

CONTEMPLATIVE PLACE IN CITIES

by

Julie A. Moir

B.A. Wellesley College

1973

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degrees of

Master of Architecture

and

Master of City Planning

at the

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

June, 1978

Signature of the Author _____

Department of Architecture

May 23, 1978

Certified by _____

Kevin Lynch, Professor of City Design

Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____

Associate Professor Chester Sprague, Chairman
Departmental Committee for Graduate Students

Copyright © Julie A. Moir

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE
OF TECHNOLOGY

JUN 28 1978

Archives

LIBRARIES

CONTEMPLATIVE PLACE IN CITIES

By Julie A. Moir

Submitted to the Departments of Architecture and Urban Studies and Planning on May 23, 1978, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of Master of Architecture and Master of City Planning.

Abstract

Man searches for places of retreat and quiescence to counter the active, noisy world of today's urban setting. He finds pockets of privacy in informal as well as formally-designed spaces in the city in moments of leisure and repose. Designers don't often recognize this need, concentrating instead on the public, communal aspects of urban form. By examining a range of people's contemplative experiences, and by abstracting this information into understandable characteristics and design guidelines, we can hope to influence designers to think more carefully about the role contemplative place should have in a city.

Interviews conducted with a range of people who work in downtown Boston revealed four "archetypes" of contemplative place. Observations of the places they go to show the existence of some characteristics in common among them. The thesis presents a set of flexible rules for designing these places, using case studies from Boston and other cities as examples.

This thesis also discusses some of the practical considerations in creating contemplative places. It looks into problems of implementation in the public sector and possibilities in the private sector, and suggests an alternative, the enclosed public garden, for our cities.

Thesis Supervisor: Kevin Lynch
Title: Professor of City Design

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have written this thesis through the guidance of two people who have decisively influenced my ideas about the philosophy of design in today's world. Professor Kinsaku Nakane, a noted designer of traditional Japanese gardens, taught me the techniques of building these gardens, the most beautiful contemplative places I know. The friendship and wisdom of Professor Günter Nitschke have also been important, influencing me to go to Japan in the first place and helping me to understand my experiences there since my return. I dedicate my ideas to these two men.

I would also like to express my gratitude to those who have helped me during this time. My thanks to my sponsor, Professor Kevin Lynch, and to my readers, Professor Jack Myer, Professor Molly Potter and Professor Chester Sprague, for their thoughtful criticism, encouragement and support; to all the people at the State Office Building and the Quincy Markets who donated their time to be interviewed; to Alice Klein for her valuable help in editing and clarifying my ideas; to Harriet and Tim, and to Susan for their many acts of kindness; and to John for making it fun after all.

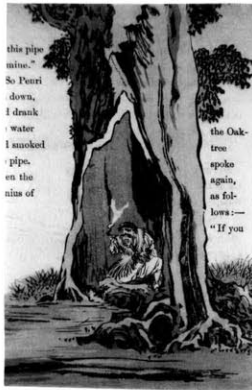
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	1.
Introduction.....	4.
Chapter I: Exploring the Need for Contemplative Place.....	10.
Chapter II: The Characteristics of Contemplative Place.....	42.
Chapter III: Designing Contemplative Place.....	73.
Chapter IV: Practical Considerations in Creating Contemplative Place.....	103.
Appendix A.....	119.
Appendix B.....	124.
Notes.....	128.
Credits.....	132.
Bibliography.....	134.

FOREWORD

1.

My own need for contemplative places goes back as far as I can remember. I was one of seven children in a lively and rambunctious family, and I dreamt of special places to hide away in. I loved fairy tales and dolls and diminutive things, imagining little retreats and houses for all my playthings.



We lived in a Chicago suburb on a tiny lot undistinguished except for one thing: an Indian tree. This was a tree so huge and gnarled that it had become a piece of living sculpture and was felt by all of us to be endowed with special powers that could produce lightning and cloudbursts. We never climbed it, but it engaged our imaginations as nothing else could.

As I grew older I became fascinated by attics and cupolas—little houses atop bigger ones. I longed for a grand old Victorian house with a lookout place on top just for me. I spent hours arranging and furnishing this tiny, secret

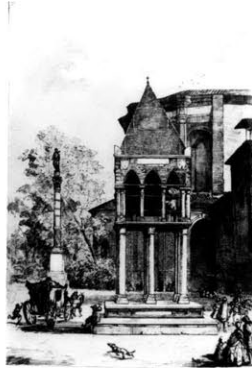
house in my imagination, luxuriating in the thought of being up there all alone, hidden, free.

For years I was also fascinated by the idea of secret gardens, which I dreamed of in elaborate detail. Within would be soft mosses, flowering trees and a rocky stream, enclosed by an ancient brick wall. I would discover, possess and care for each one all alone; secret, separate worlds which I nurtured in my imagination for lack of such places in reality. I always hoped these dreams would one day come true.

I finally found my secret gardens in Japan. There, in Kyoto, I discovered several hundred such gardens, protected from the noisy, bustling city by walls enclosing all the archetypes of childhood musing: mountains, caves, rivers and diminutive places. These gardens are urban oases, almost sacred in their serenity, designed to resuscitate the soul.

I studied, designed and built gardens like these for eighteen months and returned home, more conscious of the





need for places of reverie and contemplation in the city. I found almost none here that were created expressly as sanctuaries in the city. This led me to question some of the purposes of urban design in America today, and to want to know more about other people's needs for contemplative places, in order to rethink attitudes and assumptions of architects and landscape designers. On the basis of what I have learned in talking to others, it seems that we all need places for contemplation; places where we can stop and take stock of ourselves before rejoining the rush of ordinary life, places where we can focus on the middle distance: the dynamic between self-scrutiny and our place in the infinite.

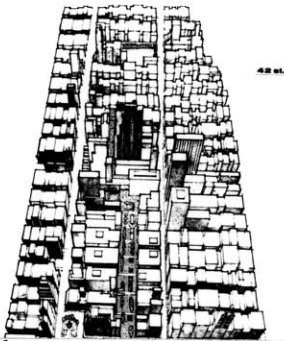
INTRODUCTION

4.

A typical day at work: up at seven, shower, shave, rushed breakfast, missed bus, crowded subway...appointments, phone calls, meetings, headaches...

The city is a high-load environment. A typical day shows masses of people experiencing unending streams of visual, sensory and psychological stimuli within highly regulated, stress-filled lives. The excitement of living and working in a city; of coming into contact with all sorts of people, cultures, objects, ideas, is too much too often for many. Constant stimulation and excessive activity is not only exhausting physically, but psychically as well, testing one's tolerance and upsetting one's balance; eroding much of one's inner sense of oneself.

For the American city is an intensely public world. Every inch of space seems earmarked for some collective enterprise, rationalized for an economic or public purpose. What open space there is, is designed as "public activity nodes", and as such, are often vast, windswept gathering places, with a few benches given over to the individual.



Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, til there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.

Isaiah 5:8



Except in some isolated pockets, usually in older parts of cities where life continues to spill over property lines, invading the streets and merging private space into its common communal extension, private space has been banished behind the walls of dwellings and made to fit the contours of secluded rooms.

Paul Shepard

So many planners and designers believe that "the social function of open spaces in the city is to bring people together."¹

But what about the need for space apart as well? Why is that non-collective need so rarely met? Why is one's only space for self-consolidation, solitude, and repose in one's own home, completely cut off from the activity that is alternately delightful and overwhelming? It is as if we have been told that we cannot desire solitude, quiet or calm until we return home each night; that the city cannot accommodate such needs. And so, our lives hover between the two extremes: a public, active, outwardly-directed side, and a private, passive, introverted one. Few alternatives are offered by the designers of city space today.

Part of the reason is one of economics. Soaring costs of mid-town land means absolute efficiency in its use by the private sector. City governments, using their own land or creating incentives for others to do so, work to provide



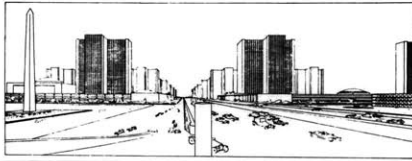
Contemporary man has rationalized the myths, but he has not been able to destroy them.

Octavio Paz

needed open space in the public interest. Yet, because that interest must serve as many people as possible, collective spaces only are created. Anyone who has walked down 6th Avenue in New York City will agree that such spaces do not always work; they end up serving, not the public, but no interest at all, and waste valuable land in the process.

The main reason may be more complex. It seems that, in American cities, we have no clear-cut, well-defined "behaviour setting" for quiet, self-reflective activity, except within our own homes. And even there, we cannot always find places for retreat - especially if our houses are located in crowded urban neighborhoods or have too few square feet per person within them. It has been suggested that we haven't recognized as a culture, the value of introverted activity, and demand no environmental setting for it. The fact that places for reverie and reflection are "missing"; are not clearly identifiable as a special form of space, means to some ecological psychologists, that people using cities don't desire them to exist.²

This thesis asserts that people do desire such spaces, and that in the absence of areas designed expressly for such needs, they find substitutes that become highly important to their well-being and enjoyment of the city. It will point out the way people have had to adapt spaces built for active, social uses, and show the unplanned spaces which often satisfy their needs more naturally.



The question of whether man can master his self-imposed fate will be determined in large part by how well he solves the challenge of leisure and the public open space necessary to accommodate much of it.

Wm. H. Whyte

Contemplative place as a concept is both imageable and analyzable. Like other types of space, contemplative place has understandable formal properties and design characteristics, and different kinds may be identified. Through an examination of these characteristics, the thesis suggests opportunities for contemplative place design, both at an urban scale and an architectural one. It will also discuss some of the planning issues involved in institutionalizing these places within today's urban setting, and introduce a possible model which may provide a workable addition to what exists as public open space in our cities today.

The time seems right for a study of contemplative place in cities. The public has complained too long about the dehumanizing aspects of "the urban wilderness": the increasing crowding of one's private world, the dangers lurking in the public one, the stress and tension of the work environment. Increasingly, they are demanding improvements in their living and working conditions. Contemplative places, although not solving any of these problems directly, would set aside time and space for people - in the midst of it all - to "recollect" themselves, and perhaps help them to maintain a sense of balance and perspective in their lives.

Many single men and women suffer from loneliness in their leisure hours, which in some cases results in neurotic conditions and even suicide. This is particularly true in big cities, where life can be alien and impersonal. Just getting away from the city is not always a solution.

Stanley Parker

At the same time as people expect more from their environment, so too they look for more in themselves. They are healthier; taking care to eat well, to move more, and to take time out for themselves for self-reflection. If, as designers, we disregard the need for places in the city for the self, we shall have failed miserably in our

When I speak of the contemplative life I do not mean the institutional cloistered life, the organized life of prayer...I am talking about a special dimension of inner discipline and experience, a certain integrity and fullness of personal development, which are not compatible with a purely external, alienated, busy-busy existence.

Thomas Merton.

We live in cities badly; we have built them up in culpable innocence and now fret helplessly in a synthetic wilderness of our own construction. We need - more urgently than architectural utopias, ingenious traffic disposal systems, or ecological programmes... to make a serious imaginative assessment of that special relationship between the self and the city...

Jonathan Raban

desire to build a better world. Lewis Mumford sums up the problem for the design profession in this way:

Today, in most countries, we tend to overplay the role of mass movements and mass satisfactions and mass attendance at spectatorial sports. We forget the need to offset the pervasive compulsions of the crowd by providing plenty of space for solitary withdrawal. Man, as Emerson observed, needs both society and solitude...³

EXPLORING THE NEED FOR CONTEMPLATIVE PLACE

10.

What is contemplative place?

To see a dream is to pass over by the mind into the secret place of divine contemplation. He who ascends by ecstasy into contemplation of sublime things sleeps and sees a dream.

Richard of Saint-Victor

The man in contemplation is a free man. He needs nothing. Therefore nothing determines or distorts his thought. He does whatever he loves to do, and what he does is done for its own sake.

Aristotle

Let's begin by stating what it is not. Contemplation is not necessarily imbued with religious mysteries as many authors have written of it. It is not meant to describe the "religious meditation" of Thomas Merton, for instance, nor the state of "Deep Reflection" that Aldous Huxley describes, nor is it the mystical experience of Zen monks hinted at in the many books on Japanese Zen Buddhism. Contemplation may have overtones of all of the foregoing spiritual experiences, but our definition refers to a state of mind that people experience in their everyday lives.

Our notion of contemplation is less mystical than restful, less a form of meditation than a form of leisure. Our sense of contemplation relates more closely to the quiet

joy of reverie and reflection, to the union of memory and imagination in a calm and tranquil mind.⁴

For a better understanding of the need for contemplative places in the city, people who live and work there were interviewed. Two small samples of people who work in downtown Boston were selected; ten were employed in an office near Government Center and ten were shopkeepers in the new Quincy Market Buildings - a newly renovated activity center for downtown Boston. The office workers - 5 men and 5 women ranging in age from 23 to 60 had various occupations and all occupied the 21st floor of the building. The ten stallkeepers, again 5 men and 5 women, represented a similar range of ages. These two work settings were chosen in order to see whether people's need for contemplative places was affected by the atmosphere in which they work and spend most of their waking times.



Interior, Quincy Markets

The following questions were asked of each person interviewed:

- 1) As a child, did you have any special daydreaming places; spots where you would go if you just wanted to get away to think or dream for awhile? What were they like?
- 2) Do you have any such places in your environment today, either home or work? Are there any special places you go for reverie and reflection in Boston?
- 3) If you could go anywhere in the world for contemplative activity, where would you choose to go?

Questions were also asked about their age, occupation and living situation.

Responses to Childhood Memories

I remember reading one fairy story about a princess and a goblin. The princess had a bed next to a mirror and all she had to do was walk through the mirror and she'd be in another dimension. Well, I used to lie there at night and dream that all I had to do was roll over and I'd be in another dimension too...

When asked to look back upon their life as a child and to recall their "special places for daydreaming", people remembered, immediately and with great detail, the contemplative places they had cherished in their youth. They seemed to find such areas both within their own homes and outside of them, in parks, cemeteries, and beaches, but interestingly enough, never in the playgrounds they were supposed to play in. Each person had a storehouse of special memories of these places and recalled them with enthusiasm,

and often, nostalgia.

Houses provided the necessary retreat spaces for some people, but not for all. Remembered most vividly was the attic, loved for its great height, its intimacy and secrecy within the eaves, and often, for its unfinished quality as compared to the rest of the house.

I remember making a little room for myself up in the attic under the eaves just to get away.

I had one special place in that house - an unfinished room with a skylight where I could go in at night and look up at the stars...I had this one little corner up there, just tucked in behind the chimney and no one ever thought to find me there.

Other areas of the house were mentioned as well: the coal bin was described as being dark and warm, despite its dirtiness; a sunporch was for one man, "the only place I can remember being cozy and quiet and alone," full of filtered light through hanging plants with a view out to the little garden beyond. Their own rooms provided some people with places of retreat, often merely because they felt they had some control over who was allowed to enter. When forced to share a room, the person would seek places outside

The child seeks to make a world in which to find a place to discover a self.

Edith Cobb

of it; whereas in smaller families, where one "owned" one's bedroom, it became a haven.

Sometimes all one needed was a "big old rocking chair" right in the living room of one's house, focussing attention on the family stereo to feel in a dreamy mood. The rhythmic rocking motion, the enclosing quality of the chair and the evocative music created a contemplative place in the middle of the family's most communal and active area. People who grew up in crowded circumstances especially, claimed corners of the living space as their own.

Time and ritual also played a major part in people's recollection of contemplative places in their childhood. One young woman talked of walking the dog in a park in the morning and evening only because it was quieter then; another remembered in acute detail waking each Saturday morning with the sun streaming in her window and hitting the bureau which housed her elder, much-admired college sister's leftover things. Her contemplative place involved a special ritual of laying out the bows, clips, scarves and other knickknacks

Thanks to games and fantasies,
the inert natural world of adults - a chair, a book, anything - suddenly acquires a life of its own.

