LANDSCAPE VIEWING IN METROPOLITAN BOSTON

by

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture
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Abstract

This thesis recognizes the importance of landscape viewing, especially as a solitary act of contemplation. It suggests the creation of a place from which to gaze upon a vast landscape. It postulates that an observation structure can act as a border between the natural world and the constructed world in order to accentuate their differences and to acknowledge the importance of each. In addition, this thesis shows why Route One next to the Lynn Woods Reservation in Metropolitan Boston is an excellent place for a landscape viewing structure.

The resulting design is an observation wall located between Route 1 and the Lynn Woods Reservation in Saugus. It is composed of two parts. The primary structure of the composition is two tall, tapering concrete walls that rise from beneath the ground. The walls curve through the landscape, disappearing and reappearing. Their character is a complement to the contours of the land. The secondary structure is a light wood and steel frame construction. This system supports the act of solitary landscape viewing by providing individual viewing lookouts in conjunction with a gallery space, a small library, and a small kitchen. The design is organized as a series of episodes along a continuous ramp. The interplay of the two construction systems is meant to evoke combined feelings of transience and persistence as well as the contrast that exists between the two types of landscape on either side of the walls.

Thesis Supervisor: Bill Hubbard Jr.

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"Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts again when we are alone." (Bachelard, p.184)

Human life is filled with limitations—time, space, money—but often what is most limiting in the late twentieth century is lack of understanding. People do not know where they fit into the melee that surrounds them; they cannot sense their role in the world. They wish they could put their lives into a larger perspective. They recall the feeling they had as a child that the world was immense and awesome, yet safe and livable. They think they could reclaim that sensation, if only they had the time and place in which to do it.

The inability to find one's role in the world is, in part, a product of life in the twentieth century. It is hard to find time for reflection; it is even harder to find a peaceful place for contemplation. It is hard to find a place containing movement, yet excluding distracting unpredictability. It is rare to find a place that has opposite qualities in union, such as balance and movement, silence and noise, light and shade. Many of the environments in
which people spend time contain too much of one set of qualities and not enough of the other set. An individual's usual environment may be conducive to work or to recreation, but may not be suitable for contemplation. Where can a person find a place for contemplation?

To answer this question, one must first explore two aspects of the act of contemplation: contemplation as retreat and contemplation as enlightenment.

The first aspect of contemplation, retreat and escape, is a familiar theme in vacation advertisements: the appeal of "getting away from it all." However, it is not always necessary to leave home to "get away." Some people are fortunate enough to have escapes within or around their home: a basement or an attic, for example. Some find quiet, detached spots in or near their workplace: a window looking onto a garden, or a balcony overlooking the ocean. Unfortunately, there are many other people who search for retreats from daily life but are unable to find them, especially in the city. Finding a retreat or escape seems to be an especially difficult problem for students, transient families, lower income households, and mothers who stay at home. Ironically, these are the people who need it the most. They cannot find peace and solace until they go home; even then,
quiet contemplation may be impossible if the architecture or the social environment is not supportive. Solitary retreat is crucial because, as Julie Moir Messervy writes in *Contemplative Places in Cities*, "It is only when we are alone, or in the company of others who share our mood, that we can go beyond ourselves, beyond the normal world to a larger one which connects us with places and times beyond the one we're in." (Moir, p.60)

The second part of contemplation is the discovery of that link with the larger, surrounding world. It is not simply that humans want to escape the world through contemplation; there is a need, as real as hunger or thirst, to find an understanding of how one connects with the world, an understanding that will enable one to return to everyday life and live with meaning. The act of contemplation can accomplish this. By detaching people from the limitations they encounter in everyday life, it can allow people assume the vastness of the world of the mind. This occurs in solitary contemplation as one's focus shifts, first to the immensity of the world beyond, then back to one's self as a part of that immensity. Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* describes this as becoming a "mirror of immensity." (Bachelard, p.196) Rather than being caught up in the
complexities of the pieces of the world, one can gain a special understanding of the world and a connection with it in its entirety.

