

2-2011

The Pragmatic Picturesque: The Philosophy of Central Park

Gary Shapiro

University of Richmond, gshapiro@richmond.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.richmond.edu/philosophy-faculty-publications>



Part of the [Esthetics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Shapiro, Gary. "The Pragmatic Picturesque: The Philosophy of Central Park." In *Gardening - Philosophy for Everyone: Cultivating Wisdom*, edited by Dan O'Brien, 148-160. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by the Philosophy at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.

PHILOSOPHY FOR EVERYONE

Series editor: Fritz Allhoff

Not so much a subject matter, philosophy is a way of thinking. Thinking not just about the Big Questions, but about little ones too. This series invites everyone to ponder things they care about, big or small, significant, serious ... or just curious.

Running & Philosophy:

A Marathon for the Mind

Edited by Michael W. Austin

Wine & Philosophy:

A Symposium on Thinking and Drinking

Edited by Fritz Allhoff

Food & Philosophy:

Eat, Think and Be Merry

Edited by Fritz Allhoff and Dave Monroe

Beer & Philosophy:

The Unexamined Beer Isn't Worth

Drinking

Edited by Steven D. Hales

Whiskey & Philosophy:

A Small Batch of Spirited Ideas

Edited by Fritz Allhoff and Marcus P. Adams

College Sex – Philosophy for

Everyone: Philosophers With Benefits

Edited by Michael Bruce

and Robert M. Stewart

Cycling – Philosophy for Everyone:

A Philosophical Tour de Force

Edited by Jesús Ilundáin-Agurruza

and Michael W. Austin

Climbing – Philosophy for Everyone:

Because It's There

Edited by Stephen E. Schmid

Hunting – Philosophy for Everyone:

In Search of the Wild Life

Edited by Nathan Kowalsky

Christmas – Philosophy for Everyone:

Better Than a Lump of Coal

Edited by Scott C. Lowe

Cannabis – Philosophy for Everyone:

What Were We Just Talking About?

Edited by Dale Jacquette

Porn – Philosophy for Everyone:

How to Think With Kink

Edited by Dave Monroe

Serial Killers – Philosophy for

Everyone: Being and Killing

Edited by S. Waller

Dating – Philosophy for Everyone:

Flirting With Big Ideas

Edited by Kristie Miller and Marlene Clark

Gardening – Philosophy for Everyone:

Cultivating Wisdom

Edited by Dan O'Brien

Motherhood – Philosophy for

Everyone: The Birth of Wisdom

Edited by Sheila Lintott

Fatherhood – Philosophy for

Everyone: The Dao of Daddy

Edited by Lon S. Nease

and Michael W. Austin

Forthcoming books in the series:

Fashion – Philosophy for Everyone

Edited by Jessica Wolfendale

and Jeanette Kennett

Coffee – Philosophy for Everyone

Edited by Scott Parker

and Michael W. Austin

Blues – Philosophy for Everyone

Edited by Abrol Fairweather

and Jesse Steinberg

Edited by Dan O'Brien

GARDENING

PHILOSOPHY FOR EVERYONE

Cultivating Wisdom

Foreword by David E. Cooper

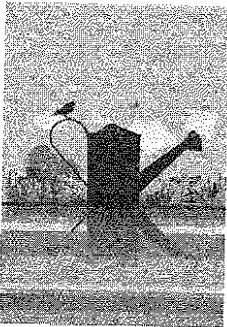
 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

CHAPTER 11

THE PRAGMATIC PICTURESQUE

The Philosophy of Central Park



New York's Central Park is one of the world's iconic works of landscape architecture. The park has achieved global recognition through its representations in film and photography; it is visited by millions every year and every sunny day sees a procession of engaged or newly married couples having their official photographs taken against the background of its picturesque scenery and monumental structures.