Octavio Paz

of her sister's in a methodical order, arranging them, admiring them, and delighting silently in the images, sounds and scents which signified her sister. Her self-created ritual gave her the space and time for reverie.

These same places mentioned within the house of one's childhood: the very top of it, the very bottom of it, the very(outside) edge of it and the very center of it, were locations of contemplative places outside the home as well. Most frequently mentioned were places up in the air: tree-tops or treehouses, towers or lookouts, cliffs and bluffs. Like the attic of one's house, with its view on the sky, these places too had the virtue of being surrounded by air and light, yet hidden within leafy boughs, or nests which others couldn't see. Part of the love of high places came because of the means of getting to them in childhood: the act of climbing.

In these special places which he will always remember with peculiar reverence, the child's play is at once monkey- and cat-like, hiding, stalking and capture. Pursuit, flight, scuffling and organizing are woven through secret hides, cherishing trees or thickets, rock piles or dumps, basements and alleys.

Paul Shepard

At the top of the park there was this old tower - the Powderhouse - and if you go to the top of it you'd see out all over Boston. I used to climb one tree up there and be able to go from tree to tree and never touch the ground. I was always climbing,

I guess, even the tiniest tree. I just always had to get to the top...

Some of the other places mentioned were nearly the opposite of the high place - like the coalbin - they were small and enclosed, and often, hidden from view from others. For many, just being beneath an enclosure overhead was enough: under the dining room table or "just sitting under an old tree looking up at the sky and twirling a piece of grass in my mouth." For others it was being within an enclosed area with a view to something beyond oneself as the old abandoned box car in the woods was to one woman, and as a church was to others. Nestled into her pew, one particularly religious woman found contemplative moments in her childhood staring out at the symbol of Christ at the altar. Located right next to her childhood home, the church offered a space of solitude which was always there as an important alternative to her otherwise busy life.

Still another important type of contemplative place mentioned in the childhood interviews was the place by the

Or I would go on walks - there were these great rock formations and a wooded area out behind the house, and not too far away was an old abandoned box car.

edge of the water. For most people interviewed, especially the men, their predominant image of contemplative place was that of being nearby water, whether by the seashore, the river, or pond. For subjects who grew up in the Northeast especially, the seashore was mentioned quite often:

When I was thirteen, I became more mobile, and could travel on my bike all the way to the shore - that was my favorite place to get away and be by myself.

Others went to Gloucester or Rockport or down to the Cape Cod area in order to find an isolated spot on the beach "as far out on the rocks as I could go". Within the city itself, the North End beaches were mentioned as were places by the Charles River, and Fresh Pond in Cambridge. And for the man from Nafplion, Greece, nowhere he had been in America was as satisfying as his native village, a hilltown directly on the Mediterranean Sea.

I come from Greece. Not 15 steps from my house was the sea. That was where I would go to play, to sing, to be alone. It was built on the edge of a mountain, my hometown, with a castle on top.

Water cleanses my soul.

Water then, held a deep fascination for all the respondents (only two failed to mention it at all during the entire interview). Besides the deep symbolic meanings water

It is very healing, the ocean-
just the sound of it.

I'm really hooked in with
water. It's just enough to
smell it in order to feel bet-
ter in the midst of all this
craziness.

could take on, were its associated properties: its feel, its taste, smell and sound. The latter two especially seemed important in people's childhood associations of contemplative water places: "I love anything with water in it...especially the sound." For another person it was enough just to smell water to feel better in the midst of city life.

The last place mentioned from memories of people's past contemplative places was that of the wide open area. Being in the middle of a wheat-filled meadow was one person's childhood dreaming spot; wild berry fields nearby to parks and schools was another's favorite place: "I was always out there wandering around...I loved fields." One young woman who grew up in Medford, a rather dense urban area, found solace in a playing field behind her house, a part of the Tufts campus.

I love openness, being in the
middle of nothing. I don't
like edges, perhaps because
I always feel secure wherever
I go. My ideal place would be
an open field with a few trees
around the edge...

There wasn't anything particular about the place,
no trees, no bushes, just an open field...

For a city child, an open deserted field must have been
a luxury indeed.



Four types of contemplative places found in childhood could be recognized from the first part of the interviews. The types reflect the desire of children to 1) be up high, 2) be within, 3) be at the edge of and 4) right in the middle of a piece of turf, no matter what his or her background may be. These places seem to be based upon some fundamental contemplative images - archetypes perhaps - found in nature: mountains and treetops, caves and huts, oceans and rivers, and meadows and open fields. They bring the child close up to the primary forces in the universe and thus to his own most elemental self, as he touches the air, the earth and the water from vantages he creates to do this.

Responses to Ideal Images

My ideal place would be a house upon a hill with no other houses around. Inside, there would be a sunporch with all glass on all sides, plants everywhere and all kinds of greenery outside too. It would be in the middle of nowhere or maybe by a beach, but that wouldn't even be necessary if I could just get away...

It was fascinating to relate the results of the question on one's childhood contemplative places to the responses concerning people's ideal ones. Although separated in time by the question about places respondents go for peace and quiet in the city today, responses to their ideal places

We are condemned to live alone, but also to transcend our solitude, to re-establish the bonds that united us with life in a paradisiac past.

Octavio Paz



The child's early perceptual continuity with nature, the innate gestalt-making process of the nervous system, then remain the biological basis of intuition. Something of this process remains in the adult memory, bathing parts of the environment with the colors of paradise.

Paul Shepard

provoked associations as vivid and rich as those of the childhood set. Most people had a fixed and ready response, as though they had dreamed about it many times before.

People's initial responses were full of natural images: islands in the ocean, mountain-top homes, and open fields in the middle of nowhere. Others mentioned small enclosed enclaves within the city: churches or small chapels, tiny enclosed gardens, or their own bedrooms; in one woman's case, a place surrounded by plants and a mirror. All spoke with a hint of wistfulness, for few seemed able to believe that they could find their dream.

Most interesting of all was the correlation of one's childhood response to his ideal one: this revealed that fully 50% of those interviewed who found richness in one or another of the types of childhood contemplative places, looked for that same kind of place again in his adult day-dreams. That is, those who found solace in water places as children, dreamed of water places again in adulthood as ideal spots for reflection and reverie. Those who loved

Going to the beach alone,
 watching the water, the birds,
 laying back, sitting on rocks...
 those are my favorite day-
 dreaming occupations. Or
 up in the mountains you get
 that feeling. And sometimes
 when I go fishing with this
 friend of mine who doesn't
 talk much...it's very relaxing,
 like being alone except you're
 not.

When I was a boy I would lie
 right down in the middle of
 the city and watch ants on the
 sidewalk...I was always fas-
 cinated by nature. I just like
 to witness to what goes on, to
 watch things very carefully.

high places like mountaintops or tree huts, dreamed of
 living above the world in some ideal place of their own
 making. And for the most imaginative, those who found re-
 treats in all the childhood archetypes, seemed to be the
 most able to find them easily still in everyday surroundings;
 they were the least frustrated, the least nostalgic and had
 adjusted their lives according to their imagined set of con-
 templative places: they actually found their ideal spots.
 One respondent had moved to the North End because of his
 love of the water, and had set up a "daily constitutional"
 for attending to it. Another person found joy in almost
 any form of contemplative place, and described himself as
 "a Pisces - a constant and enthusiastic daydreamer". He
 seemed to be highly aware of corners in the city, his of-
 fice and his home to use as daydreaming places, and responded
 to all questions in the interview with the richest and most
 wide-ranging sets of contemplative places.

Responses to Boston's Contemplative Places

The leisure that people need today is not free time but a free spirit; not more hobbies or amusements but a sense of grace and peace which will lift us beyond our busy schedules.

Gordon Dahl

I grew up in the war, so I could never be alone, and I still never am. Oh, once in a while I'll go up to the mountains in New Hampshire to find a little peace and quiet.

If privacy and its associated mechanisms are ignored or rigidly incorporated into designs, or if the meaning of different levels of personal space and territory is not recognized then people will have to struggle against the environment to achieve what they consider to be appropriate degrees of interaction.

Irwin Altman

In most cases, responses to the question concerning where people go to find places for reverie and reflection yielded pallid responses in comparison to reactions to the other two questions. Not only were people more hesitant about their replies - as if the place in mind really didn't qualify as a contemplative place - but also, their degree of enthusiasm decreased considerably. In a few cases (all males) no response at all was given, as though the idea of such places within the city never occurred to them. Also, although a large range of places was mentioned, they all seemed to be areas which the respondents had adapted for their own purposes; that they would take over spaces with little expectation that they would really find much quiescence and solitude there. There was some amazement among respondents that there were not more good places for getting away from the city, and a feeling that planners should be providing more of them for their use. When pressed on this question, few could think of ways to do this however.

My remedy for working in this place is to go home and talk to no one unless I want to. I even got rid of my phone.

A few people seemingly had parceled their lives into "active" times and "passive" ones, expecting little but a highly public world until they returned to the quietness of their home life. Therefore, these people didn't even search for places of contemplation - they expected none and found none. They would save up all their reflection time until they got home, and could "really relax", and be themselves again.

There was also a marked difference between groups interviewed. The Quincy Market group spoke long and vigorously either for or against their present crowded situation. Those who had to stand out in the open all day, with no counter to hide behind were especially upset about their own plight. They blamed much of their situation on management's lack of interest in their needs. They had almost no privacy anywhere in the building, and basic facilities such as an employees' cafeteria or restrooms were not provided either. One young woman talked about how many of her fellow employees would find tiny corners to crouch behind to get

Management doesn't care about us...they should have built an employee's lunch room and bathrooms.

I've never liked crowded places; I avoid them at all costs. I guess it's strange that I work in the Markets then...I'm a person who really needs alot of solitude to be happy.

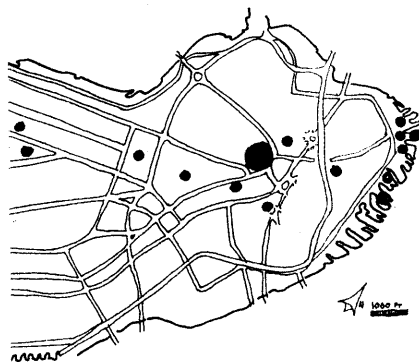


The great thing about the Market is the fact that it gets people out of their locked-up apartments and houses and into the world for awhile. It would really be perfect if they could find some places within it all to be alone too.

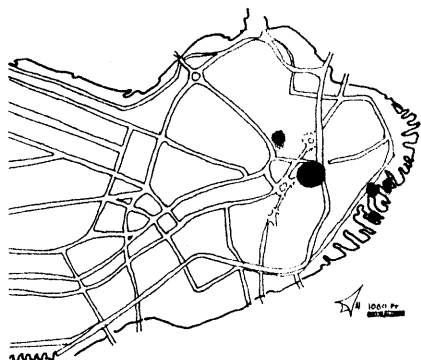
away from the crowds of people who descend daily upon this popular Boston attraction. Another person said flatly, "It's impossible to be alone here."

Others, predominantly men, loved the Markets for precisely that reason. But of the two who reacted that way, one lived on Cape Cod, working every few weeks only, and the other came from a crowded and vocal family and cultural background, saying he had never been alone in his life. One can conjecture that perhaps only people who love the constant company of others should be encouraged to work there; or better, that management be induced to provide private facilities for employees to be able to leave their crowded posts for awhile. One young woman said that she was luckier than most, because she had a back room to go to in order to get away.

Few others have the luxury of getting away like that, but it's funny, even back there you're really not far from it all because you can hear the humming of the crowds. I always think of it as being like one giant beehive in here.



Map showing office workers' responses



Map showing shopkeepers' responses - contemplative places in Boston

Another fact distinguishing one group from another was the distance traveled to get to contemplative places; perhaps due to differences in lunch hour length, or in other intangible qualities. The maps showing locations of contemplative places in Boston show the differences in responses very clearly: the office workers ranged over distances up to one-half an hour away from their office building on foot; while the shopkeepers sought contemplative space only 5-10 minutes away at the most. Many of the Market interviewees didn't ever venture out of the building at all, due to lack of break time, while others were so tired from standing on their feet all day that they would rush to the nearest and quietest empty bench outside their workplace and just sit. On the contrary, many of the office workers tended to love getting as far from the office building as possible, some even stating that if a quiet place were built right below them, they wouldn't use it because it would be "too close to work". These opinions tended to be those of the men, whereas most of the women would have loved a quiet place at the

base of their building, "as long as it had a pond and some plants and was quiet". These divergent responses suggest that as many opportunities as possible should be explored for providing a range of contemplative places all throughout the city.

People found quiet times at different points of the day. For most, the lunch hour was the only time they sought a break from the activity of their life; for a few, this time would come in the early morning before work, or late in the evening after returning home. Those who found time for reflection best seemed to be citydwellers who, in the case of one man, would go to the Waterfront Park, buy a cup of coffee and watch the joggers and the water before walking to work. One young woman mentioned her times for thinking as being at the odd hours of the day "because they're so calm...I guess that during the working hours, things are just too crowded and active."

Another thing I do in the summer is to get up early and before work go to the Waterfront Park. I buy some coffee and sip it by the water, just watching the joggers and the water. It's so quiet, and I feel really relaxed before going to work.

The following sections are summaries of the areas mentioned by people as their contemplative places in Boston.

They represent a surprising range of places used by the two groups, and have been broken down into headings by "archetype": water places, open places, enclosed places and high places.

The Waterfront



Recently, I've even resorted to sitting out by the waterfront in the cold weather. It's worth being cold just to eat lunch in peace.

The waterfront was mentioned quite frequently by both groups interviewed, especially by the Quincy Market employees. Since they were situated within a five minute walk from the Waterfront Park, its name came up quite frequently as being a place which should have taken care of their contemplative needs, but, for the most part, didn't. In good weather, they reported, it was much too crowded to go to for such purposes, even more so than the Markets themselves, and so was used only in inclement weather. The office workers too, shirked the Park in good weather, but found the docks and wharves around it much more satisfactory for contemplative purposes.

People who mentioned the waterfront area seemed to be devoted water enthusiasts, building daily and seasonal

rituals out of being near it, aware of any other watering spots in the vicinity as well. As mentioned earlier, one young man made a "daily constitutional" out of it:



I get up early before work for a walk down by the water usually. I have all sorts of options depending on what I'm thinking about...If I'm feeling social I go to developed sections of the waterfront, like the Aquarium. If I just want to think, I go to the less-developed areas, and although there are often other people there fishing or sitting, they don't bother me, because they're all just as spaced out as I am.

This person, then, "found" places by the water, places where only other people who recognized the same need in themselves went. He chose routes which would take him past these places on his way to work or home, so he could stop in if the mood hit him. Another man, an older person also from Boston, made use of the Waterfront Park in much the same way, getting up early to sit there by the water. "It's so quiet, and I feel really relaxed before going to work." Because he lives in East Boston, this respondent's use of the Park is "on the way" too.

Water is very healing. People give off vibes I think, and I am here receiving them all the time, one person's vibes after another. I find that I have to get away to cleanse myself of them - so I literally take a hot bath or shower every night when I get home.

The "found" quality of these places makes them very special in the hearts of respondents. As with a secret, "this strongly emphasized exclusion of all outsiders makes for a correspondingly strong feeling of possession."⁵ Like inhabiting an attic in childhood, so too the citydweller finds his places of contemplation in his environment, no matter how hostile, and "owns" them for the time he occupies them. They are nodes in a network of places in the mind, claimed for the moment physically perhaps, but held within one's heart. How devastating it can be to find someone else in one's place, or worse, to find it gone.⁶

Other Watering Spots

Some people seemed to be drawn to water, no matter where it was located, and found an ability to be reflective near it. One young woman discussed the merits of different restaurants around the office building where she worked in terms of their inclusion of water fountains or pools or not.

You sort of imagine a corner in your mind. When I first was learning meditation, I would imagine myself on a beach on Martha's Vineyard, building the image in my mind, and found that the image really centered me in myself. It's like creating your own shelter in the mind; like a cave.