A specific way of connecting with the world in contemplation is to find an understanding of the human relationship to the landscape. One might do this by considering the roles that individuals play in the landscape. Although humans relate in many ways to the landscape, ways which may shift at various times in their lives, these roles could be polarized into two categories: human as a social animal and human as an animal of nature. People love the excitement and stimulation of landscapes that support human interaction: the marketplace, the political forum, the street. At the same time, they love the solitude and power of the natural landscape: the beach, the mountain, the forest. At various times, a person may argue that one or the other is more important, more proper, or more fulfilling. However, as Bachelard writes, "None of us is ever entirely political animal or entirely inhabitant; we are unpredictable mixtures of the two. We enjoy the dense vitality of the city only to complain that there are not enough green spaces where we can be alone with nature. To live close to nature in the
open country is a wholesome experience—if only there were more political coming together!" (Jackson, p.12)

To see and understand this duality is one way to find one's role in the in the landscape and in the world. It is one way of "mirroring" the immensity of the world in one's self. It is not enough merely to understand the relationship in words; it is something that must be felt. It is only useful to one's life when understood through the act of contemplation. It is one way in which contemplation can give an individual a connection with the world.

Therefore, understanding one's role in the world, going beyond one's limitations, finding that "immensity within ourselves," must begin with the creation of a detached place of contemplation, a reference point, that recognizes the duality of humans in relating to the landscape.
Landscape Viewing

"The two kinds of space, intimate space and exterior space, keep encouraging each other, as it were, in their growth." (Bachelard, p.201)

What could serve as a contemplative reference point? First of all, if one wishes to understand one's relationship to the landscape, it seems natural to create a vantage point from which to view the landscape. Secondly, if one is to understand the duality of landscapes as reflected in oneself, this lookout point should be in a place in which both types of landscape exist.

Landscape viewing can be a wonderfully contemplative and revitalizing experience. Regardless of whether one lives in an urban, suburban, or rural area, one can find pleasure and meaning through visual connection with the landscape. A well-placed window, a hillside, or the top of a skyscraper can provide people with a view of the world around them that they would not otherwise have during their daily activities. In addition, experts are beginning to discover that landscape experiences of this sort are important for children's development. As one psychologist explained, "the rural needs of the urban child are not just the sights of the farm or the pleasures of running untrammelled through the woods or exploring the country park.
They include vital personal experiences and discoveries like silence, solitude, and the sensation of utter darkness.” (Hiss, p.39)

While any kind of landscape viewing can be meaningful, the most exhilarating kind of landscape viewing happens when one is alone in a protected place at the edge of a great expanse: standing on a promontory, riding in a ferris wheel, or standing in the prow of a ship, for example. The stretch of one's view is unlimited, and yet one does not feel lost or immersed because of the protection of the lookout point with its connection back to a larger land mass, structure, or boat. A lookout point enables one to survey the landscape in its broad expanse; one can feel a connection with the vastness of the landscape as one's gaze travels to the distant horizon. The immensity of the landscape can be mirrored in the solitary viewer.

Metropolitan Boston is an especially appropriate place in which to provide an opportunity for landscape viewing. Although Greater Boston has many beautiful parks, plazas, and gardens for relaxation and enjoyment, few are suitable for contemplation because of lack of security or the absence of individuated spaces and foci for reverie. While some
associate with nature or with a natural landscape, few provide an expansive view from a lookout point; those that do are often privately owned and inaccessible to the public. The John Hancock Tower Observatory provides a dramatic view, but it is rushed, unfocused, and not very contemplative. There are public areas next to the expanse of the Charles River, but it is almost impossible to find a safe and secluded place in which to see the great vistas. The Bunker Hill Monument is somewhat contemplative, but lacks solitary resting places.

