Cultural Daily

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When May light calls … a photographic essay on ‘being there’

Maurice Amiel · Monday, May 9th, 2022

The first of May is the feast of the *lily of the valley* in France, in honor of all lovers, when flower peddlers at every street corner will offer them for free to passing couples.

In my city the air has turned mellow and the *shadows are sharper* calling for one to go out and catch the spirit of the moment; what better place to go to than the local Olmsted designed Westmount Park.

Introducing this essay are the curves of earth mounds, of leisure-bent walkways and of a sun-drenched bench circle.

Of-course the *shadow patterns* of the mounds, benches and park furniture, as if drawn on the ground, point to the natural photographic ‘spot light’ i.e. the sun. *I will elaborate this point in my end words on the photographic expression of ‘being there’.*

the shadow theatre of a bench circle

The meandering pond calls for duck wading, and for duck watching at the railing that runs along the walkway, while on the opposite side of the pond an alignment of low shrubs keeps people from getting too close to the water.

Curiously the railing shadow pattern seems to define an area reserved for pond watching, courtesy of the sloping afternoon light.

The shadow theatre of a handrail

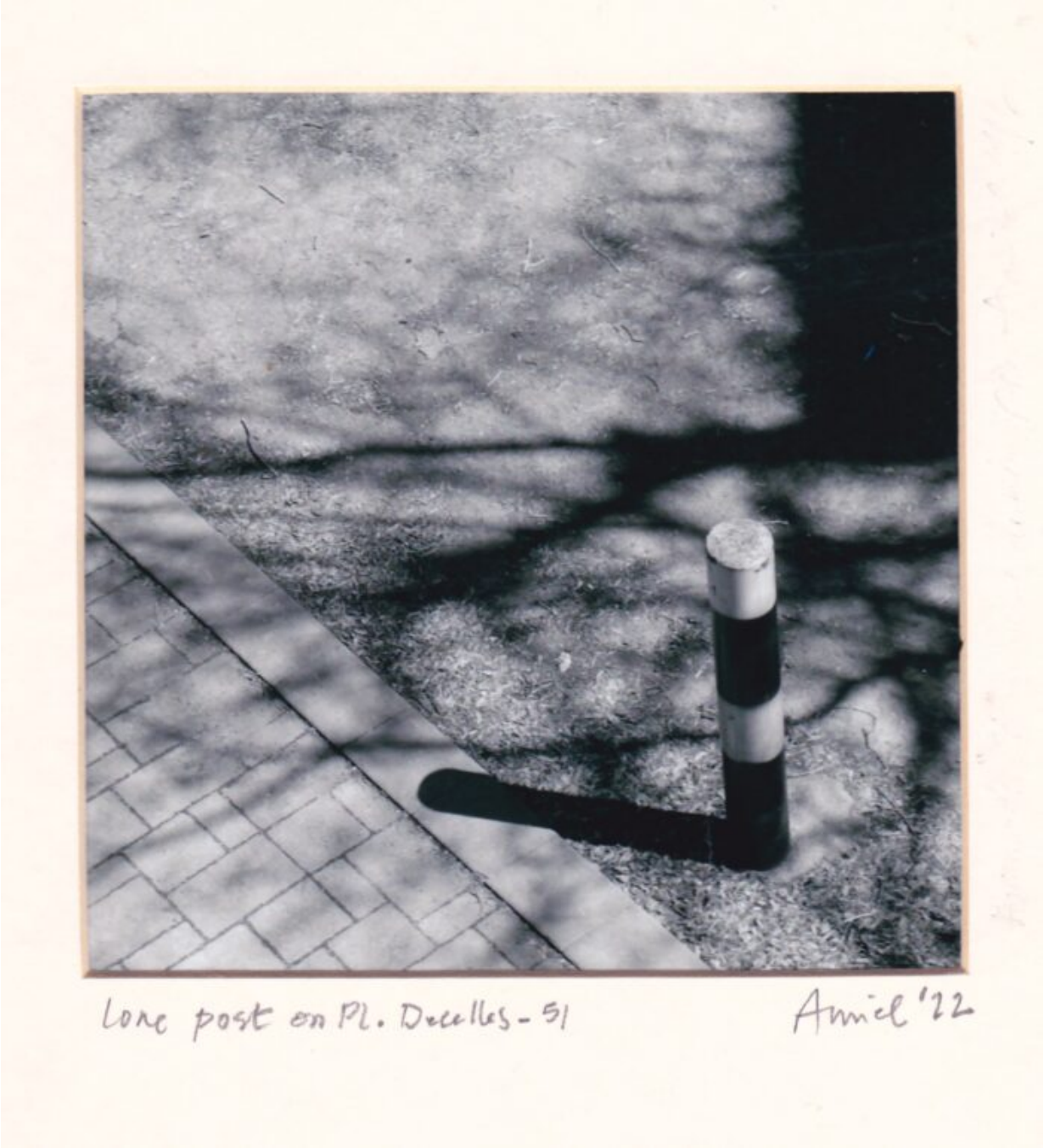
Further along the pond I spotted the sun light reflected off two white hair ladies sitting and observing the scene and the dark-suited fellow standing by the water's edge.

I simply centered the image on that fellow and the visual ensemble fell simply into place created by the contrasting people trio anchoring the foreground, against the softer natural shapes across the pond.

The theatre of people watching people

In a different location this lone post, viewed from my second-floor balcony, keeps cars heading for the garage from side tracking onto the building pedestrian entryway.

Together with the shadows of nearby trees and building roof top, the post own *clock-needle like shadow* follows the spring solar movement.



The post as sun-dial

For end words I wish to call attention to the fact that the *sense of being there is tied to prominent shadow patterns made by* a sunlit man-made structure and/or situation in the reaching out foreground of a more natural context.

That fact is inherent to the design approach of Olmsted consisting of a network of walkways and paved places *providing access to, and observation of,* the more natural and thematic areas of the park.

Of course the seasonal path of the sun is key to the enhancement of the experience of the park, and incidentally, to the photographic opportunities to express that sense of *'being there'*.

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