My ideal place is to have a house not too far away, but somehow by itself. Maybe up a bit from some water...yes, to look down at some water from a cozy place would be perfect.

I don't need flowers and greenery
I guess; I seem to need water
more.



Have you ever been to the Magic Pan?
I love rustic places, and we go there to have
lunch and sit either by the windows or
right next to the fountain they have in
the middle. Soupçon has a fountain too.
And lots of plants. Water and fountains
allow you to take your mind off everything
else, and just focus on it.

Another old-timer who works in the Markets and lived all
his life in the North End, often climbed "all seventy steps"
past City Hall to sit at "that tremendous rotunda of water,
that huge cascade." He went on to muse about the delights
of water:

Now up there you can really think. The
water, it drowns everything out, it's
like a melody, in the right key too. It
makes you feel so young again, so soothing.
It can bring you right back to your childhood.

The Common and the Public Garden

Among the only spots of developed green areas in down-
town Boston are the Boston Common and its adjacent Public
Garden. Surprisingly, neither place seemed to produce the
same depth of emotion in respondents as watering spots
did, yet was mentioned by the office group just as often.

I can see now that when I get nervous and upset, I tend to head for open space. You have to slow yourself down once in a while so you can sort yourself out.

(These areas were really too far from the Markets to be considered within walking distance.) In only one case did a person mention claiming a part of the Common.

Outside of the office I go to the Boston Common, in the summer especially. I go there, but never to sit on the benches or anything like that. I go the the very middle of the place and lie on the grass. No people around, no benches, just grass. I'll just read or lie in the sun all alone there.

She chose the most remote spot in the Common as her contemplative place in Boston; no other would do. The only other person using the middle of the Common sat occasionally by the fountain, but otherwise didn't use it at all.

Instead, most people found the Common and the Public Garden as pleasant places to walk through. Several people had habitual routes through the green space in the middle of Boston, with or without destinations at the other end. The greenery, the dappled light, the flowers and hills all seemed to provide the right contrasts necessary to combat the stress of the day. Our observations showed that when they did sit down in the Common, most people gravitated to



the sunny benches located next to the retaining walls at its periphery.

Other Open Places

For the people who worked in the Quincy Markets, the variety of response to the question about special places for reverie and reflection in Boston was quite limited. Besides the occasional use of the Waterfront Park and the City Hall Plaza fountain, little else was mentioned except areas directly within or around the Market buildings themselves. Many sat on the benches which comprise the space between the buildings; a long flat area which has as its only point of interest some changes in paving, some sparsely-planted and regularly-placed trees, and many long benches. These people prided themselves on finding benches no one else ever went to; always at the edge of the open space, either next to the buildings or in the area just next to the street.



Where do I go? I go out there near the edge of the wall or to the benches near the parking lot, lots of pigeons out there!

Where do most people get away to to think quietly? Many of the shopkeepers go behind that case over there. And I've often seen the maintenance people eat lunch in the ladies' room just to get away from the crowds. And if you've been standing all day, and it's too crowded to sit anywhere, some shopkeepers even resort to sitting by the dumpster out the back - even when it smells.

For these overworked, overcrowded people, the edge of a place was their natural gravitation point; their protection from encroachment from all sides by others. We shall discuss the importance of this "inhabitable edge" for reflection and reverie in the following chapters; an important component of good contemplative design.

Churches

Churches were mentioned as contemplative places by several respondents, all of them between the ages of 45 and 60, and Roman Catholic. For one woman, the church had been the major reflective and quiet place of her entire life.

If something's bothering me, or if I need to get away to think, I always slip away during my lunch hour, or even before work to go... I have lots of kids to pray for you know.

She emphasized that her use of the church was never premeditated, except on Sundays, but was always quite on impulse. Being near to work, one church in downtown Boston was a handy, readily-accessible private abode for her. Another man, when asked what his ideal contemplative place

might be responded without hesitation:

Oh yes, St. Thomas More Chapel. I go there sometimes on my walks, stop in on a whim just for five minutes or so to meditate a bit.

The role of the church as contemplative place in a city is very interesting indeed. One seems always to be just a few minutes away from a church in a city, almost no matter where one goes. In downtown Boston, in the area of the office building alone, four churches were mentioned within two minutes walking distance. Marked off as special by a spire, with a tranquil and quiet sanctuary within, the church is perhaps the only contemplative place mentioned which was actually designed for such a purpose, together with a religious intent, and as such should be ideal contemplative places for all sorts of people. Yet they are increasingly underused in a city, due often to the perception of a person not of the faith of the church that non-believers are not welcome.

These are three great areas of our world which the churches have not really penetrated. They are: Hinduism, Islam, and the culture of modern cities.

First Assembly of the World
Council of Churches

Other Enclosed Places

A few people mentioned their use of the Boston Public

Library and its courtyard as special contemplative places. For one woman, it was far enough away from her workplace that it had an anonymous quality, drawing her to it on particularly frustrating days.

Sometimes if I'm feeling overwhelmed, I'll go to the Public Library and just sit; I'll find a sunny window spot and gaze out...you see, no one ever knows me there.

Another young man said that he doesn't like enclosed places too much, but he did spend an entire summer reading every day in the Public Library's courtyard. Because he could see the sky, he didn't find it enclosed, enjoying it for its shade, the fountain and its light. For both, some relation to the outside, or some reference to it was important in a relatively closed-in place.



A recent article in the Boston Globe brought out the importance of enclosure for dreaming in a city. Contrasting the pleasures of driving one's own car to work rather than taking the subway, columnist Ellen Goodman gave the following reasons:

The car and the subway come with matching horror stories - one traffic jam for every stalled train, one overturned truck for every power-out. We fundamentally choose wheels for the same reason Greta Garbo chose sunglasses. We want to be alone. (sic)

We prefer the private hassles to the public ones and the illusion of control to the feeling of being controlled. But more than anything else, the automobile is our isolation booth, our own piece of solitary confinement...it's our think space, where we do our best hoping and mourning, fantasizing and raging on semi-automatic pilot...⁷

Places of Activity

A few of the office workers mentioned crowded, colorful places as being excellent for losing oneself within. Although there seemed to be no particular time for crowd-seeking behaviour, there were particular places in the central city people chose. Filene's Basement, an ever-teeming bargain basement was one place mentioned; the other two were Haymarket Square and the new Faneuil Hall market place area, wonderful because they were like "a circus of activity". It seems paradoxical that highly active places should foster contemplative activity in a city as well as very remote ones,

Sometimes I just like to space out on activities, like in Filene's Basement...It's like a circus of activity. Sometimes, and I'm not sure what the difference is, I like heavy activity, sometimes heavy solitude.

but George Simmel, a famous sociologist, describes the problem in this way:

The reciprocal reserve and indifference and the intellectual life conditions of large cities are never felt more strongly by the individual in their impact upon his independence than in the thickest crowd of the big city. This is because the bodily proximity and narrowness of space makes the mental distance only the more visible. It is obviously only the obverse of this freedom if, under certain circumstances, one nowhere feels as lonely and lost as in the metropolitan crowd.⁸

The condition described by the respondent and Simmel is that of a place ripe for daydreaming and wild imaginings, not necessarily for contemplation. Contemplation is an activity carried on usually in a state of rest; it depends upon the inward images set off by tranquil exterior ones, not by the loud sights and smells of more vividly sense-oriented ones.⁹ Seeing oneself in the midst of a crowd, separated as Simmel points out, by a "vast mental distance"¹⁰ is another way to put the world in perspective, but not synonymous with the state of contemplation.

The essence of this discussion is that privacy mechanisms define the limits and boundaries of the self. When the permeability of those boundaries is under the control of a person, a sense of individuality develops. But it is not the inclusion or exclusion of others that is vital to self-definition; it is the ability to regulate contact when desired.

Irwin Altman

Windows and Views from Above



Because the office workers all worked on the 21st floor of an office tower, many mentioned their windows and views out onto the rest of the city as being important contemplative places for them, right within the office. They loved the position of being so far above the rest of the world - the vantage point which allowed them not only clear vision, but also, a certain perspective others didn't have.

If I get frustrated or upset sometimes and go over to those windows and stare out, it's really calming. I look out and think of what is going on out there, and somehow it helps put everything in perspective.

Two women changed the positions of their desks so that they could have a clear view out of their bosses' windows, moving the room around until their view out was just right.

Being on a high place allows one a wonderful view of the world below: the place one has come from and where one shall return. It allows one to suspend the self in time and space above it all, allowing a kind of interval of aloneness, of separateness before the inevitable rejoining

Sometimes I'd go up to a friend's house in Vermont and climb up the side of a mountain and just sit up there, with this great view of all Vermont.

of the "normal" life below. We shall discuss the importance of the "immense" space in the next chapter.

Other Places Mentioned

Other places I might think about going to in Boston are the MFA (Museum of Fine Arts), maybe the Christian Science Center, because the water there is so soothing, and the City Hall plaza when the water is turned on.

(The park) was an old historic place, and sometimes, you'd find bullet holes (sic) in those rocks and then just sort of dream about who might have died there, and how...



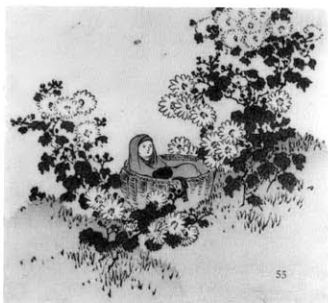
Museums and other historical places like Boston's Faneuil Hall were brought up in passing by a few people, who enjoyed imagining what had gone on in places in earlier times. They picked up references from the signs and symbols of other times around them, and were able to daydream and fantasize about "the way things were back then". Like the "bullet holes" found in some rocks in an historic park in one man's youth, strong associations to one's own past or a collective past were set off by some of the historical places in and around Boston.

Finally, one man mentioned that probably in extremely crowded central cities like Manhattan in New York, bars would be the only places of refuge:

Contemplative places in really crowded cities like New York are bars and lounges - everyone "gets away" in his drink.

Contemplative Places in the City

As we have seen, the types of places mentioned bear a strong correspondence to those types mentioned in the childhood and ideal interviews. Water places, open ones, enclosed places and high ones all were mentioned as being the most important contemplative places for people in a city, despite their lack of strong feeling for them. A recent book by Bloomer and Moore called Body, Memory and Architecture, describes how we animate our inner selves with the experiences of our childhood and adult lives, taking our identity from them:



...we develop memories of an inside world that include a panorama of experiences taken from the environment and etched into the "feeling" of our identity over a lifetime of personal encounters with the world. We populate our inside world with the people, places, and events that we "felt" at one time in the outside world, and we associate those events with the feelings themselves.¹¹

What feelings are associated with contemplative place? What qualities can we extract from the interviews which describe those places we populate either in our imaginings back to

The feeling of solitude, which is a nostalgic longing for the body from which we were cast out, is a longing for a place.

Octavio Paz

childhood or beyond to an ideal world? The next chapter describes the characteristics of contemplative place, analyzing their common elements and properties of design.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPLATIVE PLACE

42.

Now that we have identified the general types of contemplative place, we need to look more closely at the characteristics which are common to all of them. A contemplative place, be it a high place, an enclosed or an open place, or a place by the water, has definable elements and properties. The elements are those physical components which by their relationship to each other encourage reverie and reflection. The properties are more subjective qualities which are components of a contemplative frame of mind as well as of contemplative places. They were formulated by noting the common themes expressed by the people interviewed about the quality of environments they thought of as contemplative in nature, whereas the elements were abstracted from observations made of the places they mentioned in downtown Boston.

The Elements of Contemplative Place

This power and energy of extension are available to man through his own gravitational center which relates him to the indefinable, unknowable source of his own creation.

I. Rice Pereira

Without references for position and extension, the shock and impact of the vast realm of the incomprehensible, infinitely large will negate space and activate the experience of "nothing", accompanied by anxiety, fear and dread, because what is experienced is a "void" or a "vacuum".

I. Rice Pereira

The elements of contemplative place are the center, the reference and the frame. The center is the position from which the contemplator regards the world, his place in time and space. Through inhabitation of a physical "center", a niche within which he contemplates, he feels at ease and secure, able to concentrate on the reference before him.

He needs a physical symbolic reference for contemplative thought to enable him to extend his thoughts outward. This reference is a "mobile threshold between inner and outer experience"¹² allowing the contemplator to transfer his thought through extension.

The frame comprises the physical limits of a contemplative place and as a spatial metaphor establishes boundaries for the act of contemplation, isolating contemplative experience from other experience, and providing a three-dimensional place of peace and serenity.

The center, the reference and the frame interact through a kind of dynamic balance of sustained introversion and extension. The mind goes out and returns in a "space of contemplation", the area pondered when one "looks into the middle distance", or is "in a brown study". Inner and outer experience become a continuous cycle, superimposed in time through a tension of mutual reinforcement until something breaks the spell and normal awareness is restored.

Unless the two worlds - inner and outer - can be superimposed and sustained in the mind, there by giving depth and solidity to the substance of experience, man will lose his balance when confronted with the irrational, incomprehensible space of the infinitely large.

I. Rice Pereira



The simplest illustration of the interaction of these elements is that of people sitting around a campfire in a clearing of a forest. They sit on logs mesmerized by the crackling fire in front of them. This natural "reference" brings to each individual's mind different images based upon things past, or things yet to come. They feel protected by the "center" in which they sit, formed by the benches they occupy and the leafy overhangs of the trees. And their thoughts and actions are composed within the context of a "frame" - the clearing which bounds them as an entity

within the vastness of the rest of the forest around them. These ideas will be expanded further in the following section on the properties of contemplative place.

The Properties of Contemplative Place

The properties of contemplative place have been derived by comparing qualities mentioned by the people interviewed in Boston with similar qualities found in other cities. From such observations, we can sort out seven properties of contemplative place, some combination of which should be present for a place to be used for reverie and reflection. These properties are imageability, inhabitability, tranquility, movement, detachment, security and accessibility.

Environments that emphasize only either very little interaction or a great deal of interaction are, to my way of thinking, too static and will not be responsive to changing privacy needs.

Irwin Altman

Imageability

A contemplative place must have "that quality...which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer."¹³ As we saw in the interviews from remarks about places for reverie in childhood, strong images

evoked strong memories. Comments about ideal places also made reference to images remembered from dreams and fantasies, pieced together to form a highly detailed contemplative setting, one which people had lived in many times in their daydreams, but rarely in reality.

The "reference" is the element which is most concerned with the property of imageability. Images which compose the reference for a contemplative place are either natural, sacred or man-made. The most constant and compelling images mentioned in the interviews were found either in nature or in churches or cemeteries; for these carried deeply-felt symbolic significance and evoked memories of childhood, fantasies, and dreams.



Rarely were man-made objects mentioned as contemplative references. The only kinds which were brought up were man-made objects which moved: machines, mobiles or boats, for reasons which we'll discuss on the section entitled "Movement". It is interesting that while static man-made objects were found to be unsatisfactory subjects of contemplation, a

view of the city from a great height was found to be very effective.



There is one man-made image which tries to appeal directly to our innermost selves. We find ourselves, when observing a work of art, in the same state of awareness that we are in in the midst of nature, or in a church.

Rudolf Arnheim explains:

If one wishes to be admitted to the presence of a work of art, one must, first of all, face it as a whole. What is it that comes across?...We look for a theme, a key to which everything relates... Gradually the entire wealth of the work reveals itself and falls into place, and as we perceive it correctly, it begins to engage all the powers of the mind with its message.¹⁴

The power of a work of art to entice participation on the viewer's part may be as strong as any natural setting's; its symbols may be as deeply felt as those of the most holy sanctuary.

Contemplative places which are based upon an image of nature require a designer to examine its beauty with a careful eye, and understand its qualities and interrelationships. Lawrence Halprin, in his Notebooks, wrote down



what he observed to be the elements of a natural landscape, from his many walks taken to come to a better understanding of nature for his work as a landscape architect.