In the twenty-first century it may sound slightly odd to consider Central Park as a form of gardening, but the eighteenth-century founders of modern aesthetics and the philosophy of art would have called it a garden or park. Horace Walpole spoke for the age in saying that "poetry, painting & gardening, or the science of landscape, will forever by men of taste be deemed three sisters, or *the Three New Graces* who dress and adorn nature."² Walpole was thinking of the great English landscape gardens or parks constructed on private estates. Poets like Alexander Pope and critics like Joseph Addison were enthusiastic garden designers whose poetry and prose explored the meanings of the art. In Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), generally taken to be the founding text of modern aesthetics, landscape gardening is classified as a form of painting, which differs from the two-dimensional canvases we respectfully visit in museums only in its use of the medium of actual plants, land, water, and sky.³

Yet gardening did not maintain its place among the fine arts. There is a story to be told about how around 1830, as a recent, distinguished historian of landscape design puts it: "Garden encyclopedias replaced treatises on aesthetics."⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, whose monumental lectures on aesthetics set much of the pattern for thinking on this subject in the nineteenth century, treated gardens as a minor appendix to architecture, and remarked that however pleasant a walk through a garden might be, one would never be tempted to visit the same one twice.⁵ To put it briefly, gardening was marginalized among the arts when it came to be seen as a private, individual, and domestic avocation, and the marginalization, as is so frequently the case, was accompanied by feminization, assigning the art to women whose real or imagined activity was confined to the home.

I agree with a number of recent critics who believe that this marginalization needs to be remedied, and that what are variously called gardens, parks, earthworks, or perhaps most generally land art should be acknowledged once again as major forms of art.⁶ This essay argues that Central Park is a major work of this type and attempts to show the aesthetic principles that contributed to its design and its continuing appeal. If I am right, then we can say that Frederick Law Olmsted, the park's co-designer (with Calvert Vaux), is the most influential American artist.⁷ Certainly, more people have toured or viewed Central Park or others which Olmsted designed, like Brooklyn's Prospect Park, or the parks of Boston, Buffalo, the Chicago area, the Stanford University campus, and the Biltmore estate (and the list goes on), than are familiar with the paintings of Thomas Cole or Georgia O'Keefe or the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. And who has been more influential in constructing models emulated in other parks, gardens, campuses, and corporate landscaping? But it is more than a question of numbers. Around 1900, Harvard President Charles Eliot Norton said of Olmsted that of all American artists he stood "first in the production of great works which answer the needs and give expression to the life of our immense and miscellaneous democracy."⁸ Perhaps Olmsted has been a victim of his own success in adapting, popularizing, and spreading the picturesque style across the continent. For the desired picturesque effect of a pleasing mix of open meadows, changing elevation, occasional wooded areas, irregular bodies of water, and the succession of new and sometimes surprising views encountered on a stroll along one of Olmsted's serpentine walkways has been taken to be the "natural" form in which landscape presents itself. This was precisely the effect that the style sought to achieve, but it



does so through planning, design, and construction. Like other arts it involves the imposition of form and invites its audience to approach it in specific ways.

The Invention of the Picturesque Style

To understand the artistic principles of Central Park and of Olmsted's work, it is necessary to see how the picturesque style of landscape design arose and flourished. Until the advent of the picturesque, gardens were typically enclosed, walled structures. The Persian word which is the root of the English "paradise" conveyed the idea of an enclosed garden. Enclosed gardens were often laid out in relatively formal, geometric patterns, along straight axes and with clearly centered structures. Even when there were no walls, and the garden trailed off ultimately into the countryside, as in André Le Nôtre's great garden at Versailles for Louis XIV, the garden retained or even intensified such a formal structure. There was no doubt that the garden was quite distinct from the surrounding world. Since throughout most of human history the natural world was understandably seen as threatening or hostile, the garden was felt to be a place of safety and refuge, sometimes conceived as an analogue of heaven. It was culture as opposed to nature.

