

Learning Places Fall 2018

# SITE REPORT #1A

The Oculus and Zuccotti Park.



Cover Image: **ICONIC.**



This image represents the magnificent relationship between these two most iconic buildings. "The Oculus," manifest freedom, tranquility and the ambition of been noticeable worldwide. On the other hand, the "World Trade Center", will be always standing besides the great Oculus, to complement each other in a way that blends into one majestic gathering space.

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## INTRODUCTION

**Zuccotti Park:** When the professor mentioned we were going to visit Zuccotti Park, I imagined a park with grass, lots of vegetation and benches. These are the three characteristics I always picture on a park. To be more specific; The Battery Park and Central park are my two biggest expectations when someone mentions "park". Even though, it was my first time visiting Zuccotti Park, based on my expectation vs. reality situation, I will not go back to it. The problem is not the missing vegetation but, the space overall.

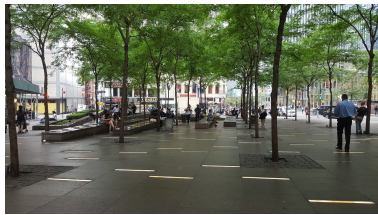
Based on the reading I figured or imagine the park to be a lot bigger than it is. Why? Because activist lived there for months, and even had a library and kitchen in there. To be more realistic, I'm sure enough they were blocking every space of the park, creating pedestrian traffic and giving the appearance of a crowded, and unorganized public space.

My expectations did not match the reality of the size of the space neither, the vegetation on a park. Vegetation helps to make people (visitors), to escape for a minute from the city, and make them feel relax. However, this was not the case, the reading narrated and described the space as a public space where activist and people interacting everyday. This specific description, makes me wonder how uncomfortable it was for everyone.

**The Oculus:** I've been to the Oculus many times and it always captures me with its delightful and unique architecture. It is a place that makes me proud, and inspires me to accomplish my goals. It was great to go back and visit a place that symbolizes harmony and gratefulness. This is to the real life heroes.

## SITE OBSERVATIONS

Images showing the utility of the space.



Vegetation/Plaza



Miniature/Transportation



Escaping/Resting

Why did you choose these images? Do they summarize a feeling you have for the place? Do they focus on prominent objects or features of the place? I chose these three images because they represent what the space has to offer and what can be improved.

**Zuccotti Park:** The first image was taken from the middle of the plaza (facing Trinity PL) and the third image is facing (Broadway), at first glance, looks a relaxing space, ideal for anyone working around the area. One of the most amazing features about this plaza was, the well maintained it is. I was aware of seeing a janitor walking around keeping everything organized and clean. Also the seating areas are exclusively to (sit) no skateboarding or riding with bicycles on top of it's permitted. This is completely a life changer, it comes to public seating areas. Even though the amount of vegetation is limited, the trees seemed to provide enough shade and shelter to the plaza, giving it that relaxing and comfortable characteristic. However, I would have loved to see more vegetation to make it more of a green area plaza.

**The Oculus:** This image of the Oculus was taken from (Church St) main entrance. This place is majestic. The memorial has a unique

opening on the middle of its structure, this with the purpose to allow the sun(natural lighting) into the space. Even though, its a public transportation hub that connects NJ and NY (PATH), it look more likely to a mall. High end mall may look perfect and modern to all of us but, the way they designed and placed the glass rail made me feel uncomfortable. Rail was placed to angle that makes it difficult to lean on and not been able to enjoy the lower levels. Overall, as a memorial and tourist attraction works perfectly fine, however there should be more seating areas,just to be able to appreciate the space in general.

Describe the sizes and shapes of buildings in this area. Is there general uniformity or heterogeneity among structures?

The buildings located around Zuccotti Park are a mixture of uniformity and heterogeneity. You will be able to find different styles of buildings including historical buildings and the most exclusive one as well. This is where everything happens and where the economy stock place. It is a major attraction to tourist since, the Charging Bull is located around, Wall St also, the ferry that takes you to the Statue of Liberty, The Oculus,Battery Park,911 Memorial etc. This is a district that has to much to offer to the public including services and architecture.