1. Unpredictable rhythms - as arrangements through scatterations of trees...
2. Relatedness of things - colors all related in brown range, fallen leaves, tree bark, earth shapes, etc.
3. Small counter rhythms - leaves falling, branches moving.
4. Sounds are quiet but persistent and unpredictable within a configurative pattern - as the stream moving over rocks.
5. All edges are soft - they feel as though they have become worn - not created into a fixed edge.
6. Evolverment by either addition or subtraction of shapes- i.e. erosion shapes or the additive shapes of growth.
7. Non-completion of spaces - the spaces all move into other spaces and are non-confined.
8. Variability of light - non-fixed and glowing.
9. This environment is permissive - it enables you to come in and participate on your own level in any way you see fit. It does not impose many restrictions, limitations but not restrictions.¹⁵

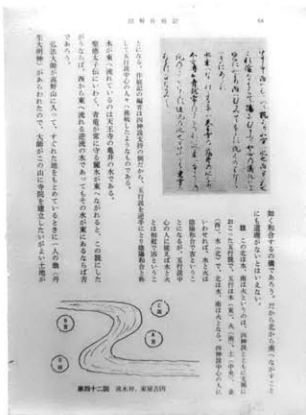
It is rare that one finds any of these qualities in a public park or plaza in the city today. Although this is only one man's interpretation of the image of nature, it is important as a means of describing nature's components useful to other designers as well. Few designers seem to really know nature,

Nature is really important in a place...I suppose there aren't really any natural places in a city - about the closest you could come would be to take one of those Harbor Island Cruises out to an island and then look back...

or take their design references from it. Japanese gardeners, on the other hand, most of whom have had to build within urban environments more dense than our own for the past 1000 years, still look to nature for their design ideas, walking in the hills and mountains which make up 80% of Japan's landscape to observe the natural construction of waterfalls, rock ledges and mountain streams, noticing the disposition of plant materials and abstracting natural forms into rules much like Halprin's for constructing their lovely gardens. American designers would do well, not to imitate Japanese gardens, but to look more closely at the origins of their beauty: to nature itself. Creating references which have an imageable quality is an important component of contemplative design.

Inhabitability

A major criterion of contemplative place is that it be "inhabitable": that it induce people to live in their thoughts within it for awhile. As we saw in the interviews,



Page from a 12th century gardening treatise showing Japanese gardening rules

My ideal contemplative spot would be a cabin in the woods near a waterfall, with just one room, very compact, and I could sit on a soft carpet on the floor.

many people's fondest memories were of those places they had inhabited in childhood - treetops, caves, rocking chairs, coalbins and attics - all places scaled down to their own size. At the same time, people reported another kind of inhabitation as important to their sense of contemplative place: an inhabitation which takes place in the mind, which extends beyond the physical coziness of the cave, and becomes a hollow to nest in within one's imagination. The two forms, physical and imaginative inhabitability, are both equally important to the success of a contemplative place.

Physical inhabitability is possible when one feels enclosed within something which relates specifically to one's own size. It is the one-to-one correspondence between man and his environment, the delight of discovering the niche which just fits. From this post, man can feel free to come to terms with the world around him. It is mainly through proper design of the "center" that one can physically inhabit a place, the qualities of which we'll discuss later on.



Imaginative inhabitability is an equally important property of contemplative place. Viewing nature close-up, like the man who studied ants on the sidewalk, or the woman who wanted a miniature garden in the midst of the city, allows on to step out of normal size relationships and expectations to occupy a diminutive world.

People also reported finding far-away places fascinating: views of the city from the 21st floor, a boat far off on the horizon, the view from a mountaintop over all Vermont. Rarely was the normal view of the world mentioned as being a contemplative one, rather, places were special only when they were either very close-up, or quite far-away; when one looked at one's world from an other-than-usual viewpoint.

We can come to characterize contemplative places then, as being either intimate in scale, or immense, depending upon the depth of the "space of contemplation". The intimate place and the immense one are alike in that the mind rushes to inhabit them, for both reveal the world as a miniaturization of itself.



Miniature landscapes like terrariums and courtyard gardens, as well as diminutive dwellings, like doll's houses and cupolas, become little worlds to inhabit for the dreamer, enticing his mind to wander as his body would, through the terrain which becomes full-scale in his imagination. As Gaston Bachelard puts it, "Every object invested with intimate space becomes the center of all space..."¹⁶

For an immense space, the factor of distance creates miniature landscapes on the horizon, abstracting something which is really one's own scale and making it tiny.

The dreamer, faced with these spectacles of distant nature, picks out these miniatures as so many nests of solitude in which he dreams of living.¹⁷



It is this fascination with the inhabitable miniaturized world which one feels from the top of the Empire State Building; one feels a certain power over the vast landscape below, as well as the enchantment of entering into all its intricate nooks and crannies, and the lives of the people who occupy them. When one sits alone on a beach, too, nestled into the sand, with a big windswept dune behind, one may imagine

I had one special place in that house, an unfinished room with a skylight where I could go in at night and look up at the stars.

oneself manning the shops which cross the horizon, or dream up desert islands to inhabit. And it is through seeing ourselves in miniature in the intimate or immense landscapes that we regain a certain perspective, sensing perhaps our own insignificance, or merely reestablishing our place in the world.

Tranquillity



A contemplative place must have the quality of tranquillity - of calm, quiet, soothing elements allowing a relaxation of tensions and a feeling of serene well-being in all who go there. In tranquillity are the muted strains of a faraway flute, the fresh mistiness of an early Spring morning, the velvet lushness of a bed of moss. It is the peace one feels through the silent awareness of one's place in the stream of time; of one's primordial self. Set aside for the moment are the cares and stresses occupying one's mind in normal time and space, replaced instead by images of deeper meaning: images of nature, of one's childhood, or of other times.

A tranquil environment is one which requires certain types of stimuli: those which allow a heightening of the senses together with a quietening of the mind. Such stimuli are neither static nor in constant motion; they are neither loud nor are they silent, not always bright, nor always dark. They are instead combinations of these qualities which recreate the tranquillity one looks for in nature in the sanctuaries we yearn for in our cities.

Polar opposites in union seem to create the tranquil setting. It may exude a quality of "bright darkness", interpreted through light quality, color or sound distinctions made between a contemplative environment and the rest of the city. As the interviews showed, most people desired spots which were significantly different from the city, and wished to get away from the overload of visual and auditory stimuli, from the "humming" of the crowds. They did not want somber environments however, but mentioned places which had natural hues and materials, flowers and greenery as their ideal places, bright sunshine, yet dappled light

My ideal place would have grass, trees, and flowers where you could see beautiful things, smell the flowers and hear the birds sing. It wouldn't have to be a very big place - even as small as this space here. (3'x5') Other people could come in once in a while...they wouldn't get in the way.

conditions. They wanted places which were intricate in detail yet simple in effect, where one is not overpowered by strong sensory elements, just gently affected by them.

Translated into design terms, this tranquil environment requires the overall use of deep, rather than harsh colors, hues which have a certain restrained richness. In the interviews, bright primary colors were rarely mentioned, except when speaking of the natural hues of flowers.¹⁸ Rather, most people spoke of verdant places, or those made up of earth colors and natural materials as distinct from the concrete slabs of the city.



To create a tranquil environment, one must also control the intensity and variability of light. Dappled light, for instance, plays with "bright darkness", creating rhythms and patterns of sun and shade which enhance the contemplative setting. Unrelenting shadows over a space doom it to failure, just as harsh sunlight on a torrid day drives people away.

I'm not that taken with water, even though I've had it near me all my life. I'd much rather have it in a little pond; not the ocean. I don't care about pounding waves and all that. I like places that are quiet and soothing.

Another means of reducing the stimuli in a city is to mask the sounds that it makes. Waterfalls and fountains have been successfully used to block out mid-town noises in a small space. The "quiet but persistent" sounds such as Halprin describes can be employed in cities to create a different environment than that of its surroundings. And water has thermal properties which add a special ambiance to the air: cooling us on hot days, both physically, by evaporation and psychologically, recalling other water places of our lives: old swimming holes, fishing trips or vacations by the sea. Wind chimes too, can act as masking devices for city sounds, suggesting coolness by the quality of their tones.

A tranquil place should never be a static one. Tranquillity can come in the juxtaposition of constant movement with unpredictable rhythms. Such small counter rhythms add a quiet dynamic which reminds us of nature: the forest trees which are brushed by breezes; dancing grasses. And we respond with awakened senses and a tranquil mind.



Movement

People remembered and sought out places for reverie and reflection which had some dynamic quality to them. They gravitated to moving water, moving clouds, people in motion. As one man pointed out:

I often go to sit near the Government Center fountain, but most of the time it's not even turned on, so I leave.

Since most of a city's landscape is immoveable stone, brick and concrete, that which is moving provides a special focus in its midst.

For contemplative places, there are two kinds of movement: actual movement and virtual movement. An image which shows or suggests motion invites the mind to participate far more strongly than does a static one. As Rudolf Arnheim says, "Motion is the strongest visual appeal to attention."¹⁹



Actual movement is usually important in contemplative places which have as their focus man-made images. The difference between a steam engine in motion and one which is



A fountain area without water is a dismal place in a city.

static tells the difference. A machine is meant to be in motion and until it is does not reveal its true nature: rhythms created by its various operations, sounds of metal against metal, smells of grease and steam, are only activated when the switch is turned on. One's eyes follow its complex processes, getting lost in its syncopated movement patterns. A static machine has none of these qualities.

As suggested earlier, actual movement is most interesting when not completely predictable. As in nature, "sounds are quiet but persistent and unpredictable within a configurative pattern."²⁰ Just as a stream moves over rocks, flowing gently over the flats, falling over rapids, so any man-made reference should try to create variable patterns responding to conditions in which it is located. References such as mobiles, wind chimes, and waterfalls can produce the effect, or the illusion, of tranquil motion, calming the senses and delighting the soul.

Virtual movement is movement which results from the interplay of forces within a static reference. Nothing is

actually in motion, but feels as though it is. How can we create the illusion of movement through a static reference?

This question is a complex one which artists are constantly attempting to solve, and we can only suggest a perspective from which to approach it. What is necessary to provide an impression of movement in a static object is an attribute which we may call "dynamic balance", this being a relationship of elements in a composition such that, as Arnheim says, "each relation is unbalanced in itself, but together they balance one another in the structure of the whole work."²¹ It is the combination of external tranquillity and strong potential activity which defines the whole: "the meaning of the work emerges from the interplay of activating and balancing forces."²²



The problem of all great works of art is really one of creating a solution of dynamic balance. And it is only in the contemplation of a reference which solves this problem that one is caught up in its internal movement, yet senses a balance to the whole. It is for this reason that

benches placed directly in front of symmetrical monuments are doomed to fail as contemplative places; there is no fascination in something which is in a state of "perfect"²³ yet static balance.

Detachment

To be detached means to remove oneself from activities and thoughts of the rest of the world. Yet detachment is distinct from isolation. Isolation means to cut all ties with the normal world, to retreat to a far-off place. Religious contemplation often demands isolation, as in the Middle Ages when monks and priests retreated to monasteries on remote mountains in order to meditate in more rarefied surroundings. The urban dweller today cannot often physically isolate himself from the rest of the city, he can only detach himself intellectually and emotionally from it.

Unfortunately, it must be admitted that the official contemplative life as it is lived in our monasteries needs a great deal of rethinking, because it is still too closely identified with patterns of thought that were accepted five hundred years ago, but which are completely strange to modern man.

Thomas Merton

Communion and solitude are opposite and complementary.

Octavio Paz

Detachment is the solitude of well-being, not the solitude of loneliness. For 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: that we can contemplate. As Bachelard puts it,

...in his solitary reverie, the dreamer of cosmic reverie is the veritable subject of the verb "to contemplate", the primary evidence of the power of contemplation. The World is then the direct object of the verb "to contemplate".²⁴

Towers and rooftops in the sky are perfect places to feel detached within, in part because they are so very secret. One can observe the world in solitude and anonymity. Sociologist Georg Simmel describes our love for secrecy in this way:

The secret produces an immense enlargement of life: numerous contents of life cannot even emerge in the presence of full publicity. The secret offers, so to speak, the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world; and the latter is decisively influenced by the former.²⁵

This second world then, provides a strong basis for contemplative thought. Secret places, by being detached, enhance one's enjoyment of a city. One person described her delight in coming upon a particular Italian restaurant in Beacon

The urban environment must allow such individuals periods of privacy at their option during which they may withdraw from the local communications process without danger of permanent isolation from it.

Christopher Tunnard

I had this one little corner up there, just tucked in behind the chimney and no one ever thought to find me there.

Hill in Boston which goes unadvertised, and bears only a small unobtrusive sign outside. She loves it especially in the summer when:



I sit back here on this bench, and bring something to read, and if people want to talk to me they just do it through the puppets. I feel pretty secluded in here compared to alot of the others.

you enter through a back brick-pathed alley between buildings like a pleasant tunnel, until you reach the patio - cool and green, with a fountain in the middle, and you feel almost as though this secret place belongs just to you!

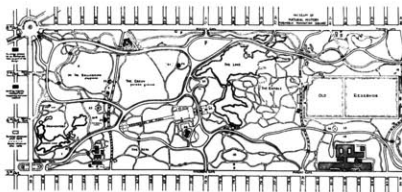
Isolation as a physical state is nearly impossible to achieve in a city; yet places conducive to a sense of detachment are not. As we'll see in the next chapter, places which seem detached can abut or lie within normal collective space, but that subtleties of design of the "frame" allow them to seem secluded and remote. Although not a perfect example of a contemplative place, Paley Park in New York City does illustrate well the concept of detachment in contemplative spaces. Located between two buildings on Manhattan's busy 58th Street, the "vest-pocket park" sits just off the street and sidewalk. Hoping to alleviate some of the noise from the street, the designers decided to build two brick "gatehouses" through which one

enters the space. They also raised the entire floor a few steps off the street, and created a "wall of water" to mask the city sounds. Because the park is nestled between three buildings, the gatehouses create a strong entrance structure and also complete the "frame" around the tiny park. Within it people sit on moveable chairs beneath the trees, relaxing in an atmosphere completely different from one only a few feet away. How to create places which feel detached, yet are secure and accessible to all who might find solace and tranquillity there are among the main issues facing designers of contemplative places in our cities.

It wouldn't matter if my special place were in a city or not; in fact I think it would be better if it were in the midst of buildings as long as the sun could get in...somehow it would be more special that way.

Security

One can only be in a contemplative frame of mind if one feels secure from outside influences within the place one has chose for retreat. It is this problem which has all but closed many of our traditional contemplative settings to daily use by citydwellers; one can rarely daydream on the grass on a sunny afternoon in many of our city parks without



Olmsted's Central Park was meant to be a large-scale sanctuary without walls.

anxiety. A sad fact but a true one: many of the most beautifully designed city parks, like Olmsted's Central Park, have become havens not only for seekers of peace and tranquillity but for criminals as well.

Three major issues seem to determine one's sense of security within a contemplative place: personal control, external control, and behavioral control. Personal control means that the use of the space feels that he is able to claim a place for the time which he uses it; that he is able to control the area within the scope of his vision from a secure "center". Perhaps he is a habitual user, like the young man whose "daily constitutional" takes him to the waterfront docks. He feels he belongs there and his customary sitting place is recognized as being his own. Or one might be only an occasional user, like the young woman who found her quiet place in the middle of the Boston Common. She claimed temporarily her open space there and felt secure because she was able to see all around her clearly, thereby spotting any intruders into her contemplative setting.

Outside of the office, I go to the Boston Common, in the summer especially. I go there, but never to sit on the benches or anything like that - I go to the very middle of the place and lie on the grass. No people, no benches, just grass. I'll just read or lie in the sun all alone.

People are always sitting in small groups or alone under the stairwells to eat. Or they go to the upper rotunda and sit on the floor or at the little tables there.



Usually however, feelings of personal control are gained by having a center with a strong "back" behind, shielding one from surprise from beyond one's peripheral vision; and a clear view in front in order to keep tabs on one's situation there. The "back" can be of varying sizes and materials, but should feel substantial, like a corner does, protecting the viewer and enclosing him.