In the eighteenth century, and especially in England, this changed. People were placing less hope in the afterlife and focusing more on how this world could be made more appealing and fulfilling. Economic and social developments presented new opportunities to English landowners. Enclosure of lands and the dispossession of local people were taken to be aesthetically and politically legitimate since aristocratic gardens were seen as representatives of British liberty, in contrast with the monarchical, centralized, and geometrical gardens of the Sun King at Versailles.

What we call the picturesque in respect to the English garden or park actually involves a series of stylistic variations. John Dixon Hunt has pointed out a significant change in the practice and aesthetics of garden design around the middle of the eighteenth century. The exemplary gardens of the century's first decades (e.g., Castle Howard, Stowe, Stourhead) are symbolic and allegorical: they are structured by temples and other monuments that recall Roman republicanism and British tradition and have a strong political import. They require interpretation or what recent

philosophers call hermeneutics. To say that these parks were picturesque meant that they resembled "history paintings" that depicted significant human actions.

Then philosophical empiricism (John Locke and his successors) replaced a culture of interpretation; meaning was understood as a function of sensory impressions and ideas constructed from them, rather than on the model of interpreting texts. Gardens were created for the taste of landowners who were not so firmly grounded in classical culture as their predecessors. In just a few years the "picturesque" acquired its later meaning – Hunt calls it "vulgar" – in which it is the shape and disposition of the landscape that is crucial. Parks were now laid out on the whole to present pleasing images of "nature," and while designers continued to use painting as a model for their work, they tended to concentrate on paintings (or those aspects of paintings) that represented landscapes with little or no allegorical and symbolic meaning.⁹

The ideal was now that of a total landscape, one in which the boundary between the property and the surrounding world was blurred or obscured. This aesthetic required an artful veiling of the difference between nature and culture, accomplished by destroying any visible boundaries to the park, such as traditional walls or obtrusive structures in the distance. Borrowed scenery blurred the distinction between private property and a view of the world. Trees were planted and earth moved to screen unwanted reminders of the limits of the property, but practical requirements (keeping some animals in, while excluding others and human intruders) dictated some substitute for walls. The great aesthetic invention of the picturesque was its discovery of the ha-ha, the ditch or sunken pit which is the hidden frame of the park. Together with artful planting and leveling or building up of the earth, the ha-ha contributed to producing what Joseph Addison called a "landskip" that presented "an image of liberty, where the eye has room to range abroad, to expatiate at large on the immensity of its views."¹⁰ As Gina Crandell succinctly expresses it: "what is designed and owned is composed to give the illusion of being natural, when in fact it is maintained as an enclave."¹¹ This is an instance of what the philosopher Jacques Derrida suggests is a paradox necessarily arising from the fact that all works of visual art have a frame, yet the frame is neither simply inside nor outside the work. Just as a picture frame both detaches a painting from the gallery wall while attaching it to the same, so the invisible frame of the park's grounds (plantings, ha-has, etc.) performs this double function. The eighteenth-century English picturesque garden is an exemplary case of the paradox



of the frame, because it must, in its founding gesture, disguise the frame which is essential to it. The undecidability of the frame's position – is it the core of the work or something which the work erases? – is only intensified by the practice of the picturesque. This frame does its work of framing by concealing itself. The frame is both internal and external to the park. It requires boundaries and limits and yet also must create the impression that it is continuous with the world.

The picturesque aesthetic was elaborated by British writers like William Gilpin, who produced guides to English scenery, and Uvedale Price, a landowner who both designed his own park and produced a lengthy treatise on the picturesque which linked it very closely to painting, although Price reduces painting, at least for these purposes, to the representation of landscape, unlike the designers of a generation or two earlier who took history painting as their model. Sightseeing manuals by Gilpin and others advised viewers how to frame ideal views, preferably with the aid of the “Claude glass,” an optical device with which the spectator looked at the scene behind her with a handheld rearview mirror. The mirror provided both a frame, comparable to a painting, while tinting the color to resemble the model paintings of the picturesque movement. Olmsted took the works of these two men to be the finest guides to landscaping aesthetics, and so put them immediately into apprentices' hands. They were, he thought, superior to “any published” and he instructed his pupils: “You are to read these seriously, as a student of law would read Blackstone.”¹²

