



A SENSE OF TIME, A SENSE OF SELF
The 'Lived Perspective' of the Walk

I have never been so much myself...as in journeys that I have made alone and on foot.

~Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les confessions*, 1781



View through trees to CSX Railway

A Sense of Time, A Sense of Self
The 'Lived Perspective' of the Walk

Julia Thompson

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the Graduate Faculty of
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in partial fulfillment of the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Much of the walking that we do in our daily lives is dull, but sometimes, unexpectedly, it can be revelatory. During these moments, through what phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls the “lived perspective” of walking, we experience a merging of our inner and outer worlds and achieve greater self-awareness.

Although most of our experience in the landscape is through movement, we rarely design for such spaces. Using the hypothesis that terrorist threats and an aging infrastructure may lead to the rerouting of the CSX Railway south of Washington, D.C., shutting down the existing line, I propose to convert the CSX Railway bridge that crosses the Anacostia River in Southeast Washington to an open public space. While other portions of the track may be demolished and returned to the wide avenues envisioned by L'Enfant or renovated as trolley tracks, the CSX bridge could be renovated to provide a link between the neighborhood of Capitol Hill and the Anacostia River through a pedestrian walkway.

The methodology I use to explore this thesis is two-fold. I study several environments, from site-specific artworks to monuments to large urban parks. I also study fields that explore the experiential nature of perception such as art and philosophy, and use the freedom of expression that drawing allows as a tool to inform the design of spaces that can enable us to experience a state in which our mind, body, and vision are intertwined.

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I benefited from the insights of several scholars whose writings were critical to the development of this thesis. Nancy Forgione's "Everyday Life in Motion: The Art of Walking in Late-Nineteenth Century Paris" initially led me to the notion of the "lived perspective" of the walk, upon which this work is based. Sean Dorrance Kelly's "Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty" helped me to more fully understand Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the phenomenology of perception. Finally, James Corner's "Representation and Landscape: Drawing and Making in the Landscape" and "Projection and Disclosure in Drawing" were crucial to my study of how the representation of the walk can inform the design process.

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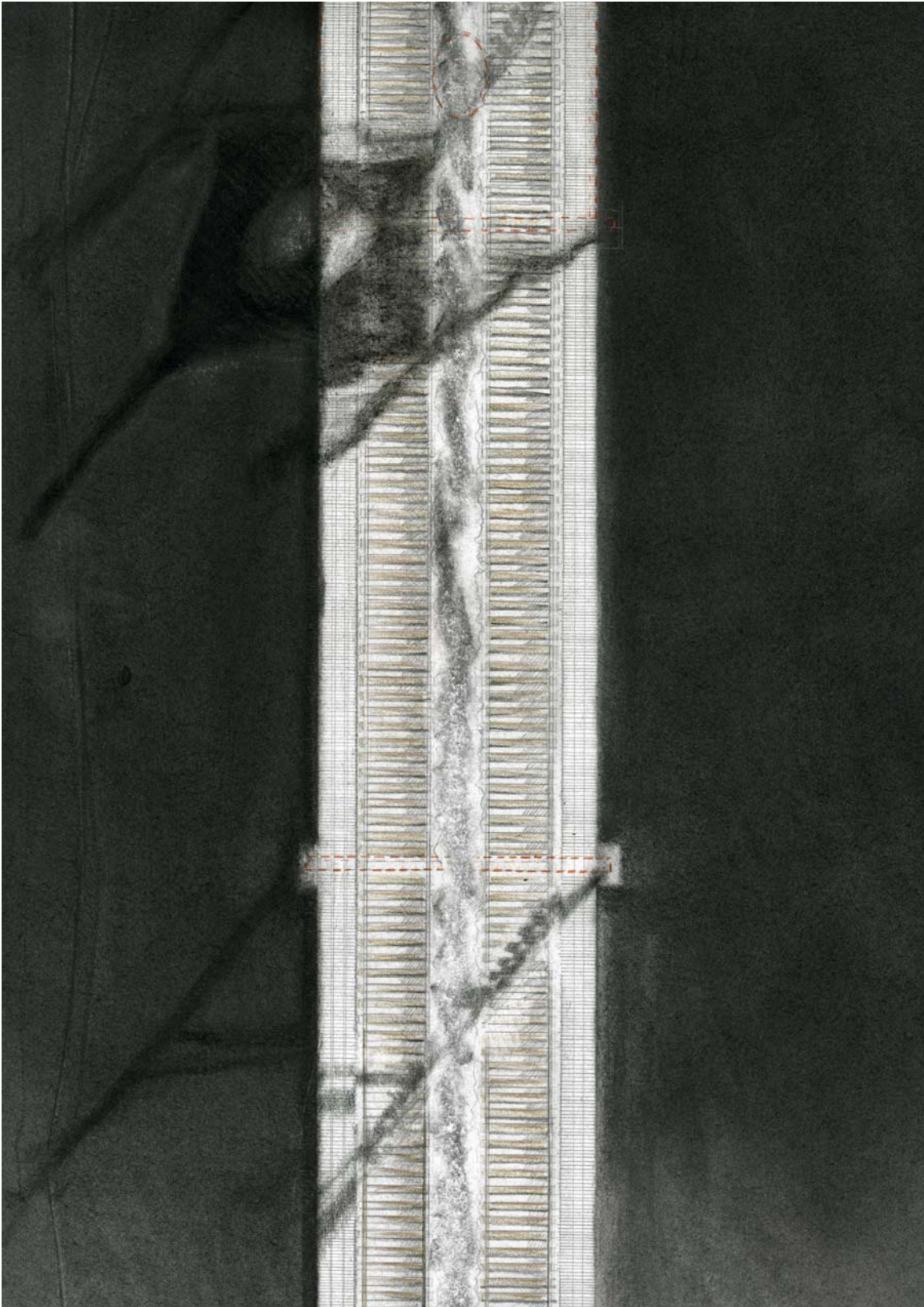
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View through chain link fence



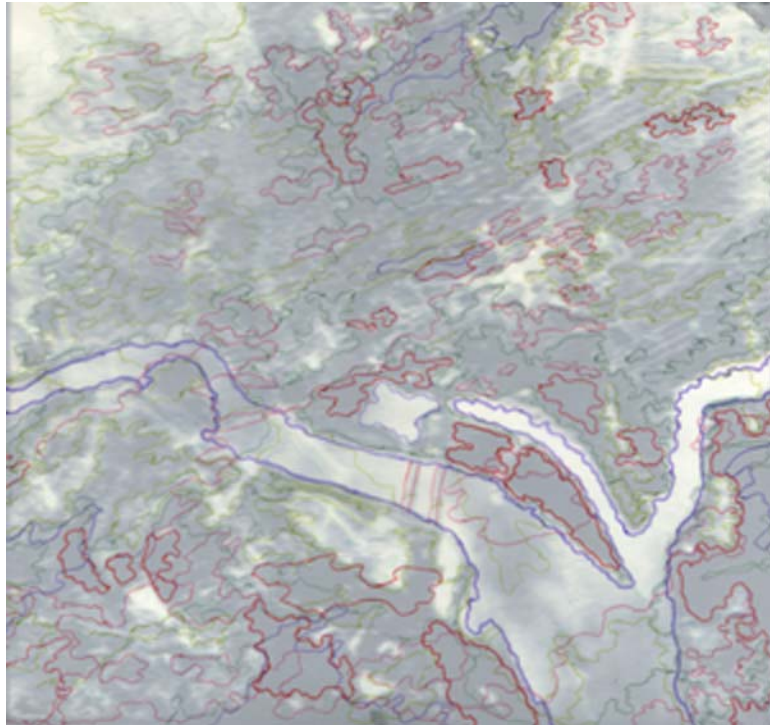
Narnia (plan)



View of tracks from Sousa Bridge

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Untitled (studies)

Every walk is unreproducible, as is every poem. Even if you walk exactly the same route each time, the events along the route and the thoughts are not the same.

~A.R. Ammons, *A Poem is a Walk*, 1968

Introduction

Walking is common to our daily lives. Much of these walks are dull, but sometimes, quite unexpectedly, they can be full of surprise and wonder (Lynch 1995, p. 185). It is at such moments, during what phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers to as the “lived perspective” of walking, that we experience an intertwining of our vision and movement, and achieve a greater sense of self-awareness (Merleau-Ponty 2005, p. 278).

While most of our experience in the landscape is through movement, the design of such spaces is rarely practiced (Lynch 1995, p. 185). How, then, might we design for spaces that elicit a coalescence of our inner and outer worlds? And, while it may be possible in nature or in isolated areas for us to experience such a state, is it possible in an urban setting, or do the distractions of the city preclude introspection?



Untitled (studies)

The methodology I use to explore these questions is two-fold. I study several environments, from site-specific artworks to monuments to large urban parks. These case studies are arranged first by successive types, then chronologically, and then by comparison or contrast. I begin with the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., which I selected for its successful translation of the idea of bodily experience, duration, and immersion. The next case studies, Duisburg Nord Landschaftspark and the High Line in Manhattan, are both “reclaimed” industrial sites, open to change and different conditions, which speak to the concepts

of time and motion. The final case studies are the Central Garden at the Getty Center, a highly constructed landscape; and Crissy Field, a landscape intended to change, evolve, and be shaped by natural forces.

The second methodology of my study involves drawing as a tool to inform and inspire design. I explore the relationship between the creative process of drawing and landscape's temporal nature through a series of drawings meant to capture the experience of walking and seeing. James Corner notes that the relationship between representation and the built environment is obscure (1992, p. 244). Yet, by responding to the medium, we allow possibilities to emerge from the drawing process, and, in turn, this freedom of imagination and expression enriches our relationship to landscape architecture. "After all," he states,

It is no small issue to suggest that the primary difficulty in achieving an artful and non-trivial landscape architecture lies within the limits of human imagination and speculative vision—the ability to 'see', to see differently, and to see how things might be otherwise (Corner 1992, p. 246).

My background and interest in art has profoundly influenced this thesis, beginning with my choice of topic and continuing through my research, because, although many fields explore the way we see and experience the world, perhaps one of the most important of these is art.



Weaving

[T]he system of experience is not arrayed before me as if I were God, it is lived by me from a certain point of view; I am not the spectator, I am involved, and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception.

~Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1942

Step 1 The Experience of the Viewer



Figure 1-1 Sky 1

As we walk in the world, we see and experience its spatial and temporal qualities. These qualities are unique to the landscape, yet they were brought to the fore of the field of landscape architecture by artists such as Robert Smithson and Richard Serra. Their earthworks and site-specific sculptures taught young landscape architects in the 1970s about perceptual consciousness by providing a unique reflective experience (Corner 1992; Hargreaves 1993; Meyer 2000).

Smithson's 1973 essay "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape" quotes Uvedale Price, who, in his *Three Essays on the Picturesque* (1810), sought to free landscape from "picture gardens" to "a more physical sense of the temporal landscape." Smithson considers a passage in which Price describes how an eroded hillside, ordinarily thought of as "deformed," is "converted into picturesqueness" when ornamented by the "effects of time" (Flam 1996, p. 159).

For Smithson, the temporal landscape, "far from being an inner movement of the mind, is based on real land; it precedes the mind in its material external existence." It is rooted in the real world, and thus is open to chance and change. Therefore, "A park can no longer be seen

as ‘a thing in itself,’ but rather as a process of ongoing relationships existing in a physical region—the park becomes a ‘thing-for-us’” (Flam 1996, p. 160). With this essay, Smithson establishes Olmsted’s Central Park as a precedent to his own earthworks: each were reclaimed through artistic intervention, large enough to be permeated with change and different conditions. But most important, these were spaces that are experienced rather than observed, revealing not only the dynamics of the world around us, but also the dynamics of our perceiving the nature of that world and our being in it as well.

