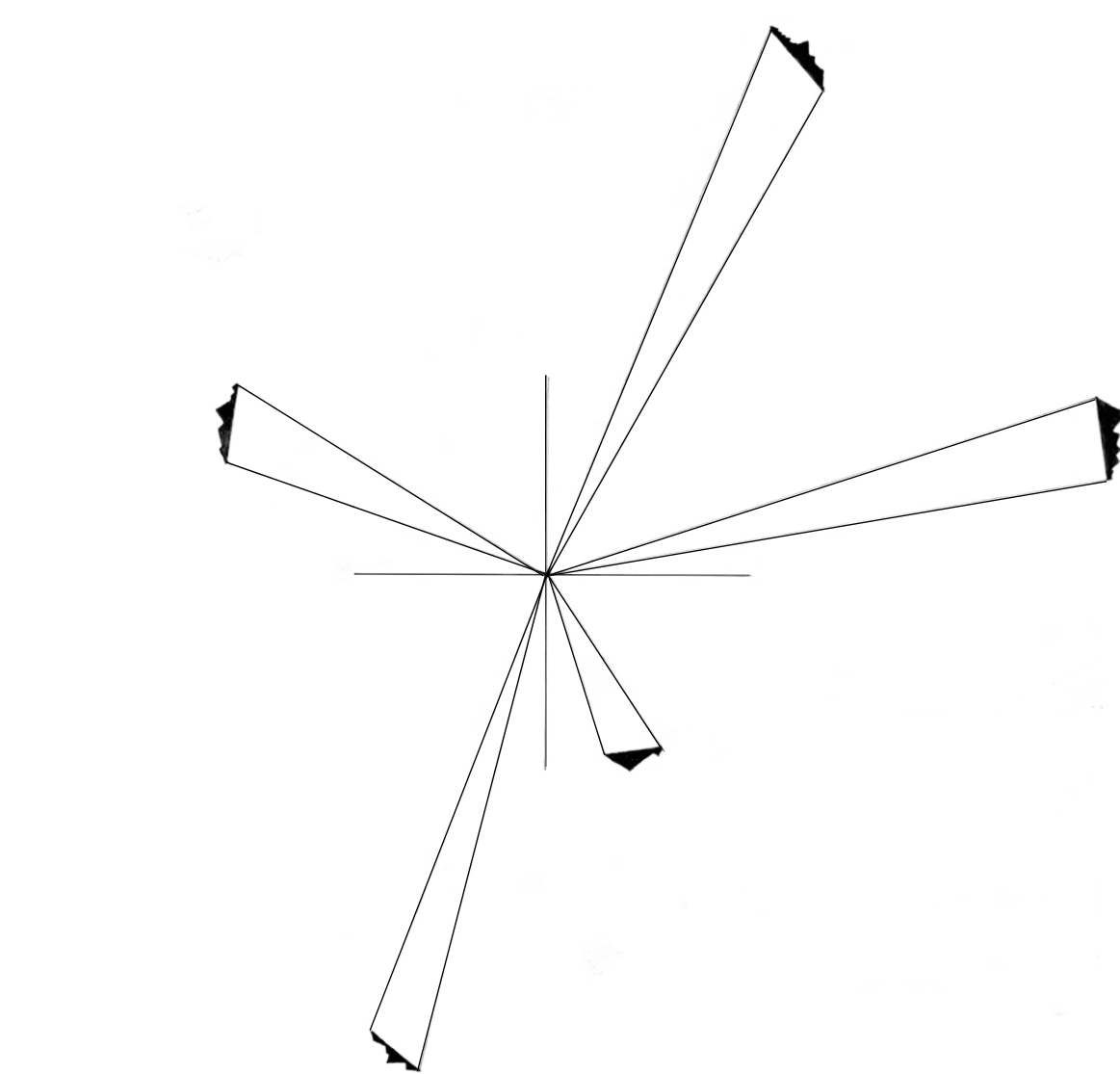
Relatively shallow slope

Water



Water pathways

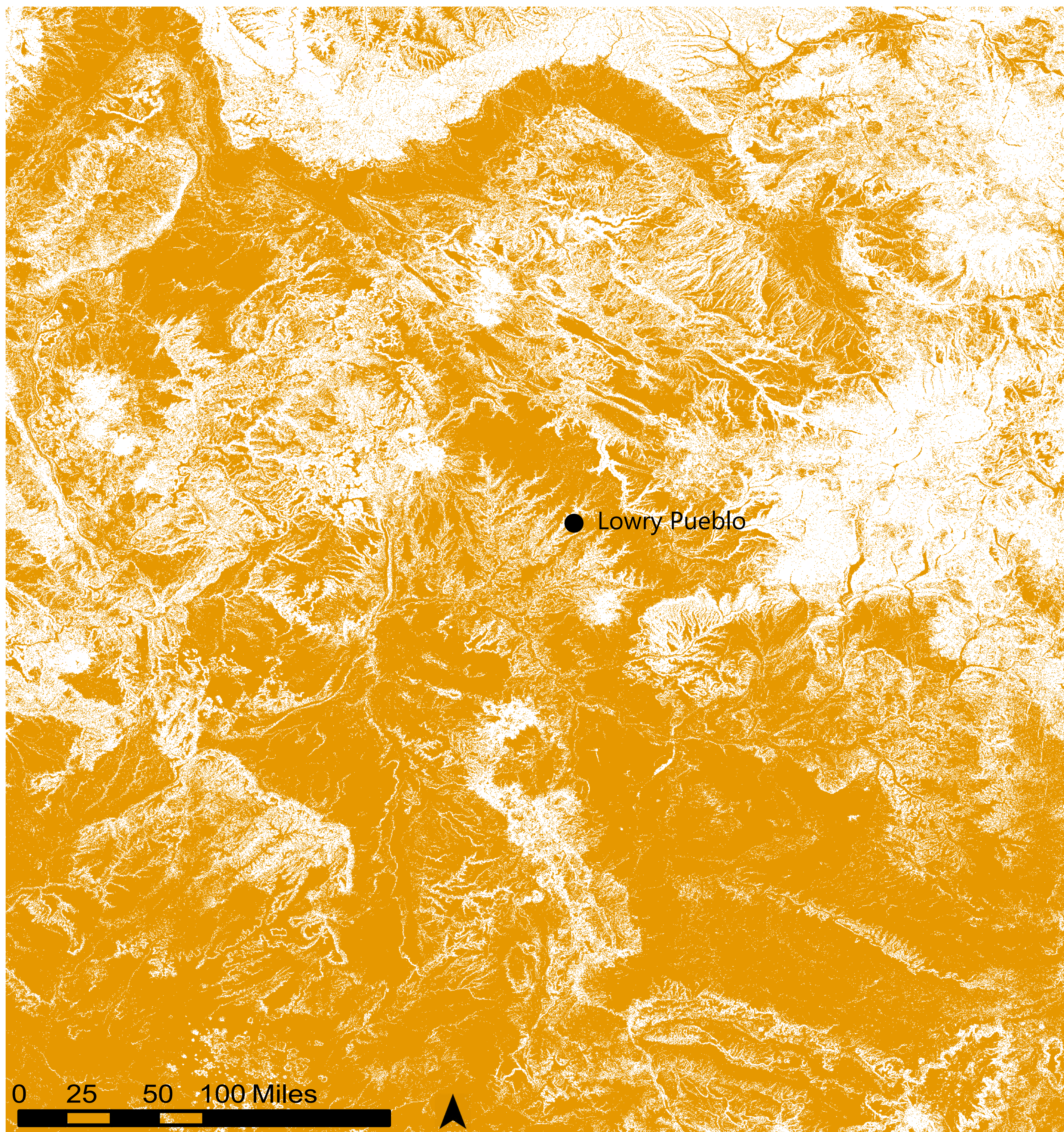