...every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination...²⁶

Unless it is within a nurturing kind of niche, an exposed bench alone cannot feel secure enough for a contemplative place.

The need for a clear view in front is an aspect of contemplative space design which will be discussed in more depth later. In general, people seem to need to feel control over at least ten feet in front of them in order to feel secure.²⁷ This seems to imply that the "space of contemplation is the area of influence a person needs to be able

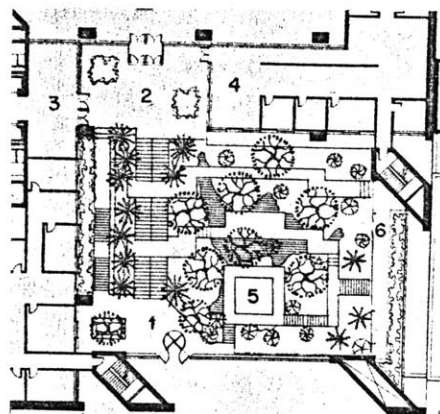
to feel in a contemplative frame of mind in the midst of a city.

External control is control of a contemplative place by forces outside of one's personal control. The knowledge that someone is nearby to protect you is always of major importance in a city. Much of the failure of today's inward-directed parks come from their very remoteness from any nearby onlookers. People are too afraid to go where they cannot be guaranteed safety.

(My ideal place) must be full of pretty things, a bit luxurious, organized, comfortable, and spacious... and yet impenetrable (with a fence so that no one could see in) I wouldn't care if it were in the city or the country so long as...I could deal with people on my own terms.

Proper external controls can come from either locating a contemplative place adjacent to a communal one, or removing it completely from the collective space, employing a "filtering zone" to maintain the security within. As we'll see in the next chapter, the question of contemplative/communal overlap is solveable by careful design of the frame of a contemplative place. By locating the contemplative place right next to, but on a different level from, collective space its users can be easily overseen by people gathering there.

The Ford Foundation Building in New York shows the latter possibility. Within a large brick office building is built an atrium: a lovely, light and plant-filled garden with hills and a stream, like a huge terrarium, right in the middle of a busy office space. Quasi-public in nature as this building is, the public is invited to enter, but only on the Foundation's terms.



The Ford Foundation Atrium,
New York City.

One enters the building at 41st Street through a heavy set of doors. Ahead one sees the garden. To the right sits a receptionist who doesn't bother you, as you naturally move toward the atrium area. Once there, you can revel in its peace and beauty, protected by glass walls all around, and a "back" of offices above. At the bottom of the garden, by the exit door, sits a guard further assuring one of contemplative security in this place. One is completely safe to enjoy the tranquillity here, protected by the existence of two "filtering zones" controlled by people who screen everyone coming in, giving one a good sense of external control.

From our analysis, privacy becomes more than just a state, it becomes a state of balance in the process whereby particular places are thought of as being closely related to activities - activities which we regard as so intertwined with our self concept that we wish to keep close control over their availability.

Irwin Altman

The third aspect of security at work in an effective contemplative place is behavioral control. This aspect has to do with the understanding by those who use it that certain rules of conduct must be observed. Several of the interviewees mentioned a desire to have more behavioral controls in operation in their ideal contemplative places:

I wouldn't mind a place in the city which didn't have too many people, and the people who were there understood what they were supposed to do in that place...I guess I am a strict regime sort of person - as long as they knew the rules, they could go.

Like the tradition of silence in libraries, churches impose strongly felt rules of conduct. Aside from these, there are few places of tranquillity which offer on the freedom to contemplate which comes with the unwritten understanding of rules.

The very heterogeneity of the American city prevents too many of these special rituals from happening spontaneously. Our notion is that if public places are really to be public they must be open to all kinds of people with different backgrounds, cultures and languages, and thus

with a different set of rules which they read from any setting. Institutions like churches and libraries work, despite the multiplicity of backgrounds of their users, because they have a well-understood, well-defined purpose, and a strongly perceived need for quiet in order to fulfill it.²⁸ It is precisely within these settings that contemplative places could be most successful; in places like the Ford Foundation building which overlap a contemplative setting onto one with another intent, establishing its own rules of conduct through juxtaposition of the two.

...a spirit of urban involvement will result in a new environment in which private and public space needs find a healthy balance, and joint use of communal space will supercede the conflicting uses of overlapping private spaces.

Christopher Tunnard

Accessibility

The accessibility of a contemplative place is for any individual the ultimate determinant of its success. A place can have all of the other properties mentioned, yet if it doesn't see within easy access of a person, he won't use it.

Many factors are involved in making a place seem accessible: appropriate distance, time, and season together create the right conditions for going to a contemplative place.

And, once there, a person must be able to feel that he has the right, or the means, to enter it.

As we've seen from the two different maps of contemplative places in downtown Boston, all the places mentioned are within a certain radius of the buildings the interviewees worked in. We can state that as a rule, any place beyond a distance of one-half an hour away (walking) is too far to be considered accessible. Obviously such perceptions vary: for two men, a contemplative place adjacent to their office building would be too close, but for some women who work in the same place, it would be "a place I would use all the time." Distance is a major factor in one's perception of how far one wants to travel to satisfy the need for reflection and reverie in a city.

Distance becomes larger or smaller depending upon the weather, the season, and the time of day. Many of the people interviewed mentioned only places which they went to on their lunch hour, while others found the early morning or evening to be most contemplative "because they are so calm."

If someone would fix up that little plaza right outside the office; you know, put in some nice trees, a fountain or two, I'd go there every day. If there were more places like that in the city, people would be happier, more content, and maybe they wouldn't rush around so much.

There wasn't anything particular about the place, no trees, no bushes, just an open field...I'd take the dog and walk up in that field usually early in the morning or late at night.

For them, other times of the day appeared to be "just too active, too crowded." Any designer of contemplative places must consider time as a very important factor in their feeling of accessibility, taking pains to schedule hours which enable working people to use them: during lunch hours, and before and after work.

Others mentioned the seasons as being very important to their success at finding places of contemplation in the city. Most people began their descriptions of places used in Boston with such phrases as "In the summer I..." The warmth of the weather allowed them greater freedom for discovering places for themselves, whereas the winter mostly frustrated such attempts. They tended to stay inside their buildings all day, finding Boston weather too intolerable to venture out in, although some of the shopkeepers found inclement conditions more conducive to finding peace in the city. A few people remarked that they would welcome comfortable places to go in winter weather and wondered why designers weren't providing places which were usable in

Of course in the wintertime there's almost nowhere to go - it's impossible to find the kind of place which feels secluded in the city.

all the seasons rather than just in the pleasant times of the year.

My ideal place? Oh yes, it's the Saint Thomas More Chapel where I go sometimes on my walks. I'll stop in on a whim just for five minutes or so to meditate.

Finally, accessibility also has to do with the perceived exclusiveness of a contemplative place. Many places of refuge in a city are the elite clubs for only a privileged few to enter. Other places, while catering to the public, price many people out of enjoying what they have to offer. One young woman mentioned the Prudential Tower restaurant and other rooftop eating places as being perfect contemplative places except that "they're too expensive for most people. If only there were more informal and less exclusive ways to be able to get up high like that..." The question of private institutions housing contemplative places is a tricky one. One view might be that all contemplative places should be public, accessible and open to all; another view is that they should be encouraged to exist in as many forms as possible, on both the private and the public level. We shall take up this question in the policy section of this paper.

My favorite contemplative place is a restaurant in LaJolla which is all wood, natural, with plants all around and a picture window to look out at the ocean...

DESIGNING CONTEMPLATIVE PLACE

73.

We have discussed the characteristics of contemplative places: their elements and their properties. Each is directly related to some aspect of contemplative place-making, but the question remains, how does one put them together to form a coherent whole? This chapter will discuss some of the factors the designer must consider in creating these spaces and suggest some flexible rules for siting and linking them, and for arranging their elements in ways most conducive to encouraging a contemplative mood.

Let us look at several prototypes of contemplative places based upon the four types discussed earlier. These models, together with discussions of aspects of contemplative places in various cities in this country and in other parts of the world, will illustrate how the rules offered can be applied, and they will show the significance of the arrangement of elements in each prototype and the relationship of the elements to the properties involved. We will

see, for example, that the design of the frame for a high place will be quite different from the design of the frame for an enclosed one. Too, the interrelation between elements - their relative balance - will be different in the various prototypes. In a place by the water, more emphasis must be given to the design of the center than to the design of the frame. This chapter, then, is intended to clarify for designers some of the intricacies involved in making retreats within the hustle and bustle of a city.

The Enclosed Garden

Walled gardens are a feature of many private residences, and could become a more extensively used design element for businesses and other institutions as well. For employees and visitors alike, coming upon a small spot of nature is a delight. As Lawrence Halprin comments:

Among the hard constructions of urban spaces, the confined and walled garden can generate a magnificent series of interrelations between man-made and natural forms seen at close range and intimately experienced - a complete universe in microcosm.²⁹

Human beings have persistently searched for the ideal environment. How it looks varies from one culture to another but in essence it seems to draw on two antipodal images: the garden of innocence and the cosmos.

Yi-fu Tuan



The wall itself - the frame - of such a garden controls access and provides the barrier between the secluded interior and the world just outside. A sense of security within the enclosed space can be ensured by the existence of a "filtering zone" where some control can be exercised in admitting visitors. In the case of the Ford Foundation's atrium garden, the filtering zone was the reception area one passed before entering the garden. In the case of the Boston Public Library, the garden is surrounded by parts of the building, which in itself acts as a control. Here, the filtering zone is more removed from the garden itself which lies off a major path connecting the new part of the library to the old one. Since people often pass by the garden on their way from one section to another, the garden is both accessible and secure.

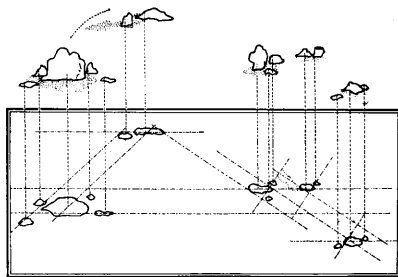
It is necessary, of course, in these confined spaces, to shift our sense of scale and plan microcosmically. The tiny garden must establish its own scale - its own frame of reference...

Lawrence Halprin

Gardens, as contemplative places, derive their power from careful design of the reference, the intimate landscape before us. As discussed earlier, the reference may be either a moving thing, such as a stream, waterfall or

fountain, or a thing characterized by virtual movement, such as a path or some other embodiment of "dynamic balance". An impression of movement can be achieved entirely within the confines of the frame or by extending the source of that impression beyond it.

Japanese gardens employ the dynamic balance of virtual movement in most of their dry landscape gardens. The Ryoan-ji stone garden in Kyoto is a good illustration of this principle. Arranged on a bed of raked sand within a space the size of a tennis court are five "islands" of moss and stone, with 5, 2, 3, 2, and 3 rocks composing them, respectively. Because there is an odd number of rocks as well as an odd number of islands, the composition as a whole is asymmetrical. How does the garden achieve a state of balance?



The balance of the rocks in terms of their height and mass in relation to one another is asymmetrical. Within each group of rocks there is a strong hierarchical order, and between the 5 groups of rocks there is a very subtle hierarchical order in which the eye is carried upward from rock to rock and from group to group by proportionally asymmetrical increments.³⁰

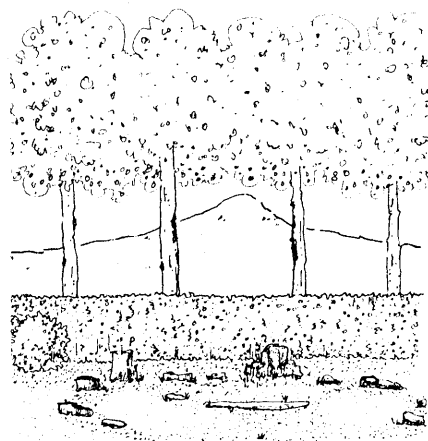
It is the hierarchical order which brings balance to the otherwise completely asymmetrical composition. The group of 5 rocks to the extreme left makes up a central theme, containing the tallest rock as well as the two smallest rocks. One's eye starts here and then shifts to each of the other groups in succession locating the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th highest rocks. The 6th and 7th highest are in the central group where we started, the 8th in the next group and so on, back to the central group which contains the 14th and 15th rocks, the lowest of all. The asymmetrical composition, combined with the subtle yet significant hierarchical order guides our eyes all around the garden, thereby giving an impression of motion. At the same time, the mind is soothed by the serene simplicity of the spare materials: sand, rocks and moss.

To have experienced miniature sincerely detaches me from the surrounding world, and helps me to resist dissolution of the surrounding atmosphere.

Gaston Bachelard

Another Japanese gardening technique for creating dynamic balance is to use the walls as a means of visual passage between the miniature landscape in the foreground and the larger landscape beyond. This technique is called

"shakkei" in Japanese, or "borrowed landscape", and is used to make tiny gardens appear much larger than they are. In these gardens, the foreground may be a dry landscape of rocks, moss and small shrubs, behind which lies a carefully-groomed hedge with a grove of trees beyond it. The trees are pruned so that only the tops have branches, leaving long slim trunks which compose the border of a natural "frame". One looks through this frame, bordered by the hedge, the trunks and the branches above, and finds a view of a mountain, perhaps, way off in the distance, which then becomes part of the garden. One's eye then, travels between two worlds: the miniature landscape in front, and the distant mountainscape in the background. What pulls the two together is the clever use of a natural frame, making one picture out of it all, achieving a state of dynamic balance in depth.



The "center" of a walled garden, should offer a sitting place which shelters the viewer from the elements and provides a clear view of the garden. The benches in the arcaded porch of the Boston Public Library courtyard for example, are

protected from the sun and rain by the roof of the arcade and are well placed for viewing the courtyard, although in this case the reference itself is not very interesting, due to its lack of intricacy and movement.



A simple way of providing protection from the elements without sacrificing the view of the reference is illustrated by the Japanese veranda. Raised a few feet off the ground, this highly polished wooden corridor is the "transition zone" between the house and the garden, with sliding panels which screen out the elements when closed, and allow a view out to the garden when open. The veranda itself is used mainly as a viewing platform for the garden - it is in effect a long "center" protected in back by the house, on the sides by the garden walls, and overhead by a roof. One's house becomes one's niche, while the miniature landscape in front becomes the reference back to nature.

Harvard's Loeb Drama Center has a similar kind of contemplative place in an enclosed garden just outside its lobby. Yet here, because the garden is on the same level



as the lobby, one cannot see into it very well. And because the primary purpose of the space is not contemplation, but the circulation of theater-goers, there is no real center from which to view it.

The design of enclosed gardens, then, requires that the following guidelines be observed:

1. The frame should act as a barrier for controlling access to the garden.
2. The filtering zone should be part of the design, to maintain external control over use of the garden.
3. The reference should contain elements which are either in actual motion or in a state of "dynamic balance".
4. The center should provide protection from the elements and offer a view (preferably elevated) from which to enjoy the garden.

The Tower and the Rooftop

The high place can best be exemplified by a cupola surmounting a house. From the security of this aedicula, one has a special view of the immense space extending for miles around. The reference is vast, the center is small,



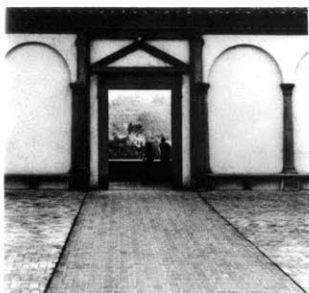
private and protective and frames the view, which changes as one changes position.

When we compare the cupola with other high places in downtown sections of cities, we discover that in the latter, several of the contemplative elements are often missing. Since from any high place one's reference is the landscape below, the only means of confining its great expanse is through careful design of the frame. How does one create a frame for an immense space? Perhaps the contrast of two examples from the Boston area:- the Bunker Hill Monument and the John Hancock Tower- will answer the question.