Artists often borrow from other fields, and the books in Smithson’s library indicate his interest in the phenomenology of perception (Tsai 2004, pp. 249-261). In “Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects” (1968), Smithson writes, “When a *thing* is seen through the consciousness of temporality, it is changed into something that is nothing” (Flam 1996, p. 111). This passage reflects his knowledge of the writings of Edmund Husserl, who uses similar language in his *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* (1893-1917), “As the temporal Object moves into the past, it is drawn together on itself and thereby also becomes obscure.” For Husserl, temporal perspective is analogous to spatial perspective; the object, once seen, “sinks into the past” (Husserl 1964, p. 47).

Husserl defines phenomenology as “the science of the essence of consciousness” and believes that “all consciousness is a consciousness of something” (Husserl 1964, p. 33). Unlike Husserl, who tended to regard consciousness as disengaged, Martin Heidegger uses the term “*Dasein*” to refer to the richness of human existence. Because *Dasein* is a practical human being-in-the-world, Heidegger analyzes the everyday temporality of *Dasein* as it pursues activities (for example, hammering) in that world.



Figure 1-2 Sky 2



Figure 1-3 Sky 3

When used in connection with *Dasein*, temporality does not indicate chronological order, but rather *Dasein*'s finite and mortal becoming: our life is a present that looks towards a future that it intends while acknowledging a past that it was (Heidegger 2001, p. 38). *Dasein* "discloses," that is, momentarily rescues something from some prior unavailability and holds it in the present. The ability to disclose—to hold something in the present—resonates in the following passage from Kevin Lynch's *What Time is This Place?*, in which he speaks of a "great present,"

At some time in our lives we all have experienced that peculiar sensation of a suspended moment of time, a 'great present' that focuses all our attention and seems to hang motionless before us. It is an intense and mystical personal experience. Things are presented to us directly, not through the veil of customary meanings. The inside and outside worlds connect, and we seem to be the landscape itself. It is not a stoppage of time but a sense of vital stillness, wherein change and time seem immediately apprehensible. Permanence and evanescence, rapid biological rhythms and long cycles, all seem to be there together. We have constructed an unusually extended, coherent, and intense moment of present time. The experience is not readily evoked, but a powerful form or a vivid display of living things seen at some special moment can bring it on (1995, p. 177).

Yet the descriptions "hold in the present" and "sense of vital stillness" seem to preclude the notion of temporal experience. The

state of which Lynch speaks suggests a unity of mind and vision, but it does not account for our body's constant movement, intertwined with the dynamics of our being in the world. The phenomenological accounts of perception of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, however, describe state in which the body, mind, and vision are united. Merleau-Ponty considers the body and the world as being of the same substance, and therefore the body is a dynamic, interactive, and sensual consciousness that unveils meaning and form to the surrounding world. According to Merleau-Ponty, our awareness of the world is correspondingly an awareness of the body, as a sensing body in movement perceives the world and space.

Merleau-Ponty made many references to the paintings of Cézanne in his seminal *Phenomenology of Perception* (1942). He later published the essay *Cézanne's Doubt* (1945), in which he expands on his beliefs that Cézanne's paintings gave evidence to his own account of visual experience. His final work, *Eye and Mind* (1961), explores painting's ability to express the ways in which the visible world forms itself to our eyes, radiating its shape, color, and even movement, in ways that photography is unable to do.

It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body—not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement (Merleau-Ponty 2005, p. 294).

Artists of the twentieth century contributed much to the study of perceptual awareness, as realism gave way to works that sought to reconsider experience. The works of Cézanne heralded a shift in pictorial conventions, with an emphasis on the actual experiences of the landscape, as artists explored “the seeing rather than on what is seen” (Crandell 1993, p. 161). Art critic Arnold Berleant, in his essay “The

Aesthetics of Art and Nature” (1993), speaks of an aesthetics of engagement and traces its roots in the art of the early twentieth century,

[S]ince the impressionists’ dissolution of represented objects into atmosphere and of art objects into perceptual experiences, the visual arts have increasingly followed the nonconfining pattern of the other arts....Such developments in painting make reference to the beholder, and the viewer’s participation is required to complete the work. What the multiple planes of cubism do in fragmenting static objects, the intense energy of the futurist does in dissolving dynamic ones: both transform objects into experiences (pp. 232-233).



Figure 1-4 Sky 4

Berleant asserts “the history of the modern arts is more a history of perception than a history of objects” (1993, p. 232). Earthworks and site-specific sculpture enabled the viewer to become the participant by allowing for the experience of the environment from within. Richard Serra, influenced by contemporary dance, considered “ways of relating movement to material and space,” which led him to “think about sculpture in an open and extended field in a way that is precluded when dealing with sculpture as an autonomous object.”

I found very important the idea of the body passing through space, and the body’s movement not being predicated totally on image or sight or optical awareness,

but on physical awareness in relation to space, place, time, movement (Cooke 1997, pp. 27-28).

During a visit to Japan in 1970, Serra studied the Zen gardens of Myoshin-ji “in perambulatory space and peripatetic vision,” and discovered that vision “is not reduced to framing an image. It includes and is dependent upon memory and anticipation.... The relationships of time, space, walking, and looking—particularly in arcs and circles—constitutes the only way you can see certain Japanese gardens” (Cooke 1997, pp. 28-29).

Serra’s landscape sculptures are site-specific—that is, they are made for a specific location and are meant to become part of that environment. Their scale and complexity are such that they cannot be taken in at a glance—they insist the spectator discover while walking within the sculpture.

Because of their distribution of weight and sometimes disorienting tilt, Serra’s work also addresses the human body and its anxieties. We wonder, “What is keeping this from falling over?” These works make us think about how we feel, perceptually, in their presence, by directing our attention to the complexity of our experience—“the non-visual components of our ‘visual’ experience” (Noë 2000, p. 131).

One of the young architects and landscape architects who felt Serra’s influence is Maya Lin, whose description of her work echoes the writings of Serra,

Each of my works originates from a simple desire to make people aware of their surroundings, not just the physical world but also the psychological world we live in.... I create



Figure 1-5 Line 1

places in which to think, without trying to dictate what to think.... But more typical are those works that focus on purely aesthetic levels of experience, works that invite the viewer in, that ask the viewer to notice a change in shape, color, or light.... But whether socially or aesthetically based, in these works I seek to create an intimate dialogue with the viewer, to allow a place of contemplation, sometimes an incorporation of history, always a reliance on time, memory, a passage or journey (Lin 2000, p. 2:03).

Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the subject of the first case study, chosen in part because I must experience for myself the heightened state of self-awareness and sense of time of which Serra and Lin speak. But I must also understand the differences between walking through Lin's memorial—a work of art in the landscape—and walking through the landscape. We are engaged when looking at art, our senses open as the work unveils its meaning to us. We rarely pay such attention to landscape, and this is why many of our walks are dull—as Corner points out, we experience landscape, for the most part, in a state of distraction (1992, p. 249).



Figure 1-6 Line 2

Can we borrow from works that explore the experiential nature of perception to use in the design of spaces that can enable us to experience a state in which our inner and outer worlds are merged? Is such a state even possible, given that we live in an ever-shifting society in which we seldom get to know a place, and therefore may have no memories on which to draw? I explore these and other questions in the following case studies.



Figure 2-1 Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Step 2 The Case Studies

Project: Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Location: Washington, D.C.

Architect: Maya Lin

Date completed: 1982

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial commemorates over 57,000 people who died in that war. It is an elegant, simple, open V-shape, with an interior angle of 132 degrees. Walls of polished black granite, set into the ground, point to the Lincoln Memorial to the west and the Washington Monument to the east. The sloping ground gives the impression that the walls are emerging from or receding into the earth, reminiscent of Serra's *Spin Out (for Robert Smithson)* (1973). On the face of the walls are the names of those who died or are still missing-in-action in the Vietnam War. The names are listed chronologically, beginning at the top right of the memorial's apex, continuing to the far right before jumping to the extreme left, and culminating at the bottom left of the apex. In this way, "the war's beginning and end meet; the war is 'complete'.... Yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle's open side, and contained by the earth itself" (Lin 2000, p. 4:05).

Lin describes her architecture as an "experiential path," relying on a physical or empathetic response from the viewer in order to be understood—or, more accurately, felt. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial requires the active participation of the viewer in a "direct and intimate dialogue" with the work,

The memorial is composed not as an unchanging monument, but as a moving composition, to be understood as we move into and out of it; the passage itself is gradual, the descent to the origin slow, but it is at the origin that the meaning of this memorial is to [be] fully understood (Lin 2000, p. 4:05).

As I researched various artists whose work deals with the experiential nature of seeing, I realized the importance of experiencing these places or works myself, and this is what led me to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. As I looked at the Wall and my own image stared back at me from the polished surface, it was a highly-charged, intensely personal moment. I saw myself seeing—and it is through this seeing that I was acutely aware of my place in the world. As I moved away from the apex of the memorial and towards the end, it seemed that I emerged into the light, and reentered the world. The change in elevation, together with the change in light, allowed a sense of renewal, and it was as if I felt anew the wonder of being in the world.

My experience walking through the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a work of art in the landscape, reinforced my belief in the transforming power of art. There were important elements that I took away from the experience, such as the monument's changing light, shape, and color, which led me to think about landscape's ever-changing nature. For my second case study, then, I chose a place that reveals the effects of time, change, and growth.

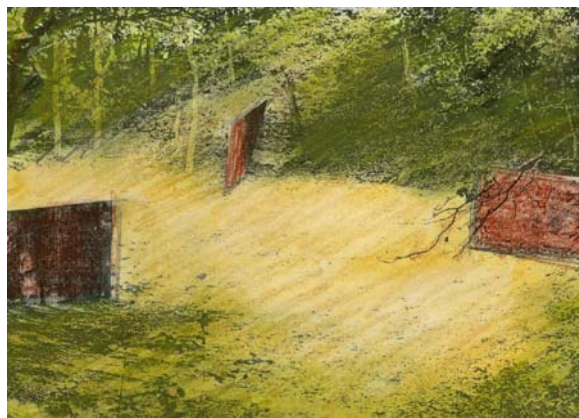


Figure 2-2 Spin Out (for Robert Smithson)

Project: Duisburg-Nord Landschaftspark

Location: Duisburg, Germany

Landscape Architect: Peter Latz, Latz + Partner

Date completed: 2002

Duisburg-Nord Landschaftspark is a 570-acre park located in the densely populated Ruhr district in western Germany. It is one of a 45 mile-long string of parks along the Emscher, formerly an open wastewater ditch that carried non-clarified sewage to the Rhine River. The closure of the mills brought about a call for redevelopment; Duisburg Nord was the first major project. The firm of Latz + Partner won the 1991 design competition.

Peter Latz appreciated the site's industrial past and realized that marrying such a past with its natural surrounding would result in an experience rich with memories and significance. He left the existing industrial structures virtually unchanged to acknowledge their "physical qualities, also their destroyed nature and topography" (Latz 1998, p. 6). His goal was to recombine the fragments of industry through the design of a park, connecting all of the different layers through a system of linking elements, either symbolically by gardens or substantially through the use of ramps, stairs, and terraces.

Latz's concept plan reflects the significance of the existing infrastructure. Rail tracks had been laid successively for mining companies, private railroads, and the state, with each rail system being constructed on its own level. Latz saw that these systems could be retained as bicycle and pedestrian paths, giving coherence to the system of paths, steel catwalks, a canal, and monumental bunkers, all of which are transformed from their previous uses into landscape features. New paths and elevated footbridges, echoing the old infrastructure, allow visitors to experience the site from many levels.

Plantings also provide a structuring element. Some areas are clearly planted, while others, because of the generally poor soil quality of the

majority of the site, are limited as to what may grow. Birch and poplar trees, raspberries, native and exotic wildflowers, grasses, and lichens are among the pioneer plants, which over time will improve the soil and allow other species to take hold.

I made several important discoveries by studying Duisburg Nord. It is a powerful vision of the reusing and remembering of a landscape: allowing the different layers of time to coexist simultaneously makes us aware that the landscape is an ongoing process, made up of overlapping and competing layers of nature and culture. It also helps us to understand the inherent beauty and value that is to be found in the structures of the industrial past.