We can think of the English theorists of the picturesque as developing a diagram of visibility that enabled experiences of intricacy, complexity, and shifting perspectives. Following the philosophers Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, I think of the diagram not simply as an outline sketch or blueprint, but as a dynamic arrangement of structures and forces, which channels and focuses human activity to specific ends. Around the same time that the English picturesque was flourishing, the philosopher Jeremy Bentham was elaborating the diagram of what he called the Panopticon, the plan of an architecture of total surveillance, to be used most famously in prisons, where inmates were given the impression that they were objects of observation and inspection by hidden guards in a central tower.¹³ Having to assume that they might be under observation at any time, they were encouraged to become their own guards, imposing on themselves the discipline of the institution (Bentham intended that his model could also be extended to schools, factories, and other disciplinary sites). This diagram can be thought of as a machine – a complex

arrangement of architectural structures, human action, expectation, observation, and self-observation – that produces a holistic effect of discipline in its subjects. If the Panopticon is the diagram of the *gaze* – focused and objectifying vision – at its extreme, the English picturesque garden, designed for those who regard themselves as very much at liberty, is the theatre of the *glance* – the passing, perspectival, and partial look. While the diagram or frame of the Panopticon oppressively structures its enclosed world, that of the ideal park frames the territory by producing the illusion that there is no frame. Where Bentham offered a diagram for total visibility with relatively fixed positions for observed and observer, Price laid down principles for exploiting the moving body's multiplicity and complexity of orientations and views; he was exploiting the concepts of the threshold and horizon. This optical machine has a political dimension: the impression of unlimited views and a horizon receding into infinity are thought to be congruent with the educated spectator taking a wide, impartial view not only of the landscape, but also, by analogy, of the public good of the nation.

Olmsted and Central Park: Ethics, Politics, Aesthetics

Olmsted published his *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England* in 1852, offering an account of his tours of the English countryside and parks. Guided in his taste by classic thinkers and critics of the picturesque (like Gilpin and Price), Olmsted also saw new possibilities for adapting the style to the life of the modern, urban, democratic population he saw emerging in the United States. He was especially impressed by Sir Joseph Paxton's design for the People's Garden in the Liverpool suburb of Birkenhead, one of the first public parks.

By 1858 Olmsted and Calvert Vaux had been successful in the competition to produce a plan for what was to be Central Park. The park's site was determined by the city authorities, the city having committed itself to a grid pattern of building which left little choice by that time. Olmsted regretted the park's rectangular dimensions and its isolation from the rivers and waterways that bound Manhattan. The park was framed as a pastoral island within a maritime island. This also required that the traffic of the city somehow flow through the park. At the same time the central position of the park opened it up to the maximum number of people.



In designing Central Park Olmsted and Vaux turned the diagram of the English park inside out, transforming it to respond both to the specific nature of the site and the emerging urban society to be served by the park. The inversion of the diagram can be described in formal terms, but the choice of the form is governed both by an analysis of the social and infrastructure needs of the emergent American metropolis and an ethical and political vision of the life of a democratic citizenry. Inspired by the perfectionism of Carlyle and Emerson, and working in the same climate of ideas that nurtured the classic American philosophy of Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, Olmsted devised the innovative approach to urban life that I call the "pragmatic picturesque." The formal innovation can be described succinctly, but must be integrated with Olmsted's perfectionist and pragmatic view of public life. That the designers wanted to create the impression of "naturalness" is clear, and they did so by following the diagram of the picturesque, which calls for intricacy, variety, and a multiplicity of thresholds leading on to new views and perspectives. They sketched this diagram in their Greensward Plan. Although the diagram of the picturesque is decidedly different from that of the walled Italian Renaissance garden or the intensively centralized schema of a park like Versailles, which echoes the forms of monarchical power, it is still a diagram, a way of delimiting, inscribing, marking, and coding a territory, and indicating forms of movement appropriate for the bodies which move within or through it. In the exemplary picturesque park the hidden frame created the impression of unlimited space, while actually laying claim to an exclusive and private domain. Central Park has a clearly defined and visible rectangular boundary, a low stone wall punctuated by a series of entries, called gates by the designers and given specific titles (e.g., All Saints Gate, Mariner's Gate); the surrounding city cannot be hidden, and even in the few places where the New York skyline is not visible, the city is never far away because of our awareness of the urban multitude. The movement of the city enters into the park, not only through its openness to walkers and cyclists, but because its design, from the beginning, incorporated carriageways (now roadways and a few remaining ways for horses, carriages, and occasional pedestrians).