Perhaps the absence of contemplative lookouts in central Boston is related to the high price of land and the great demand for it. Perhaps people seeking quiet contemplation would rather drive than use mass transit to reach it. Whatever the reason for the absence of contemplative places, it seems useful to consider Suburban Boston as a potential site. First of all, suburban Boston contains large nature reserves that are accessible to people in cars. Secondly, outlying areas are more often the sites of recreational facilities, partly because the demand for land is lower. Finally, suburban Boston is home to an exciting and interesting newly-constructed landscape, one that is unknown in the inner city, called "the strip."
The strip is a new and unfamiliar sort of urbanism, and people are not sure how to evaluate it. Evaluated by criteria of older European-style cities, it may seem crude and inhumane. These may not, however, be valid criteria for such a new, uniquely American environment. J. B. Jackson says that the American landscape "has an un-dreamed of potential for public spaces of infinite variety...the college campus...the high school auditorium...the sports arena...the flea market...the strip. If their humanizing function seems doubtful that may be because they have yet to develop, but even now there can be no doubt as to their popularity." (Jackson, p.20) The strip is a place where the highway is determinant. In this way, it reflects the way most people in the twentieth century operate: from their automobile. It reflects the freedom of individual transportation, the energy of entrepreneurship, and a certain sense of humor and optimism.

More than this, however, the strip is an attractive site for landscape viewing because of its juxtaposition with vast natural resources. Large reservations of lakes and forests can often be found intermingled with new development. These resources are not as well-known as Boston Common or as well-populated as the Esplanade, so they serve perfectly as objects of
solitary contemplation. Viewing the landscape of the strip is also fascinating because it is the artifact of bold human endeavors, progress in transportation and communication, and individual expression. It gives us insight on the natural, uninhibited workings of commerce and technology. Is it as beautiful as the forests and lakes of the nature reserves? In the words of J.B. Jackson, "...a landscape is beautiful when it has been or can be the scene of a significant experience in self-awareness and eventual self-knowledge." (Jackson, p.64) Its value must be understood in terms of its contribution to one's understanding of one's personal role in the landscape.

The specific site that was chosen as a place of landscape viewing is the Route 1 strip in Saugus next to Lynn Woods Reservation. The site is about ten miles north of central Boston at the Saugus-Lynnfield border.

The natural component of the site, Lynn Woods Reservation, is an underappreciated natural resource adjacent to Route 1. Many people in Boston are familiar with Route 1, an active area of restaurants, stores, offices, and housing. However, the people who work on Route 1, and the thousands who drive past Lynn Woods, are not even aware that it exists!
Even though it is immediately adjacent to the highway, the berms along Route 1 hide it and protect it.

Lynn Woods is a large, forested area, still beautiful and unspoiled, containing a clear lake, Walden Pond (not Thoreau's pond), used for drinking water. It was shaped by the action of glaciers, which can be seen in the crags and crevices of granite outcroppings. Walden Pond sits quietly in a clearing 1000 feet from the highway. Local residents like to hike through Lynn Woods or play there, but its isolation makes it somewhat unsafe for recreational use. In addition, the woods can be bitterly cold in the winter, and camping is not allowed. Swimming and boating are not allowed, either. So people do what they can do: hike in groups, mostly. Lynn Woods could be appreciated by more people and provide the solace that people need if an observation place were adjacent to it, receiving its visual beauty without destroying its natural balance. It is easy to imagine the inspiring view out to the lake from a perch above the treetops. Thoreau said in *Walden*, "A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature."
The constructed part of the site, Route One, is deliberate and unyielding, boisterous and expedient. Route One cuts boldly through the landscape and knows only its own rules of highway engineering. It is a huge, fast-flowing river, impossible to cross, but thrilling to ride. Its roadside attachments are created as objects to be viewed at sixty miles an hour in a car, and are designed for low cost and expediency. The Route One strip is a human construct, made to suit human ideas of modern convenience, adapting to what it sees as the ideal human lifestyle: good, fast food; a large selection of products; and the exciting connection of people over long distances through the invention of the highway.