Ultimately, however, the most important lesson learned through this study is that I must have personal experience of these places, and I did not have that here. Without the experience of actually walking through the space and perceiving it in movement, I must question the ability to draw meaningful conclusions.



Figure 2-3 Duisburg Nord Landschaftspark



Figure 2-4 High Line

Project: High Line

Location: New York, New York

Landscape Architect: Field Operations

Architect: Diller Scofidio + Renfro

Currently under construction

The High Line is an out-of-use elevated rail structure that runs along Manhattan's far West Side from Gansevoort Street to 34th Street. Completed in 1934, but unused since 1980, the High Line has become a grassy industrial corridor running above the city. In its existing state, the High Line has an untamed beauty, which some residents would like to preserve: there are several gardens planted on the Line, but for the most part it is covered with volunteer trees and shrubs, wildflowers and grasses.

The High Line was slated for preservation and re-use in March, 2004. In September of that year, a design team led by Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, horticulturist Piet Oudulf, and artist Ólafur Eliasson was chosen by Friends of the High Line and the City of New York to convert the Line to open public space.

A hard planking system, around and within which layers of vegetation will grow, provides the overall underlying framework of their design. The planking systems allows for a "blurred edge," as it will bleed into planting beds. The system's flexibility will allow primary and splinter paths among a variegated landscape of woodlands,

grasslands, and wetlands, which will preserve the Line's improvised quality of found beauty and slowness (DeCarlo 2004, n.p.).

The most current phase of development, completed in February, 2005, focused on preliminary designs for Gansevoort Street through 15th Street, which will serve as a prototype for the remaining portion of the Line. Various combinations and designs for programmatic elements such as entry and access points, seating areas, events spaces, and found objects have been studied to ensure their fluid integration within the framework.

Like Duisburg Nord, the High Line retains elements of the industrial past as “found objects” that underpin the design. Within the framework, there is an overlay of time achieved through change and growth, and it is through the dynamics of this ever-changing and never-changing landscape that a revelatory space is achieved.

Although the experience of walking along the High Line has been thoroughly documented through video and photographs, I again feel that the lack of personal experience disallows meaningful conclusions.



Figure 2-5 Central Garden, Getty Center

Project: Central Garden, Getty Center

Location: Los Angeles, California

Architect: Richard Meier

Artist: Robert Irwin

Date completed: 1997

The Getty Center occupies a promontory of a 110-acre site. To the west is the Pacific Ocean; to the east is downtown Los Angeles. A nature preserve was created out of 600 acres of land adjoining the site.

The J. Paul Getty Museum and Trust were the named beneficiaries of the estate of Mr. Getty. Three areas of the arts—scholarship, conservation, and education—were targeted as the focus of the museum, and therefore, the museum moved from its former Malibu location to the new, campus-like Center. The Trust chose Richard Meier & Associates as architect in 1985, after a year-long selection process, and it took Meier another seven years to complete his design because of the difficulties of the site (there were only 24 buildable acres on the former landfill, and the off-site parking had to be negotiated with the neighbors) and the Getty's diverse program requirements.

A tram moves visitors up the hill at a speed of ten miles an hour. The five minute ride is intended to allow us to feel that we are being elevated out of our day-to-day world and into a new and wondrous one. The “campus” is made up of several buildings, each unique, laid out in a grid. Travertine, which was produced through an innovative

splitting process that resulted in the distinctive rough surface, covers much of the buildings and plaza areas.

The Central Garden, designed by Robert Irwin, acts as a counterpoint of color and texture to the complex of buildings. “A sculpture in the form of a garden aspiring to be art,” Irwin re-created a canyon that had been obliterated in preparation for building on the site. A stream meanders down the restored slope, over which a path zigzags its way. As we walk along the path, we can hear different sounds produced by the water through the strategic placement of boulders. At the bottom we reach the visual centerpiece of the garden, a reflecting pool and a maze of over 400 azaleas.

Irwin acknowledges, “In hiring me rather than a landscape architect, [the Getty Center] made an adventurous choice that most supposedly avant-garde places aren’t willing to make.”

Gardens are about another kind of experience. They’re about joy...not only does the Getty have the money to create an extravagant garden, they also have the funds and the willingness to maintain it (Beardsley 1998, pp. 189-191).

Over time I came to see the Central Garden as probably the most important and relevant case study to this thesis. Irwin has created a place that has much to do with the heightened awareness of the act of seeing, but it lacks an awareness or acknowledgment of time and its passage. As I walked through the Central Garden, it is as if I was walking through a stage scene: it feels artificial, always maintained to perfection to a moment that never changes. In this way, the Garden denies not only the temporal nature of landscape, but also the sense of wonder and power it holds.

Project: Crissy Field

Location: Golden Gate National Recreation Area, San Francisco, California

Landscape Architect: Hargreaves Associates

Date Completed: 2000, opened May 2001

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area is the largest urban national park in the world. Approximately 28 miles of coastline lie within its boundaries, and comprises numerous sites, including the former Presidio Military Base of San Francisco where the Crissy Field site is located.

When the Crissy Field project began in 1998, it had been closed for 25 years, and the site was a derelict concrete and asphalt paved airstrip surrounded by a chain-link fence. The program introduced a 20-acre tidal marsh, a promenade along San Francisco Bay, bike paths, and a 28-acre grass airfield to be used as an event space.

The conversion of the site into a national park involved the restoration and rehabilitation of the natural landscape of wetlands and dune fields along the San Francisco Bay waterfront. Hargreaves Associates reintroduced and augmented the landforms created by wind and waves, and integrated a variety of public uses within a dynamic landscape environment within the context of an enduring landmark.

As a landscape design in the public realm addressing the passage and change of a fragile landscape over time, the project had to accomplish several goals. One was to restore a naturally functioning and sustaining tidal wetland as a habitat for flora and fauna currently not evident on the site, and another was to restore the former military grass airfield. The new marsh is clearly constructed, characterized by obviously sculptured landforms. The design restores the airfield in its original location, in its exact size and shape, but it, too, is configured as a landform, underscoring its remade nature.

Hargreaves Associates worked with, rather than against, the recurring processes of tides, wind, and microclimate as well as the clear connection of the durability of the landscape processes and the ideas of landscape design. Mary Margaret Jones laments the “absence of understanding and exploration of this idea [of how landscapes change]” in the design field.

I would have to go back very far to Robert Smithson and some people who did talk about it. What they were lacking was what landscape architecture can bring to that subject, which is an understanding of science, an understanding of ecology, and an understanding of a different orientation that has to do with culture rather than what the land artists were thinking about. Artists like Robert Smithson were thinking of a phenomenon and exploring that phenomenon and registering change related to phenomenological experiences (Jones 2004, p. 172).

The case studies led me to conclude that it is the ever-changing nature of the world that engages us, sometimes in extraordinary ways, but more commonly in subtle ways. Materials that allow us to change our pace, to move more slowly, lead us to perhaps take more time in looking at our surroundings. Sound—or the lack of it—can evoke memories, thoughts, and daydreams. An acknowledgment of the passage of time, of a place’s previous use, can lend a place its richness and significance. Man-made structures can provide a kind of beauty, and can heighten our awareness of landscape as an ongoing process.

I kept all of these things in mind as I searched for a place in which to intervene with a design.



Figure 2-6 Crissy Field

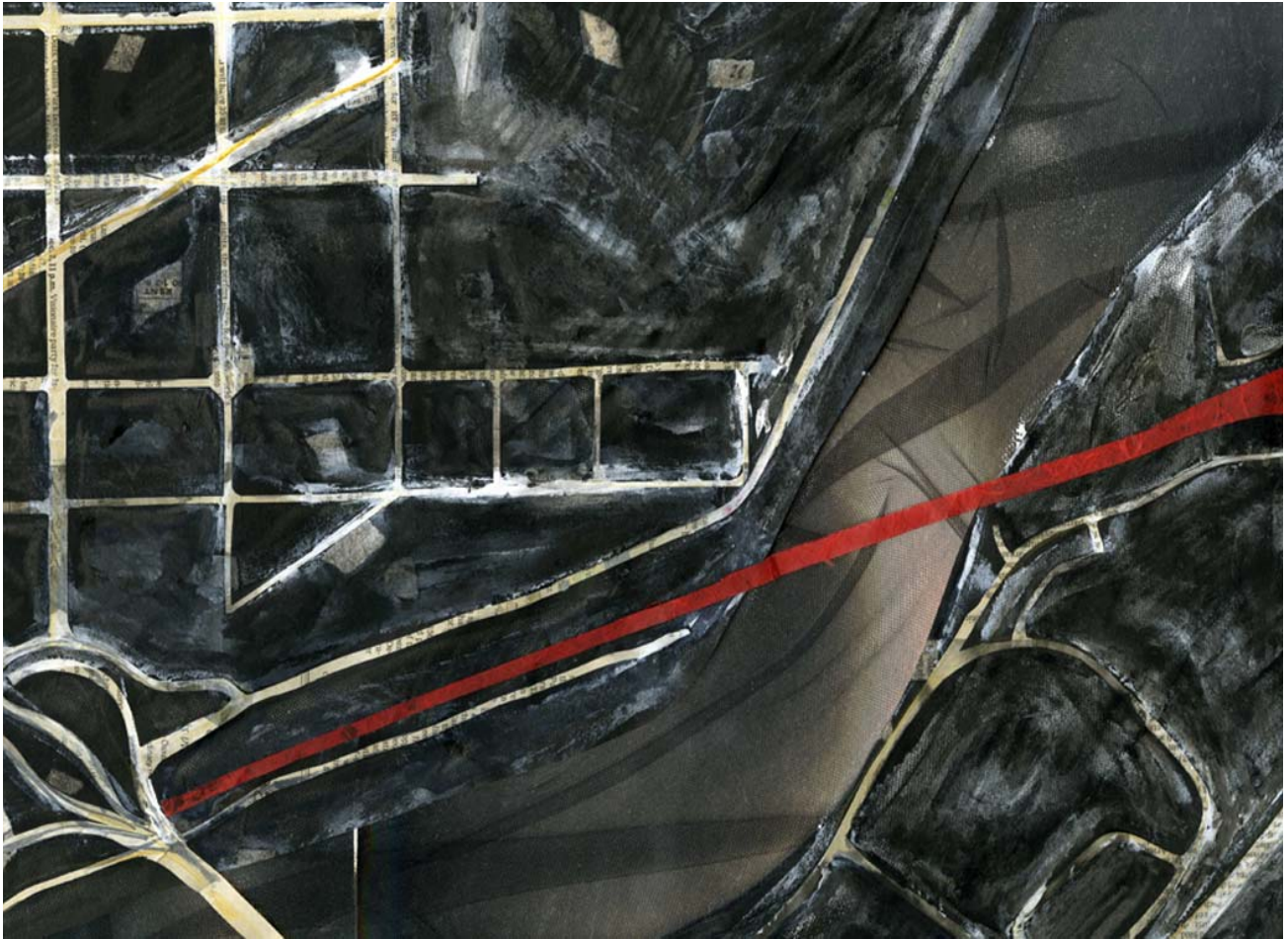


Figure 3-1 Place (map)

A Place is more than an area. A place surrounds something. A place is the extension of a presence or the consequence of an action. A place is the opposite of empty space. A place is where an event has taken or is taking place.

~ John Berger, *The Shape of a Pocket*, 2001

Step 3 The Place

As I searched for a place in which to implement conclusions drawn from the case studies, I looked for something that would be open to change and different conditions, where the “flow of time” can be expressed through the flow of water. Time should also be revealed by its more recent industrial past. And finally, it can be one that could be “reclaimed” through artistic intervention. Using the hypothesis that terrorist threats and an aging infrastructure may lead to the rerouting of the CSX Railway south of Washington, D.C., shutting down the existing line, I propose to convert the CSX Railway bridge that crosses the Anacostia River in Southeast Washington to an open public space. While other portions of the track may be demolished and returned to the wide avenues envisioned by L’Enfant or renovated as trolley tracks, the CSX bridge could be renovated to provide a link between the neighborhood of Capitol Hill and the Anacostia River through a pedestrian walkway.