At the Bunker Hill Monument, one must climb up the many stairs in darkness, finally arriving at the top where one can look out through small openings framing four different views of Boston. The space itself holds only four people comfortably, one at each window. One can observe others holding one view, trying to make out familiar landmarks. One can see the whole of Boston from up there and the scene becomes a landscape to inhabit in the mind,

to come to know from a new perspective, to enjoy from afar.

The John Hancock Tower, partly due to the rapidity of an elevator ride to the top of its 50-plus floors, produces a less powerful effect. There are crowds of people milling around its wide-open corridors, and its huge windows surround the building as one continuous strip. There are no mullions or casements which divide the view up into segments, so one feels as though one must keep moving around continually, rather than resting in one place, uninterrupted as one "spaces out" over the Boston landscape below. The feeling that there is something in one's peripheral vision pulling one onward could be alleviated by consciously designing distinct framed views of different parts of the city of Boston, creating a group of individually different contemplative references.³¹ Also helpful would be a number of carefully designed viewing niches or corners, for only a few people at a time to gather in, in front of the breathtaking views below.





Other high contemplative places in cities could include the belvedere, a structure or building which is designed to take advantage of its position on the top of a hill or edge of a cliff to provide a fine view of something below. In many Italian cities and hill towns, the belvedere is often a protected sitting area just off a public path nestled into the face of a stony cliff. There one can find shelter and relief from the elements while enjoying a splendid view of the landscape below. Balconies are another architectural version of the high contemplative place, although they do not usually offer the proper enclosure or the feeling of privacy suitable to the best of them. So often they are stacked one on top of the other up the sides of buildings with no baffles between one unit and its neighbor, with the result that they are underused as retreat spaces. If, in designing balconies, more attention were paid to the elements of contemplative place, people in a city could find their daydreaming spots more readily in their own homes.

If I really need to think, I suppose the best place is at home in my bay window. It's sunny, and has plants, and is just my own little niche.



As space becomes scarcer in cities, rooftops are being used more and more. Unfortunately, many large office buildings, and especially corporate headquarters, open their penthouse areas to executives only. It is sad that such an abundance of room cannot be open to more people. Some countries, for lack of space, open up major commercial rooftops to the public in good weather, and use them as beer gardens or open-air restaurants. What finer place to sit on a hot summer evening than on a rooftop, sipping a cool drink, enjoying the breeze and the view.



In designing rooftop gardens, the "shakkei" technique discussed earlier is a model that might well be emulated. One could design a lovely miniature landscape garden on the roof with trees and a wall to frame the buildings beyond. But it is not always necessary to have a direct frontal view of the city from above. The following story of one tea master's solution shows how to frame a view in an unexpected and delightful way.

This tea master, it is said, built his garden right on the edge of Japan's Inland Sea. Even the emperor had heard of it, and travelled a great distance to enjoy the magnificent view the master was said to have. Upon entering, he found a thickly-hedged garden which seemed to have no openings at all out to the sea below. The guest, wondering why the tea master took no advantage of his site, wound his way through the mossy garden on a stepping-stone path, coming to a low water basin. As ritual dictated, he stopped to wash his hands before the ceremony. Just as he felt the moist atmosphere around the water, a flicker of brightness caught his eye. There, through a break in the hedges, was a tiny framed view of the beautiful sea, a miniature landscape for him alone to behold.



In designing contemplative places which are high in the air, with views to a landscape below, the following guidelines should be respected.

1. Access to the viewing area should be a progression which produces a growing sense of anticipation of the goal as one approaches it.

2. The center should be niche-like and intimate enough for just a few people to enter it.
3. Each of the references, separately framed, is large in scope, but not so large that the view extends beyond one's peripheral vision.

The Plaza

There are opportunities for creating contemplative places in many of the plazas which we find in cities today. Because these are often large undifferentiated spaces, modifying them to include more contemplative places would help give variety to their composition and keep their scale at a more human level than it now is.

Plazas are designed as public places for people to walk through and gather in - they are active places, full of movement. In such a setting, the location of any contemplative place must be carefully thought out, for it needs to be sufficiently removed to allow a sense of detachment, but not so remote as to sacrifice a sense of security. From this perspective, the location of the fountain-

In orthodox city planning, open spaces are venerated in an amazingly uncritical fashion, much as savages venerated magical fetishes...ask a houser how his planned neighborhood improves on the old city and he will cite, as self-evident virtue, More Open Space...

Jane Jacobs



the contemplative place - at Boston's City Hall Plaza is quite appropriate. Situated at the most public edge of the plaza, yet just off the major paths which people follow to go to work, the fountain area is both accessible and secure. Yet from looking at the plan, one wonders how it is possible to find tranquillity in a place so close to one of Boston's busiest streets at the edge of its most used plaza.



The answer is in its designer's understanding of the importance of the frame. The fountain area is dug into the ground some 6-10 feet, so people must go down into it to sit. It is a place detached by means of a change in elevation from the rest of the plaza, yet secure by its proximity to the street. Furthermore it is well scaled for use by a small number of individuals, unlike the plaza which reportedly can hold as many as 100,000 people. It is unfortunate that the fountain area has so few trees and that its fountain is so rarely turned on, for in all other respects, the area is a good example of a contemplative place.

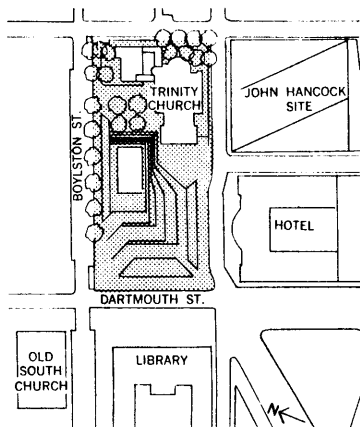
Changing the elevation of the frame of the contemplative place, so that it is higher or lower than the collective space, is an important device for making people sense that they are entering a different setting. As we saw in the case of the Bunker Hill Monument, the sense of anticipation is critical in "creating the difference" between the reference and the outside world.

Changing the materials used in the frame of a contemplative place is another technique for enhancing the distinction between it and the outside world. Using warm colors, natural materials, and many trees and shrubs, and contriving to introduce water into the composition will help to create soft and tranquil effects in these "oases" in the city.

Open spaces are not merely places to visit, exercise in or learn from. They are areas in which one may encounter the aesthetic values of trees, sky and the feeling of enclosed space.

Seymour M. Gold

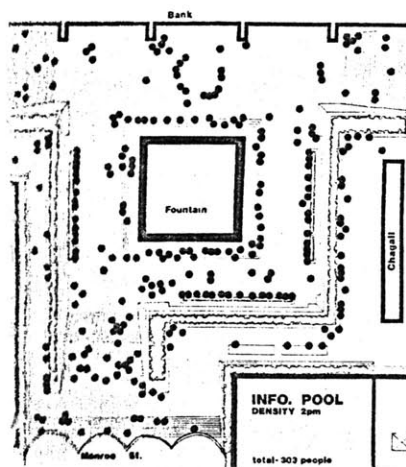
One can see in the example of Boston's Copley Square a plaza which should have provided a strong frame, but didn't. Just off busy Boylston Street, surrounded by some of the most revered landmarks in town, "Copley Square is a paved



precinct, shielded by low banks but otherwise left open to preserve views of the surrounding landmarks."³² It descends a few feet over a large area in a series of paved terraces to a rather unspectacular fountain, with some shrubs and a few trees to break the monotony of the asphalt block and concrete steps. The sameness of the materials, together with the shallowness of the landscaping make it a dull and dreary space - mentioned by none of the people interviewed. Had the designer gone further, creating a fountain markedly different both in scale and depth from the rest of the plaza, an effective contemplative place would have been created. It is an opportunity missed.³³

Another consideration in creating contemplative places in plazas is the importance of actual or virtual movement in the reference, mainly to direct one's attention away from the hustle and bustle of the plaza nearby. This can be achieved by the presence of a fountain, a design element used by many plaza designers; one, preferably, which does not flow with monotonous regularity but changes and absorbs

the attention in syncopated rhythms more conducive to reverie. The "wall of water" at New York's Paley Park is an example of quite a different use of movement. The water has no inherent interest as a reference, but serves instead to mask noise and cool the air. The static sculpture or statue, no matter how beautiful to behold, will have a hard time holding people's interest in a plaza area because of the activity going on around it. Rather than a direct frontal view of such a reference, the designer might try to create a series of unexpected viewing positions, similar in effect to that created by the Japanese tea master in his garden by the sea. We shall discuss this more in the section on contemplative paths.



The center of a contemplative place in a plaza need not be more than the edge created by the change in elevation of the frame. An analysis of Chicago's First National Bank Plaza showed that people tended to gravitate to any "inhabitable edge" of the plaza's frame. Few benches were provided; instead, people sat on steps, planters and the fountain's



edge in order to find the protective "back" and the center for relaxation.

Even the design of benches can affect their effectiveness as centers for contemplative use. Benches meant for conventional use are appropriately of conventional size. Those intended for use in contemplative places should be proportioned for one person and should perhaps have a more enveloping design.



A further consideration in siting contemplative places in plazas and other areas is their exposure. A certain degree of physical comfort is indispensable to a mood of contemplation. Jane Jacobs has noted this problem in her critique of city parks in her book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Among her four criteria for good park design (which include intricacy - similar to our sense of "movement" - centering and enclosure) is the need for sun:

Sun is part of a park's setting for people, shaded to be sure, in summer. A high building effectively cutting the sun angle across the south side of a park can kill off a lot of it. Rittenhouse Square, for all its virtues, has this misfortune.

On a good October afternoon, for example, almost a third of the square lies completely empty; the great building shadow across it from a new apartment house is a great eraser of human beings within its pall.³⁴

Of course, another way of combatting problematic weather conditions is simply (and expensively) to roof over the entire space. The Ford Foundation Building architects decided to do this maintaining a "temperate zone" temperature within their atrium through an intricate heating and cooling system, designed to offset the "glass-house" effects of the tall greenhouse-like walls.³⁵ Another more "hi-tech" solution is to employ an "air door" which allows control of the indoor temperature by means of air jets while maintaining visual integration with the outdoors, thus encouraging people to go inside. For now, such ideas are complex solutions to a simple need for comfort. Good site design is a less costly and more achievable solution.

The physical conception of private space is being superceded by its psychological conception.. private space, no longer necessarily a static container even when stationary and enclosed, may employ transparent and translucent elements to relate interior to the total urban environment, to nature, and to sky...

Paul Shepard

To sum up, some general rules can be applied in designing contemplative places in plazas:

1. The location of the contemplative place should be at the edge of the plaza, and just off the major pathways through it.
2. Design characteristics of the contemplative place should include a decided change in elevation or materials to enhance the feeling of enclosure and detachment, and a frame that is small in scale, for an impression of intimacy.
3. The reference should manifest actual or virtual movement.
4. Attention should be given to inhabitable edges for people to sit on or lean against, and benches should be of reduced proportions.

Design of the Whole: Imageability

So far we have been talking about the contemplative place as an area in and of itself. We have spoken of it as a unit of repose in a city: an enclosed garden, a tower, a plaza. As a unit it must show a certain balance of design, but the nature of its design will also be determined by its surroundings.

Perhaps the most daunting problem with most of the potential contemplative places we have studied in downtown

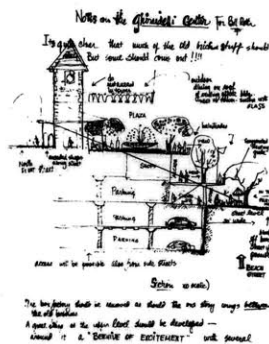


Boston is the lack of imageability of their surroundings. These spaces were designed in general for social rather than contemplative purposes, and, for the people interviewed, evoked little more than images of noisy crowds. A case in point is the Waterfront Park mentioned often by the people interviewed. This was one of the few places that people who worked at the Quincy Markets could go to to escape the crowds they faced daily in their work, and yet, they considered going there only during off-seasons or in cold weather because otherwise "it is just too public over there." And when they did go, most tried to sit as near to the water as possible, although this was made nearly impossible due to the long, undifferentiated cliff of concrete which forms the focus of the place. Certainly, easily accessible public places will attract crowds in fine weather, and this is as it should be. But one role of the designer should be to differentiate the space in public places - to create more edges to sit on, to make it easier for people to get close to the water and dangle their feet in it.



My ideal place? I suppose it is the waterfront, getting right up close to the water and looking out over it.

GHIRARDELLI SQUARE



Halprin's organizing image for the design of Ghirardelli Square was a "beehive of excitement".

The designer must also work to build images with integrity which help organize the whole. Sometimes the context will provide few overall organizing images to build from; sometimes the character of a place will suggest all sorts of references by virtue of the history of the place. In the best cases, the design of the whole will mean the formation of contemplative places which derive their force in large part directly from their context. It is up to the designer to create an overall organizing structure which by virtue of the power of its references, enables contemplative places to be easily formed.

One need only look thirty miles up the coast from Boston to the little town of Rockport to find a compelling set of images. Bearskin Neck, a finger of land flanked by ticky-tacky once-commercial fishing huts, extends right out into the water and has little peninsulas where people can find places to dangle their feet in the water and be alone. Its image has evolved from the history of the place, and crowded though it is in the summers, it allows

contemplative and communal places to exist alongside of one another, due to the preservation of its less-developed wharves and docks. One set of images gives rise to another, and the historic character of the place is strongly felt, allowing people to experience in their minds another time in the same place. The Waterfront Park in Boston, although it shares many of the attributes of Bearskin Neck, is bland and cold, its designers having failed to take advantage of them. Since this is the only bit of developed open space in that congested area of the city, this is a great misfortune.



Or sometimes when it's not too crowded I go to the Waterfront Park. Otherwise there's nowhere else to go at all (to be alone).

In designing the whole, the designer should work to realize the following guidelines in his work:

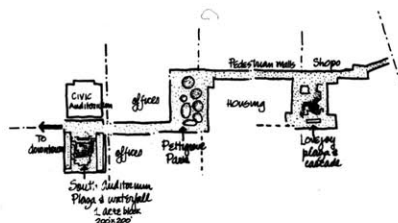
1. The designer should look to the existing context to get clues for overall organizing images.
2. The organizing images should have integrity; they should evolve as much as possible from the history of the place.
3. He must then work to differentiate the space according to these images; creating collective areas with vitality nearby to contemplative ones with tranquillity.

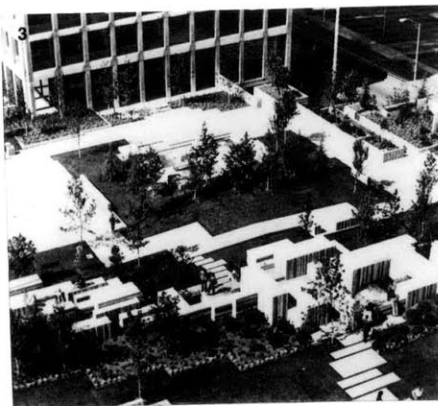
Designing Contemplative Paths

Part of the success of the whole may depend upon linking places of activity with places of retreat by carefully designed paths. This would not only unify the overall plan, but also introduce the property of movement in a simple way. One might want to interrelate contemplative places within a large tract of land, or within the scope of a whole city - in either case, the design of the paths could influence the walker's state of mind and set the appropriate mood.

An example of the use of paths in linking contemplative places is to be found in Lawrence Halprin's design for downtown Portland. In a few city blocks, between housing areas, shops and a civic auditorium, Halprin created a series of linked plazas and malls that are carefully scaled and differentiated for different levels of participation by the leisure-seeking public. In one plaza he created a huge walk-in public fountain. Another fountain, the Auditorium Forecourt Fountain, spills "13,000 gallons of water per minute...over a series of cascades 20 ft.