The site embodies the duality of human roles in the landscape as described in Chapter One. It is an ideal place of reference from which to consider both ways of inhabiting the environment: as a natural animal, and as a political animal. That part of a human being that is a creature of nature is supported by the natural world of Lynn Woods Reservation, while the political part is supported by the bustling commerce of Route 1 and all of the stores, restaurants, dealerships, and office buildings that attach themselves to it. The landscape of Route One is created for the benefit of humans who
wish to join the human society, whereas Lynn Woods merely evolves as people try to live harmoniously with the natural world.

Route 1’s embodiment of the political environment, juxtaposed with Lynn Wood’s natural environment, makes the site ideal for revitalizing, contemplative landscape viewing.
Walls for Landscape Viewing

"Slowly, immensity becomes a primal value, a primal, intimate value." (Bachelard, p.195)

What form best suits the act of landscape viewing? Initially, one might think of towers—observation towers, monuments, skyscrapers—because they provide the wide, distant views that allow for the internalization of immensity. Towers, however, rarely support individual contemplative landscape viewing in their design. More commonly, their goal is to be as tall as possible, in order to become a landmark or "beacon." This kind of presence usually detracts from a contemplative atmosphere because it attracts everyone in the tower's vicinity, regardless of their aims. Reaching the top becomes the primary goal of visitors because of the top's prominence. Sitting quietly along the way, or having any kind of privacy, is not encouraged because of the singular importance of the summit as the place to be. Height, of course, is important in achieving distant views, but it is possible to achieve height without verticality. Why not consider horizontal forms, such as walls?
First of all, horizontal forms can be much more conducive to contemplation because they can be "discovered" in the landscape and explored by those who seek a quiet view. Exploration and unexpected discovery are important in landscape viewing because they are activities of a contemplative journey, as opposed to the goal-oriented climb of a tower. When the goal is not presented as singularly important, the journey itself becomes the goal.

Secondly, walls can reach an appropriate height for distant viewing while still being a part of the landscape around them. Towers are generally set apart from the landscape; they become part of the sky. Walls remain earth-bound; they remind one of one's connection with the earth's landscape, which is an important reminder in the process of viewing the earth's landscape and absorbing its immensity.

One can even argue that horizontal forms are more appropriate than stand-alone beacons to the auto-oriented society in which we live. "It is evident that increased mobility, and even more, an increased experience of uninterrupted speed...bring with them a sharpened awareness of horizontal space and the eventual transformation of many landscapes devoted to
recreation." (Jackson, p.70) Walls can express horizontal movement and transformation along a path.

Finally, walls can serve as boundaries.

Walls as boundaries dominate the historical landscape: the Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, and fortress walls, to name a few. Even today, they play an important role as markers in the landscape, giving what J. B. Jackson calls "a permanent human quality to what would otherwise be an amorphous stretch of land." (Jackson, p.15)

There are signs that humanity is growing tired of linear boundaries that are used to stabilize social tension: the Berlin Wall, for example. People want to break down the barriers that divide them. This is, of course, an important social goal. However, walls themselves deserve a reconsideration in terms of their positive roles as margin-definers. This is best explained through the example of garden walls.

Garden walls are not used as dividers of social groups; they are used as aesthetic tools. They help to clarify the form and structure of the natural pieces of the garden, they suggest particular ways of moving and particular views, and they provide a backdrop to nature and to human activity. They
enrich human understanding of the environment, thus enriching self-awareness.

Similarly, walls for landscape viewing can enrich self-awareness by suggesting movement and views, serving as a backdrop, and increasing understanding of the environment. In the case of Route 1 in Saugus, walls can act as a divider or margin to express the contrast between the world of Route 1 and the world of Lynn Woods Reservation.