Figure 3-2 Locator map



Figure 3-3 Congressional Cemetery, looking west

This area has a rich history. To the north is Congressional Cemetery, established in 1807, which served as the first *de facto* national cemetery. It is the final resting place of over 60,000 congressmen, military leaders, and patriots, as well as ordinary citizens, including tradesmen, housewives, and businessmen. The cemetery houses a wide variety of monuments, many of which were designed by some of the most well-known artists and stone carvers of their day. Unfortunately, unlike most early cemeteries, Congressional Cemetery was established without a perpetual care plan, and the site suffered from increasing neglect as plot-owning families moved or died out. In recent years, private and public funding helped spearhead the formation of a preservation coalition, and in 1999, the National Trust announced a \$1 million grant, matched with private funds, to assure the perpetual care and maintenance of the cemetery.

Congressional Cemetery is also an active community resource for the neighborhood of Capitol Hill. It is a popular area for dog walkers, many of whom belong to a group called Congressional Dogs. Yearly fees go to help maintain the grounds, and many of the group's members as well as neighborhood residents volunteer to perform landscaping and other chores. Not only are there many mature trees on the site, the cemetery is also the site of the Ward Six September 11 Memorial

Grove, an allée of over 160 trees honoring those lost on 9/11. The memorial is located on the west end of the cemetery near the 17th Street boundary.

Across 17th Street is a residential area, along which are row houses from the 1930s and 1940s, many of which have been or are being renovated. Seventeenth Street runs south to Barney Circle, where it merges with Pennsylvania Avenue, which continues over the Anacostia River, across the John Philip Sousa Bridge, also known as the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge.



Figure 3-4 John Philip Sousa Bridge, looking south

The first bridge at this spot was wooden and built in 1804. A rebuilt version, set afire by steamboat sparks in 1845, was replaced by an iron, underslung truss bridge on masonry piers in 1890. These same masonry piers were used for construction of the current bridge, completed in 1940, and named the “John Philip Sousa Bridge” by an Act of Congress.

The river is tidal here to about three feet. This area was once a popular rowing spot, rowing as a sport being well established in Washington by 1890. Unfortunately, since colonization, the Anacostia River has suffered from erosion and sedimentation, and is now considered one of the most polluted rivers in the country. The river

was navigable until the late 1800s, by which time it had narrowed considerably due to silting. Large tracts along the river were used for agriculture, as early colonial settlers raised corn, cotton, and tobacco, and by 1860 most of the land along the river was under cultivation. Between 1875 and 1937, railways and roads were built and cities and industries developed. By the 1940s much of the land formerly used for agriculture had been converted to residential use; in all but a few areas very little native vegetation remained. The loss of the natural vegetative cover resulted in an increased silting and a general rise in the level of the riverbed up to three feet, and a constriction ranging from seventy yards to two yards in width (Williams 1942).

One of the few wetlands that exist along the river today is Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, which is part of Anacostia Park. With over 1200 acres, the park is one of Washington's largest and most important recreation areas. The area of the park that lies across the Sousa Bridge, to the south, is very flat, made from fill by the Army Corps of Engineers between 1912 and 1942. It features ball fields, picnic areas, basketball courts, a pavilion for roller-skating and special events, the Aquatic Education Center, operated by the District of Columbia, and a public boat ramp.



Figure 3-5 CSX Railway bridge, looking south

Above the CSX Railway bridge, and extending up river to Kenilworth, much of the Anacostia Park riverbank is forested. Because the CSX Railway bridge is low to the water, only small craft can navigate under it. This bridge, like the Sousa Bridge, went through

several incarnations. The first structure was wood, built in the early 1800s by the Baltimore and Potomac Railway. The version that exists today dates from the 1940s, with some modifications, as the railway changed hands, first to Conrail, and later to CSX.



Figure 3-6 CSX Railway bridge, looking north

The tracks are laid in two parallel lines, about eight feet apart. Approximately every 180 feet is a steel tower that holds the electrical lines. The largest of these structures is found on the bridge, in the area where it “draws.” Here the structures form a box-like shape (more correctly, a rectangle). Along the entire run of the bridge, on either side of the tracks, are metal grates; the tracks themselves are left open so that one can view the water below. A low railing encloses the sides of the bridge, but at the draw area, the railing gives way to a low, solid wall, on the south side of which, facing Anacostia Park, is spray-painted the word “Narnia.”

On the north bank of the river, adjacent to the railroad tracks, lie three marinas. Two are privately owned; the Department of the Interior operates the third. This area is accessible by M Street SE, which runs under the Sousa Bridge, adjacent to the river. North of the tracks is an access road to RFK stadium, which is closed to traffic except during games or events; the land that lies between the road and the tracks is the easement for the railroad. This area often has standing water, and is wooded with sycamore, ash, and catalpa trees; it also has many

grasses and wildflowers. The Department of the Interior owns the area between the road and the boundary of the cemetery; it, too, is heavily wooded, particularly with catalpa trees along the cemetery fence line.

The first time I visited the place, I was keenly aware that because it is open to the water and to the sky it is therefore open to change and varying conditions. It has a rich history in the form of both a distant past and a more recent industrial past. Yet, as I walked, I wondered how I could represent through drawing the experience of moving through this place. Corner and Clarke have noted the difficulty of landscape representation because its large scale and temporal nature defy description (1992, p. 244; 2005, p. 50). Yet I feel strongly that these material and temporal qualities and my experience as I move through the landscape are critical to the design process. I developed a subset of questions: How can the landscape architect represent the “lived perspective” of walking? Can these representations be used to inform the design process? I explored through drawing the experience of walking through the landscape. These drawings became the second method of developing my thesis.



Figure 3-7 Brick earthwork steps, Congressional Cemetery, looking south



4-1 Walk 1

An inability to draw is, to some extent, an inability to see.

~Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, 1974

Step 4 The Walk Drawings

When I began the walks, it was my intention to take one every two to three weeks. I took my first walk in late January. I began in the cemetery, as I assumed that there would be a gate that would allow me to exit to the south (there is not). I slowly followed a brick path that led to the western edge of the cemetery, reading the markers along the way. I came upon a small stone, about the size of a brick, inscribed “Julia.” As I bent down to look more closely, I noticed that within the turf were small plants that looked like bugleweed. I descended the brick earthwork steps that led me down a gentle slope to a maintenance road at the southern border of the cemetery, walking carefully because the risers were of different heights, but also because it had rained earlier in the day. I could see the blue of the sky reflected in the puddles on the bricks; it seemed to cause the red-orange of the bricks to become more pronounced. To the west were two women walking dogs; one of the dogs ran toward me, but was called back by his owner.



Figure 4-2 Marker



Figure 4-3 Bricks

My pace quickened as I left the cemetery and followed the bike path leading from 17th Street to the Sousa Bridge. There I looked out over the railing to the tracks below. A freight train rolled from the east, very slowly; I watched it as it disappeared beneath me. Time slowed to a crawl. In the distance I could see the horizon; it was still misty from

the rain, or perhaps it was raining there. It was difficult to distinguish where the land ended and the sky began. I was suddenly aware that I was seeing, and seeing perspectively, because of the way that the tracks narrowed until they disappeared in the distance. It seemed as if the land had somehow stretched itself out before me and become elongated, vast, and strangely empty, and I was transported to a time in my childhood when I took a cross-country train trip.



Figure 4-4 Tracks from Sousa Bridge

The bike path led me over the bridge. I was aware of heavy traffic, but nervousness at being separated from it by what seemed like only a few feet and a railing caused me to not look directly at it; nor did I look directly at a man sitting on the side of the bridge, reading a newspaper. I started when I came upon him very suddenly, as the bench is hidden within a niche. It seemed a strange place to read.

On the other side of the river, I followed the bike path down a rather steep incline from the bridge to the level grassy area of the park. The flatness of the land here seemed to act to expand my view—it was as if the world had suddenly opened, and I stepped into it. I walked to the river’s edge to a stone lookout. My eyes panned from the bridge to the west, then to the marinas to the north, and then to the railroad bridge that disappears into the trees to the east. I heard grating and clacking noises to the east, the sounds of another train coming. I watched as it lumbered by, very slowly, and I was a child again as I counted the cars, still caught up in memories.



Figure 4-5 View on bridge, looking west



Figure 4-6 Power structure

I continued walking along the riverbank, and then climbed up the embankment to the railroad tracks. I walked to the edge of the bridge, but a “no trespassing” sign and the fear of another train coming kept me from stepping on the bridge itself. I looked up at the electrical tower overhead, and then straight down the tracks through the towers to the horizon. I could see the Sousa Bridge extending south and the line of trees to the north.

I had brought my sketchbook with me so that I could make very quick drawings and notes about color or conditions. I made several notes about what I experienced as well. At this point I was thinking somewhere between an artist and a landscape architect. When I returned to the studio and made the drawing to represent this walk, I used the sketches for reference. (It would be several weeks before I took photographs for the first time, after I had taken my second walk.) I drew what I saw in the way that I saw it: from above, from the right or left, from a distance; I also drew from the perspective of where I was in relationship to my location on the site. For example, if I turned 90 degrees, the image in the drawing turned as well. Therefore, in the final drawing, some images are sideways or upside down. The drawing begins at the lower edge, echoing the forward movement of my body. I used whatever media I thought would be most appropriate for what I was depicting: watercolor for the river; pastels with ink for the bricks, to convey their substance but also the wetness of the rain.



Figure 4-7 Sketchbook pages

I intended this drawing to capture the way that the images I saw moved from one to the next, like “moving pictures,” as my body moved. The areas between the images I left vague or amorphous. Did this mean that these non-image areas depict those moments when I walked in a state of distraction, or those moments when I was not engaged, when perhaps I was thinking or daydreaming or remembering? This seemed important, and I explored this further in the drawing I made of my second walk.