Mountains



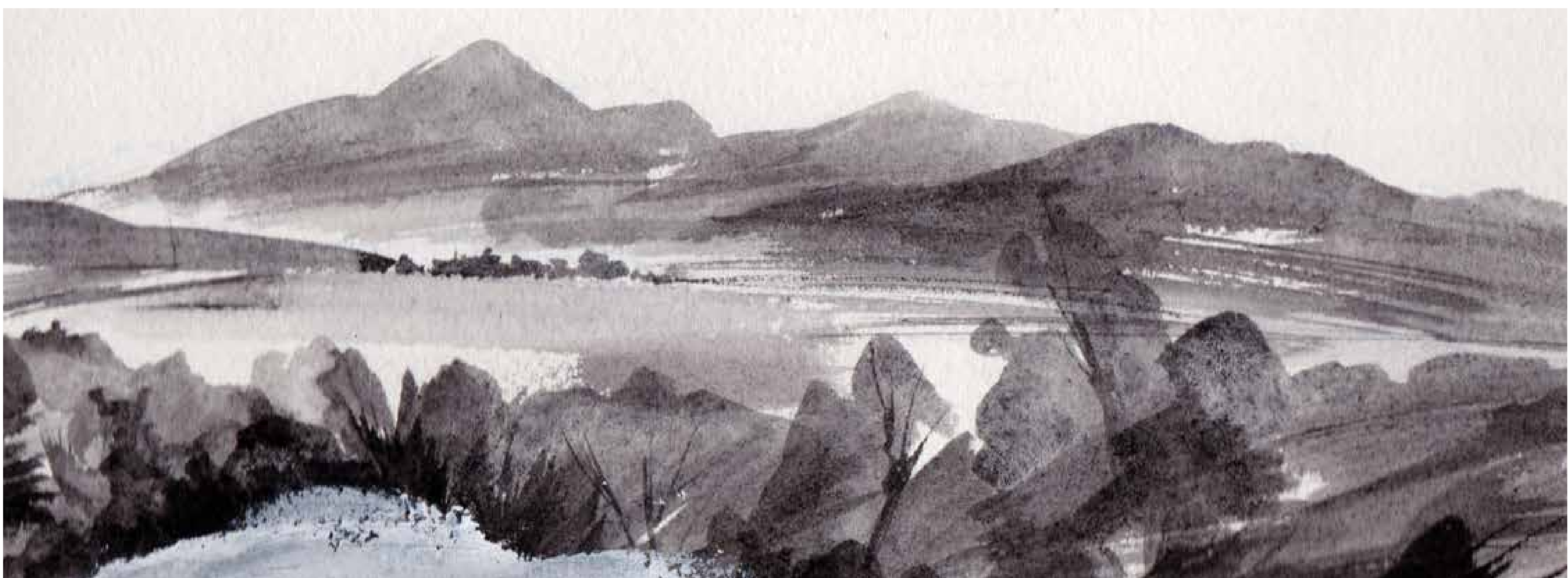
Site lines from Lowry Pueblo to mountain ranges within view.