"...man, the political animal, thinks of the landscape as his own creation, as belonging to him...whereas man the inhabitant sees the landscape as a habitat which was there long before he appeared...he is its product. Yet the two points of view have this in common: they see the landscape as something shared; they assume that human beings cannot survive and fulfill themselves unless there is a landscape to hold them together in a group." (Jackson, p.40)

Walls can become the shared element, part of the landscape that holds people together. Serving as a boundary between the "political" or man-made world and the natural world, they can help us to understand the duality in ourselves as well as the significance of both kinds of landscapes.
"From being imagined, calm becomes an emergence of being. It is like a value that dominates, in spite of minor states of being, in spite of a disturbed world. Immensity has been magnified through contemplation." (Bachelard, p. 210)

The Lynn Woods Viewing Wall, designed for Route One in Saugus at the Lynnfield border, seeks to be three things: an embodiment of landscape duality, a mechanism for landscape viewing, and an experiential journey. As an embodiment of landscape duality and as a mechanism for landscape viewing, the viewing wall is best explained by photographs of design models and by references to similar structures. The final section, *An Experiential Journey*, contains more specific architectural drawings as a possible scenario.
An Embodiment of Landscape Duality

The Lynn Woods Viewing Wall consists of two systems: a system of massive curving concrete walls, and a system of light wood frame attachments. The duality of the systems echoes the landscape duality, and their juxtaposition is a continual reminder of their simultaneous presence.

The wall system feels at home with the natural landscape of Lynn Woods and the topography of the area. The walls break through the ground, rise, and dive back in, similar to the granite outcroppings of the area. They run counter to the rise and fall of the land, complementing the contours and serving as retaining walls to two of the three significant hillocks on the site. They contain the colors of the granite, so they are "discovered" in the landscape, rising just above the treeline.

They are made of rough-textured sitecast concrete to give them the kind of singularity and natural quality that the granite outcroppings have. Their order is based on the landscape and their awareness of their own structure.
The walls have qualities of permanence and timelessness. Their self-supporting structure give them a feeling of independence, as if they existed previously for other purposes and could take on new meanings and uses in the future.

As a pair, they are two-sided and are therefore neutral and indifferent to the contrasting landscapes on either side of them. The varying window patterns on either side are obviously part of the wood system, appearing as a later addition for viewing and contemplation. They appear to be cut specifically to serve the character of individual episodes.
The lighter wood structure is secondary to the concrete wall structure. It feels tacked-on, and its structure uses the wall as support. It contrasts with the timeless wall as a temporary, expedient structure, much the same way that the buildings along Route 1 are for convenient enjoyment by humans.

It allows for movement through, along, and over the walls, and it provides places to stop and contemplate. It serves the important function of protecting people from the elements, giving them a degree of comfort in their natural surroundings.
This system of wooden "barnacles" is also designed to have an aesthetic quality of human warmth that enhances contemplation and viewing. Its wooden structure is more absorptive of sound than steel, and it holds the warmth of the human body long after it is touched. It is custom-fitted to the curve of the walls and to the size and shape of human beings.

Its contrast with the heavy, immovable landscape wall gives it poignancy and significance. It calls to mind images of other structures erected for the enjoyment of natural landscapes, such as the wooden platforms at Niagara Falls or the propped-up walkways at the Flume in New Hampshire.
Although it adequately supports the comfort needs of landscape viewers, it is not so pervasive or overwhelming as to get in the way of the strength and potency of the natural elements: the walls and the landscape. It is not so easy to inhabit that one forgets the power and difficulty of adapting to the natural landscape.
A Mechanism for Viewing

Viewing the landscape in this case is not connected with the experience of being in the landscape itself. The relationship of the viewing wall to Lynn Woods Reservation is similar to that of a pagoda that is used to view a sacred garden. Each vantage point is set up for the viewer to take a mental journey, rather than a physical one, into the forest and out to the lake.