Figure 4-8 Untitled



Figure 4-9 Untitled

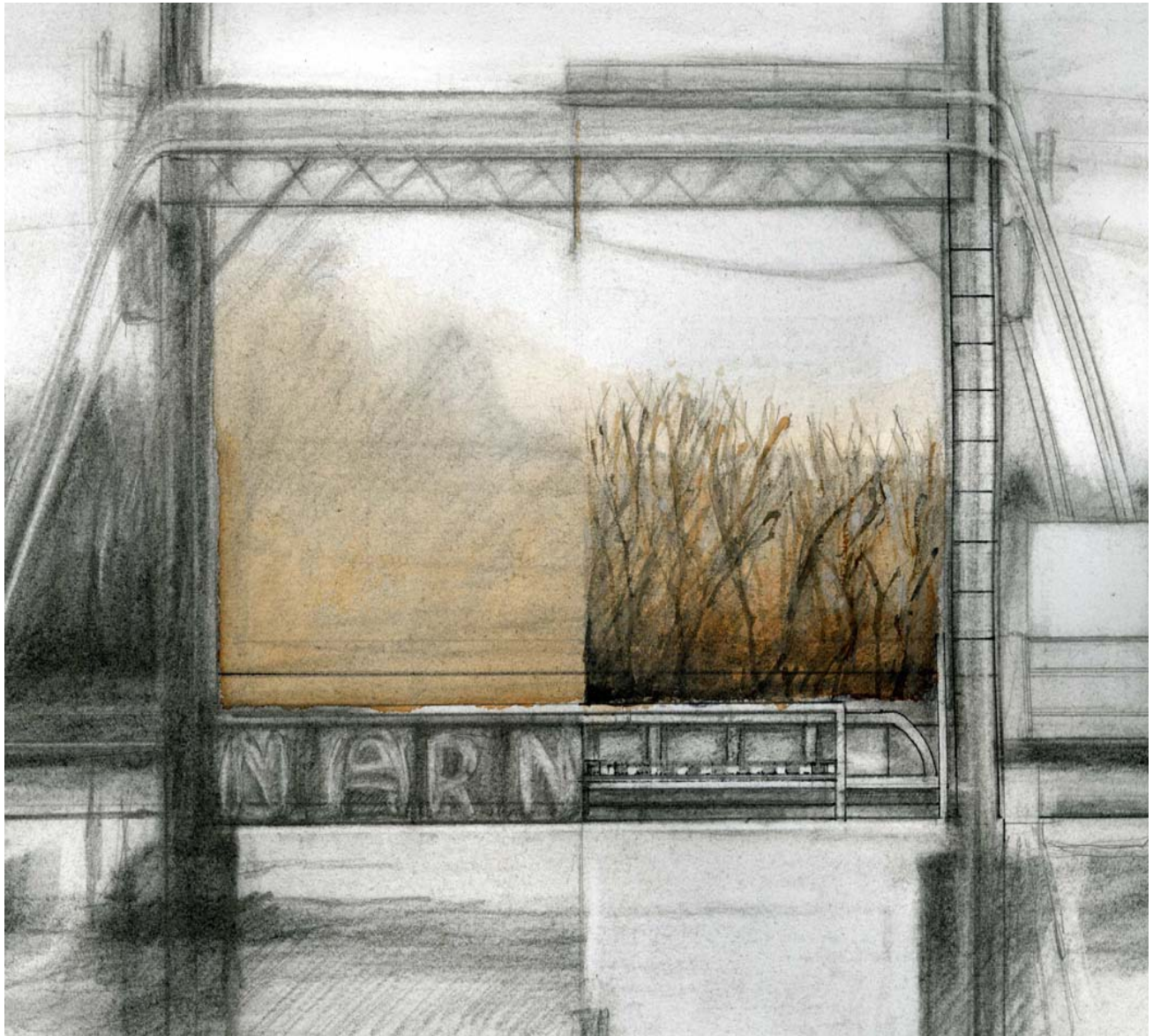


Figure 4-10 Narnia

Between the first and second walk drawings, I made a drawing to describe the surprise I felt discovering that, when I looked through the electrical towers of the bridge from the river's edge, it seemed that the rectangle made by the structure acted as a camera viewfinder, framing the landscape inside it and making it appear as if more focused or crystallized. I used graphite except for the area of the framed landscape. I painted this area with watercolor, to allow for more detail and color.



Figure 4-11 Walk 2

I was compelled to do more reading before I took my second walk, still trying to determine how the seemingly simple act of walking could act as a catalyst for the drawings and also inform the design. Ben Jacks, in his essay “Re-imagining Walking: Four Practices,” points out that, when we walk “with attention” we are able to “recognize the beauty inherent” in the world by turning our imagination to the “things of the world with some sense of equality—the natural and the artificial, the beautiful and the ugly, the pine forest and the strip mall” (2004, p. 6).

Jacks argues that these four practices of walking are of value to the designer: sighting, measuring, reading, and merging (2004, pp. 5-9). Sighting involves an intuitive understanding of the relationship among physical objects in the landscape, as seen from a few feet above the ground. (In a way, it allows us to foretell the future by enabling us to see where we are going.) Measuring allows us to “possess” a landscape through walking to determine its dimension and the relative locations of objects, but it also has to do with size or scale, including bodily scale. Reading allows us to remember stories through the naming of objects.

Because of its “transcendent potential,” the most significant of these practices is merging. Merging involves “a heightened awareness of time and consciousness” in which the walker is “aware of noticing” (Jacks 2004, p. 8). Merging seems to suggest the coalescence of mind, body, and vision about which Merleau-Ponty wrote. With these practices in mind, I took my second walk.



Figure 4-12 Markers

I took the same route with the second walk as I did in the first, so that I could build on my previous experiences and notice any changes. I began in the same place in the cemetery, near its western edge. Again, as in the first walk, I stopped to look closely at two small markers, inscribed “mother” and “father.” They were different, as if one was much older than the other, yet they were a pair. I thought that the mother marker, because it was shorter, might be the older of the two. I wondered what happened to her, and for a moment I was lost in a daydream.

I walked down the brick earthwork steps to the chain link fence at the southern boundary and peered through to a small stream and the trees. I wondered what it would be to look back into the cemetery from the other side, so I retraced my steps back to the iron gate that leads to 17th Street. I walked along the stadium access road, where I saw large boulders among the trees, probably left when the land was cleared. Down the road, I came upon a clearing; the area opened to the sky above, but the surrounding views were “filtered” by the trees. It seemed as if I could see the landscape in overlapping or juxtaposed layers of nature and culture: the cemetery to the north, the railway bridge to the east and south, and Anacostia Park to the south.



Figure 4-13 Rocks



Figure 4-14 View along road, to the east



Figure 4-15 Railroad ties

I retraced my steps along the road and came to the bike path entrance before the Sousa Bridge. Looking down, I could see a pile of railroad ties lying near the river's edge. As I progressed further along the bike path and came to the point directly over the tracks, I looked down and over again at the railroad ties. I took note of the configuration of the tracks; there was no train coming this time. Again, I noticed the way that the land seemed to stretch into the distance; this time there was a clear distinction between earth and sky at the horizon.

I crossed the Sousa Bridge to Anacostia Park and stood at the first stone "lookout." I had walked a little further to the second lookout when I heard the sounds of a train coming. I watched the train slowly pulling in from the east. As my eyes panned back and forth, the train seemed to fill the entire horizon, as far as I could see in either direction.



Figure 4-16 Train

I returned to the studio to make my drawing, again using my sketches as reference. I used only charcoal so as to give equal importance to the areas of “distraction” as those of “attention.” Again, as my location and perspective changed, so too did the drawing: for example, what I saw on one side of the chain link fence is turned 180 degrees from that which I saw on the other.

As with the first drawing, there were certain areas in which I seemed to “step into” or “out of” the world. It was apparent from the first walk that there were areas on the site that I was particularly struck by, and these were the areas that I returned to with the second walk. Perhaps what I was experiencing had to do with the various ways of seeing while walking of which Jacks speaks. Therefore, I made a drawing to explore Jacks’ four practices of walking.



Figure 4-17 View of tracks from Sousa Bridge

I explored views of four specific places. The first was that of the railroad tracks extending to the horizon line as seen from the Sousa Bridge. The view involves sighting, as it is seen from an elevated position, and therefore I am able locate objects in the landscape. It also involves measuring in the way that the electrical towers progress into space and therefore reveal distance, and it involves reading as well, through the memories evoked by the train and the river.

Most important, the view involves merging. Looking into the distance, at the horizon line, I was aware that I was looking perspectively—in other words, I was conscious of my own seeing. Watching the train involved not only duration—the time that it took for the train to pass, and the next one to come along—but this view gives me another sense of time, in the site's industrial history, appearing as overlapping horizontal layers on the landscape.



Figure 4-18 View of tracks from Sousa Bridge

The second view is that of the northern shore of the river, which includes the train tracks, as seen from the southern shore. Here, my eye instinctively measures the distance across the river, and I “read” the landscape’s recent industrial past by looking at the train tracks. But looking at the river also gives me a sense of a deep, more primordial time, and the unceasing motion of the water makes me aware of the passage of time.



Figure 4-19 View across Anacostia River

The third area is the view through the electrical towers on the bridge. My eye instinctively measures the distance across the water; my body measures the height of the towers and the lowness of the bridge to the water. I read its history. But most important, I am aware that I am seeing. Again, as before, when I look through the rectangle created by the power structures, the landscape seems to become more clearly focused.



Figure 4-20 View through Bridge

The fourth area is the clearing in the trees between south of the cemetery and north of the train tracks, where I see the “layers of time” through the trees. I am immediately aware of myself seeing, and seeing in different ways: for example, I see perspectively when I look through the trees to the train tracks, or I look closely as I study the bark of a sycamore. Views may be obscured by the trees, or filtered by them; they can be seen through the “scrim” of the cemetery’s chain link fence. The view can also be completely open, as it is to the sky. Here, I have the sensation that I am stepping both into and out of the world, depending on which direction I took.

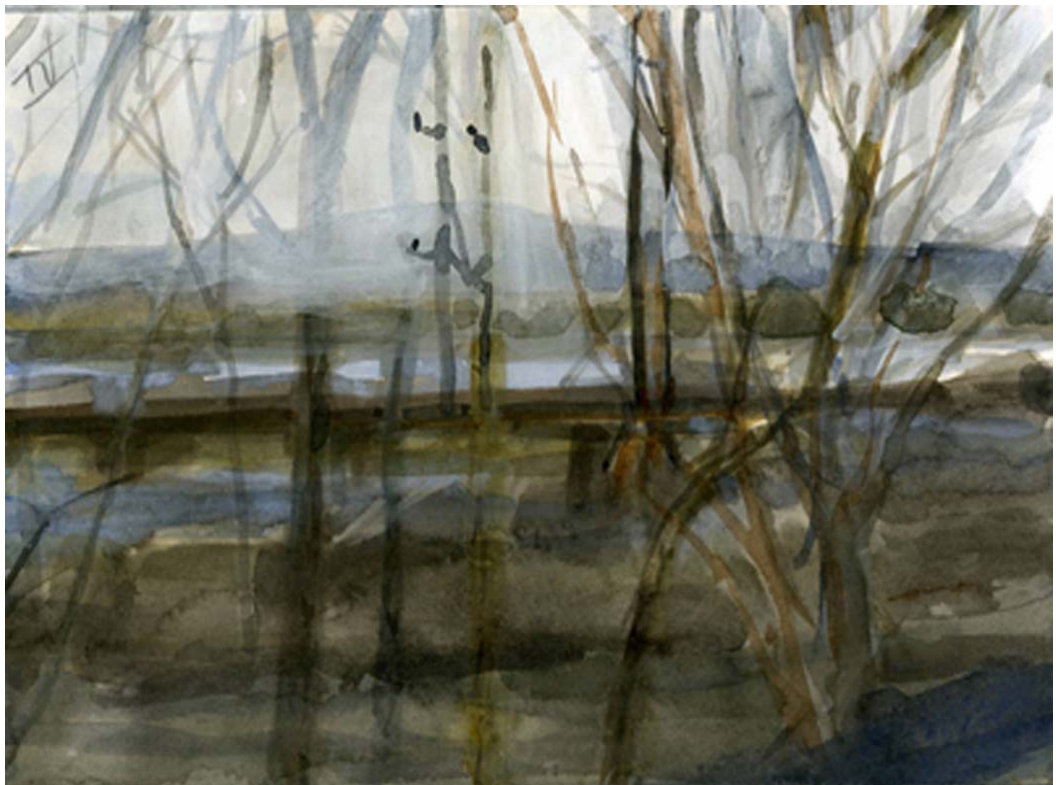


Figure 4-21 View through trees to CSX Railway

These areas, which had profoundly moved or intrigued me initially on an intuitive level, were reinforced through the drawings as highly significant. By closely and carefully reading the drawings, could I make other discoveries as well? I felt that I was ready to begin the design exploration.



Figure 5-1 Walk 3 (design exploration)

Too few designers today appreciate the way in which drawings can harbor profound and wondrous images that contain within their traces all the content of the design project itself...

*~James Corner, *Projection and Disclosure in Drawing*, 1993*

Step 5 The Design Process

I explored through the design the potential experiences the place holds—or suggests—and sought to draw out these experiences not only in what already exists, but also, in subtle and minimal ways, to bring experiences in. Throughout the design process, I made drawings of what it might be like to experience the place.

I began by carefully reading the walk drawings. I found that they suggested where and a way to enter the place. By installing a gate in the chain link fence at the southwest corner of the cemetery that could be reached by walking down the brick earthwork steps, the steps are incorporated into the place's threshold.



Figure 5-2 View through chain link fence

The drawings suggested a way of walking as well. The steps in the cemetery allow us to descend slowly, and we must look down often, as the surface of the bricks can be uneven. Our pace is further slowed as we pause to read the headstones along the way. Our bodies innately measure as we walk: one step on the bricks, two steps on the turf, one step on the bricks.

