

MONUMENT OR FOLLY? MAYA LIN'S *BIRD BLIND* AT THE
SANDY RIVER DELTA, OREGON
(2006, CONFLUENCE PROJECT)

by

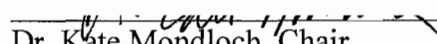
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A THESIS

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“Monument or Folly? Maya Lin’s *Bird Blind* at the Sandy River Delta, Oregon (2006, Confluence Project),” a thesis prepared by Kristine M. Kaeding in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Department of Art History. This thesis has been approved and accepted by:



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Dr. Kate Mondloch

In 2000, a non-profit organization, the Confluence Project, based in Vancouver, Washington commissioned Maya Lin to design seven site-specific art installations. Lin chose certain points along the Columbia River to commemorate the bicentennial of the Corps of Discovery, the Lewis and Clark Expedition. I will focus on the third completed site, *Bird Blind*, located at the Sandy River Delta in Troutdale, Oregon. This artwork is a functional piece for viewing the surrounding wildlife in addition to a textually informative work referencing the diaries of Lewis and Clark and includes the current species status report published by the Sierra Club on the animals observed by Lewis and Clark. This thesis examines the accessibility of the artwork to the wide variety of audiences and its success as a point of dialogue for its specific site.

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CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING

The bicentennial of the exploration of the Corps of Discovery's in 2005 sparked interest for civic groups to commemorate the historical journey of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. One such effort, the Confluence Project, has raised enough money to create a large-scale, regional commemoration with artworks commissioned by renowned American artist, Maya Lin. There are and have been many ways to commemorate the Corps of Discovery's journey throughout the United States, but in the Pacific Northwest, the Confluence Project with Lin is creating a series of site-specific artworks that address this national event in a new way. Taking text directly from the diaries of Lewis and Clark, Lin is combining them with local Native American stories to create integrated structural artworks in the landscape that reference their specific place. One of these sites, the Sandy River Delta, is home to the third completed artwork, installed in 2006, *Bird Blind* (image 1). In my thesis, I will provide a comprehensive analysis of the *Bird Blind* artwork in context of its site, the many layered histories that contribute to its site, and the various sites that must be considered as part of the artwork's site-specificity, as one part of the larger picture created with the Confluence Project sites.

The Confluence Project is a non-profit group, based in Vancouver, Washington, that seeks to commemorate the Journey of the Corps of Discovery, with seven site-specific artwork installations at certain places along the Columbia River in Washington and Oregon.¹ It began as a conversation one May afternoon in 1999 between Vancouver community leaders, Jane Jacobsen and David DiCesare.² At the time, Jacobsen was a member of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemorative Committee and DiCesare managed the Fort Vancouver Historic Reserve.³ Instead of the proverbial male statues, they wanted to see something of substance that spoke to the interconnectivity of the various peoples within the Columbia River region, from past to present. At the same time, Antone Minthorn, of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, was thinking the same. While watching the PBS program, “A Strong Clear Vision,” a special on the artwork of Maya Lin, he came to the conclusion that she was an artist who could truly speak to the hearts of the tribes.⁴ Coincidentally, Lin was also Jacobsen and DiCesare’s artist of choice.

In 2000, Maya Lin’s book, *Boundaries*, was being published. In her book, she expresses an interest in developing a *Last Memorial* that would “focus on the most important issue for [her] while growing up and to this day: the environment and man’s

¹ Jane Jacobsen, Bob Friedman, and David DiCesare, Confluence Project, Vancouver, interviewed by the author, Vancouver, Washington, 15 December 2009.

² Author interview, 2009.

³ Sylvia Lindman, “Maya Lin and the Confluence Project” in *Oregon Land: Oregon Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects* (Spring 2005), p. 19.

⁴ Author interview, 2009.

relationship to it.”⁵ While Lin envisioned her *Last Memorial* as an abstract global concept, the Confluence Project was something real and present that spoke to her values, to “teach us about the past in the hopes of creating a better future.”⁶ Jacobsen and DiCesare had little hope of commissioning Lin, because they did not know her and had no indications that she would be interested in their project. However, a Google™ search found a speech where Lin expressed interest in knowing what Lewis and Clark had seen and how the land had changed over time. They immediately called David Nicandri, the Director of the Washington State Historical Society, only to discover that Minthorn had spoken with him just days before, stating his belief that Lin should be the artist to commission for a Lewis and Clark memorial.⁷ In June of 1999, the group that would become the Confluence Project, including Minthorn, met in the basement of the Howard House in Vancouver, Washington.⁸

At this time, the members of the Confluence Project team numbered only a dozen individual community leaders from all over Washington State. From the beginning, Native American tribal representatives were part of the Confluence Project group and it was those tribal members who originally brought up the name, *Confluence*.⁹ In the pre-settlement Pacific Northwest, travel by waterway was far easier and more efficient than

⁵ Maya Lin, *Boundaries* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 12:03.

⁶ Lin, 12:03.

⁷ Author interview, 2009.

⁸ The Howard House is a museum that also serves as the visitors’ center for the city of Vancouver.

⁹ Author interview, 2009.

by land, so the confluence of two rivers became important meeting sites.¹⁰ With this in mind, the Confluence Project established the commission's primary intent: the acknowledgement and preservation of true Pacific Northwest history. For them, this meant the acknowledgement of Native American presence in the Northwest at the time of Lewis and Clark's arrival.

After their first meeting in 1999, the Confluence Project team contacted Gary Locke then Washington state governor. He is the first and only Chinese-American governor of a U.S. state outside of Hawaii. He was also a graduate of Yale University and while there, he had met Maya Lin during the course of his studies. It was a full year before Locke was persuaded to contact Lin. Meanwhile, the Confluence Project moved forward in their commission with Lin. In January of 2000, they sent Lin a letter and a package of natural items. They included feathers, rocks, and wood – items that physically represented the land that Lin would be working with. “She needs something to touch,” Jacobsen stated. They also included maps of the region in which Lin would be working. In February, DiCesare visited her studio, but was unsuccessful in securing the commission.¹¹

In June 2000, one year after being petitioned by the Confluence Project, Governor Locke called Lin to discuss their proposal. After speaking with Lin, he contacted Jacobsen and told her that Lin was considering the project. In December of 2000, in good faith, a larger and more diverse Confluence Project group held a press conference

¹⁰ Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 33.

¹¹ Author interview, 2009.

announcing their intentions. They had added several new members representing the tribes of the region. However, Lin had not made any commitments to the project. In May 2001, twelve members of the Confluence Project, which included both Euro-Americans and Native Americans, went to visit Maya Lin.¹² “I said yes, when I realized who was asking,” states Lin in her press release.¹³ For Lin, it was the coming together of both Native and Euro-American cultures in commemoration that won her over.

In 2002, the Confluence Project opened their office with non-profit status and Maya Lin came to visit the region for the first time for artistic research.¹⁴ In the years that followed, Lin would crisscross the state of Washington five times.¹⁵ She visited each site as they were chosen, initially for design inspiration and then as necessary during the phases of construction.¹⁶ Currently, four of the seven sites are either under construction or still in the design phase.

According to Jacobsen, the Confluence Project decided that each site chosen had to meet three requirements. First, because of the community-minded motivation of the project, the sites had to be on public land. Private land would be too difficult and potentially too expensive to acquire. Land held by the state or federal government would not need to be purchased, only a permit for the commemorative artwork would be

¹² Author interview, 2009.

¹³ David Sarasohn, *Waiting for Lewis and Clark: The Bicentennial and the Changing West* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Press, 2005), 199.

¹⁴ Author interview, 2009.

¹⁵ Sarasohn, 119.

¹⁶ Author interview, 2009.

required. Second, the sites all had to have some tribal significance. This means that each site must be deemed as historically important according to local tribal representatives in accordance with their traditions. Third, each site must be mentioned in the journals of Lewis and Clark.¹⁷

It is the second requirement that truly sets the Confluence Project apart from other Lewis and Clark memorials; the Confluence Project seeks to firmly establish the land-stewardship of Pacific Northwest Native Americans at the time of contact with the Corps of Discovery. Using Lewis and Clark as a lens to view the civilizations of the Columbia River region, the Confluence Project converges two cultures that have been traditionally separated; they have successfully connected what is viewed as the Euro-American present and the Native American past by visually and physically indicating the coming together of these cultures. Lin commemorates each site with an artwork that references the journey of the Corps of Discovery with references to Native American traditions and stories in text.