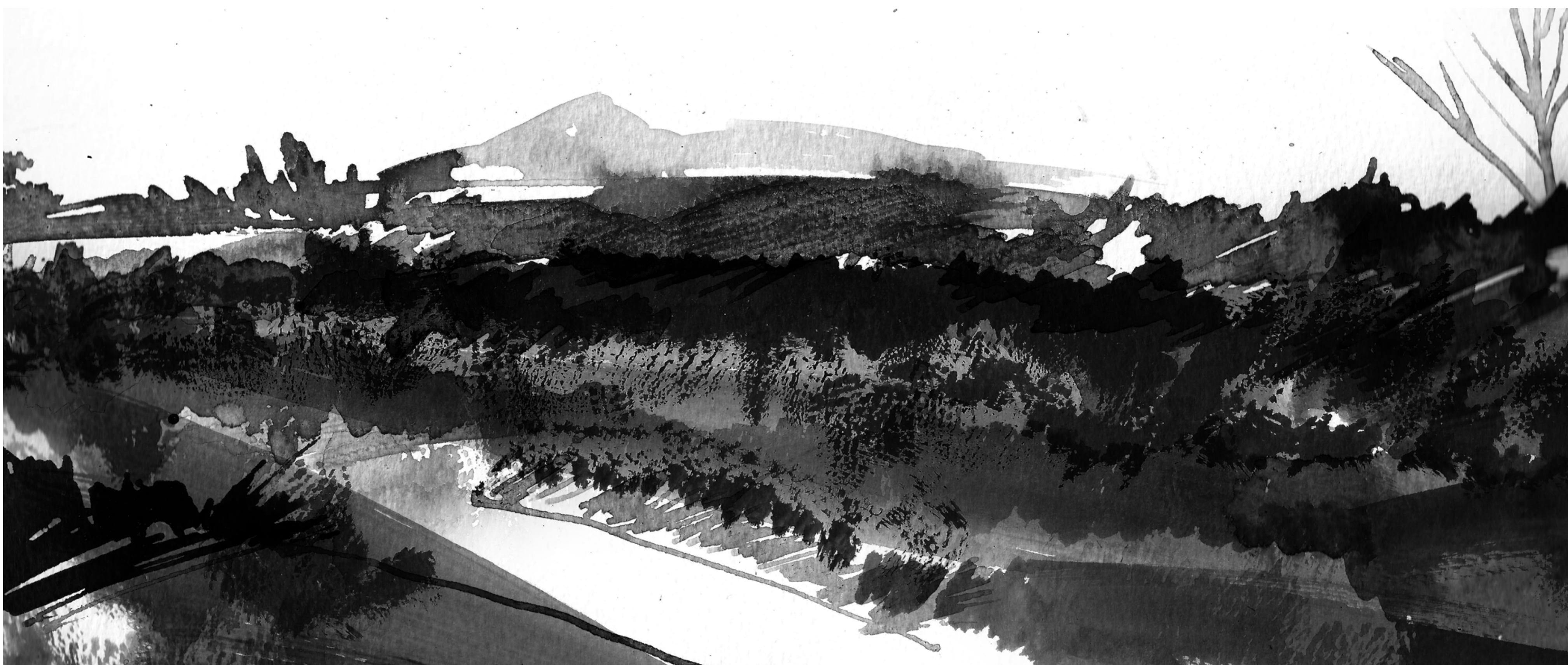
Esther Kim, at Lowry Pueblo looking north



Katie O'Meara, a map contrasting steepness--the shallow slopes and level ground being most suitable for growing food--are shown in tone, steeper slopes shown in white



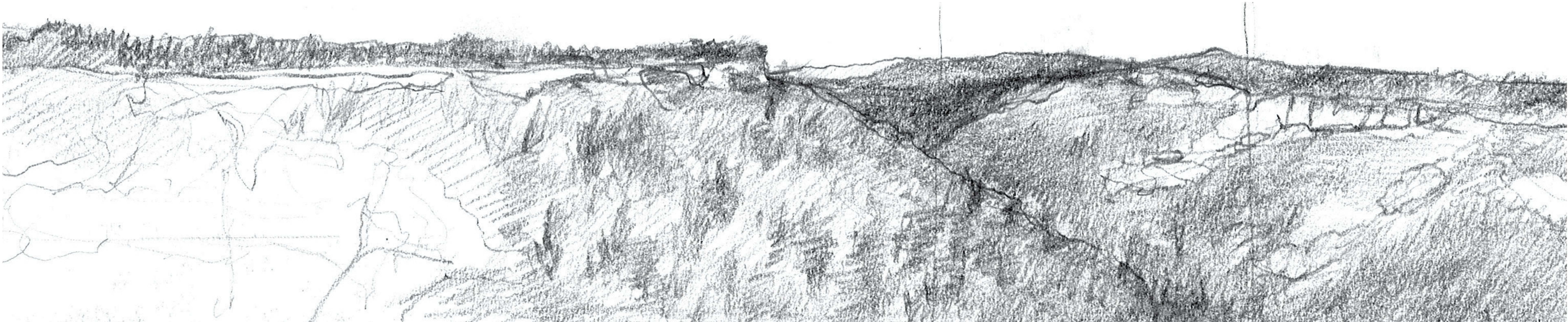
Zi Xu, at Lowry Pueblo, looking south to the Sleeping Ute Mountain