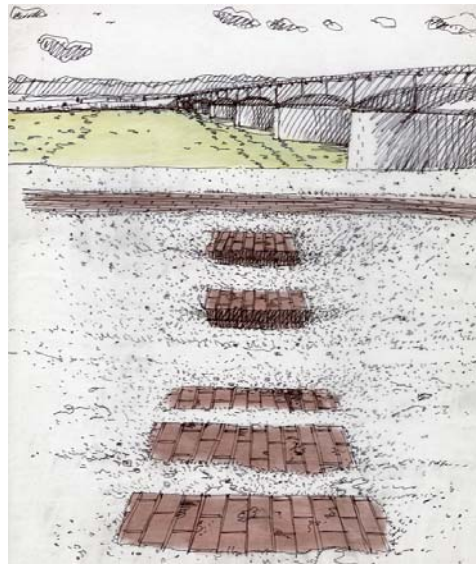


Figure 5-3 Brick steps to tracks



Figure 5-4 Bricks



Figure 5-5 Earthwork steps to railway tracks

As we leave the cemetery and walk south, toward the railway tracks, our slow pace is supported by the continuation of the brick earthwork steps. The bricks here are rounded, like cobbles, further slowing our progress.

The slow pace is also supported by the plantings along the edge of the path. The year-round interest that Arrowwood Viburnums provide helps to draw our eye. In early summer, white, flat-topped flowers appear, followed by blue-black fruit in the fall, when their dark green leaves turn yellow to red.

These viburnums have an arching, billowing habit—to walk along the brick earthwork path when they are in flower is as if walking through clouds.



Figure 5-6 Arrowwood Viburnum flower



Figure 5-7 Arrowwood Viburnum foliage



Figure 5-8 Staghorn Sumac

Planted along the river's edge are Staghorn Sumacs. Their lacy, fern-like leaves turn orange to red to purple in the fall, and provide a contrast in color and texture to the clean lines of the bridge. They arch over the water; thus, the color of the water changes with the color of the foliage.

Several Sumacs are planted initially, and then are allowed to naturalize.



Figure 5-9 Brick walkway

Arriving at the tracks, we step up on to the walkway, which is between the two sets of tracks, built of bricks set in sand. These bricks are cobble-like as well, to slow our pace.

The spaces inside the rails, between each of the railroad ties, are also bricked. By allowing the ties to remain, visible, that particular layer of time is held in the present, and we are reminded of the walkway's former use.

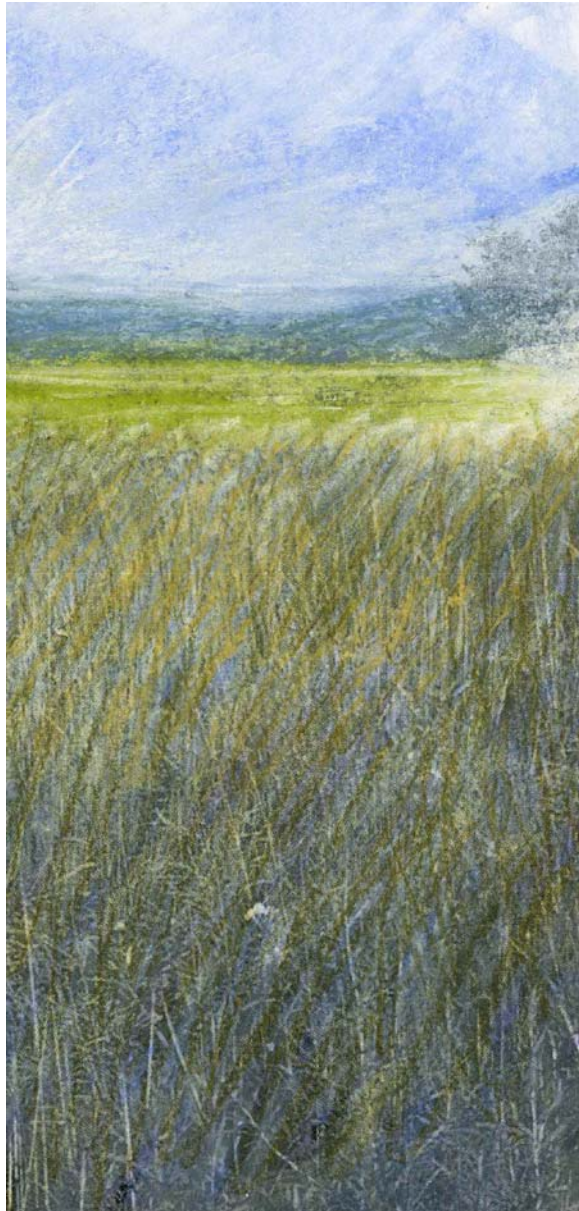


Figure 5-10 Grasses

Radiating out from the tracks to the south, to the river's edge and even into the river, are large swaths of grasses, reeds, and sedges of varying, shifting color. The river here is open; the grasses echo the movement of the river and its ever-changing and never-changing nature. There is a mown path in the grasses that takes us to the water's edge.

To the north is the wooded area, with its sycamore trees left undisturbed.

The electrical towers along the walkway remain in place, undisturbed, as sculptures or found objects in the landscape. At one point in the process I thought that the towers might be painted so that they would be more prominent, but on reflection I realized that it was their patina of age that initially drew my appreciation. The towers act as measuring devices; as they recede into the distance, we get a sense of how far it is to the end of the walkway.

It is important that these structures continue in their same configuration along the walkway, and that there be no “gaps” between them. Therefore, five towers from further down the tracks (not those that currently exist along the walkway) are installed at the end of the walkway, in a “yard” west of the Sousa Bridge. There they wait, stacked like unused railway cars, in the event that one of the towers along the walkway needs to be replaced. Grasses and wildflowers are planted beneath the structures, between the tracks.



Figure 5-12 West yard



Figure 5-11 Electrical tower



Figure 5-13 Redbud grove (plan)

To the north of the walkway, through the Sycamore trees, there is a grove of white-flowering Redbuds in the clearing. The grove is clearly planted by man, as the trees are evenly spaced in rows that run perpendicular to the tracks.

The trees' golden yellow leaves cause the grove to glow in the fall.



Figure 5-14 Redbud (fall foliage)

As we approach the bridge, the bricks of the walkway give way to a steel bar grating, similar to the grating currently existing on the bridge. The grating is over red crushed granite, which closely matches the color of the bricks.

The combination of the grating over the granite creates a hollow sound, as we anticipate our arrival at the bridge.

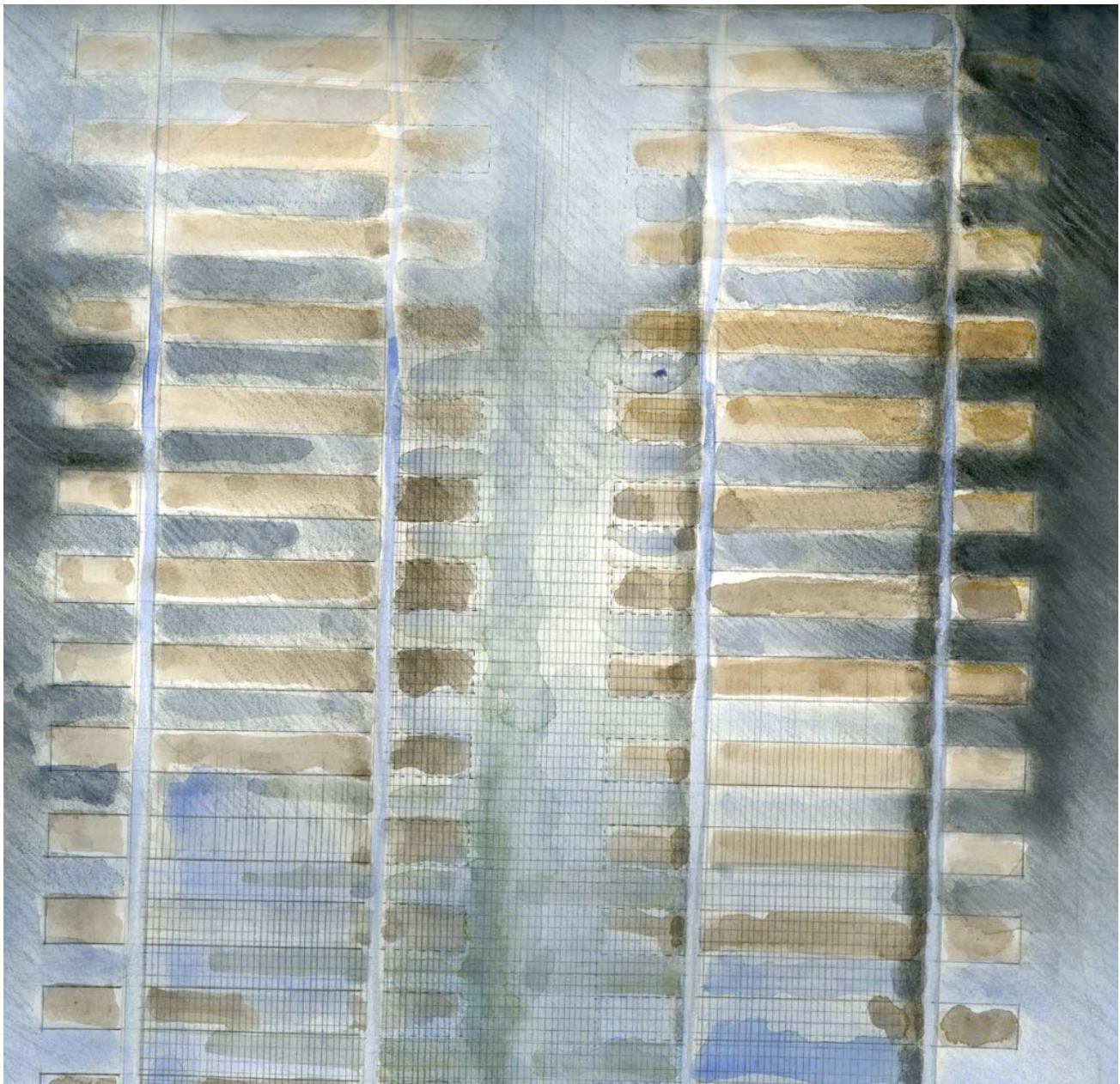


Figure 5-15 Steel bar grating over tracks

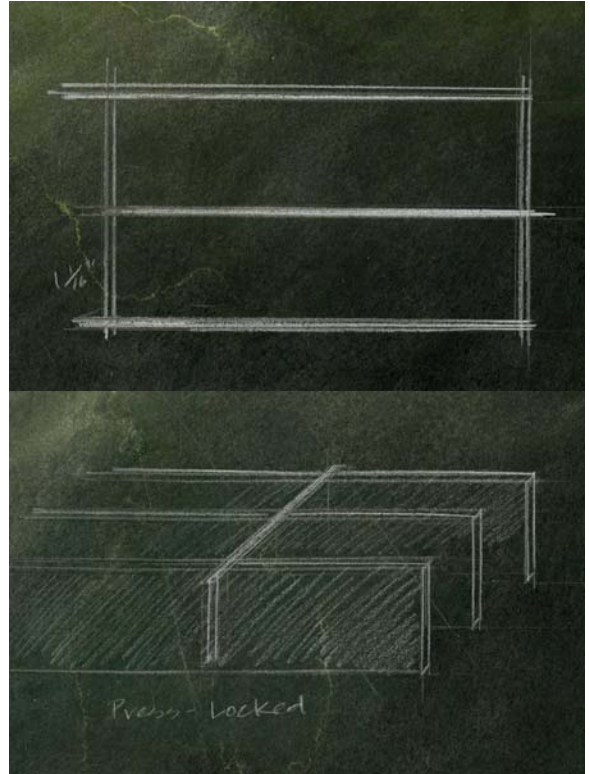


Figure 5-16 Steel bar grating

The steel bar grating is $1 \frac{1}{16}$ inches by 4 inches, with the width running perpendicular to the tracks. The bar grating will, over time, rust and take on a patina of age.