While the private park celebrated the liberty of the glance of the landowner and privileged guests, the Olmsted park enables citizens to encounter one another in a mutual recognition that minimizes the competition and crowding of urban life. The frame is explicit rather than hidden. Rather than the illusion of the natural and pastoral, far from the city, Central Park opens itself up to urban traffic while artfully concealing

most of the roadways by bridges and other architecture. In many cases the roads pass below the ground level of the park, so becoming the analogue of the picturesque ha-has. In Robert Smithson's 1972 essay on "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape" he calls this interaction of the park and the city a form of "dialectical materialism," emphasizing the fluid nature of the exchange. Rather than the park being maintained as a closed site as in the aristocratic English model (which disguised this isolation), Central Park interacts with its urban surroundings. It does this spatially by admitting people and traffic, and historically in the way that the park and the city engage in mutually influenced alterations over time. Smithson claimed that Olmsted was "America's greatest earthworks artist"; he was himself a pioneer in the new forms of this genre that took shape in the 1960s.¹⁴ Smithson's essay seems to be the first theoretical analysis of the park's diagram (after Olmsted's own). Smithson was highly critical of gardens and their aesthetics because he thought they generally obscured the truth of change, entropy, and ruin. They promoted an illusion of eternity, something ingredient in the garden through its many transformations from the enclosed Persian form, through classical gardens of the Versailles type, to the English "natural" model. In contrast he praised Olmsted for creating a fluid work, that opened itself up to interchange with its surroundings, and did not need to hide the facts of historical or geological change and becoming.

Olmsted attempted to explain the social and political horizon of public parks in his extensive writings on cities and urban planning; these could very well be introduced into the canon of American philosophy. Writing in 1870, using the model of Central Park to convince Bostonians of the need for analogous public spaces, Olmsted produced what we could call a Platonic argument to explain the necessity and function of the park. Like Plato in the *Republic*, he asks how life in the city, life together, can be strengthened and supported, and contribute to human excellence. Like Plato he is intensely conscious of the importance of aesthetic education, including the mostly unconscious influence of the citizens' aesthetic surroundings.¹⁵ Unlike Plato, of course, the assumed political form of the city is democratic, and rather than imagining that a new utopian city can be constructed from scratch, he pragmatically accepts given social and economic conditions as a starting point, and just as pragmatically asks how they can best be directed and focused.

Olmsted argues that the principle of the city (especially on a naturally bounded site like Manhattan island) is density and concentration. This leads to specific hazards to physical health and the need for fresh air.



More than that, unrelieved congestion and crowded street life requires the city dweller to be constantly wary of others, and to assess the character and motives of strangers. Olmsted notes that the very structure of the city promotes a practical and political skepticism about the possibility of community and cooperation. In the modern metropolis where we encounter unknown people with suspicion and reserve, Olmsted says: "Our minds are thus brought into close dealings with other minds without any friendly flowing toward them, but rather a drawing from them."¹⁶ Yet a flourishing democratic state must allow and encourage other means of social interaction which reinforce inclinations for mutual respect and a sense of communal identity.