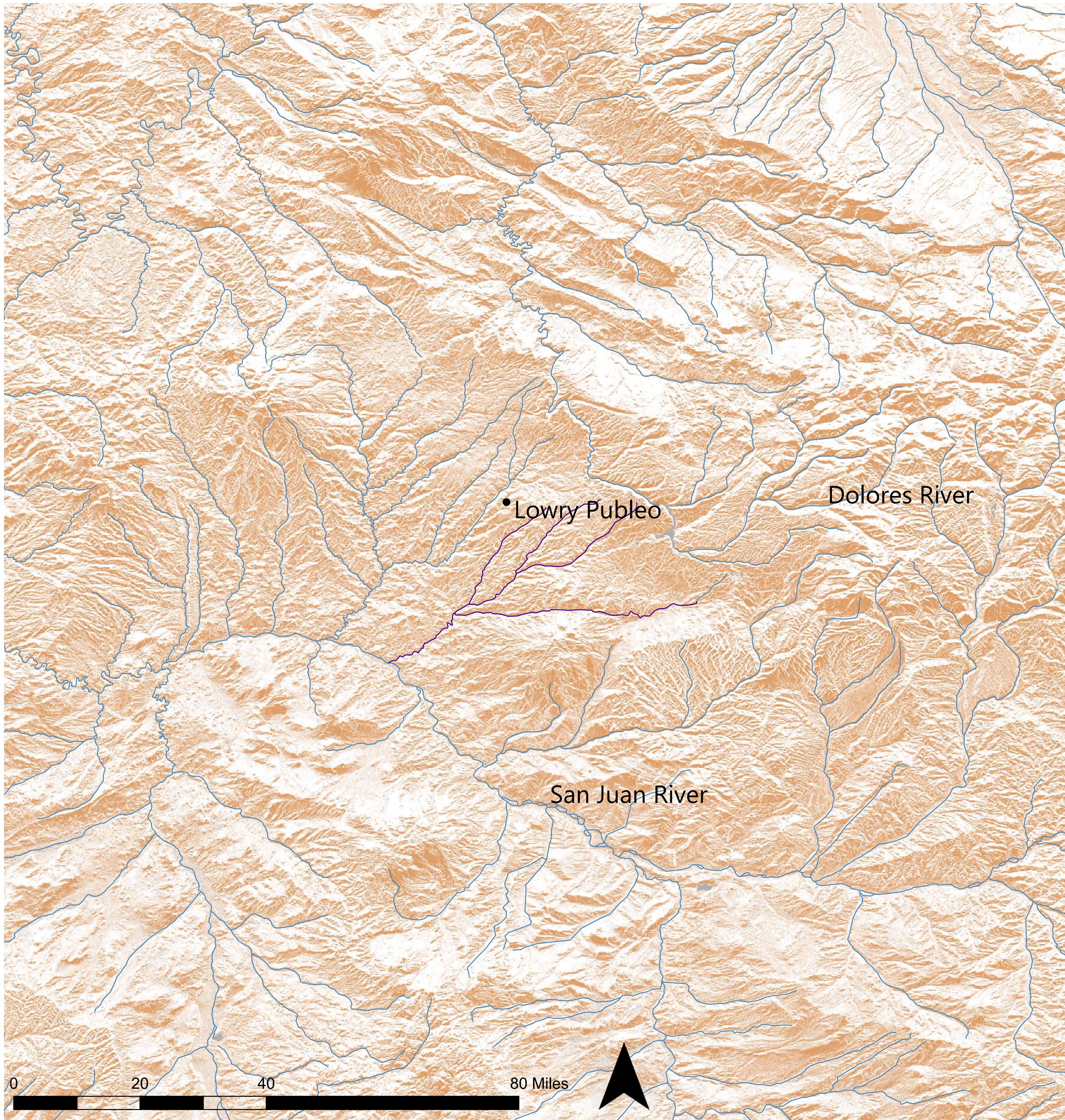
Zi Xu, at Lowry Pueblo, looking south to the Sleeping Ute Mountain