The ability of people to physically wander out into the forest is intentionally thwarted in the design of the walls. This is crucial because the walls' main purpose, landscape viewing, is best fulfilled by establishing a distance between viewer and object that is significant enough to give the viewer a wider or further perspective than he or she usually has. Furthermore, with the presence of the viewing wall, the forest actually gains significance as a special natural feature that should not be entered without contemplation and preparation.
March 21, September 21, 9am

March 21, September 21, noon

Much of the viewing experience is affected by the movement of the earth. As the earth rotates, different regions of the viewing wall are gradually illuminated. One area is warmed by the sunrise over the lake, while another is cooled by the shade of the heavy walls in the afternoon.

March 21, September 21, 3pm
The viewing experience also changes as the seasons change. Particular viewing platforms become more hospitable or less hospitable. During the summer, the areas between the walls are much brighter and feel less enclosed. In winter the area between the walls feels more cave-like. Views are more distant in the winter when the leaves have fallen from the trees. In autumn a shorter-distance view offers the color of the leaves. The dense summer vegetation creates framed and partial views.

Every time one visits, the viewing experience is slightly different.
An Experiential Journey

The contemplative journey begins in the car, driving north on Route One through Saugus. After passing Hilltop, Kowloon's, and Tower of Pizza, there is a hint of something different up ahead. The trees and the slope block the view, but pieces of textured concrete wall are visible, rising past the treetops.

Another car pulls off the highway onto a ramp that seems to carry him in the direction of the wall pieces. Following him, one begins to see that the pieces seen from the highway are only the tips of walls whose heights range from one foot to sixty feet.
A wall appears first on the right side of the road. It disappears, then
another appears on the left side of the road. The slope and curve of the road is very gradual so that one's attention focuses on the discovery and observation of the walls, rather than on driving.

Site Plan, 1" = 240'
The walls seem to rise from beneath the earth. Tapering toward the top, their heights vary according to their width. They emerge, then plunge back into the ground, following their own natural rhythm. They seem unaware of the presence of anything but the rise and fall of the land, serving as retaining walls to two hills, one of which is on the Route One side.

Drifts of vegetation and trees flow across the places where the wall is low, as if the walls were ancient ruins taken over by nature. The higher parts of the wall, however, cut through the trees defiantly. There is also evidence that there are a few breaks in the stands of trees where grass and lower vegetation dominate.

The road levels out to a plateau, upon which several other cars are parked. Evidently, when there are more than about ten cars, they park on the wide shoulder of the road. There are no painted parking lines on the plateau; there are, however, some areas covered by gravel, and there is a spot between a couple of trees and a boulder that seems like a good place to leave the car.
Looking up at the closest wall, there is evidence that this is not simply a ruin or a rock formation. There are holes cut in the walls, and there are platforms extending from the walls, some of which contain solitary figures. There is also a larger platform at the top of the wall, but it is about fifty feet above ground, so only the bottom of it is visible.

The entrance is not immediately apparent, but the visitor soon sees that there is only one opening, a mousehole in comparison to the tall wall, at the top of a small hill. The wall curves around the plateau, giving an invitation to enter its "mouth."
The world inside is dark except for a large high window straight ahead, through which the tops of the trees are visible. There is also a wash of light from the sky above which filters through the roofs to the ground.

Choosing to turn right, the visitor realizes that the primary path always runs next to the near wall and has a constant gradual slope. One always moves next to the rough, massive wall, upon which are attached drain pipes, steel angles, and other tacked-on fixtures. Due to the slight separation between the walkway and the wall, the light from above travels unbroken along the wall's surface, emphasizing the wall's singularity and strength.
It appears that the walkway is part of a larger system of ramps and platforms. One strolls from place to place on the sloped ramps, but all other activities occur on level platforms, including the stair tower and elevator.
Walking along the ramp, one encounters the first "event" past the stair tower. Stepping onto the platform, one finds a refrigerator, a counter, and a microwave.
Section B-B through kitchen, 1" = 8'

While cooking a purchased snack, the visitor gazes upon a group of tree trunks through a hole in the outside wall.