PORTLAND OPEN-SPACE NETWORK

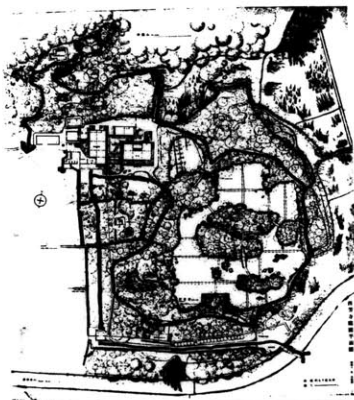




high and 100 ft. wide - with a roar that blots out all other sound." ³⁶ While the reference itself is hardly tranquil, the area succeeds fairly well in being a set of carefully designed contemplative places, linked together, as in the diagram, by a walkway of concrete slabs. This path occasionally widens to become a more public place, or narrows and detours to the quieter places for reflection. Its climax comes when one sits at the very top of the fountain and looks out to the rest of the city beyond.

Just as intimate spaces and views from high places have in common the effect of miniaturization, so, the contemplative path can be imaged. A contemplative path could be designed as a metaphor for one's travel through life, with stops and starts, twists and turns, open areas and enclosed ones, shaded areas and bright ones. These attributes together with those of texture, color, sound and scent, and the feel of the path underfoot could make a compelling experience of the journey itself and of the contemplative places linked by the path.

The importance of the property of movement in contemplative places is attested to by the fact that, of the three major types of gardens in Japan, two are designed around the idea of the path. In the "stroll garden", tea houses, meditation chapels, small sitting pavilions and the like are linked by paths. One example is the Moss Garden in Kyoto, where such structures surround an irregularly-shaped pond set in a wood. Some 43 different kinds of moss cover the ground like a blanket, verdant and lush. A tamped earthen path winds like a ribbon through the $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres of the temple grounds, while occasional paths of stepping stones lead off it to small, fenced areas, enclosing the huts and arbors - the innermost contemplative places. The garden illustrates the principle of "continuous discontinuity" in the specially designed detours from the main path which lure the dreamer on.



The Moss Temple, Kyoto, Japan.

In the Japanese tea garden, the design is such as to provide guests with a series of spatial impressions in a tiny area as they walk through it, and the design of its path



The teahouse has the look of a small dwelling in the mountains. It expresses great feeling and must truly be called a quiet retreat in the city.

is critical in influencing their awareness of the environment around them. Stepping stones are a constant motif, variously used. Small stepping stones placed next to each other slow the walkers' pace and direct their gaze downward; larger stones let them stop to look at some special view; and long stone planks allow them to quicken their steps in anticipation of the tea house around the bend...Each stone of the path is there for a purpose, to concentrate one's mind upon the act of moving through the garden, to rid one's mind of mundane thoughts, and to anticipate the quiet serenity of the tea ceremony to come. Detours from the path are brief, perhaps only to wash one's hands in a stone basin. And always the path provides the continuity which links together the various parts of the garden experience.

The best contemplative paths have two other characteristics: they lead to a point (usually a high place) where one can look back on the path already traveled and ahead to the destination; and they return the traveler to the starting



point without retracing his steps. This latter characteristic is due to the difficulty of designing two completely different spatial experiences in one path, as difficult as designing sculpture in the round. Tea gardens, despite their tiny dimensions, often have multiple paths, closed or open to entry by the placement of a single reed-bound rock called the yogoseki upon the initial stepping stone in the path. In general a path should be designed as a sequence of small events which happen at irregular intervals along a continuous way. Designing a path might be thought of as analogous to writing a book: one builds towards a climax or high point which is resolved in the denouement. In the Moss Temple, the high point is an elevation within the garden from which one can see the mossy banks of the pond below as well~~as~~ the gate that marks the end of the journey. This "climax" comes as a surprise, for as one winds through the garden, the high point looks like a natural ridge which one can't ascend. The effect upon the viewer is powerful: time seems to stand still. This place in the

garden becomes a metaphor for one's position in life; suspended between past and future.

Some guidelines for designers of contemplative paths might be the following:

1. The designer should attempt to link places of activity with places of retreat through carefully designed paths in order to unify the whole plan and introduce the property of movement.
2. The path should be a sequence of spatial events which happen at irregular intervals along a continuous way.
3. The designer should appeal to all the senses in designing the path, and realize that he can control people's spatial experience by the feel of the path underfoot.



PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CREATING CONTEMPLATIVE PLACE

103.

I grew up in Roslindale. My favorite places were the garden, the pond near to the house and an old quarry which was like a cave. My grandparents were from Nova Scotia, so they knew all about being alone, and built many little places in the yard for that purpose. But then I moved to a housing project which really threw me...suddenly there was no where to be alone, and everything was concrete and so unnatural. Why can't there be trees and gardens and pretty places for people in the projects too?

We have established that the need for contemplative place as well as the lack of it is commonly felt; we have identified the characteristics shared by successful contemplative places; and we have proposed a number of flexible rules that designers can apply in their efforts to create them. We must now find ways to make these places happen, and some observations about ownership, management, maintenance and related matters may be useful.

Implementation in the Public Sector

Such agencies as parks departments, public works departments and building administration agencies exercise wide-ranging jurisdiction over existing public parks, plazas and buildings. The Boston Redevelopment Authority, for example, has the power both to buy and sell city land, and as such, could be instrumental in formulating policies which focus on existing and potential public contemplative places within its compass as well as in developing incentives

to encourage private institutions to act on this recognized need. Such policies could include the following:

1. Preservation of undeveloped areas in cases where a consensus of community feeling shows that they are already used as contemplative places.
2. Adaptation of developed open space to include more contemplative places within them.
3. Encouragement of private development of contemplative places.



Preservation of undeveloped areas should be given serious thought, because people find contemplative places often in pieces of undeveloped land, in ruins, or in urban wilds. Long Wharf, near the busy Waterfront Park in Boston, has an old wooden dock and rocky seawall which were mentioned often as people's favorite contemplative places. Planners should make themselves aware of the uses proposed development sites are put to, taking pains to preserve areas that work in their undeveloped state, before tearing them down for renewal. Citizens' opinions should be solicited during the programming stage of design development in order to insure that their needs will be taken into consideration. Of



course, development of a large tract of prime land should not be stopped in order to preserve the contemplative places of a few, but some of their qualities should be maintained in the final design.

A case in point is the development of Rex Lot Park in the Lowell Heritage State Park, in Massachusetts. In the center of the town is a peninsula, formed by the junction of two historic canals, slated for development as an office park. Realizing its importance to the community as a public space by the water and as a recreation area, the State had hoped to build a park there. Since it is privately owned, and the State has no mandate to buy and then sell property, it agreed to buy a 25' riverfront easement from the owner/developer allowing public access to the water and other parts of the city. The State is proposing to develop it with Federal money and maintain it as part of the State Park system. The public sector, in this case, recognized the importance of the lot, and is working to

preserve the most important part of it, creating the opportunity for making retreat areas in downtown Lowell.

Adaptation of undeveloped open spaces would involve the agencies concerned with their design and maintenance in conscious efforts to create more contemplative places in the parks, playgrounds, plazas and malls already in use. In some situations, this might be accomplished simply by moving a bench from an exposed position to a more sheltered one, under a tree for example; in others it might involve redesigning an entire area of a park around a new focus, such as a waterfall or piece of environmental art. Municipalities could consider a systematic review of their parks, looking for simple but important improvements in the interior design and proximity to the street. Small but significant adaptations of an existing environment could make a major difference in the liveability of our cities.

Encouragement of private development of contemplative places by public agencies is surely a complex proposition. For one thing, such an effort would require a high level of

awareness within the local administration of the need for such places. For another, public sector incentive systems can only create opportunities for development which directly affects public, not private, space, thereby limiting the affect it might have in encouraging development within buildings. As it is now, plazas, malls and walkways are the few types of open space in which development could be encouraged by the public sector at all, all of which have difficult maintenance and management problems to solve, and often end up being public detriments rather than amenities.



The case of the 6th Avenue plaza development scheme in New York provides a case in point. A zoning variance of extra floors of useable space was allowed if developers provided a plaza on the ground floor as a public amenity. Nearly every new building complied, creating huge public plazas in front of their office towers meant to appeal to the public's need for open space in the city. The unfortunate results were some concrete areas in front of the

buildings, available to the public but usable by no one; built of the most durable, vandal-proof materials with the minimum of upkeep required.



A more straightforward and successful influence on private development of contemplative places, might take the form of conditions attached to the sale of city property. Filene's Department Store pedestrian mall provides an example. The city sold Filene's the land under the condition that they (the city) approve all plans. As a result, a small park with benches and trees was built at a street corner next to the department store as a public amenity. Street vendors and entertainers gather crowds on its street side, but one can also find a bit of quiet in the back away from all the activity. Although too open, too hard, cold and unfocused for a true contemplative place, its very presence in the middle of Boston's busiest district provides some relief from the crowds. As long as the agency involved is clear in its design intent and reviews all prospective plans,

selling city land for little malls and vest-pocket parks is a good means to encourage the development of more contemplative places in the city. What it still cannot solve is the biggest problem affecting the use of public space in a city: maintenance in the face of vandalism and destruction of public property.

There is no evidence that the frequency or magnitude of crime and vandalism is more concentrated in public open spaces than in any other portion of the urban area.

Seymour M. Gold

Although it is said that incidents of vandalism are actually few and far between, unfortunately, the threat is real and must be taken into account in the design of public places. One planner tells of demonstrators at City Hall Plaza who threw soap bubbles into the plaza's fountain; after three days when it was finally clean, another demonstrator threw in red dye! Stories of vandalism are numerous and many far worse examples could be cited. In any case, we cannot respond by ceasing to build fountains.

The possibility of vandalism does not require designers to create places which are static, cold or exposed. It is true that materials should be durable and structures immovable, but, as we have seen, there are many ways of

achieving the difference in atmosphere that distinguishes contemplative place from the collective world, if care is taken with the design of each of the essential elements.

One urban designer in Boston bemoaned the failure of one of his more "inward-directed" pocket parks. He had tried to provide small benches nestled into a bank of plants with a sunny exposure just off a major intersection, but people just didn't use it. Although he had carefully designed the centers and the frame, what he had forgotten in his park - one of the best-designed quiet places in the central city - was the reference: some sort of interesting object for people to focus on which maintained their interest in going there. When one of the elements is neglected, the space will probably not work as a contemplative one, no matter how well-designed the rest of it is.

Considerations in the Private Sector

All in all, the private sector may be better suited to develop places which serve the individual rather than the

collective interest. Security can be more easily handled by careful siting and enclosure of the space, and maintenance can be accomplished through the institution's own resources. There are many different kinds of opportunities in the private sector, all of which hinge on one common theme: building courtyards, atriums, gardens, fountains, plazas and the like, which are actually within or protected by the structure with which they are associated. What kinds of institutions could be convinced that building places for reflection and reverie is in their own, more "private interest?"

The office building could be one type of place which can incorporate contemplative places within its structure. Opportunities exist up high: the penthouse; on the ground: the lobby; and at the edge: the plaza or courtyard, for creating imageable areas for people to relax in. Management may only accept the introduction of such places if they serve a clear function: as an eating terrace in the summer, a flower-filled visitor's reception area, or a left-over space turned terrarium in the lobby. Sometimes, companies will



Privacy is better approached as a changing self-other boundary-regulation process in which a person or a group sometimes wants to be separated from others and sometimes wants to be in contact with others.

Irwin Altman

see the provision of a contemplative area as improving workers' job performance. The research and development firm of Abt Associates in Cambridge, Mass. has a small space they call "the Reality Gap" with many levels and skylights, a courtyard in its building said to be "conducive to thought." Or perhaps company unions could lobby for contemplative places as "improvements to the work environment."

Sometimes management sees the provision of special amenities as a public relations asset. As we saw in the Ford Foundation case in New York City, providing an atrium space as an extension of the lobby makes that building a special place in the city. Just as the plaza was a status symbol for office towers in the late 1960's, now the interior courtyard, the atrium or the rooftop terrace garden could become amenities by which a company's standards are judged.

Semi-public institutions such as museums and libraries often provide such spaces, fulfilling many people's contemplative needs within their walls. The Museum of Modern Art in New York, for instance, surrounds an open sculpture garden

which gives natural light to the interior galleries and provides delightful sitting areas in the midst of nature. Perhaps the most wonderful contemplative place in Boston is the tiny Byzantine Chapel located in the Museum of Fine Arts. One sits in a rustic pew surrounded by images of Christ in a little chapel just off one of the main galleries. The lighting is soft and indirect, and music emanates from an unseen source; rarely does another person enter. Although part of a large institution, this contemplative place feels completely private, as if built for oneself alone. Designers of such buildings should work to include opportunities for making contemplative places wherever possible.

Opportunities also exist in central city neighborhoods for creating small contemplative places within institutions in their environs. Although public vest-pocket parks built in left-over lots between buildings were popular in inner-city neighborhoods and opened up many new play areas there, maintenance was always a headache. Were these small parks

linked to other uses, "fences...occasionally, and reluctantly, installed, for the only real defense against misuse or vandalism..."³⁷ would not be such a major issue as it is. Building neighborhood parks within the confines of schools, day-care centers, library branches, community centers and churches would give the area the security, accessibility and detachment so important to contemplative design. It would also take the burden of maintenance off the public sector and place it on a smaller-scale, more involved institution which functions as a member of a neighborhood already.

There is no reason why a neighborhood park must be an island surrounded by a cyclone fence, separated from or excluding appropriate private developments and eating or drinking facilities. It may be possible and logical to locate neighborhood parks in association with other utilities such as day-care center, restaurants, medical or office centers, motels and churches.

Seymour M. Gold

Churches are by their very nature contemplative places. Yet, as we've seen, they do not feel accessible to people unless they feel they belong to the church membership. The mid-town church should strive to find ways to attract more people into them, either by providing more frequent non-sectarian activities during the working day, such as noon-hour concerts, or by changing some aspects of its image.

The Catholic Chapel in the Prudential Center shopping mall is one example in which a major design change resulted in increased attendance. This church looks just like all the shops around it, with a glass store-front facade, and is located next to a shoe store and a candy shop. Open all day, every day, with many services, the church feels open and is convenient to the many shoppers and office workers who go there. It provides a needed sanctuary in the area, used by Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

A New Model

Based upon the different management models presented by the church, the museum and the neighborhood park, we can suggest a new model for building small retreat spaces within a city; one which provides an area which is both secure and accessible, yet detached and inhabitable too: a park open to use by the public which is completely enclosed. Designed by private landscape consultants, owned and operated by either the city or a private group, this

garden could be maintained and managed through either donations from private sources, or the collection of admission fees.

At Dumbarton Oaks, in Washington D.C., an old estate was donated to Harvard University with a trust set up for the maintenance and management of its beautiful Italian Garden. The garden is open to the public every afternoon, and its location within the crowded Georgetown section of the Capital insures constant use by people who live nearby, as well as those who come from miles around to view it. Donation of existing property to a private institution responsible for its management then, is one way of realizing more contemplative areas in the city.

Or, a private institution can decide to include a garden in its plans for new development and pay for its upkeep out of admission fees. Japanese temple gardens were always built in this way, as enclosed space for use by people who lived in or visited the monastery. Nowadays, there is

a small entrance fee and the once-hidden gardens are able to be seen during the day. Modern Chinese gardens aren't built for any religious reason. They are enclosed parks run by the government for communal and contemplative pleasure right in the middle of the crowded cities. They too charge a small entrance fee.

A general principle is that we should attempt to design responsive environments which permit easy alternation between a state of separateness and a state of togetherness.

Irwin Altman .

By enclosing a garden within the middle of our cities, we gain a kind of urban oasis of quiescence which we lack right now. Its very location would make it accessible, its closure would allow us to feel detached, and its surveillance would help us feel secure. Perhaps within we'd find a set of contemplative areas along a winding path, all tied together with an air of tranquillity and beauty of repose quite different from anywhere else in the city. We'd sit awhile, reflect thoughtfully, unhurriedly, and return from the sanctuary to the outside world, refreshed and restored.

APPENDIX A

119.

Some Thoughts on the Differences between Daydreaming, Meditation and Contemplation

A contemplative place is distinguishable from a place which lets the imagination run free only in that it has a clear focus toward which one directs one's thoughts. And in focusing upon that object, one abstracts it, extending one's mind's eye beyond it, gaining perspective on the world, and thereby, on oneself. The desire to concentrate separates daydreaming from contemplation just as the act of extension determines a contemplative rather than a meditative experience. Perhaps defining each more specifically will clarify the differences between them.