Arable Land

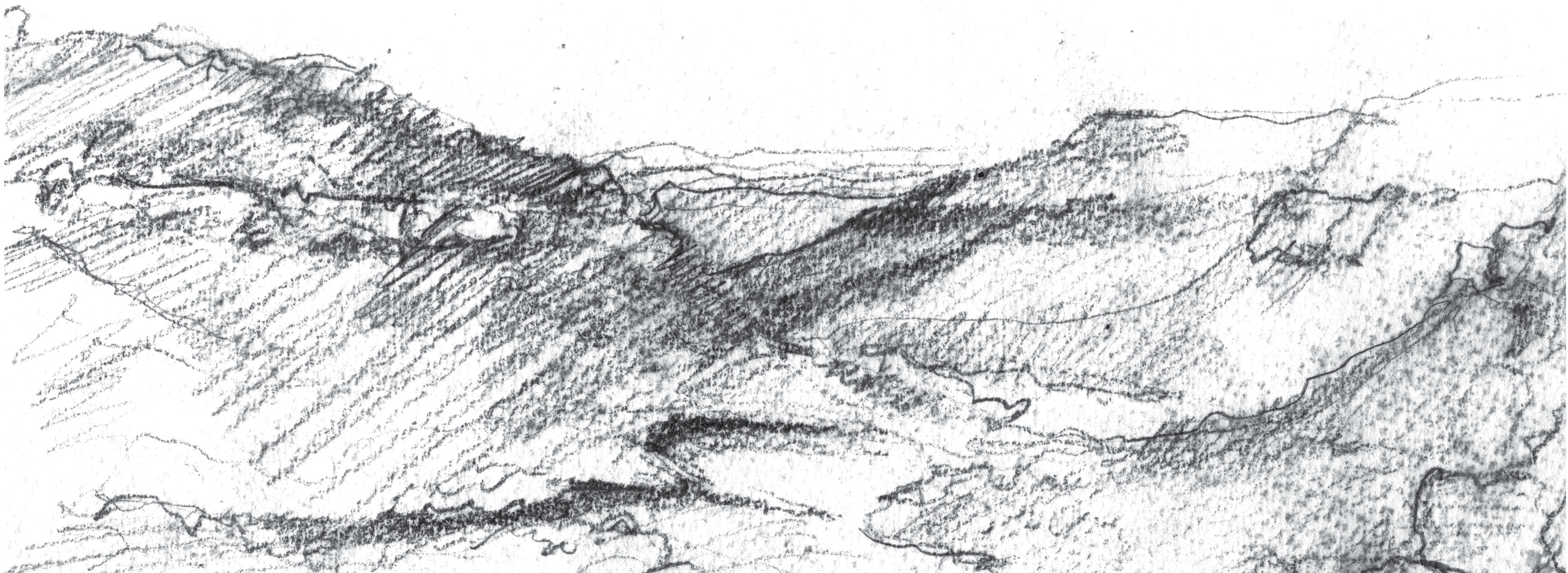
Adjacent to the zones where settlements and structures are located, mesa tops, valleys, basins and stretches of flat land offer the possibility of arable soil for Ancestral Puebloan agriculture, as well as the availability of other kinds of resources. Over millennia, wind has deposited sandy silt, worn from glacial deposits, over the plateaus and valleys west of Mesa Verde, making possible the growing of beans and other food crops. These areas also yielded wild plants and game that supported the human communities that lived here for generations.



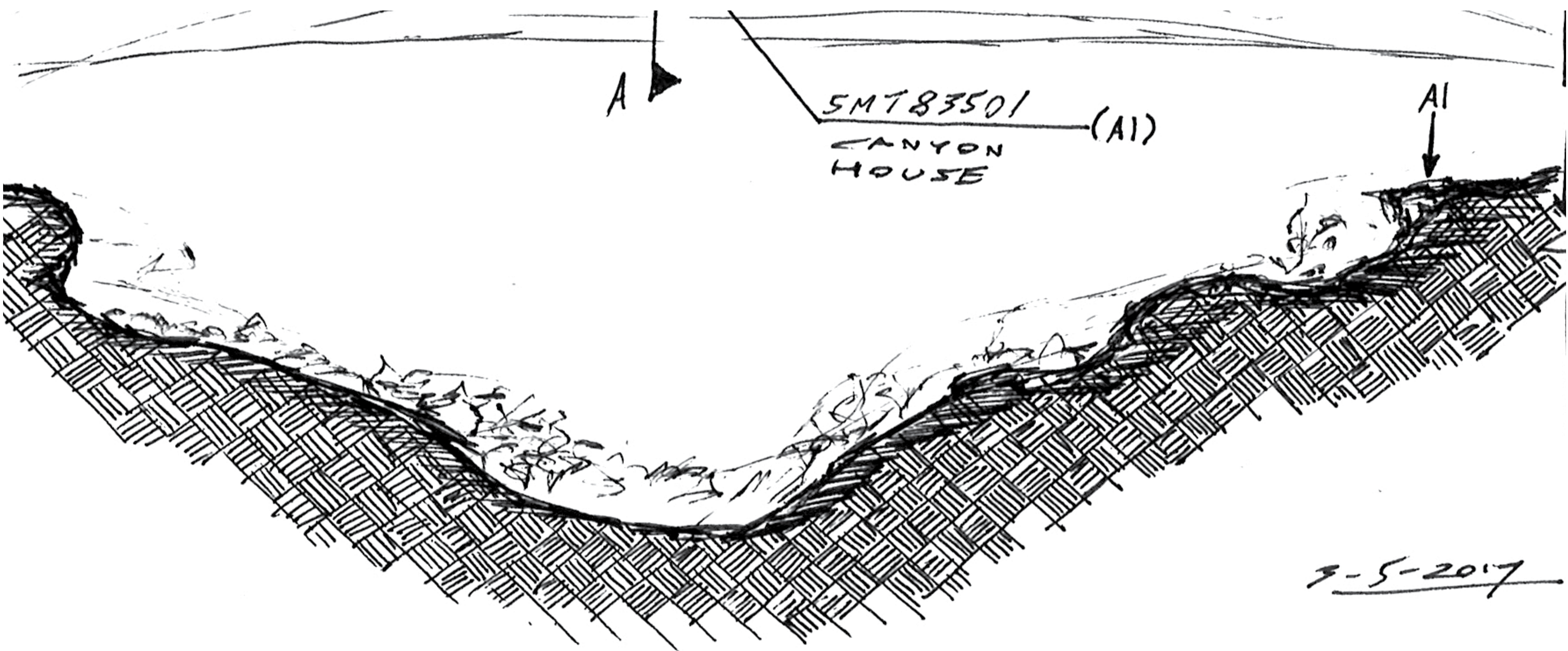
Esther Kim, at Two Kivas in the Lowry Pueblo Community, view to the southwest showing the distant mesas and valleys along the water passages