My thesis will discuss one of these sites, the *Bird Blind* in Troutdale, Oregon, as a site-specific work and the issues that arise from the placement of an architectural artwork in a publically used space. As Miwon Kwon discusses in “One Place after Another,” the *Bird Blind* occupies a site that is a relatively minor place, meant to be rediscovered by the dominant culture to “extract the social and historical dimensions” out of this place in order serve the motivations of the Confluence Project.¹⁸ Although the Confluence Project

¹⁷ Author interview, 2009.

¹⁸ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 53.

notes only one moment in one narrow reading of the site's history, I will identify the various competing histories of the site to evaluate the effectiveness of the artwork in connection with its site and its corresponding potential impact on the users of the space. This an appropriate approach to the artwork, not just because it is site-specific, but also in terms of the artist's motivation. Lin has stated that her work is always site-specific, "it is not just the physical but the cultural context of a site that I look at."¹⁹ Consequently my two main approaches in analysis of the Bird Blind artwork with derive from the land the artwork is in and its history.

Much propaganda and many laudatory articles have created the media perception of Lin's *Bird Blind* as a successful community coming-together and commemoration. The artist, in general, has received little critical attention after enduring attacks for the *Vietnam War Veterans Memorial* created in the early 1980s. An excellent example of this is found in Peter Boswell's catalog to accompany Lin's first exhibition outside the United States. It is a catalog of four essays, each written by a different scholar, however all essays provide the same narrow reading of Lin's works, which directly follow Lin's artist statements.²⁰ This is problematic, primarily because it posits that there is one privileged reading of the work. In the case of Lin's work, the privileged reading exists in a non-political stasis, as if it is a serene placement of the object solely for aesthetic and academic contemplation. In reality, every object placed in the public realm becomes part of the living landscape in dialogue with users, pre-existing objects, and the terrain.

¹⁹ Maya Lin, *Timetable: Maya Lin*, 1 vols. (Stanford, CA: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, 2002), 10.

²⁰ Peter Boswell, *Maya Lin: The American Academy in Rome* (Electa: Milan, 1998).

Lin's notoriety in combination with the Confluence Project's media promotion has made the sites into tourist destinations. For example, Horizon Air™ featured an article on Cape Disappointment in the August 2006 edition of their magazine.²¹ Lucy Lippard discusses the phenomenon of tourism locales becoming sites of placelessness due to the lack of variance in architectural forms and diluting of local culture into a commodity, all in the hopes of making the traveler feel "away from it all" in as oasis of pastiche nostalgia. This sort of art tourism contrasts with Lippard's definition because the Confluence Project seeks to integrate the viewer into dialogue with the historic landscape, rather than alienate the viewer from reality.²² So by contrast, the intention of the Confluence Project sites is not to make the viewer feel away from it all, but rather closer to the history and culture that has created the place they are visiting.

Currently there are no commercial plans for the *Bird Blind* site; therefore, it appears that the Confluence Project seeks to present it informatively. However the presentation of the site is biased toward the historical Lewis and Clark moment in the context of the Native American tribal land usage. It is important to note that the site has its own history and contemporary usage outside of the Confluence Project's narrow vision, which I will bring to the forefront to provide a holistic vision that places the *Bird Blind* artwork in a comprehensive context.

In 2005, the first site was dedicated at Cape Disappointment on the southwestern corner of Washington for the bicentennial commemoration of the Corps of Discovery. It

²¹ April Christiansen, "Confluence of Cultures," *Horizon Air* (Aug 2006), 5.

²² Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Sense of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 66.

is an elaborately composed site of several smaller sites within the state park. The main artwork for this area is the *Fish-Cleaning Table* (image 2) near the boat launch. Constructed from a basalt pillar, it is a functional piece that replaced the former metal fish-cleaning table. The dock was added and the walkway to the dock was renovated as part of the artwork. Fish cleaning has a ceremonial tradition for Native Americans and to acknowledge this, Lin inscribed a nineteenth-century version of the Chinook Tribe's origin myth in which man is created from the belly of a fish.²³

From the *Fish-Cleaning Table*, there is an oyster-shell pathway to the *Viewing Platform* (image 3), an arched bench constructed on an arched platform, which looks out onto Baker Bay. On the opposite side of the park, there is the *Amphitheater Trail* leading to the *Cedar Circle* (image 4) and the *Boardwalk* (image 5). The *Boardwalk* is a text-inscribed oyster-shell path that marks the journey of Lewis and Clark from St. Louis to the point at which the viewer reaches the end of the path to Waikiki Beach, physically synchronizing text and viewer. The *Amphitheater Trail* is also an oyster-shell path that meanders past the curving cedar-benched amphitheater. This path terminates at the *Cedar Circle* where six pieces of driftwood stand upright with visible steel supports positioned around a large driftwood stump.

At Ridgefield, Washington, approximately one hundred miles east of Cape Disappointment, Lin currently is designing a new research center for the Ridgefield

²³ Confluence Project, "Overview of The Fish Cleaning Table," *Confluence Journey Book* [website]; available from <http://journeybook.confluenceproject.org/#/site/cape-disappointment/art-installations/fish-cleaning-table/>; Internet; accessed 24 April 2010.

Wildlife Refuge in conjunction with Washington State University.²⁴ Two other sites still under construction are Sacajawea and Chief Timothy State Parks in eastern Washington. At Sacajawea State Park, the work is nearly completed on the seven *Story Circles*, in which a ringed space made of basalt is inscribed with Native American stories that allow the viewer to enter and direct the viewer to move from space to space.²⁵ A *Listening Circle* will be constructed at Chief Timothy State Park out of the rock of the island-park's nature terrain, along with the restoration of native grasses and flowers to the site.²⁶

At the Dalles in Oregon on the Columbia River, Lin will install the last work. This commemorative artwork is still in the design phase and will pay homage to Celilo Falls, the place where, for many hundreds of years before the dam, Native Americans came from all over the region to fish and reconnect with each other. The longest continually occupied village in the Pacific Northwest was near the falls. Much of Oregon and Washington's regional heritage was lost when the Dalles Dam was constructed in the mid-1950s, submerging the falls and the village. Text inscribed on the cantilevered ramp,

²⁴ Confluence Project, "Overview of Ridgefield," *Confluence Journey Book* [website]; available from <http://journeybook.confluenceproject.org/#/site/ridgefield/place/overview/>; Internet; accessed 24 April 2010.

²⁵ Confluence Project, "Overview of Sacajawea State Park," *Confluence Journey Book* [website]; available from <http://journeybook.confluenceproject.org/#/site/sacajawea-state-park/place/overview/>; Internet; accessed 24 April 2010.

²⁶ Confluence Project, "Overview of Chief Timothy State Park," *Confluence Journey Book* [website]; available from <http://journeybook.confluenceproject.org/#/site/chief-timothy-park/place/overview/>; Internet; accessed 24 April 2010.

which will extend over the water's edge, will "chronicle the geological formation of the falls, mythic origins, and tribal oral histories."²⁷

In August of 2006, two sites near Portland, Oregon were completed: the Vancouver, Washington *Landbridge* (images 6 and 7) and the Sandy River Delta, Oregon, *Bird Blind*. Lin consulted on the *Landbridge* design; however Johnpaul Jones of the Jones and Jones Architectural Firm in Seattle, Washington did the actual plans and construction. It is the largest work of the Confluence Project and it is located in one of the most difficult and controversial areas. Vancouver was one of the earliest settlements of the Pacific Northwest, established by the Hudson Bay Company. The fort was built on a hill not far from the river beach, where it has been reconstructed today as a museum. Eventually transportation lines severed the fort from the beach, first with railroad tracks and then with interstate 84. With his design, Jones "grabbed the prairie and pulled it over the highway" as a way to reconnect Vancouver with its waterfront.²⁸

The *Landbridge* is a nearly circular-shaped pedestrian and bicycle overpass. The path is flanked, to either side, by native vegetation plantings and informative plaques. There are three circular outlook points decorated with work by Native American artist Lillian Pitt with the words translated into various Native American languages. Jones, himself, is a Native American of the Cherokee-Choctaw.²⁹ Part of the pathway is laid

²⁷ Confluence Project, "Overview of Celilo Park," *Confluence Journey Book* [website]; available from <http://journeybook.confluenceproject.org/#/site/celilo-park/place/overview/>; Internet; accessed 24 April 2010.