Describe the patterns, textures, colors, and ornamental features of the surfaces of the buildings and structures in and around the place.

The building characteristics and material textures around this park are breathtaking. You'll be able to find facades made of masonry, cooper cornices,limestone facades, curtain wall facades and sculptures made of metal. All at the same place. This is a location where historically and modernism takes place and makes it a total tourist attraction. One of my favorite material found in the Federal District (Lower Manhattan) are the cobblestone streets.This is a historic landmark.

How is the natural world integrated into the built environment? Were trees, plants, lawns, and bodies of water established around existing architectures, or were the buildings and walkways built to observe preexisting "wild" areas? Describe patterns and methods of integration.

Definitely the buildings and walkways were built around pre existing wild areas on some of the cases. The purpose is to appreciate nature and respect it as well. An example is; my architecture class, most of the professor's advice you to work around nature since is such a great opportunity to design a resilient and sustainable building. However;

**Zuccotti Park:**The land of this park was not empty in the first place, I'm guessing it used to be existing vegetation and hills however, designers did not appreciate the opportunity to built around wild nature. In this case natural world was integrated into the built environment;providing trees and plants into the park to make it look natural made.

Some other cases of taking advantage of nature is when, architects and designers design and/or place the building facing the bodies of water or natural landscape. This is with the purpose of been able to enjoy nature from the commodity of home.

**The Oculus:** This is definitely a place where wild nature was ignored completely. There is no vegetation or bodies of water around. Also there is no such a thing that reminds you that wild nature existed before. This is a places that reflects modernism and futuristic characteristics.

Other than buildings, what are the functions of the designed / built structures (walkways, seating, etc)?

The purpose of designing seating areas and walkways are to enjoy the view and the space. The number one priority is to make the visitors welcomed and comfortable at been in the space.

**Zuccotti Park:** The seating areas at this park were not to comfortable and traditional as any other park in the city. First of all, there was no back rest on the seating areas. Maybe the design of this seating areas was to keep the crowd away and the visitors to stay as little as possible. However, the pathways were too wide (actually it was a big plaza with no paths) this allows the people to move forward and not feel congested. Unlike other parks, pathways are not always convenient for groups of people walking together.

**The Oculus:** I was able to see a couple of seats, or a small seating area by the entrance located on (Church st). However, this space was not meant to sit and relax, this is more of a transportation/connection central that has to be fluent traffic, and not generate any crowds at all. Even though, it would be lovely to enjoy and relax under the AC or an enclosed area. The Oculus was designed to keep people moving all the time.

What public amenities are offered to users of the space (water fountains, wheelchair access and other supports for the disabled, public telephones, phone charging stations, WiFi, subway and bus stations, etc.)?

**Zuccotti Park:** The park was ADA accessible even there was a sign letting people (visitors) know they were accessible to persons with disabilities, which is great. They also provided the visitors with seating areas, some trees (for shelter), trash cans (clean environment), plants to enjoy and admired and a sculpture. This park also had a public telephone booth that was out of service but, it was provided. The bus and trains station were very accessible to visitors showing the easy access to the park.

**The Oculus:** ADA accessible providing elevators and stairs near the entrance for easy access to the ground level. In this case, there was no telephone booth around the area but, there were train stations that allows visitors to find the place easily.

How have the planners and architectects communicated the purpose of the place, via signage or design elements?

**Zuccotti Park:** Architects and planners were aware of placing a sign near the entrance of the park. The purpose was to communicate with the visitors and make it more easily accessed. Also, this was such a great opportunity to let disable people know they were welcomed into the space as well.

**The Oculus:** I did not noticed any sign with the services and amenities provided but, there were floor plans on each floor providing information to visitors.

Are there any restrictions or rules (either explicit or implied) about how to use the space or interact with other people? Do you see anyone using the space in a manner that exceeds or violates the intentional design? Describe.