Katie O'Meara, A map showing rivers and streams, and south-facing terrain in tone, with Lowry Pueblo located between feeder streams of the San Juan River



Katie O'Meara, at Two Kivas in the Lowry Pueblo Community, along the water passage

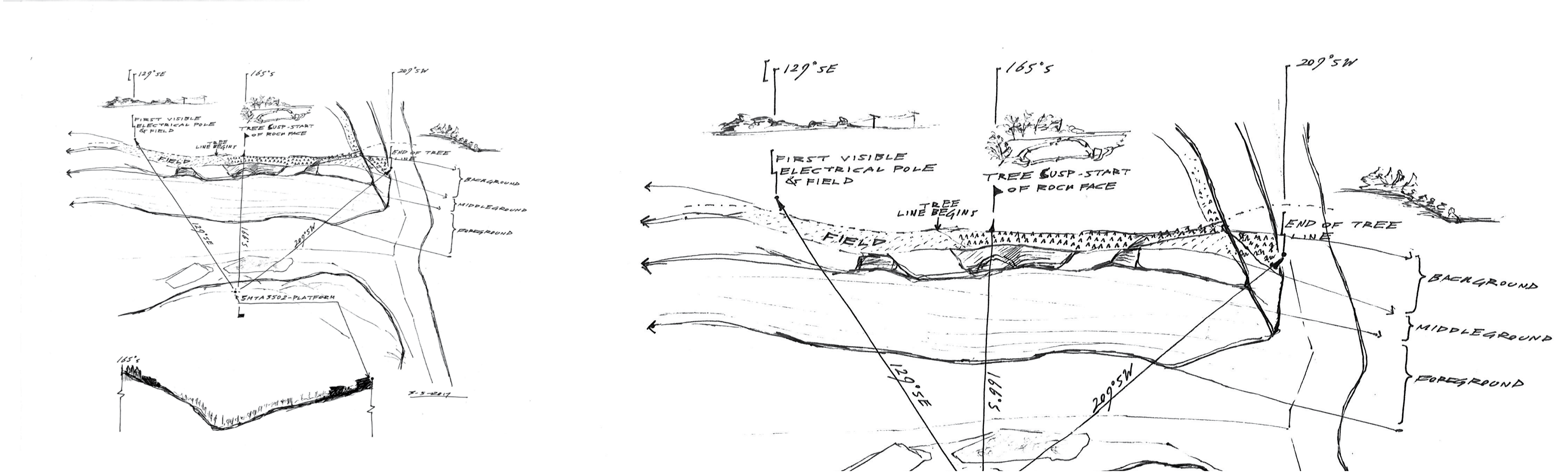


Ty Skeiky, at Canyon House in the Lowry Pueblo Community, profile of Canyon House

Water

The MICA methodology combines exacting observations of the landscape through precise drawings, with GIS mapping that “locates” foreground, middle-ground and background views for close analysis. Relative to the location of pueblos, kivas, towers and other built features of the Ancestral Puebloan period, landscapes immediately adjacent tend to include features like canyon slopes, arroyos, stream beds or seasonal water courses which reflect the importance of siting structures on rises, and/or the close availability of water. The cliffs yield Dakota sandstone, used extensively in Ancestral Pueblo architecture, and springs often appear where the sandstone strata meet the underlying and widespread Mancos shale formation.