²⁸ Clair Enlow, "Prairie Crossing" in *Landscape Architecture* 99:2 (Feb 2009), p. 90.

²⁹ Jones & Jones Architecture, "Principals," *People* [website]; available from http://www.jonesandjones.com/people/people_principals.html; Internet; accessed 24 April 2010.

with paving stones in a basket-weave pattern that runs through the circle-shape of the bridge and is mimicked on the roof of the freeway underpass. An additional work by Pittman is the entry gate that stands at the riverside entrance to the bridge.

The sister site to the *Landbridge* is the *Bird Blind* at the Sandy River Delta (images 1, 8-23), which was commemorated on the same day and lies approximately twenty minutes east on the Oregon side of the Columbia River. The *Bird Blind* is an elliptical shaped enclosure, about the size of a small room, with an arching ramp leading from the gravel trail into the enclosure. The body of the *Bird Blind* is composed of two-by-four inch wood slats, which tower above the viewer approximately two times the average female height. The slats alternate with the same width space between, to allow the viewer to observe the exterior wildlife, while being shielded from view. Steel supports are used for the columns that raise the structure; for bands at the top, middle, and bottom of the enclosure; and on the ramp, holding together the path, supporting the handrail, and as wire barriers beneath it.

The land of the Sandy River Delta is owned by the United States Forest Service and is part of the Mount Hood National Forest. It is currently undergoing a major restoration process to replant native vegetation and revitalize the formerly naturally occurring wetlands. Although the Confluence Project is primarily concerned with the conservation of cultures, the environmental conservation efforts of the United States Forest Service are in line with Maya Lin's personal and artist values, making this an ideal site for her work.

The United States Forest Service acquired the land that composes the site from Reynolds Aluminum in 1991; in 1997 they began their restoration process. It is a multi-use public park of hiking trails, equestrian areas, an off-leash dog area, and fishing access with the last two uses being the most influential to the area directly in and around the *Bird Blind*. Although the title of the artwork, *Bird Blind*, assumes a hunting or bird watching use, the placement of the slats makes it difficult to see out from the structure. What does *blind* mean in this context? If *blind* in this context means being unable to see, and if the usage around the artwork by dogs and fisherman scare away birds from the surrounding trees, then does this monument become a landscape folly?³⁰

As with most works by Lin, and all the works in the Confluence Project, there is text to direct the viewer in moving through the work and to the artist's intention. However in this case, there is a potential disjuncture between the site-specific expectations given by the text on the handrail versus the species information for the entire journey of the Corps of Discovery inscribed on the slats within the *Bird Blind*. As the viewer ascends the ramp, the handrail text tells of what Captain Clark saw on this exact spot in 1805, followed by an explanation of the commemoration of this structure at this site by the tribes of the area. On the interior slats, the text cites every species noted by Lewis and Clark from Missouri west and then back. After reading the text on the handrail, it is logical to assume that the species information within the enclosure will also

³⁰ I define *monument* as a structure that commemorates an event publically, having the vast majority of visitors aware of the reason for the commemorations, either through visual devices within the work or as part of the general public knowledge. A *folly* is a structure, placed in a designed landscape that could commemorate an event, however the commemoration is more obscure or personal to the one creating the landscape and it functions as an integrated part of the landscape.

be site-specific, but it is not. The artwork requires that the viewer have additional knowledge of the Journey of the Corps of Discovery, specifically the distance it covered and in what timeframe. Without this outside information, the handrail and enclosure text, taken together, are misleading.

What if the viewer neglects the text entirely? The difference between a folly and a monument is almost entirely perception. If the viewer is dismissive of the text, then the Confluence Project monument at the Sandy River Delta site becomes a landscape folly in the restored delta landscape. Although the text is prominent, viewer dismissal of the text is probable due to the audience it is currently visited by. This audience may not have background historical knowledge, nor care to fully understand the meaning of the enclosure text. However, as time passes, the Sandy River Delta site's audience may change, and become a more informed audience, due to the promotion of the Confluence Project sites as art tourism sites. I will evaluate all these possible access points to the work to discuss its role as a part of the changing Sandy River Delta landscape.

To understand the deeper meaning behind the *Bird Blind* as a site-specific work, in chapter two, "The History," I will discuss the history of the region where the artwork is located through its role as one of seven sited works in the Confluence Project. I will begin generally in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States and then narrow to the larger Portland, Oregon/Vancouver, Washington area, with specific attention to the Sandy River Basin. In chapter three, "The Work," I will discuss the *Bird Blind* artwork specifically, focusing on materials, text, and user interaction. In chapter four, "The Site," in order to place the artwork in its site-specific context, I will discuss the particular

geographical issues of the site, the restoration efforts of the United States Forest Service, and the maintenance responsibilities of the volunteer organizations that manage the site. In chapter five, “The Connection,” I will compare the *Bird Blind* to other contemporary art works; that have inspired Lin, works similar in form and/or intention, and the artist’s larger oeuvre. In chapter six, “The Picturesque,” I will give a brief history of Picturesque landscape design and follies as a landscape architecture device. In this context, I will evaluate the extent to which the *Bird Blind* adheres to these definitions. In my final chapter, I will evaluate how the artwork brings all of these issues together in order to examine Maya Lin’s site-specific project, *Bird Blind*, in relationship to its site, history, and use. I conclude that the artist successfully engages the Confluence Project’s goal of site commemoration by creating a work that negotiates a middle ground between the roles of an architectural monument and architectural folly, while also remaining open-ended and allowing for multiple interpretations.

CHATER II

THE HISTORY

One of the three requirements for each Confluence Project site is that the place must be mentioned in the diaries of Lewis and Clark.³¹ However the region had its own history before 1805. It is important to look at the larger regional historic picture in order to gain a better understanding of the context in which the *Bird Blind* and its site are placed. The Northwest region is diverse, but it is interconnected by the Columbia River systems as the main source of water, food, travel, and energy. To understand the context of the Sandy River Delta site, I will begin with the text that inspired the chosen site, then move into the larger regional history of Euro-American discovery and then settlement in the context of an already occupied landscape and Native American marginalization. Following regional development, and then narrowing this history to the Sandy River Delta, I end the chapter in contemporary times.

On their journey, the Corps of Discovery came into the Sandy River Delta and on the morning of November 3rd 1805, Captain William Clark wrote:

The Fog So thick this morning that we could not See a man 50 Steps off, this fog detained us until 10 oclock at which time we Set out, accompanied by our Indian

³¹ Author interview, 2009.

friends who are from a village near the great falls... The under groth rushes, vines &c. in the bottoms too thick to pass through, at 3 miles I arrived at the entrerance of a river which appeared to Scatter over a Sand bar, the bottom of which I could See quite across and did not appear to be 4 Inches deep in any part; I attempted to wade this Stream and to my astonishment found the bottom a quick Sand, and impassable—I called to the Canoes to put to Shore, I got into the Canoe and landed below the mouth, & Capt Lewis and my Self walked up this river about 1 ½ miles wide, composed of Corse Sand which is thrown out of this quick Sand river Compressing the waters of the Columbia and throwing the whole Current of its waters against its Northern banks, within a Chanel of ½ mile wide, Several Small Islands 1 mile up this river...

The Quick Sand river appears to pass through the low countrey at the foot of those high range of mountains in a Southerly direction.... A Mountain which we Suppose to be Mt. Hood is S. 85° E about 47 miles distant from the mouth of quick sand river... below quick Sand River the Countrey is low rich and thickly timbered on each Side of the river, the Islands open & Some ponds river wide and emence numbers of fowls flying in every direction Such as Swan, geese, Brants, Cranes, Stalks, white guls, comerants & plevers &c. also great numbers of Sea Otter in the river—³²

The Sandy River finds its source in the glaciers of Mt. Hood, located southeast of Portland, Oregon. It flows, first west then north to its confluence with the Columbia River, just east of Troutdale, Oregon. Its underlying soil is composed of alluvium and loose volcanic soils, which are generally unstable and subject to erosion.³³ When Lewis and Clark arrived at the Sandy River, it was particularly loose and shallow due to the recent eruptions of Mt. Hood, beginning in 1720 and continuing for decades into the century.³⁴ Named appropriately by Clark, the Sandy River's soil, to this day, is still composed of debris from these eighteenth-century eruptions.