On both places, there were no specific rules or regulations on how to use the space. However, there are certain rules and manners that we owned as human beings to act appropriate on each of these public spaces. **The idea is to respect the public areas and spaces to make it more convenient and comfortable to each and everyone who visits it.** However, police officers were around these spaces to control any bad behavior or unexpected situation that may occur.

How do people generally interact with the environment? Is this place crowded? Walkable? Easy to navigate? Comfortable?

Both of the public spaces were comfortable to walk around. Of course, there would be times where crowds may get into the space making it undesirable to walk through but, both have decent walkable space for groups of people visiting. What I really enjoy about these spaces was the ability to walk into the space and enjoy what they offered.

**Zuccotti Park:** Open space with walkable areas. I was able to move freely.

**The Oculus:** enclosed space with walkable areas. Even though it is an enclosed area and there is a lot of pedestrian traffic, I was able to move freely.

What is your personal experience of the place? Think about sound/smell/touch, your body's movement, contact with the ground and physical comfort. How does the place make you feel?

**Zuccotti Park:** The park had this particular smell of food. Since many halal carts were next to it, that was the first smell I was able to recognize. Also something that grabbed my attention was the **tiny amount** of people in the park. Overall, this place made me feel calm and relaxed for a while.

**The Oculus:** As much as I love and enjoy visiting the Oculus, it always makes me feel uncomfortable and rushed on. I believed it is the type of retail and shops that belong to the space that makes me feel that way.

## ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES

*Use this section to reflect on your observations. Remember to refer to your observations when drawing general conclusions.*


Thinking about the neighborhood in which the place is embedded, who is this space designed for and for what general purpose?

In my opinion, since both of these spaces are located on the Financial District, neighboring Tribeca, Battery Park etc. These spaces were designed for the wealthy and business people mostly but, also for the working people and visitors.


**The Oculus:** This space was designed **to make richer the rich people.** The purpose behind the Oculus was to bring more wealth into this neighborhood. However, this is a space that brings people together and makes it unique.

More specifically, what kinds of social interactions does the place encourage or support? How do noise and light affect social interaction? What about the proximity of design elements (walkways, benches, etc.)? Mention specific design elements in your answer.


**Zuccotti Park** is a place where social gathering of small people can take place. It is very relaxing and calm to just simply enjoy with great company. Even though this space does not make you feel outside of NY, it somewhat attracts people to come into the park and walk through it. That was the purpose of creating a plaza that will make anyone feel welcomed. The noise is not a big deal to the space, once you are seated under the tree, you'll not even notice or hear anything but pigeons and the wind.

**The Oculus** on the other hand, is a place that makes you feel uncomfortable and tiny. Even though it's a symbolic memorial and used by anyone, the noise of people walking through the space makes you feel rushed on.  During my visit to the Oculus, I was able to see a couple of small gatherings on the ground level. Us, as a class, were standing near the entrance and was a bit uncomfortable however, it is not a great place to simply hang out because, you may get on the way of either tourists or commuters.

How might you use the space in a creative way that exceeds the intended use of the designers? Think about behavior, physical movement and organization, numbers of people, etc.

Personally, I don't like to disturb or invade any of public spaces. I  see myself joining an activist and corrupting the space though. However, since Zuccotti was already used in a creative way (Occupy Wall St) I will choose Zuccotti as a place to express any discomfort with the government, or anything that affects our rights.

**QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH.** Write down questions that require further research to answer. These should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project; do not include questions you can answer with a quick Google search.

1. What was the real purpose behind the development of "The Oculus" and Zuccotti Park/ Plaza?
2.  Under what zoning district does the Oculus and Zuccotti Park belong to? Is there any specific regulations?
3. Are there any further plans on renovating Zuccotti Park?

# SITE REPORT #1B

## FURTHER RESEARCH

Choose and revise one of your questions for further research from part 1A of this report.

Revised Research Question:

Find a book, government document, or newspaper article that could help you answer your question.

MLA Citation for Book, Government Document, or new article:

Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question?

Describe the process you used to find this source including any keywords and the search engine or tool you used to search.

What other sources or further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for them?