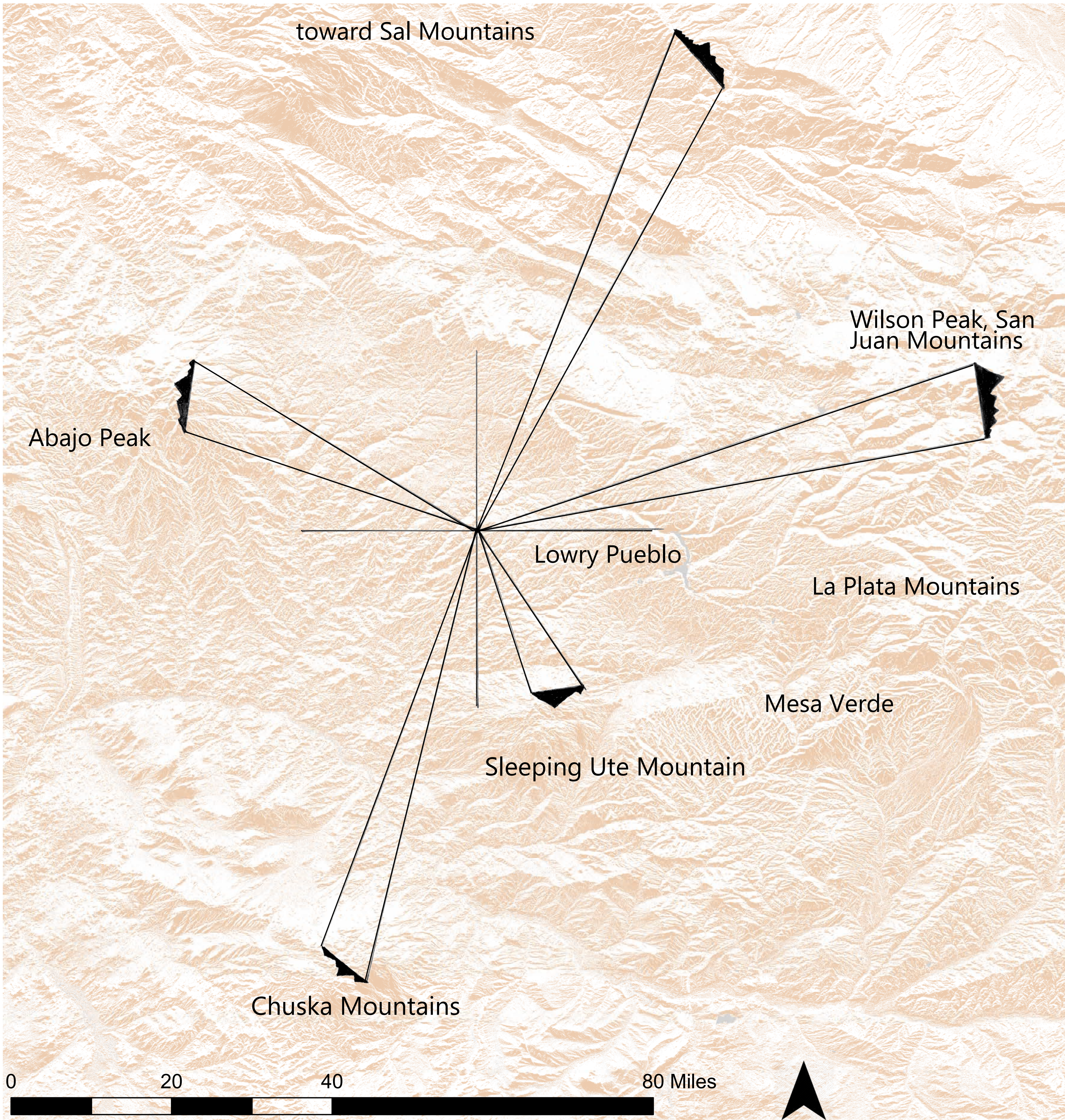
Maryland Institute College of Art 2017



Ty Skeiky, at Canyon House in the Lowry Pueblo Community, diagram of the mesa in view



Katie O'Meara, at Lowry Pueblo looking north to the La Sal Mountains



Elizabeth Ewing, Lowry Pueblo compass bearings and mountain faces in view



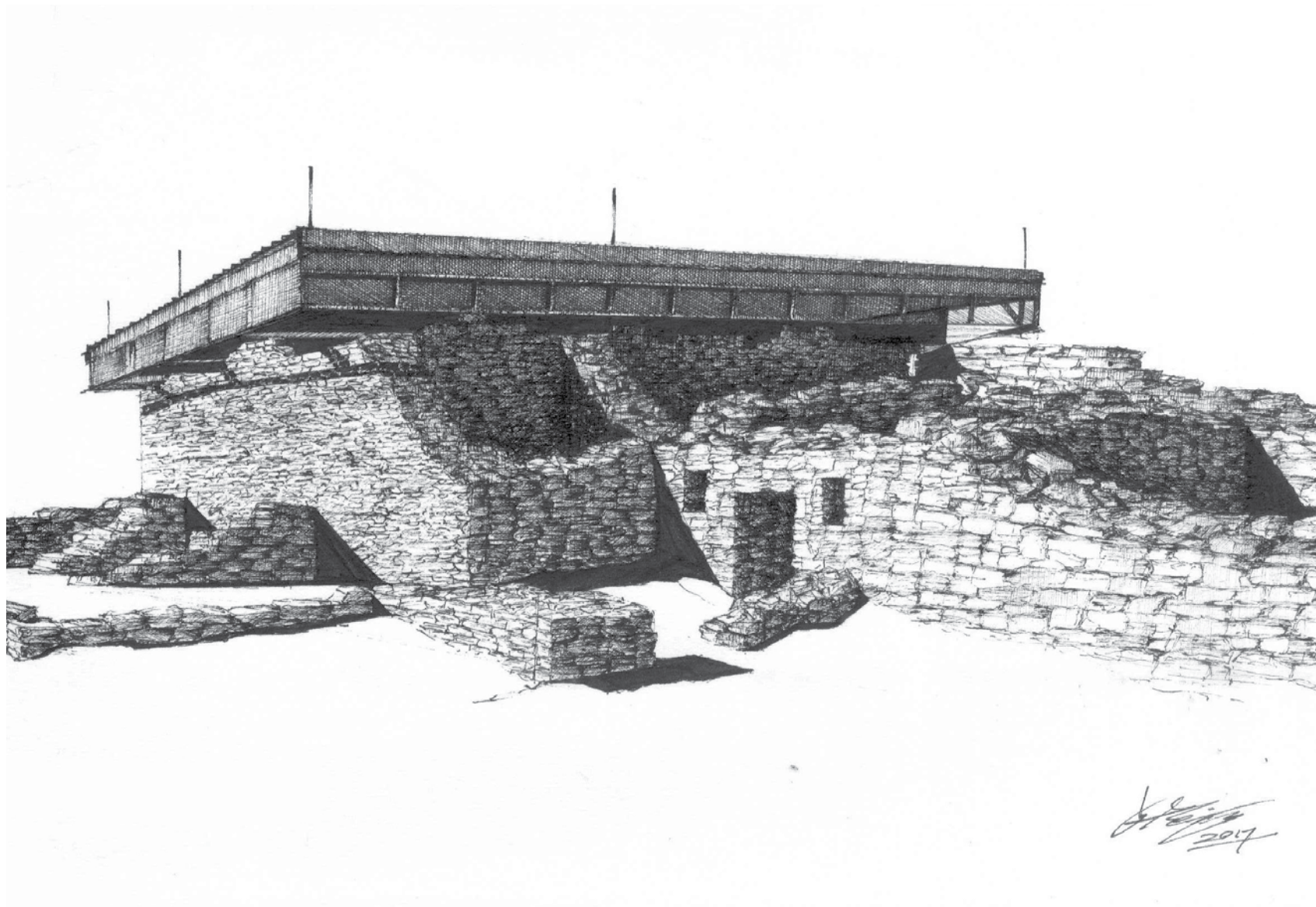
Zi Xu, at Lowry Pueblo looking south to the Sleeping Ute Mountain