³² Gary E. Moulton, ed., *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition: Volume 6—November 2, 1805-March 22, 1806* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 12-13.

³³ Barbara Taylor, *Salmon and Steelhead Runs and Related Events of the Sand River Basin – A Historical Perspective*, prepared for Portland General Electric, December 1998, 5.

³⁴ Kenneth A. Cameron and Patrick Pringle, "Post-Glacial Lahars of the Sandy River Basin, Mount Hood, Oregon," *Northwest Science* 60, no. 4 (1986): 225.

European discovery of the Pacific Northwest came first from the ocean. Legends told Europeans of a great river in North America and many captains sought its entrance in vain. In 1778, John Meares, unable to find the mouth of the Columbia, named its northern promontory Cape Disappointment and its estuary Deception Bay.³⁵ However the elusiveness of the river did not discourage naval traffic. For some time, east coast Euro-Americans had been attempting to establish trade in China with no success, having nothing of value to offer the Chinese. This changed because of the fur-trading industry. In 1787, east coast backers began sending merchants to the Oregon coast to purchase fur pelts from the Natives, which in turn were sold in China.³⁶ In the early years of the next century, fur-traders propelled the exploration of the Pacific Northwest further.

The mouth of the Columbia was finally discovered in 1792 by an American fur-trader seeking resources. On the morning of May 11, Captain Gray crossed the bar of the Columbia, but chose not to explore the interior deeply, perhaps because of the draught of his ocean-going vessel. Several months later, British Lieutenant William Broughton, sailing under Captain George Vancouver, in a small craft ventured as far as the mouth of the Columbia gorge.³⁷ The British motivation was exploring and mapping the coast of North America and making claims for the crown, but as luck would have it, the Americans ventured into the mouth of the Columbia first. No true exploration or mapping of the region would occur by Americans until President Jefferson's dispatch of the Corps

³⁵ Terence O'Donnell. *That Balance So Rare: The Story of Oregon* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society, 1997), 10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

of Discovery in 1804. Having just acquired political rights to the former French (formerly Spanish) lands, Jefferson ordered Merriwether Lewis and William Clark to set off in exploration, the same day of the official land transfer. In addition to documenting plants, wildlife, and geography, they were also charged with the responsibilities as diplomats to the new occupants of the United States of America, the Native Americans, and as liaisons to their individual nations to negotiate future trade agreements.

Jefferson intended that the Euro-American settlers would be held off for some time, perhaps even a generation, to allow for strong trade agreements and valuable political trust to build between the individual Native American nations and the United States of America. Jefferson, for his part, viewed these peoples as near-equal to the Euro-Americans in the east and wished to slowly merge the two cultures into one nation.³⁸ However, this did not happen, and Euro-American settlers' encroachment onto Native lands could not be stopped by politicians with good intentions. Even by the time Lewis and Clark left St. Charles, Missouri, for the exploration of the area northwest of the Mississippi; American settlers were already building homesteads on the west side of the Mississippi, past the political boundaries of the United States.³⁹

The Corps of Discovery intended to find a water-passage through the continental United States to the Pacific Ocean. Pursuing the headwaters of the Missouri into the Rocky Mountains, they were confronted with numerous falls that required portage and ultimately realized that there was no connecting waterway or reasonable land route

³⁸ Gunther Barth ed., *The Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 7.

³⁹ Stephen E Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Merriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (Simon & Schuster: New York, 1996), 123.

between, at least that far north and across the Bitterroot Range. Abandoning their boats, they crossed the divide at the Bitterroots and proceeded into the Pacific Northwest through the Lolo trail system with help from a Nez Perce guide who brought them to his village on the west side of the mountains. From there, they restocked and continued toward the Pacific Ocean in canoes and with horses.

As Lewis and Clark traveled down the Columbia River, they came across two well-established Clackamas Tribe villages near the area of the Sandy River (just below Beacon Rock and at the site of the present-day Portland International Airport), as well as encountering several hunting and fishing parties traveling throughout the area.⁴⁰ This is because a portion of the Lolo Pass trail network, which provides passage from present-day western Oregon and Washington through the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains, extends through the Sandy River Basin as well. However there is no evidence of historic Native American settlement specifically in the Sandy River region.⁴¹ It appears that the Sandy River Basin was used for fishing and hunting, as well as a transitional area between regions. Settlement specifically in the Sandy River Delta area likely did not occur because it was a floodplain.⁴²

The Clackamas are a sub-tribe of the Chinookan language group, which is located predominately on the south bank of the Columbia River between the area from the mouth of the Willamette River to just west of present-day Troutdale, not far across the river

⁴⁰ Moulton, 7-10.

⁴¹ O'Donnell, 4.

⁴² United States Forest Service, *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Sandy River Delta Plan* (US Department of Agriculture, Pacific Northwest Region, 1995), 3-7.

from where Fort Vancouver would be founded. They lived in villages of various sizes and built wooden plank houses to shelter three to four families. In the summer they would travel in search of roots and berries and also to fish the various rivers and falls of the region. Like the Chinook Tribe, they were some of the first peoples to be acquainted with, and suffer from, European contact.⁴³

Partners of the Pacific Fur Company, established by John Jacob Astor, were rescued by members of the Chinook tribe, at the mouth of the Columbia in 1811. They established the first white settlement at the place of present-day Astoria and immediately began probing the wilderness for furs.⁴⁴ Their explorations were short-lived. In 1813, during the War of 1812 the British took over the coastal post and in 1814, the last of the original Astorian party was killed by Natives near the Snake and Boise rivers, near the present-day border between Oregon and Idaho.⁴⁵

After the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, in 1818 it was decided that the Pacific Northwest would remain free and open to settlement from either nation, but the British continued to exert the presence of their power. It increased in 1824, when the Hudson Bay Company established Fort Vancouver at the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette rivers. Dr. McLoughlin became the Chief Factor and was responsible for

⁴³ Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 25-26.

⁴⁴ Beaver, seal, and other popular fur-providing animals were hunted to virtually extinction almost immediately in nearly every region they were found. This motivated fur-traders to probe further and further into the earth's geographical limits, eventually leading them to Antarctica. Nathaniel Philbrick, *Sea of Glory: America's Voyage of Discovery, The U.S. Exploring Expedition, 18-38-1842* (New York: Viking Press, 2003), 13-15.

⁴⁵ Ruby and Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, 30-36.

establishing a Hudson's Bay economic/resource monopoly in the area and controlling the natives.⁴⁶ He also was commanded to discourage American settlement in the region due to claims made by both the United States and Great Britain on the Oregon country.

Though the hope was to discourage settlement by the United States, in practical terms settlement proved impossible to stop.⁴⁷ In 1829, Dr. McLoughlin allowed French Canadian trappers to take land on the banks of the Willamette River near present day St. Paul, Oregon. Furthermore, ex-employees, married to Pacific Northwest Native American women, frequently remained in the area, taking land for their own use.⁴⁸ Additionally, in defiance of company orders, McLaughlin refused to turn back American wagon train arrivals when they appeared in late October or November, knowing he would be sending them to almost certain death.

With multiple world powers attempting to declare ownership in the remote Pacific Northwest, the United States became motivated to lay claim to what it viewed as its own backyard. It remained easier to access the region from the seas, rather than over land. Because the region was dense and virtually inaccessible, except via waterways, much of the hinterlands of the region remained uncharted. For this reason, the United States launched the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838 from Boston into the Atlantic, around the Horn of South America, through the waters of the South Pacific, and finally to

⁴⁶ Chief Factor is a title given to one who professionally acts on behalf of another. In this case, Dr. McLoughlin acted on behalf of the Hudson Bay Company and British interests.