Plato developed a set of categories and distinctions with respect to the gymnastics and music (including poetry) appropriate for forming the character of the city's guardians; Olmsted distinguishes two basic forms of recreation, "exertive" (strenuous sporting activities) and "receptive" (relatively passive and spectatorial activities). He divides the receptive into the neighborly (gatherings of small groups that encourage personal friendliness) and the "gregarious," which involve a large number, generally unknown to one another. Here the multitude comes together with "evident glee," Olmsted says, with "all classes largely represented, with a common purpose, not at all intellectual, competitive with none, disposing to jealousy and spiritual or intellectual pride toward none, each individual adding by his mere presence to the pleasure of all others, all helping to the greater happiness of each."¹⁷ Olmsted's "Platonic argument," then, is also pragmatic: a democracy requires the sense among its citizens of their mutual trustworthiness, of their ability to engage in non-competitive social interaction, and an acceptance of their belonging together beyond such distinctions as class, religion, and ethnicity. The diagram that he and Vaux created for Central Park brilliantly transforms the picturesque genre, as it enables new forms of recognition and self-knowledge in the park's visitors.

"The Gates" and the Meaning of the Park

While we know that this is an idealized picture, the ideal approached actualization when millions of people turned out in the depths of winter 2005 for "The Gates." This work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude involved placing 7,500 gates – steel bases with striking orange saffron fabric



panels – along 23 miles of the park's footpaths. The artists needed 26 years to gather support for the project and overcome resistance to it, which included not only practical worries about damage to trees and vegetation, but the more philosophical claim that "The Gates" would desecrate the original artwork designed by Olmsted and Vaux.¹⁸ Seen from the perspective of what I have been calling the pragmatic picturesque, "The Gates" is not an unprecedented intervention in the park, but a contemporary technological variation of the diagram which the nineteenth-century designers adapted from eighteenth-century parks and their theorists.

What the twenty-first century artists accomplished was to focus specifically on two aspects of Olmsted's idea for the park: the refreshing experience of landscape and the pleasure of seeing and meeting others in a generous atmosphere encouraging mutual recognition, affirmation, and joy. I accepted the invitation of "The Gates" thresholds in February 2005 and spent the better part of two days following the paths that were laid out through the snowy park. Having ignored the park in winter before, these walks were a revelation. The sheer multiplicity of the visitors in all their diversity, and the shared enthusiasm for the collective experience, seemed in keeping with the designers' (Olmsted and Vaux as well as Christo and Jean-Claude) broad expectations for their work.

Viewed from a height – as from a tall building, especially in the winter season of bare trees and unobstructed views – the gates marked the serpentine paths of the park as a machine for walking. On the ground, following the walkways, passing through the gates, you felt drawn in, welcomed, invited. You were not observing an artwork but entering one. And you were not alone.

With two old and dear friends I joined the multitude attracted to "The Gates." There was, first, the time of walking, a walking with no other goal than exploring, observing, whiling away the time, lingering with the elements, enjoying the crowd. The artists say they chose Central Park for this project because more people walk here than any place else (they have lived in New York since 1964). We should place equal weight on the activity of walking and on the presence of the multitude. The time of humans on the earth is a time of walking, despite the technology of speed, from auto to air, that can abbreviate or eclipse this fundamental form of mobility. The saffron banners wafting, fluttering, blowing, or billowing in the breeze marked the walkways of the park; they were invitations to stroll beneath them, along with the people thronging the park on those cold days.