We all daydream constantly - in buses, subways, walking to work, sitting at our desks "concentrating" - we are always responding to the "stream of thought" slipping through our inner minds. It is a complex process, one where we experience

the "interplay of direct perceptual responses, interpretation of such responses and then intrusion of associated phrases or memories, fantasies, fleeting images and half-heard sounds."³⁸ We are always half-tuned in to the stream of thought and find ourselves most aware of it when we're alone - on a bus or just before sleeping at night. It is then that we hear an "interior monologue", which combines with fleeting images of memories and things past as well as our awareness of our own bodily sensations and emotional responses. Daydreaming is a delightful occupation, unfocused, indolent, leisurely; a "playful contemplation" which serves well to act as "a diversion from ongoing motor performances or a more directed task-oriented sequence of thought."³⁹

Yet, although many words do seem interchangeable with daydreaming - woolgathering, fantasy, "spacing out", the spirit of contemplation and meditation seem quite different. Both seem to involve a more purposeful, less haphazard quality of directed energy output, focused either outside

within the external world or within oneself. In the case of meditation, such concentration entails setting oneself apart in time and space in order to direct all one's thought inward in order to come to a greater self-awareness through sudden enlightenment. Whereas daydreaming seems to be almost random and spontaneous in its reaction to stimuli (although more intense when stimuli are reduced), meditation doesn't react at all - in fact, the devoted meditator can meditate anywhere at anytime, focused as he is towards himself. He is not concerned with, nor affected by the outside world; but the contemplator is.

Contemplation requires a concentration just as meditation does, but its focus is not directed so much towards oneself, as it is towards an external object, outside of oneself and one's thoughts.

Contemplation is, ideally, a non-analytic apprehension of an object or idea - nonanalytic because discursive thought is banished and the attempt is made to empty the mind of everything except the percept of the object in question.⁴⁰

It is by concentrating one's thought upon an object that all external thought is forgotten. One becomes one with the thought, lost within it, and its extraneous implications. One gets caught up and absorbed in a self-initiated process when one concentrates.

Binding the mind-stuff to a place is fixed attention... Focusedness of the presented idea on that place is contemplation... this same (contemplation) shining forth (in consciousness) as the intended object and nothing more, and as it were, emptied of itself is concentration... Even these three⁴¹ are indirect aids to seedless (contemplation).

It is the process of extension which brings the thought back to rest within the contemplative soul. Extension - moving beyond the literal object one concentrates upon - abstracting it, seeing beyond its physical qualities in order to come to a new perception of both the object itself, and by extension, the World; this change in a person's perception of the world has been called a "clarity of vision, a heightening of physical perception."⁴² It is the joy of extension which gives new brilliance to the world when one contemplates; one sees everything as if for

the first time. One comes away from the experienced more centered, more tranquil, and more joyful; ready to face again the outside normal world with greater equanimity and greater self-awareness.

APPENDIX B

124.

A Few Thoughts on Changing Perceptions in the Future

As we've shown throughout this paper, people need solitude at one moment, activity at the next, whether in their office or at home. They need to be able to regulate this changing process through the help of a flexible environment around them. What designers are offering those who work in a city are only limited settings which respond primarily to their active sides. Opportunities abound for creating places which respond to their more passive natures, as we've tried to show. Yet, for these possibilities to be realized, either designers must change their present perceptions of people's needs and provide more responsive environments or the people themselves must demand them.

For the designer this may mean a major reorientation of his awareness of his own needs within any environment, accomplished best through design education. Designers must

look within themselves for their own contemplative metaphors before they will recognize the need for such places for others. They must come to understand the pattern of their own reverie and relaxation times; realize what delights them from their past and use this information as a basis for contemplative design for others.

Educational techniques have recently been introduced which advocate such an approach to design education. The "residential history technique" used by environmental psychologists such as Clare Cooper Marcus and Florence Ladd "refers to the recollection of significant features of homes and neighborhoods experienced by an individual in the context of his/her city, suburb, town or village experience."⁴³ As Professor Ladd says, "the assertion that we are where we live and where we have lived is indisputable."⁴⁴ Were such a technique directed specifically at childhood contemplative places for instance, the designer would come to understand some of the patterns of his own reverie images, and realize some important design metaphors out of his own experience too.

Another approach used by Professor John Myer at M.I.T.'s School of Architecture and Planning is that of understanding the content of form through the use of analogues, forcing students to work back into their own past to describe metaphorically, the building or environment in question. Analogue training brings a student out of his rational "secondary-process" mode of thought toward his more intuitive "primary-process" side, taking him closer to his childhood and fantasy world where design metaphors are most accessible. Such tools should be employed as preliminary explorations for design studios, becoming one of a set of skills a designer calls upon to use in his work. When we start to look back to our own special childhood places and understand the structure of those experiences in the past, we may begin to alter radically the face of our cities in the future.

If designers don't provide such environments, will people who inhabit cities begin to demand them? Two major religious philosophical thinkers of our day say that they will. Thomas

Merton bemoans our present "world of action" and sees our nation going through "the greatest crisis in the history of man" before realizing the importance of contemplative thought in our lives:

We have more power at our disposal today than we have ever had, and yet we are more alienated and estranged from the inner ground of meaning and of love than we have ever been. The result of this is evident. We are living through the greatest crisis in the history of man; and this crisis is centered precisely in the country that has made a fetish out of action and has lost (or perhaps never had) the sense of contemplation.⁴⁵

But another man sees signs of hope, that there is a "new age of fantasy" about to begin. For many reasons Harvey Cox believes that we shall find more time for the inner sides of our nature in the near future, that the time when we made a fetish out of action is past.

There are signs now that a new age of fantasy is about to begin, that there are new worlds to explore. We may be on the threshold of an exciting period of symbol formation and myth creation. It could be an age in which the fantasy side of our civilization once again flowers.⁴⁶

NOTES

1. Lewis Mumford, "The Philosophy of Urban Open Space", Small Urban Spaces, ed. Whitney N. Seymour, Jr., (New York: New York University Press, 1969), p. 18.
2. Discussion with Amos Rapoport.
3. Lewis Mumford, op. cit., p. 18.
4. For a more comprehensive definition of "contemplation" as opposed to daydreaming and meditation, please refer to Appendix A.
5. Georg Simmel, "Secrecy", The Sociology of Georg Simmel, ed., Kurt H. Wolff, (New York: The Free Press, 1950), p. 330.
6. Conversation with Kevin Lynch.
7. Ellen Goodman, "It's expensive; it's stall-and-crawl... but it suits me to a T", The Boston Globe, April 7, 1978.
8. Georg Simmel, op. cit., p. 419.
9. Refer to Appendix A.
10. Georg Simmel, op. cit., p. 419.
11. Ken Bloomer and Charles Moore, Body, Memory and Architecture, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 49.
12. I. Rice Pereira, The Nature of Space, (Corcoran Museum of Art, 1968), p. 39.
13. Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City, (Boston: M.I.T. Press, 1960), p. 9.

14. Rudolf Arnheim, Art and Visual Perception, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 8.
15. Lawrence Halprin, Notebooks, (Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1972), p. 64.
16. Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 203.
17. Ibid., p. 172.
18. It may be that people see bright colors as tranquil when they are set against a predominantly muted background. The Japanese have worked within this principle in their gardens, using mainly evergreen plants with a cherry tree or azalea set carefully into this background so that viewers may be made delicately aware of the season, as well as of the bright color of the few blooming bushes. Their feeling in the use of bright flowers in gardens: less is more.
19. Rudolf Arnheim, op. cit., p. 372.
20. Lawrence Halprin, op. cit., p. 64.
21. Rudolf Arnheim, op. cit., p. 41.
22. Ibid., p. 41.
23. Perfection in a reference - symmetry, and absolute equality of all parts - is a quality which should not be employed. For in symmetry is flawlessness, distance, and an otherworldly quality which is inherently formal and finite. If we break through the formal, we obtain freedom, necessary for participation and extension of the viewer in a contemplative place. (Paraphrased from a Zen view of aesthetics, Shin'ichi Hisamatsu's Zen and the Fine Arts.)

24. Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Reverie, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 174.
25. Georg Simmel, op. cit., p. 330.
26. Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, p. 136.
27. Estimated from observations taken of people in some of Boston's contemplative places.
28. Discussion with Alice Klein.
29. Lawrence Halprin, Cities, (Boston: M.I.T. Press, 1972) p. 37.
30. David A. Slawson, "Some Aesthetic Characteristics of Zen Art in the Ryoan-ji Rock Garden", unpublished seminar paper, (University of Indiana, 1971), p. 15.
31. Designers could have fun with the notion of framing spaces; providing many sorts of openings, glazing, as well as various sorts of niches from which to gaze at the isolated view. Imagine the delight of onlookers if the Hancock Tower were redesigned with these ideas in mind!
32. "Back Bay's Sedate Square", Architectural Forum, October, 1970, p. 58.
33. The designer could have also seized upon the idea of framing individual views rather than have the entire square open. Framing something draws attention to it much more than leaving it open to blend in with the surrounding environment.
34. Jane Jacobs, "The Uses of Neighborhood Parks", Small Urban Spaces, ed. Whitney North Seymour, Jr., (New York University Press, 1969), p. 54.

35. "Charity Begins at Home", Progressive Architecture, February, 1968, p. 95.
36. "Portland's Walk-in Waterfall", Architectural Forum, October, 1970., p. 56.
37. Eve Asner, "Philadelphia's Neighborhood Park Program", Small Urban Spaces, p. 180.
38. Jerome L. Singer, The Inner World of Daydreaming, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 4.
39. Ibid., p. 43.
40. Arthur, J. Deikman, "Deautomatization and the Mystic Experience", Altered States of Consciousness, ed. Charles T. Tart, (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1972), p. 29.
41. Ibid., p. 28, (taken from a quotation by Woods, 1914, p. 42).
42. I. Rice Pereira, op. cit., p. 39.
43. Florence Ladd, "Residential History: A Personal Element in Planning and Environmental Design", (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Department of City and Regional Planning, 1976), p. 2.
44. Ibid., p. 3.
45. Thomas Merton, Contemplation in a World of Action, (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1973), p. 179.
46. Harvey Cox, Feast of Fools, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 127.

CREDITS

The drawings on pages 1 and 2 are from B.H. Chamberlain's Aino Fairy Tales. (Ticknor and Co., Boston, 1912)

The drawings on pages 19 and 40 are from K. Florenz and A. Lloyd's White Aster. (Hasegawa Publishers, Tokyo, 1897)

The photographs on pages 55 and 101 are from the book, Town Gardens by Wolgensinger and Daldone. (Studio Vista, London, 1975)

The photographs on pages 3, 6, 95, 97, and 57 are from Lawrence Halprin's Cities. (M.I.T. Press, 1963)

The plan of Central Park on page 64 is from Paul D. Springen, ed., On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets. (M.I.T. Press, 1968)

The drawings on pages 93 and 94 are from the book, Water and Landscape by Litton, Tetlow, Sorenson and Beatty. (Water Information Center, Port Washington)

The photographs on pages 4, 47, and 107 are from the book Small Urban Spaces edited by Whitney N. Seymour Jr. (N.Y.U. Press, N.Y.)

Those photographs on pages 84, 97 and 98 are from Urban Design Case Studies (R.C. Publications 2nd Awards Program, 1977)

The photograph on page 83 is from the book Marche published by the Touring Club Italiano, Milano, 1971.

The photograph on page 35 is by the same publisher from a book called Abbazie e Conventi, 1975.

The line drawings on pages 7 and 84 are from Life for Dead Spaces by Charles Goodman (Lavanburg Foundation, 1963)

The photographs on pages 5 and 52 are from the book The American Aesthetic by Nathaniel Alexander Owings. (Harper and Row, New York, 1969)

The photograph on page 49 is taken from a book in Japanese called the Sakuteiki.

The plan on page 67 is from Progressive Architecture, page 97, February, 1968.

The plan on page 89 is from Architectural Forum, page 58, October, 1970.

The plan on page 90 is from Landscape Architecture, page 57, January, 1976.

The drawing on page 76 is from Virginia Kuck's The World of the Japanese Garden

All other photographs and drawings are mine, on pages 8, 20, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 38, 39, 46, 48, 51, 52, 53, 56, 58, 59, 60, 65, 75, 79, 80, 86, 87, 91, 96, 102, 103, and 108.

The drawings and photographs on pages 3, 81, 85, and 91 are taken from various postcards from Italy.

The quotations' sources are listed in the bibliography of this paper.

The cover design is by Cambridge artist, Roppei Matsumoto.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The books listed below are those used for reference within the body of the thesis, and a few for more general applicability. I have read many others in my search for sources on contemplative design, and have found little which relates specifically to this topic. The reader must sift through the sources given to come to his own conclusions.

Altman, Irwin. The Environment and Social Behavior. (Monterey, California: Brooks-Cole Publishing Co., 1975).

Architectural Forum. "Portland's Walk-in Waterfall". Oct., 1970.

Arnheim, Rudolf. Art and Visual Perception. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1974.

Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Reverie. Boston: Beacon Press, 1960.

Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Space. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

Banz, George. Elements of Urban Form. New York: McGraw Hill, 1970.

Bloomer, Kent C. and Moore, Charles W. Body, Memory and Architecture. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977.

Cox, Harvey. Feast of Fools. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969.

Gold, Seymour M. Urban Recreation Planning. Philadelphia: Lea and Febiger, 1973.

Goodman, Ellen. "It's expensive...but it suits me to a T". The Boston Globe, April 7, 1978.

- Halprin, Lawrence. Cities. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1972.
- Halprin, Lawrence. Notebooks: 1959-1971. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1972.
- Hisamatsu, Shin'ichi. Zen and the Fine Arts. Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1971.
- Itoh, Teiji. Space and Illusion in the Japanese Garden. New York: Weatherhill/Tankosha, 1965.
- Kirchberger, Clare. Richard of Saint-Victor and Selected Writings on Contemplation. London: Faber and Faber.
- Krasin, Karalyn Emilie. "Sacred Experience and Place in Cities". unpubl. thesis, M.I.T. School of Architecture and Planning, 1972.
- Kuck, Virginia. The World of the Japanese Garden. New York: Walker/Weatherhill, 1968.
- Ladd, Florence C. "Residential History: A Personal Element in Planning and Environmental Design". Harvard University: Department of City and Regional Planning, May 1976.
- Lee, Robert, ed. Cities and Churches. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962.
- Lynch, Kevin. The Image of the City. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1960.
- Mehrabian, Albert. Public Places and Private Spaces. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976.
- Merton, Thomas. Contemplation in a World of Action. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image Books, 1973.

Nitschke, Gunter. "Ma, the Japanese Sense of Place". Architectural Design, March, 1966.

Parker, Stanley. The Sociology of Leisure. London: George Allen and Union, Ltd., 1976.

Paz, Octavio. The Labyrinth of Solitude. New York: Grove Press, 1961.

Pereira, I. Rice. The Nature of Space. The Corcoran Museum of Art, 1968.

Progressive Architecture. "Charity Begins at Home". February, 1968.

Raban, Jonathan. Soft City. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1974.

Seymour, Whitney N., Jr., ed. Small Urban Spaces. New York: N.Y.U. Press, 1969.

Shepard, Paul, Man in the Landscape. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967.

Singer, Jerome L. The Inner World of Daydreaming. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Slawson, David A. "Some Aesthetic Characteristics of Zen Art in the Ryoan-ji Rock Garden". unpubl. seminar paper, Indiana University, 1971.

Tart, Charles T., ed. Altered States of Consciousness. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Values. Englewood Cliffs, N.Y.: Prentice-Hall, 1974.

Tunnard, Christopher. The Modern American City. Princeton, N.Y.: Van Nostrand, 1968.

Wolff, Kurt h., ed. The Sociology of Georg Simmel. New York: The Free Press, 1950.