⁴⁷ O'Donnell, 26.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.

end in a survey of the Pacific Northwest. Lieutenant Charles Wilkes and his naval squadron arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River in 1841.⁴⁹

Through his experiences in the Navy and his own personal studies, Wilkes became a noted surveyor. He served as the director of the Depot of Charts and Instruments in Washington DC for five years before heading the Expedition.⁵⁰ He and his teams surveyed from the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which divides the northwestern most region of present-day Washington State from Vancouver Island, down the Willamette River and the area that would become San Francisco. Almost three hundred place names in Washington can be attributed to Wilkes. The linguist, Horatio Hale, took the opportunity to temporarily separate from the Expedition and do an in-depth study of the rich Pacific Northwest Native American cultures.⁵¹ Wilkes, in his reports to Washington DC, deemed the Natives relatively harmless to the incoming Euro-American settlement, due to their perceived laziness, squalor, slavery, and continuing petty feuds.⁵² This view would provide a prejudiced excuse in the validation of Euro-American domination over Native lands.

In 1838, the few Euro-American settlers of the region began using the Native Americans' Lolo trail system to drive livestock over the Cascade Mountains, expanding the transportation network and diminishing isolation in some part.⁵³ The great migration

⁴⁹ Philbrick, 259.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁵¹ Ibid., 280.

⁵² Ruby and Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, 94.

⁵³ Taylor, 14.

to Oregon territory began in 1843, even though the area would not be officially United States territory until the treaty of 1846, which granted lands south of the 49th parallel to the United States.⁵⁴

Travel throughout the Pacific Northwest was extremely difficult due to the varying terrain and the heavily forested interior. Over land transit was limited to horse and footpaths created over centuries by Native Americans. Whites utilized these trails, but the most efficient transportation route was via waterways. For this reason, most of the development occurred exclusively along the rivers, even into the last part of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

Portland was founded in 1845 on sixteen blocks along the Willamette riverbank and named by a coin toss.⁵⁶ Just two years before, the city's site was founded when William Overton and Asa Lovejoy paused in their journey from Fort Vancouver back to Oregon City in a small clearing on the riverbank.⁵⁷ Its location was chosen because it lay halfway between Ft. Vancouver and Oregon City, with water deep enough on its west bank to accommodate ocean-going vessels that would bring in the United States mail. In just six short years after that coin toss, Portland was incorporated and well on its way to being a central hub for transportation and export/importation.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Vera Martin Lynch, *Free Land for Free Men: A Story of Clackamas County* (Portland, OR: Artline Printing, Inc., 1973), 3.

⁵⁵ Lynch, 224.

⁵⁶ O'Donnell, 53.

⁵⁷ Chet Orloff, "Maintaining Eden: John Charles Olmsted and the Portland Park System" a lecture given at *Portrait of Portland: History, Place, and Region* (Portland State University, Oregon) 19 September 2004.

⁵⁸ O'Donnell, 56.

The 1840s brought 12,000 Americans across Northwest Native American lands.⁵⁹ Before the Barlow Road was completed around the south shoulder of Mt. Hood in 1846, immigrants arriving at The Dalles, Oregon⁶⁰ could only proceed via rafting the Columbia River.⁶¹ Some settlement occurred along Sandy River, but the majority of the new settlers chose land in the Willamette Valley. The immigrants were predominantly middle-class, Protestant families who intended to farm.⁶² Written works, diaries, and the account on the founding of Astoria by Washington Irving, added to the lure of Oregon migration, along with land grants.⁶³ In 1843, a bill passed which gave free Oregon land to United States citizens, “640 acres to every white male, 320 to a wife and 160 to a child under eighteen years of age. With modifications to allow 640 acres to each married couple and 320 to each single adult.” The Homestead Act of 1862 made ownership of land possible for just a ten-dollar registration fee and five years of continuous residence.⁶⁴ All of this contributed to the ease of Euro-American settlement without any consideration of Native American tenancy.

⁵⁹ Ruby and Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, 96.

⁶⁰ The Pacific Northwest Native Americans had used The Dalles region as a meeting and resource collecting place for some time, due in large part to Celilo Falls, where many tribes met each year to fish the salmon runs. With the arrival of Euro-American immigrants through the region, this point became a place of commerce and rest where groups could restock supplies and purchase transportation. *Ibid.*, 98.

⁶¹ United States National Park Service, “Topographical Map of the Oregon NHT,” *Oregon National Historic Trail*, [website]; Revised September 2009, available from <http://www.nps.gov/oreg/planyourvisit/maps.htm>; accessed 18 April 2010.

⁶² O’Donnell, 33.

⁶³ Lynch, 55. At this time in literature, the American west was the source of romantic discovery. Since little was known of the area, news on discovery and settlement were taken and turned into works of fact-based fiction for literary entertainment.

⁶⁴ Linda Barrington, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Economic Explorations into Native American History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 13.

Needless to say, this land was already occupied when Euro-Americans began moving in. Estimates for the pre-contact indigenous populations across all of North America range from 3.7 to 12 million.⁶⁵ After contact, Native populations dropped quickly. In 1650 Native Americans were estimated to be 86 percent of the population of Canada and the United States. By 1825 those numbers dropped to under 4 percent.⁶⁶ In terms of the Sandy River Delta region, Lewis and Clark estimated the Clackamas tribe, located near the Sandy River Delta, at 1,800 members in 1806; at the 1855 treaty signing, only eighty-eight members remained.⁶⁷

The land-appropriation policies of the United States government in the western half of the continent in the mid-1800s caused Pacific Northwest Native Americans' land to be overrun with white settlers who failed to give Native American tribes the material tribute their culture was accustomed to receiving, and who took the land for their personal use. The Whitman massacre of 1844, in Walla Walla, in southeastern Washington, was a tragic example of the negative consequences. The Whitmans had set up a mission and founded a community around it with the intent of "civilizing the natives." The clash of cultures led to the killing of the entire family and several friends by Native Americans and set off a decades-long series of wars between Native tribes and immigrants.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Barrington, 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁶⁷ Ruby and Brown, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest*, 26.

⁶⁸ For a detail account of events and subsequent treaties imposed on the Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest, see Ruby and Brown, *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*.

These events culminated in the Dawes Act of 1887, which abolished Native Americans' communal ownership of reservation lands, giving them individual parcels instead, which resulted in the enormous reduction of Indian-held land. Between 1887 and 1934, Native Americans lost two-thirds of their remaining landholdings, due to poor record keeping and the many confusing land acts, which gave Euro-Americans more power to manipulate the system. This, combined with Native American reluctance toward agricultural development of remaining reservation lands, created extensive poverty in an entire United States population on shrinking lands. In an attempt to reverse this devastation and the drain on the government, the Indian Reorganization Act was passed in 1934. It provided tribal councils and prohibited the sale of Native American lands to non-Native Americans, returning Native Americans' responsibility over their own lands.⁶⁹

Most reservation land treaties were concluded in the mid-1850s, and by 1881, nearly every Native American was assigned to a certain reservation. Many chose not to live on the reservation, their reasons often stemming primarily from relocation from their homelands. Generally, reservation lands were not Native American homeland, but rather leftover land that Euro-American settlers did not want. Reservations were meant to encourage assimilation, specifically changing the hunting and gathering lifestyle into an agrarian culture, but nearly all of the land provided on reservations was unsuitable for agriculture due to poor soil, extreme weather, or frequent drought.⁷⁰ Furthermore the

⁶⁹ Ibid., 266-268.

⁷⁰ Robert E. Ficken, "After the Treaties: Administering Pacific Northwest Indian Reservations," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 106:3 (Fall 2005), <electronic edition> pars 1-3.

social services provided by the United States government were virtually nonexistent. For example, teachers sent to the reservations were under-educated and, in some circumstances, illiterate.⁷¹ Forced attendance of Native children was done through boarding schools and sometimes the removal of children from their parents' custody.⁷² Over the years, as more Euro-Americans moved in, formerly unattractive reservation lands now became desirable and reservation boundaries became blurred by land hungry Euro-Americans.⁷³ Often the boundary indicators in treaties did not correspond to physical geography and allowed for infringement causing reservations to shrink further.⁷⁴ By the early 1900s, Native Americans, who had formerly roamed in great populations over the entire region, were confined to small tracts of reservation lands with minimal populations. The removal and erasure of Native Americans from lands by Euro-Americans changed the geography of the region drastically through denser residential settlement and agricultural and industrial development.

