

Written Response: Learning From A Portion of Fence

I started with mapping, note-taking and photographing on the fence around Finsbury Park. At first, I saw it as both a whole and a boundary of the fence. Later, I narrowed down my scale onto one specific section of the fence. As I kept zooming in and capturing almost everything I could observe from the site, countless elements were emerging. Immersed in these seemingly mundane details, it repeatedly prompted me to the question: What has been investigated here? That's a new observing experience. It is much like what Georges Perec referred to as seeing 'almost stupidly' and 'writing about what is of no interest' (Perec, 1974, P.51) when he tried to categorize almost every element on the street.

This is what I did: I created a list of both tangible and intangible objects that make up the fence. This practice unexpectedly revealed an overlooked aspect in my previous observation. To be more specific, I wrote down '489 nails (with various shapes), 17 green wires, 121 wood posts', but as I compiled the list, I realized that the intricate interactions and connections between these materials were absent. They cannot be captured with just a single word. These reinforced structures, each with different materials, shapes, conditions, and inner relationships, emerged like slanted footnotes providing insight into how a fence is constructed. I would never have noticed them without this realization.

I transitioned from photography to drawing as my preferred method. While a photograph can indeed capture details, it sometimes appears somewhat detached. Drawing, along with writing, however, allows me to deconstruct the whole into parts. Here's a portion of notes I took from a particular connection I observed:

"The nail is not embedded in the wood; it is merely placed in the dent, somehow maintaining a balance. The string is not knotted. It intertwines with the wire, looking like a decoration that you can't tell it uses. The connections are gentle and loose. One piece casually hangs on the other, or lightly drapes on top. The relationship is never forceful, allowing both parts to maintain their natural state without any pressure. However, the connection may be unwanted for one, and one cannot be released without the letting go of the other."

Notably, the method provides an insightful perspective of seeing the fence: it allows me to view it not just as a physical structure, but as a compilation of the

hidden and unseen connections. 'Infrastructural Tourism' has provided me with perceptive ideas that may suggest further developments in critical methods. In the article, urban exploration is expended to a wide range of practices, aiming to foster "self-reflexive observation", spark "creative explorations of everyday habitats" and "raise awareness of imperceptible systems". (Mattern, 2013)

At this point, I couldn't help but raise questions: How can I "make visible" (Mattern, 2013) these interwoven, reinforced structures and their inner relationships from the fence through the method of drawing? What should I do with what I've uncovered? I think the answer to these questions may lead me to a further understanding.

Reference :

Georges Perec, (1997) *Species of Space and Other Pieces*, London: Penguin Books Ltd

Shannon Mattern, 'Infrastructural Tourism', *Places*, 2013