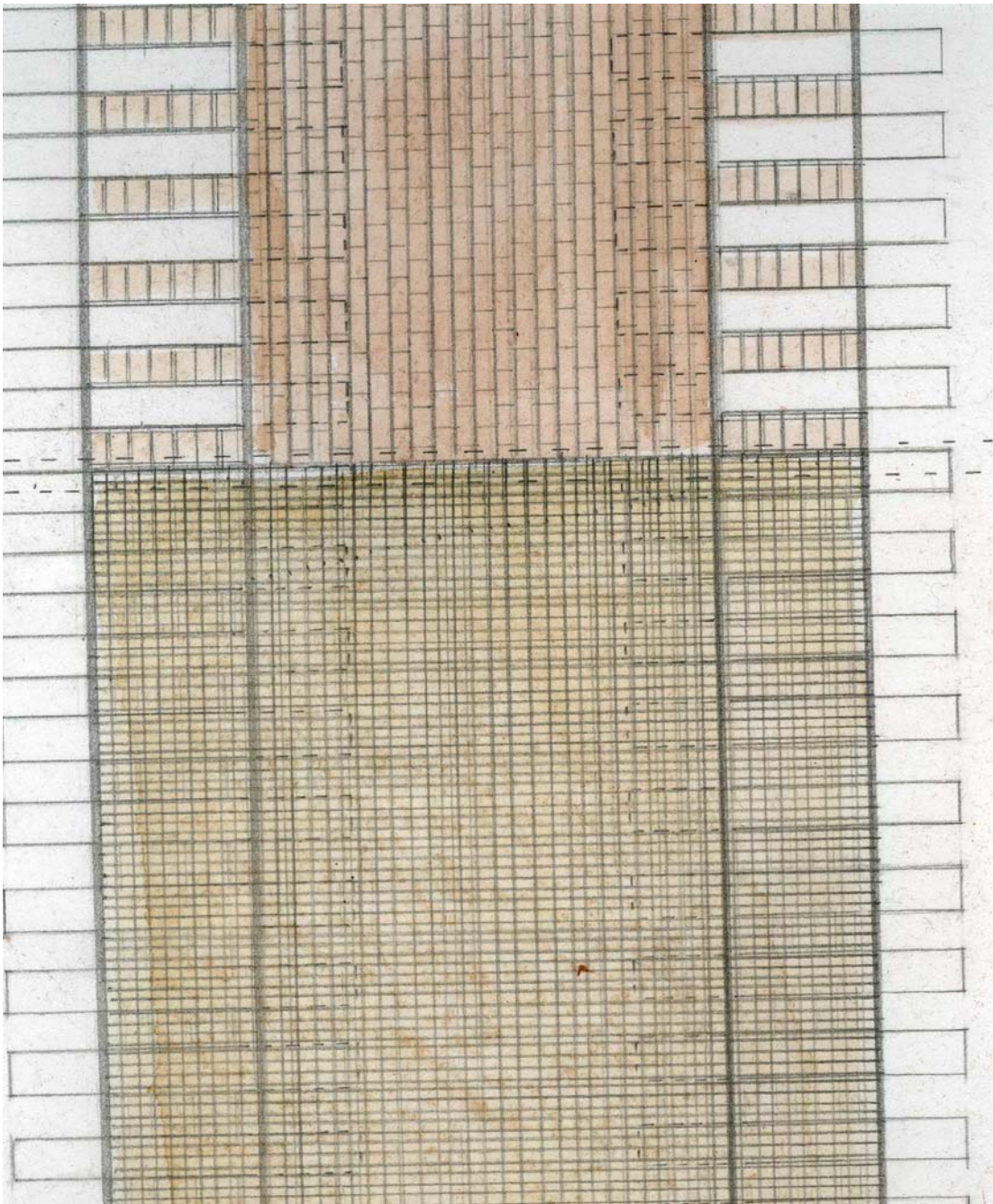


Figure 5-17 Brick to bar grating

The walkway widens here, as the steel bar grating covers the areas between the two sets of the rails as well as the space between the rails themselves.

Once we reach the bridge, the steel bar grating widens to $1 \frac{5}{16}$ inches, which allows us to more clearly see the water below.

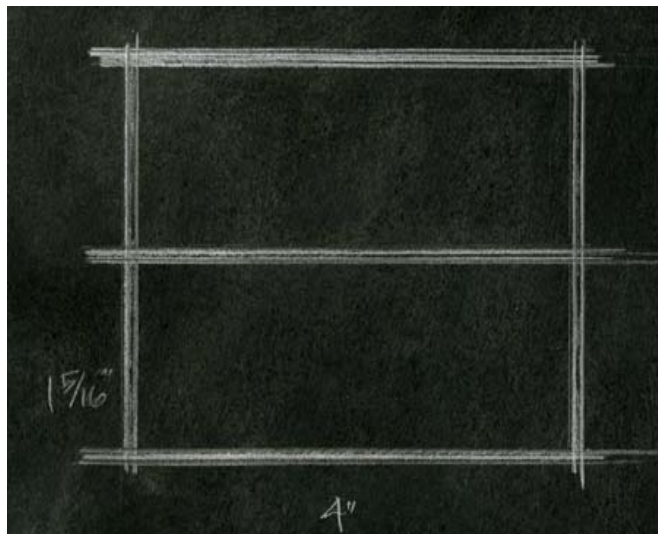


Figure 5-18 Steel bar grating

Proceeding along the bridge, we come to the rectangular “room” created by the electrical towers. Here, something unexpected and surprising happens: above us, in a “ceiling” fabricated from Cor-ten steel, is an oculus. Because the ceiling is flat, there is no indication that the oculus is there when we view it from the river banks or as we approach on the bridge.

The patina of the Cor-ten steel is a velvety, rich red/brown.

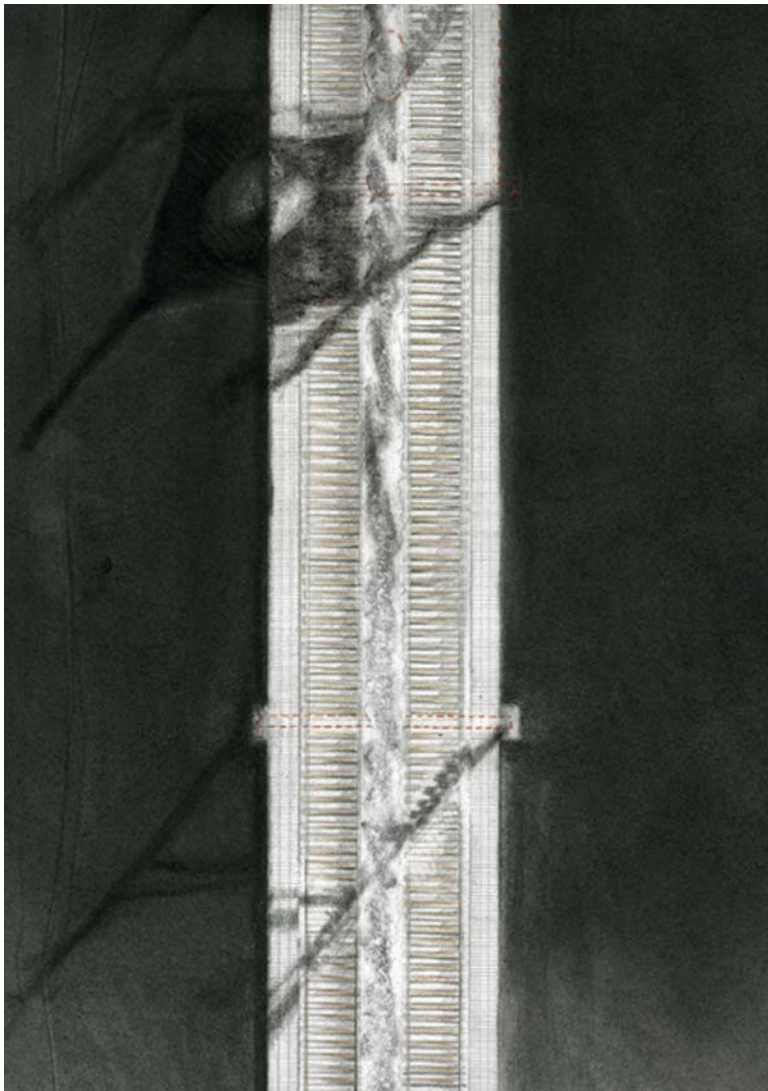


Figure 5-19 Narnia (plan)

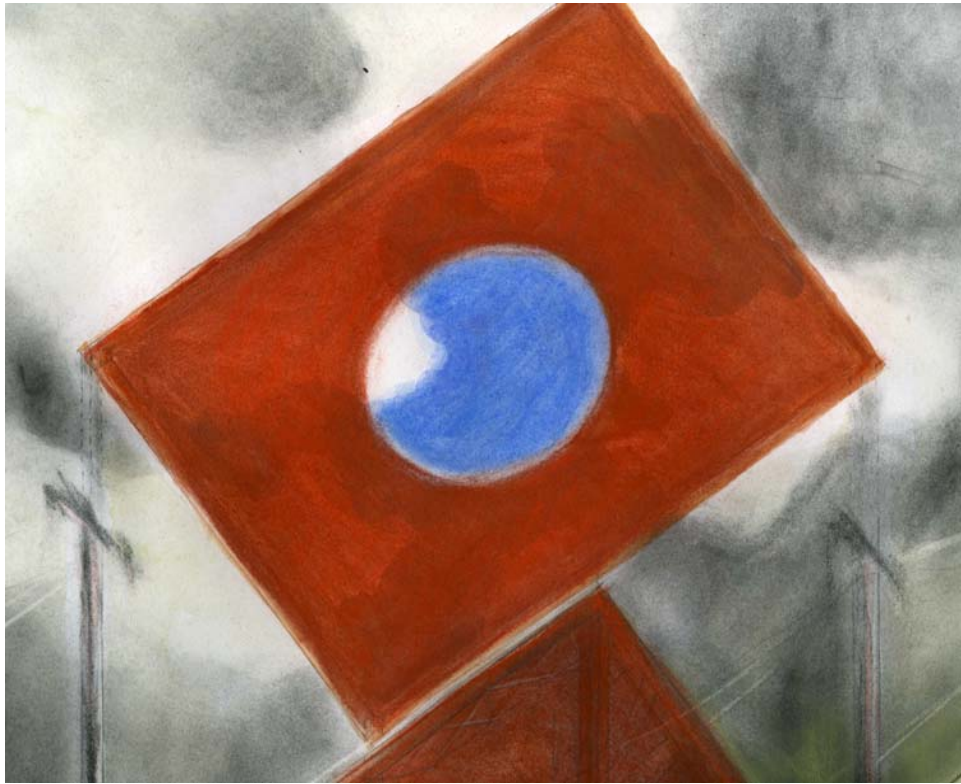


Figure 5-20 View through oculus to sky

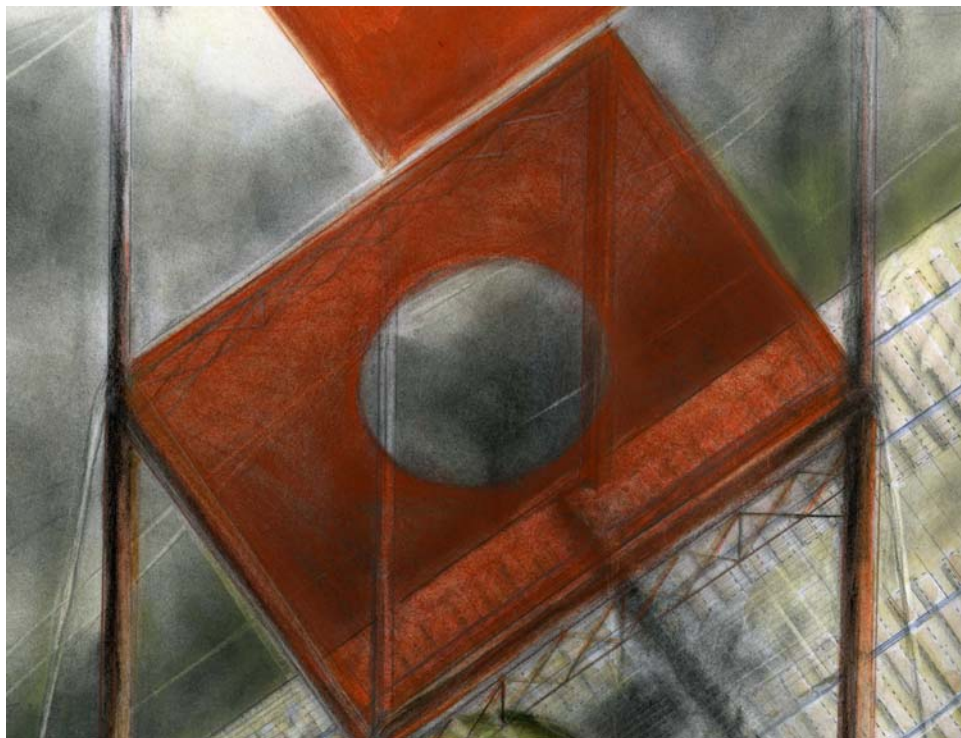


Figure 5-21 View through oculus to bridge

The bar grating in the floor of the oculus room changes to stainless steel, allowing the shaft of light created by the oculus to be reflected within the “room” and to the water below.