Some remote areas of the Northwest region remained virtually untouched until the twentieth-century. By 1901, most of the area of the Sandy River Basin remained a remote wilderness. To this day, 75 percent of the Sandy River Basin is forested and about three quarters is publically owned as part of the Mt. Hood National Forest.⁷⁵ The agricultural development that did occur was more frequent along the lower Sandy Basin, where

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pars 5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pars 15.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pars 21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pars 22.

⁷⁵ Taylor, 7.

vegetables, berries, fruits and grains, and, later, ornamental plants and trees were grown. The natural landscape was altered when floodplains, previously used by Native Americans during low-river times, were drained and filled.⁷⁶ Consequently, the land was drastically changed geographically, changing the course of the rivers, altering vegetation species, and subsequently affecting native animal routes and populations. Furthermore, the development of the Sandy River Delta erases the past usage and with it, erases contemporary knowledge of the historic site.

In 1903, with an eye to the future, Portland began arrangements for its elaborate *Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair*, scheduled for June of 1905, which would attract more than a million attendees. The celebrated landscape architect, John Charles Olmsted, was commissioned to design the fairgrounds, which he located near Guild's Lake in northwest Portland. Additionally he mapped out a green space plan for the city that wasn't immediately implemented, but would eventually become the basis for Portland's current park system.⁷⁷

Generally, development in the Sandy River Basin was focused on roads. Recreation areas were in high demand in the region, particularly in the early twentieth century after the appearance of private automobiles, as Portlanders journeyed out to the base of Mt. Hood for vacation and leisure activities.⁷⁸ Hikers had begun scaling Mt. Hood in the mid-1800s. Government Camp, established in 1845, became their base camp and

⁷⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁷⁷ Orloff.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 16.

that same year Joel Palmer reached the summit. In the 1920s, the Mt. Hood Loop Highway was completed, which eased the travel to Government Camp and facilitated the high recreational traffic.⁷⁹ The use of the Sandy River Delta area as a recreation area disturbed wildlife and broke apart forest growth along transportation lines.

Road development was also encouraged by the emerging logging industry, which began in the lower Sandy River basin in the late 1850s. Logged areas were cleared and made ready for agricultural use and community settlement. At first, logs were floated by the rivers, but shortly after logging began, railroads made exportation more efficient.⁸⁰ Logging was virtually unrestricted even into the 1970s when scientists reported on “the importance of riparian vegetation in maintaining healthy river systems.”⁸¹ This unrestricted practice created debris and pollutants that destroyed the Sandy River Basins various natural eco-systems. The timber harvest industry continues today, but regeneration techniques aim to reduce the impact, but riparian areas are smaller now and contain less diverse vegetation, which provide fewer buffers against high stream flows.⁸²

Bull Run Dam was constructed on the Sandy River in the 1890s, initially to provide drinking water to Portland. The location of the dam was still so remote that they had to create a road to reach the site. Realizing the importance of the natural environment to pure drinking water, President Harrison established the Bull Run Reserve in 1892 and

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 18-20.

by 1895 Portland began receiving water.⁸³ Shortly after dam construction, in 1911, railroad tracks to the site were completed and in 1913 electricity ran along the route.⁸⁴

In 1906, the Mr. Hood Railway and Power Company began work on two hydropower projects that provided electricity to Portland until the Dalles Dam was built in 1957. The Bull Run Project, begun in 1906, consisted of a powerhouse on the lower Bull Run and a diversion dam on the Little Sandy River. Marmot Dam, constructed in 1913, diverted water from the Sandy River to the Little Sandy River through a network of canals and tunnels, the longest of which was 4,690 feet and ran under a mountain ridge. The Marmot Dam was equipped with a fish ladder, but it was mostly used to catch adult salmon and steelhead for the hatcheries.⁸⁵ Damming (particularly the Bonneville Dam of 1934-37), logging, and transportation activities on the Columbia and its tributaries ultimately led to the extreme depletion of salmon populations, such that they reached an endangered level.

In 1957, further damage was done to the existing landscape when the Dalles Dam was constructed further up the Columbia River. It completely submerged the falls and Celilo Village, the longest continually inhabited site in North America.⁸⁶ The ancient settlement and the fishing platforms of its citizens were obliterated in a matter of days as the waters rose above them. Discussions are underway on the possibility of repairing this

⁸³ Ibid., 20.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁸⁶ For more information on Celilo Falls and Celilo Village, see Katrine Barber, *Death of Celilo Falls* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005).

cultural destruction, but no dates have been proposed for this restoration.⁸⁷ This project has now been taken up by the Confluence Project, which will provide land along the banks of Celilo Lake, in which Maya Lin will create a memorial type land-artwork that references the historic fishing platforms that once extended out over the falls.⁸⁸

Since contact, the landscape of the region from the eastern borders of Washington and Oregon to the Pacific coast has changed drastically. Although many restoration projects in recent decades have repaired some of the damage, the cultural devastation remains. Tribal members still number well below contact estimates, tribal lands are still limited to their nineteenth-century boundaries, and disenfranchisement leaves Native Americans largely without true political power. Native American culture is predominantly relegated to the museum and the reservations. This creates the misperception that Native American culture is a dead culture or merely non-existent. With Maya Lin as their commissioned artist, the Confluence Project seeks to correct this perception by placing site-specific artworks in historical and contemporary context.

⁸⁷ Although it has been discovered that removal of the dam would allow Celilo Falls to completely return to its original state, because the rock formations were not dynamited as assumed, geographical reclamation is not currently being considered.

⁸⁸ Confluence Project, "Celilo Park News," *Confluence Journey Book* [website]; available from <http://www.confluenceproject.org/news/celilo-park-near-the-dalles-oregon/>; Internet; accessed 24 April 2010.

CHAPTER III

THE WORK

Maya Lin chose the *Bird Blind* site in the early stages of the Confluence Project's site decisions. The design changed several times but the concept of the *Bird Blind* artwork held strong (image 8).⁸⁹ It is a room-sized, elliptical structure set up on steel column supports with a gentle S-curving ramp that rises from the gravel path into the enclosure (image 9). The form of the structure is made of smooth, unvarnished light wood and supporting steel elements. The ramp is composed of a wood walkway and handrail, which are held together and supported by steel guards, supports, and wire barriers (image 10). The enclosure is created by two-by-four wood slats, which alternate with spaces of equal width and are held together, at the base, middle, and top, with a steel rail to create the blinded space (image 11). The only decoration is the text that runs the length of the handrail and into the enclosure and serves as a guide to reading the work. Otherwise the design elements are simplified to function.

⁸⁹ Judy Odenheimer, Project Manager Sandy River Delta State Park, interviewed by Lindsy Cagan, Troutdale, Oregon, 12 March 2010.

The wood used to construct the *Bird Blind* is Black Locust, an invasive, non-native species, which is prolific in the Pacific Northwest and has been historically used by farmers for fencing. This wood was selected for its relatively sustainable qualities and its durability.⁹⁰ The climate of the Sandy River Delta is continental and marine influenced, so it endures more extreme temperatures along with heavier rainfall compared to other continentally influenced climates, requiring the use of this resilient hardwood.⁹¹

As late as 2005, Lin was still proposing additional works for this site, similar to the environmental art/site experience created at Cape Disappointment. Since the Sandy River Delta was historically a meeting and fishing location, a compass was planned, naming and pointing to the historical locations of the tribes. The compass would also have had the current information on how many members remain from each tribe. A boat launch was planned at a point where the Corps of Discovery entered the Columbia.⁹² Only the *Bird Blind* was built, standing as the sole artwork for the site. Its dedication brought over 400 people to celebrate its success and Maya Lin spoke of this site as representing the pure goal of the Confluence Project from a restoration and witness perspective.⁹³ With this statement, Lin is defining the Confluence Project as a group that seeks to reconnect sites with their historic functions through site-specific artworks and corresponding landscape restoration. This means that the *Bird Blind*, as an example of the

⁹⁰ The materials used at the *Bird Blind* site were harvested in the Pacific Northwest and milled in Walla Walla, Washington. Ibid.

⁹¹ I discuss this in more detail in the next chapter on site.

⁹² David Sarasohn, *Waiting for Lewis and Clark: The Bicentennial and the Changing West* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Press, 2005), 117. There is no explanation given for why these works were not realized.

⁹³ Cagan interview, 2010.

Confluence Project sites, is not merely an artwork placed appropriately in a location, but also that there is a interdependent relationship between the design of the artwork and the design of the landscape.