“The Gates” takes its name from those which Olmsted and Vaux gave to the park entrances. This naming discloses the project’s structure, building on the park’s basic diagram. Unlike the great private English gardens, the park has always been open. Unlike what is called a “gated community,” the gates invite rather than exclude. The time of hospitality and invitation can be distinguished from the time of work, which is a function of economic constraints. It is, we say, leisure time. But we seldom have the leisure time to think about leisure. The Greeks called this alternative time *scholé*, and the Romans *otium*, thinking that nothing would better occupy a time freed from necessity than study, contemplation, and friendship. It is the time of the Muses, more specifically a musical time, as Olmsted perceived when he compared walking through a park to listening to music. The park offers a time with its own rhythm and movement. “The Gates” offered the gift of time. It is also a *gift* to the park and the city, for the project was totally self-financing, leaving no credit or debt. It’s as if Christo and Jeanne-Claude were saying: “Here is your time, a precious two weeks, a unique event, now and only now.” You knew that the work was up for only two weeks, so the lived duration of your stroll bore a close relation to the finite time of the work. You were not given a thing, you were *given time*. To know that the work endures only for a specific, limited period, is to experience time otherwise than we do when returning to a painting or a sculpture that we expect to be preserved in a condition as close as possible to its original one. You were not gazing at the eternal beauty of an immortal work, as in the classical museum, but living your time on earth in and with the work.

The time of the visit opens on to *other times*, to a multiplicity of layered times, that the thinkers of the picturesque (from the eighteenth century to Smithson) would have understood. There is meteorological and atmospheric time, marked by the weather of the day or hour, the play of the elements (including several snowfalls), plays of light and shade, and the changing, floating, billowing movement of the banners, stirred in different directions by each breeze. As the artists discovered in their earlier *Running Fence* project, it was impossible to anticipate that neighboring sections of the fabric fence might simultaneously puff out in different directions, because the swirling eddies are more complex than we imagine. So the very nature of simultaneity becomes a focus of temporal attention. The time of the park is also geological, as Smithson stresses in his Olmsted essay; it is the remnant of the last ice age, a swathe of land shaped by retreating glaciers. “The Gates” are also invitations to natural and historical time. The park’s diagram, then, as elaborated by Olmsted

and distilled in “The Gates,” intensifies the experience of time as well as space. Olmsted compared the experience of strolling through the park to music, suggesting such a transformation of temporality.

Since those February days in the park, I’ve sought out some of the responses to “The Gates”; among the most significant, I think, are the many Youtube videos of walks, solitary or in the crowd, in varied weather and times of day or night. Almost all are accompanied by music, in (probably unwitting) homage to the work’s evocation of the multiple times of the earth and those who walk it.

NOTES

- 1 Thanks to Dan O’Brien for help with pruning and cultivating prose, and to Karsten Struhl and Olga Bukhina for illuminating conversation as we explored “The Gates.”
- 2 Cited by J. D. Hunt and P. Willis, *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden 1620–1820* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 11.
- 3 I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, section 51.
- 4 E. B. Rogers, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), p. 314.
- 5 G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, vol. 2, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 699–700.
- 6 The literature on this theme is enormous. A good place to start is J. Kastner and B. Wallis (eds.) *Land and Environmental Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1998). A valuable collection of philosophical essays can be found in S. Kemal and I. Gaskell (eds.) *Landscape, Natural Beauty, and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 7 In this essay I generally refer simply to Olmsted. He and Vaux collaborated on Central Park and Prospect Park, while Olmsted went on to do many more projects on his own and with others.
- 8 Quoted in R. Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, ed. J. Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 168.
- 9 J. D. Hunt, “‘Ut Pictura Poesis’: The Garden and the Picturesque in England (1710–1750),” in M. Mosser and G. Teyssot, *The History of Garden Design* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), pp. 231–41.
- 10 J. Addison, *The Spectator*, 1712, number 412.
- 11 G. Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 130.
- 12 Quoted in Smithson, *Collected Writings*, p. 159.
- 13 The classic account of Bentham’s Panopticon, with references, is to be found in M. Foucault, “Panopticism,” in *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), III.3, pp. 195–228.



- 14 Smithson, *Collected Writings*, pp. 157–71; cf. G. Shapiro, *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art after Babel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
- 15 Plato, *Republic* (London: Penguin, 1955), Books II and III.
- 16 F. L. Olmsted, *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes*, ed. S. B. Sutton (New York: Da Capo, 1997), p. 65.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 18 See the lectures and interviews in Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *On the Way to The Gates* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 127–96.

PART IV

THE COSMIC GARDEN

