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Frederick Law Olsmtd, "Preliminary Report to the Commissioners for Laying Out a Park in Brooklyn, New York: being a Consideration of Circumstances of Site and other Conditions Affecting the Design of Public Pleasure Grounds", 1866, in Charles E. Beveridge and Carolyn F. Hoffman (eds.), <i>The Papers of Frederick Law Olsmtd</i> , Supplementary Series, volume 1, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 89-90.	Code Sujet	
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THE ARTISTIC ELEMENT IN THE DESIGN OF A PARK

The general principles in regard to scenery, which have governed us in our study, remain to be indicated; and inasmuch as some misapprehension, in our judgment, generally prevails concerning the province of art in the formation of scenery, and especially of scenery in the natural style, we propose to briefly express our views upon that subject.

A mere imitation of nature, however successful, is not art, and the purpose to imitate nature, or to produce an effect which shall seem to be natural and interesting, is not sufficient for the duty before us.

A scene in nature is made up of various parts; each part has its individual character and its possible ideal. It is unlikely that accidents should bring together the best possible ideals of each separate part, merely considering them as isolated facts, and it is still more unlikely that accidents should group a number of these possible ideals in such a way that not only one or two but that all should be harmoniously related to one another. It is evident, however, that an attempt to accomplish this artificially is not impossible, and that a proper study of the circumstances relating to the perfect development of each particular detail will at least enable the designer to reckon surely on a certain success of high character in that detail, and a comprehensive bringing together of the results of his study in regard to the harmonious relations of one, two more details may enable him to discover the law of harmonious relation between multitudinous details; and if he can discover it, there is nothing to prevent him from putting it into practice. The result would be a work of art, and the combination of art thus defined, with the art of architecture in the production of landscape compositions, is what we denominate landscape architecture.

The first process in the application of this art upon any given site, is the formation of a judgment upon the capabilities and the limitations of that site, with reference to artistic purpose. It is obviously impossible, for instance, to produce in the vicinity of Brooklyn such scenery as will affect the mind as it is affected by the Alps or the Sierras, on the one hand, or by the luxuriant vegetation of a tropical swamp on the other.

Moreover, there are certain kinds of scenery which experience shows to be most satisfactory within a town park, which require an extensive aggregation of their elements. It will be readily seen, for instance, that if all the wood, water and turf, within a certain area of ground, were distributed in patches, strips and pools, however extensive as a whole, and however varied in detail it might seem to those who should thoroughly explore all its parts, there would be no part which would not seem confined, there could be no large open single scene, and no such impression or effect on the mind would be produced as there would be, if all the water were collected in one lake, all the trees in one grove, all the strips of grass in one broad meadow. Such aggregations, and consequently the degree of the impression to be produced by them, must be limited by consideration for two

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other purposes: the purpose of variety of interest, and the purpose to make all the scenery available to the satisfaction of the public by ways of communication.

45 Other limitations upon the artistic purpose, again, are imposed by conditions of soil and exposure, by rocks and springs. How far each of these can be overcome, as by blasting, draining, grading, screening, manuring and other processes, must be in every case a special study, and the artistic purpose of the plan must be affected in every part and particular by the conclusions arrived at.