The *Bird Blind* is located in the north-northwestern point of the Thousand Acres area of the Lewis and Clark State Park and gateway to the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. It is also part of the greater Mount Hood State Park. To the north and northwest of the *Bird Blind* is the Sandy River, which joins with the Columbia River bordering the north and east, forming a triangular land-piece. To reach the *Bird Blind*, the visitor must take interstate 84 east from Portland to exit 18, “Lewis and Clark State Park.” The trailhead to the artwork is located at the southeastern point of the east-most parking lot.

The trail to the *Bird Blind* passes through a large, grassy area that was once used for agricultural purposes and now has been restored to its natural flora (image 12). The landscape is bordered to the north by fir trees with power easements and lines running through the area to the river. It is a twenty to thirty-minute walk to the artwork from the trailhead. The land directly to the south and leading to the *Bird Blind* is reserved as an off-leash dog area, which is a suitable use for the grassy landscape. However the area directly around the *Bird Blind* is part of the forest revitalization project and is filled with saplings. Currently, these are struggling to grow due to the trails created by visitors to the park before the restorative process began. The trails wind in and around and then down to the river’s edge (image 13). A sign posted at the entrance to this restoration-process area (image 14) directs users to stay on the graveled trail, however prior use habits have

forced the landscape into something of a compromise. Visitors of the site have continued to use the former trails and have made new trails (images 15-17). This is causing erosion at the banks directly around the artwork (image 18), but this conclusion is negligible because the soil at the delta is subject to natural floodplain erosion.

Traditionally, a bird blind is used to view wildlife, specifically birds, from within the environment, yet obscured so that the viewer does not disturb the animals. Bird blinds can be circular or square, with one side completely open as an entrance for the viewer with a viewing slit. They can be placed directly on the ground or elevated. Elevated bird blinds are generally found in wetland areas, like the Sandy River Delta. The viewer approaches the artwork indirectly, as would be logical for the use of a wildlife viewing blind. The trail bends to the southeast before meeting with a ramp leading into the structure.

At the end of the handrail nearest the blind, the work reads: "Inscribed within are the names of the animals cited by Lewis and Clark on their journey of Discovery in 1803-1806 along with a present-day assessment of these species." The first slat to the left of the entrance indicates the organization of the information on the 129 species vertically as: "Date" documented in the Lewis and Clark diaries, "Lewis & Clark Name" given in the diaries, "Common Name", "Scientific Name", and "Status" of the species whether currently endangered or extinct (image 19). Each species is listed accordingly on its own slat running chronologically from left to right based on the date of observation documentation. The information for species regarding scientific and common names, and the status of the species was collected by the Confluence Project from the Sierra Club's

publication: *What's Lost, What's Left: A Status Report on the Plants & Animals of the Lewis & Clark Exhibition in 2002*.⁹⁴

The first species citation is from May 18, 1804 when Lewis and Clark were only a four-days journey from Missouri's Camp Wood. This means that the *Bird Blind* in Troutdale, Oregon gives information on several species not seen in the larger Columbia River regional environment of the site. Since the Confluence Project is limited to the Columbia River community, it seems logical to only include species cited by Lewis and Clark once they crossed the Great Divide of the Rocky Mountains in Montana. However if we view the Confluence Project as part of the overall commemoration of the journey of the Corps of Discovery it makes sense to include all species observations documented in the Lewis and Clark diaries. This makes the *Bird Blind* an important source document for the entire journey of the Corps of Discovery and species changes since then to 2002.

Potential confusion of the locations of species documentation can be avoided by reading the entire inscription on the handrail leading to the blind, which notes the exact date of the Corps of Discovery's arrival at the site. It reads,

The Confluence Project selected the Sandy River Delta site to commemorate Lewis and Clark's travel past this place on November 3, 1805, and to recognize the National Forest Service's removal of the Sandy River Diversion Dam. "Below Quick Sand River the Countrey is low rich and thickly timbered on each Side of the river, the Islands open & Some ponds river wide and emence numbers of fowls flying in every direction Such as Swan, geese, Brants, Cranes, Stalks, white guls, comerants & plevers &c. Also great numbers of Sea Otter in the river" – William Clark, November 3, 1805
This structure bears witness to the restoration of these 1,500 acres and to the return of the Sandy River to its natural course.

⁹⁴ Confluence Project Source Document for the Sandy River Site, provided by researcher Betsy Henning, 2010.

Inscribed within are the names of the animals cited by Lewis and Clark on their journey of Discovery in 1803-1806 along with a present-day assessment of these species. Dedicated August 23, 2008, by the first peoples of the lower Columbia River Basin.

The decidedly site-specific text on the handrail (image 20), with one phrase indicating the larger time frame, may however lead the viewer to expect site-specific species information in the blind. Once in the blind, viewers are faced with dates of observation that greatly precede the exploration of the Sandy River site and are expected to mentally bridge the gap between site-specificity and the larger historical context, or possibly be oblivious to the situation.

There currently is no plan in place for updating the statuses of threatened and endangered species.⁹⁵ Due to the dedication date noted on the handrail, these species statuses could be seen as merely a moment in time, the moment that the *Bird Blind* was dedicated. However, there are two major issues with this perspective. First, the source document for the species status was printed in 2002 and species statuses may have changed in the six years prior to project completion. Second, the *Bird Blind* presents itself as monument of continuity. This can be inferred by the use of information that spans multiple generations and cultures within the larger context of Lewis and Clark's journey. Consequently, it is problematic to inscribe possibly outdated information on a monument with no plan to revise it without noting the information source date somewhere in the piece, thus misleading the viewer into trusting dated information.

The leading question becomes, whether or not the average viewer, likely a wandering dog-owner or fisherman, will be able to fill in the information gaps. In a

⁹⁵ Cagan interview, 2010.

gallery space, such as the Henry Gallery at the University of Washington, where the *Bird Blind* design was exhibited in Lin's *Systematic Landscapes* exhibition, the curatorial staff provides information in pamphlets and wall labels. However this information is not available to the site visitor, leaving the artwork to stand alone in its environment. This is the purest and most natural way to experience the artwork; without the interceding information. But without the external source information, is the *Bird Blind* less enjoyable as an artwork?

I believe that this artwork can be appreciated as a site-specific work without the historical reference, because it is appropriate for the site and is fully integrated with the landscape. The external information is not necessary to appreciate the inscribed dedication and its intention, nor is it necessary to appreciate the species change documentation on the slats. Furthermore, the external information is not necessary to appreciate the experience of the *Bird Blind* and its relationship in its landscape.

Although, the *Bird Blind* presents itself as a usable artwork, the use of text in the work makes it reasonable to ask whether the average park visitor interacts with the material provided, to what extent, and how this may affect reception. The placement of the text is in evident locations, like the handrail and interior slats of the structure. They can also easily be overlooked. The handrail is for hands to stabilize the walker as they move up the ramp. One may notice the handrail just enough to physically interact with it, but neglect to notice the text inscribed on it. The visual interaction with the handrail often occurs at a distance where the text may not be evident, or at least become secondary to moving through the work. Furthermore, although Black Locust is a resilient hardwood,

the text will become worn down over time by hands sliding across it. This could be intentional, however the choice of a resilient hardwood for the handrail and the established maintenance concerns (which I discuss in the next chapter) all indicate that the text is meant to endure.

The text lining the blind structure is obvious and provoking. The viewer most likely will not immediately find the title slat, but western-reading conventions will push to the left where directory information can be found. From here, reading left to right, the viewer is overwhelmed with the volume of information. There is no sign or other external information about the site and artwork available to the viewer. A sign briefly stating the restoration initiatives of the United States Forest Service greets the viewer as they enter the site, but nothing of the Confluence Project or the Bird Blind and its placement in the restoration area. Consequently, if the viewer misses the handrail text, the slats of textual information in the blind become disconnected from their context. Only the short title, “Lewis & Clark Name,” indicates the information’s context and this assumes that the viewer will see it and assumes the viewer will know who are Lewis and Clark. Lacking this information decontextualizes the artwork to a significant extent.