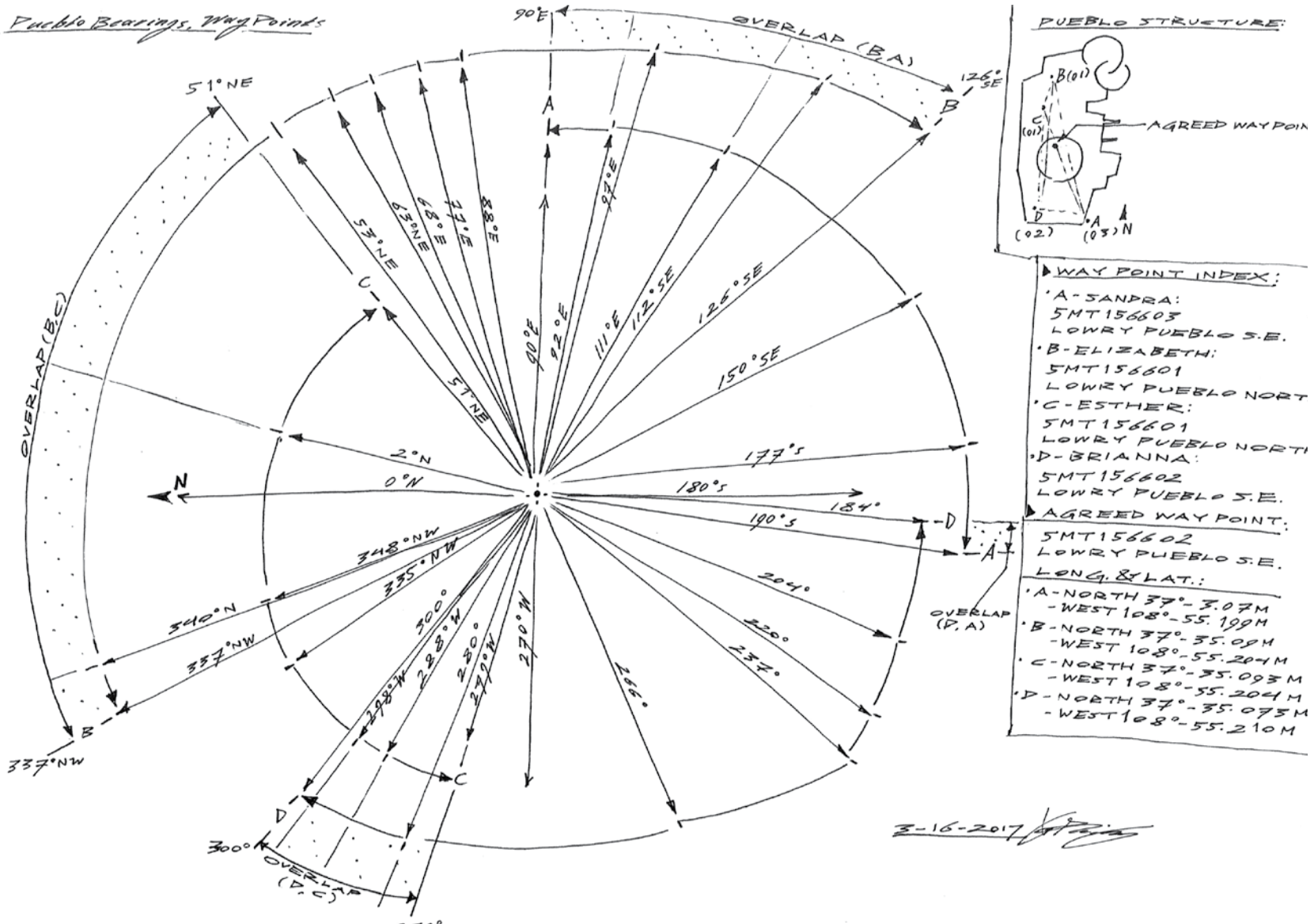
Ty Skeiky, at Lowry Pueblo looking south to Sleeping Ute Mountain

Mountains

In the distance, ranges, mountains, hills and other large features serve as critical markers, locating and “bounding” landscapes. These permanent and highly visible formations are often related to volcanic activity in the Cretaceous and Paleogene periods, and include Sleeping Ute Mountain and those features visible from it, as well as Lone Cone, the La Sal and Abajo Mountains, the Chuska range, Shiprock, the Brazos Mountains, and the La Plata and San Juan ranges. These features played—and continue to play—a key role in constructing the “identity” of the Lowry region, functioning as touchstones, way-finders and locales of important resources through their rich and varied environments.



Ty Skeiky, at Lowry Pueblo, view of the pueblo to the southwest



Ty Skeiky, at Lowry Pueblo, 180 degree bearing map showing bearings to mountain ranges