Although there appear to be many more platforms above this one, it is somehow soothing to rest here in silence for a moment in the protection and enclosure of the walls. The traffic noises of Route One are no longer noticeable, and there are only traces of sounds from other people. This new world seems to offer a retreat from the pressures of the outside.
Thinking that there must be a nice place somewhere along the walls to sit and eat, the visitor puts the snack in an insulated box and proceeds along the pathway and up the stairs.
On the next level, there is the opportunity to sit alone with a view into the forest. The visitor's mind follows the grassy pathway that swerves between stands of trees.
Platform openings frequently reveal, then conceal, views to other parts of the platform system. The curving walls constrict and expand the interior space, adding to the drama and suspense. The visitor searches for other areas of discovery and different kinds of views.
The second level also houses a small collection of landscape paintings and a tapestry that hands down to the first level. Alternating with the paintings in the gallery are small porthole windows. Some look into the branches of the trees, but those that happen in the breaks between tree drifts have more distant views along the hillside. The views are not yet very broad in scope, and they begin to whet the visitor's appetite for a more extensive picture and for a liberation from the enclosure of the walls.
Continuing along the main ramp, one is struck by the variety of openings in the wall. Each seems to be shaped to the particular activity or view it accompanies. Occasionally, there are openings that are disconnected from the platform system, as if they were waiting to be connected.
It is getting more difficult to walk along the ramp. The slope has increased from one foot in twenty on the first level to one in ten feet on this third level. There is a reward, however, in the frequency and size of the wall openings. It is much brighter, and a bit more exciting.
There are even openings out to the Route One side. One sees the cars streaming by, people walking from cars to stores, and car salesmen showing their new models. On the Lynn Woods side, the visitor first begins to get views out past the trees to Walden Pond. The vastness of Lynn Woods becomes more apparent.
Along the ramp on the third level are a set of bookshelves and a librarian who oversees them. Most of the books, fiction and non-fiction, are about nature and the landscape. Picking out a book, one can check with the librarian, then follow a catwalk to a reading nook. The wall serves as a threshold in which to sit and look out past the treetops.
If one is still looking for a place to sit and eat, one continues past the elevator platform to an even more steeply-sloped pathway.
The far wall has fallen back into the earth in this area, so there is the excitement of being freed from enclosure. This area also contains the best places for landscape viewing. The view is unobstructed by trees so that one can see out over the treetops, even past Walden Pond.
On the Route One side, one can see across the highway to Hawkes Pond and its pump station. One is removed from both of these worlds, held in a "nest" just big enough to turn around in.
The nests are ideal vantage points for individual viewing. They feel enclosed yet extended, like the car of a Ferris wheel, or the prow of a ship. They allow one to reach as far out as one wishes with the body and the eyes, while still maintaining a connection with safety and protection. One is exposed in front, but protected by the tall back and sides of the chair, which give extra privacy.
Still, stepping into one demands confidence, and this allows one to imagine being confident and secure in the larger world. One daydreams about security because one has an objective visual control over the world below. One is filled with awe of the breadth of the world, but at the same time, one is filled with confidence by one's position in relation to it.
The journey through this system of ramps and events gives one the preparation needed to reach the final point in the journey, the summit.
It has been difficult to get to this highest point, which is about twenty feet above the treetops, but the feeling of completion and accomplishment is worth the climb. The platform at the top of the walls provides an almost completely uninterrupted view in all directions. It is a place of exhilaration and fear; it is a mountaintop.
For the first time, one is close enough to touch the top of the tapering wall. One has now been exposed to the entire range of wall widths, openings, and exposures.

From deep within the enclosure of the concrete walls, and of one's own walls, one now emerges into the full sunlight to join fellow explorers in the open realm of the extended landscape.
The world below seems somehow inviting. Preparing to leave, the visitor hopes to bring this feeling of peace and confidence to everyday life.

And yet, gazing at the stairway spiraling up into the sky, the visitor is reminded that the journey, in a sense, has just begun.
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