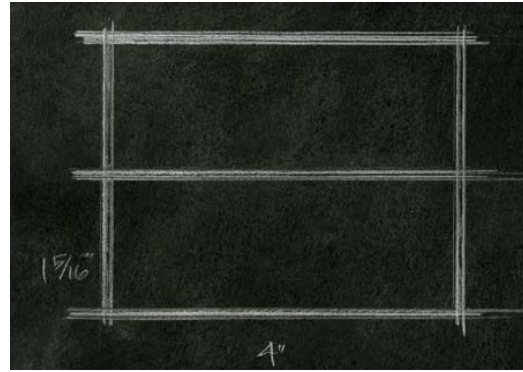


Figure 5-22 Stainless steel bar grating

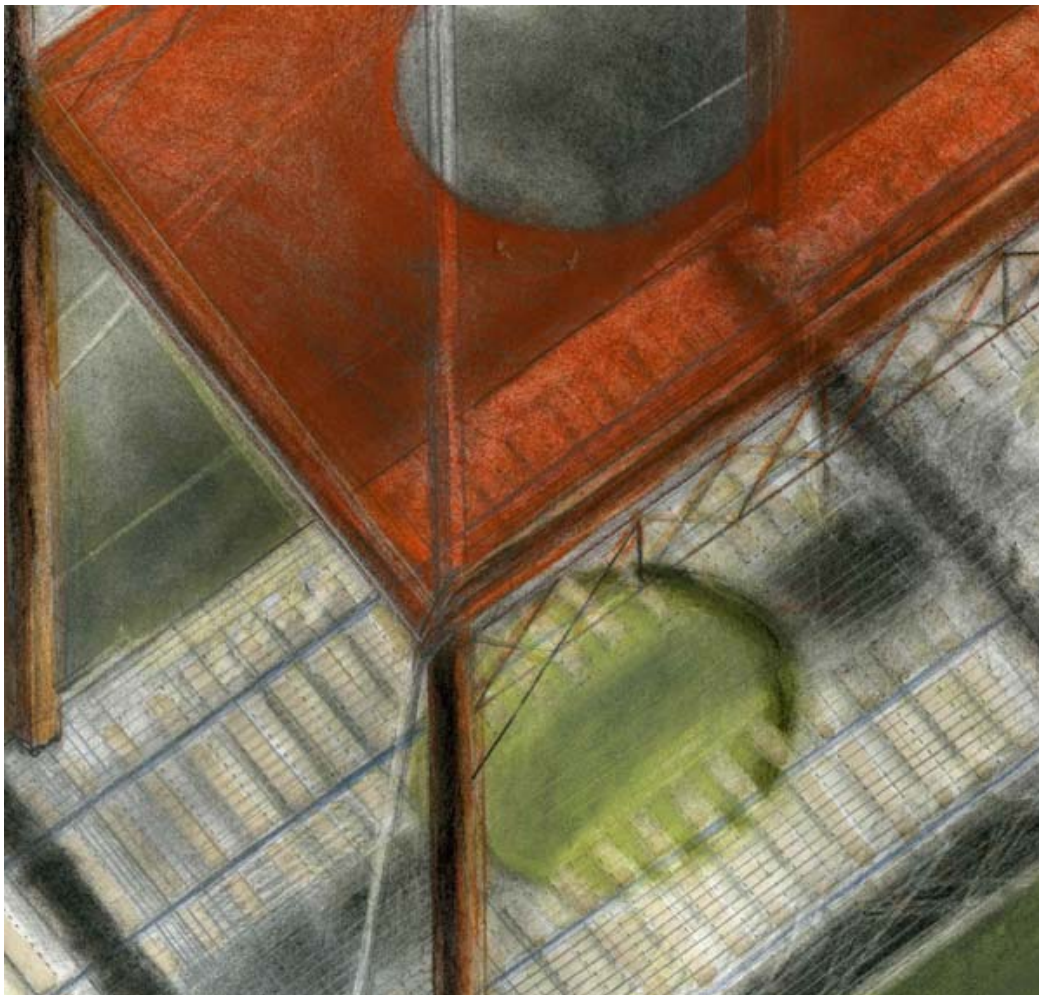


Figure 5-23 View through oculus to water

Nothing else is added to or removed from the oculus “room.” The spray-painted “Narnia” remains—should it fade or be vandalized, it is repainted.



Figure 5-24 Narnia

Beyond the bridge, to the east, the walkway changes to red crushed granite, and continues to the point where the tracks split. Here we reach the end of the walkway, where the tracks are buried in an earthwork.

Initially I envisioned the earthwork covered in turf, in response to the “parkland” landscape in which it is located.



Figure 5-25 Earthwork (initial conception)

I later revised my way of thinking however, in response to the place's industrial past and the materials found here. The earthwork is now a mesa-like structure, obviously man-made, with a flat, bricked plaza area on top, that allows us to look over the landscape at a higher elevation.

Brick steps, similar to the earthwork steps that began our walk, lead us from the crushed granite walkway and up to the plaza area above. There we can pause, and look out over the landscape, back over the route we have just taken.



Figure 5-26 Earthwork (final conception)

The walks I took and the drawings that grew out of them led me to understand and appreciate the found beauty and slowness of the place.



Figure 5-27 View on tracks, looking east



Untitled

In this perturbed state of mind, with thoughts that could rest on nothing, she walked on....

~Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813

Conclusion

There are several aspects of this thesis project that I was not able to fully resolve given the time frame involved. The first has to do with the fact that much of our walking is done in a state of distraction, during which we pay little attention to our surroundings. James Corner notes that we are rarely as conscious of landscape as we are when we observe a painting or an object,

Rather, as Walter Benjamin has recognized, the meaning derived from landscape and architectural space is received 'by a collectivity in a state of distraction,' slowly appreciating its symbolic environment through 'habitual appropriation,' or through everyday use and activity. The experience of landscape takes time, and results from an accumulation of often distracted events and everyday encounters (1992, p. 148).

Merleau-Ponty refers to gaps in our perception, but he recognizes these gaps as a positive phenomenon. The phrase he uses to describe this has been historically translated from the French as "an indeterminate vision, a vision of something or other," but recent scholarship has suggested that it is more correctly translated as "a vision of 'I do not know what'" (*je ne sais quoi*) (Kelly 2004, p. 7). These indeterminate visions are not without value, according to Merleau-Ponty; they are not mere "failures to perceive," but rather "some element of visual presence" (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, pp. 6, 11). Jonathan Crary echoes this concept,

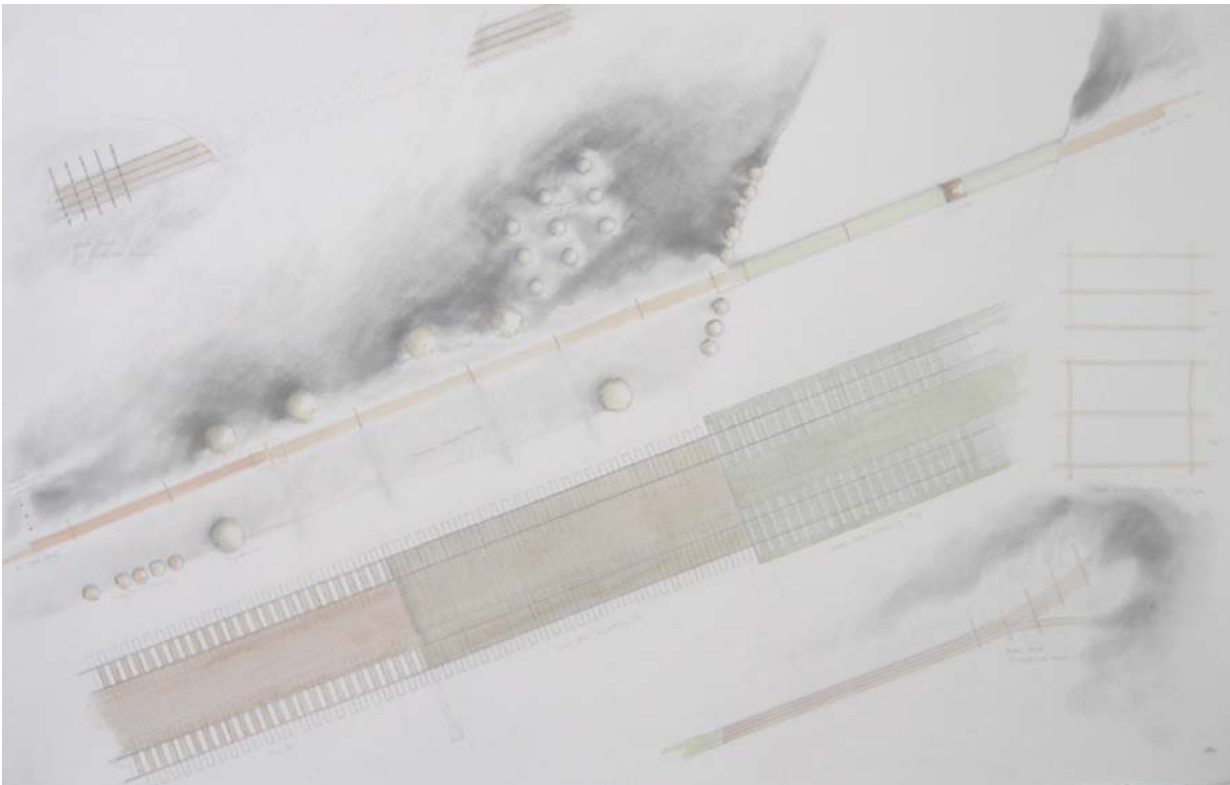
Attention and distraction were not two essentially different states but existed on a single continuum, and thus attention was...a dynamic process, intensifying and

diminishing, rising and falling, ebbing and flowing according to an indeterminate set of variables (1999, p. 47).

How would we design for these shifting states of engagement and distraction? Had time allowed, this is something that I would have explored further, again using art, particularly drawing, as a point of entry.

A second aspect of this thesis that I was not able to fully resolve involves bringing the “artistic” drawings to the realm of the built. I am confident, however, that, had time allowed, the drawing process would have guided me to a resolution.

This thesis project has reinforced in me the belief that art can help us understand the way we see and experience the world. But it has also shown me that, if we carefully read our drawings, they will reveal to us how we can create more evocative and meaningful spaces.



Design

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