Without considering the textual information, the *Bird Blind* is still enjoyable as an artwork and potentially usable. Like a room outside, the artwork separates the viewer from the landscape, yet allows the viewer a space to take in the landscape. Although the wood slats obstruct the exterior view, there is no roof (as would generally be on a traditional bird blind), exposing the viewer to the environmental elements, yet separate from them. The slats are smooth and regular, their text drawing the eye and their

verticality bring it skyward. The shape of the enclosure is similar to an eye, peering straight up into the sky, like the viewer's gaze.

However there are environmental issues that must be addressed. In the winter, the wildlife is scarce. In other seasons, birds abound, but not necessarily near the *Bird Blind*. Birds mostly remain high above in the trees or far into the fringes of the park due to the pedestrian traffic and dogs. Furthermore, when surrounding trees are in full foliage, as they are from mid-spring to early fall, the *Bird Blind* becomes a nearly enclosed space, making wildlife viewing impossible. Merely the placement of the slats close together makes it difficult to view the surrounding landscape in ideal conditions (image 21). Additionally, from high summer until early fall, wasps have found the foliage and warm space ideal for nests (image 22). As a result this *Bird Blind* is not a functional bird blind. Nevertheless, this scenario is merely the extreme case of the unaware viewer, visiting the artwork once.

In actuality, the average viewer of the artwork is a regular park-user and would likely view the work several times, in various interactions, with multiple intentions; all layering together to create, over time, the art/viewer interaction and dialogue. We should not limit the reception of the artwork to a one time, variable association experience, because this denies the relationship that can occur between the viewer and the artwork over the course of time. The placement of the *Bird Blind* in its related landscape infers the intention of building relationships with park-goers, as an added element of their landscape experience. If it were meant to be a one-time experience, the work would be placed only for the dedication and then removed. This does not, however, change the fact

that the *Bird Blind* cannot be used as a bird blind, as intended by Lin and the Confluence Project.⁹⁶ So it is possible that the term “blind” is meant literally.

When Lewis and Clark, with their Corps of Discovery, entered the Sandy River Delta and began recording the wildlife they observed, did they really see the delta environment? Does recording information translate into understanding? With the *Bird Blind*, Lin is showing us that it does not. The great scientific discovery was documented and specimens gathered, but like the data inscribed on the slats surrounding the *Bird Blind* enclosure, it does not reveal the world they had entered into. They did not understand the intricately interwoven relationships between fauna and flora, weather and travel, people and landscape. For all the groundbreaking observations recorded in the journals, they barely scratched the surface of the complexities of the region the United States had obtained from another foreign power, both governing bodies completely ignorant of the environment and peoples.

Lin mimics this experience for the viewer, by providing the data, yet obscuring the exterior view to slim slots of space, placing the viewer completely in the landscape, yet above and isolated from it. “Blind” becomes an adjective for the experience of the viewer. The materials of the work also speak to this experience. Black Locust is non-native and invasive, taking over and pushing out riparian tree species. The steel supporting elements are industrial, raise the structure, and hold it steady in the alluvium floodplain soil. These aspects are suggestive of the Corps of Discovery. They too, ushered in an invasive culture that strongly rooted itself in the new land.

⁹⁶ Jane Jacobsen, Confluence Project Director, email to author, 14 July 2010.

CHAPTER IV

THE SITE

In order to evaluate the *Bird Blind* as a site-specific artwork, I first discussed the development of the Confluence Project and its intentions for the seven site-specific artworks, each of those artworks tied to an entry in the Lewis and Clark Journals. Because those seven artworks reference a moment in history for the Euro-American discovery of the region, I devoted an entire chapter to the history of the Pacific Northwest, from contact to present day, in order to firmly place the *Bird Blind's* textual reference in historic context. Furthermore, the site chosen for the *Bird Blind* has its own landscape history that enriches the understanding of the artwork as a site-specific piece. The *Bird Blind* was created specifically for the Sandy River Delta site. Consequently, without full understanding of the site, the artwork cannot be fully understood in its landscape/artwork relationship.

The *Bird Blind* is located on property owned by the United States Forest Service in the Sandy River Delta, just east of Troutdale, Oregon, in Multnomah County. Originally the site lay in Clackamas County, a region that had once loosely encompassed most of the Pacific Northwest and was reduced in size over time as the United States

expanded and incorporated this area. In 1843, the western boundary followed the Willamette River north and in 1844 the northern boundary was placed at 54° 40', just south of Russian Alaska.⁹⁷ However, in 1853, Washington ceded, moving the northern border down to the Columbia River.⁹⁸ In 1854 the Cascade Mountains became Clackamas County's official eastern border; in 1895, Portland's county, Multnomah, claimed the riverfront strip along the northern portion of Clackamas.⁹⁹ Consequently, just before the turn of the century, the county had shrunk to its present boundaries and the Sandy River Delta was officially located in Multnomah County.

The Sandy River Delta region, as defined by the United States Forest Service,¹⁰⁰ is located at the western end of the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area, which begins in the east at Hood River and follows the Columbia River down to the Sandy River. It is also a part of the Mount Hood National Forest. The United States Forest Service acquired the approximately 1,400 acres from Reynolds Aluminum in 1991.¹⁰¹ It includes approximately 270 acres of wetlands.¹⁰² Since then, it has become the Lewis and Clark State Park and is used for hiking, horseback riding, fishing, and dog-walking. The original Sandy River channel separates Sun Dial Island, to the north, from the "mainland"

⁹⁷ Lynch, 2-3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 5-6

¹⁰⁰ Because of the United States Forest Service's continued rehabilitation and reclamation work in the defined "study area" as indicated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement of 1995, where the *Bird Blind* would eventually be located, I have chosen to use these boundaries as my boundaries as the artwork's site.

¹⁰¹ United States Forest Service, *BPA Report*, 2001, p 1.

¹⁰² United States Forest Service, *Draft*, 3-10.

Thousand Acres Area. Gary, Flag, and Chatham Islands lie to the east.¹⁰³ The *Bird Blind* artwork is located at the northern “lip” of the Thousand Acres area, looking out on the northern tip of Gary Island.

The climate is both marine-influenced and continental. The Cascade Mountains, just to the east of the Sandy River Basin, cause an orographic lift¹⁰⁴ which results in approximately twice the annual rainfall as Portland, just 13 miles to the west. Almost ninety percent of the rainfall occurs during the months from October to May. This weather pattern contributes to the natural wetlands geography of the region; however, frequent outbreaks of high pressure coming in from the east cause rapid evaporation from dry winds. This high pressure from the east also stratifies average temperatures, giving the Sandy River Delta Region higher temperatures in the summer and lower temperatures in the winter, while having double average rainfall for its marine-influenced neighbor just to the west. These climate issues influenced the materials chosen for the *Bird Blind*; steel supports are used to withstand possible flooding and extreme temperature changes, black locust wood is ideal due to its ability to endure both extreme dry and wet weather.

Agricultural use of the Sandy River Delta area, before 2001, destroyed riparian forests and introduced invasive, non-native species into the land. The floodplain and its habitat, which composes much of the delta, were lost due to damming and

¹⁰³ Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁰⁴ Orographic lift is the flow of air being forced over barriers, such as highlands or mountains. The moist air, forced aloft begins to cool; consequently condensation forms, and rain or snow begins to fall. Definition courtesy of Weather.com online glossary: <http://www.weather.com/glossary/o.html> accessed 27 April 2010.

construction.¹⁰⁵ For example, a “rock dam built in the 1930s to re-channel the mouth of the Sandy River to improve a smelt fishery partially [isolated] a slough from the Sandy River” and disrupts interaction between the river and its floodplain.¹⁰⁶ This rock dam diverts much of the Sandy River flow into the once Little Sandy River to the west. As of 1995, twenty-five percent of the area was forested with deciduous trees, while the remaining seventy-five percent is rolling-meadows caused by flooding and the filling in of stream-channels and ditches for agricultural use.¹⁰⁷ The *Bird Blind* is located just outside one of these meadows, where the forest meets the water in an area that was historically a floodplain.

Two parallel power lines cut through the Thousand Acres sub-area, creating right-of-way easements for the Bonneville Power Administration; they include twenty-three towers that hold the high-voltage power lines. Since studies are still underway investigating electromagnetic fields effects, there is a “prudent avoidance” policy in effect, which discourages recreational use around power structures and places trails perpendicular to overhead lines.¹⁰⁸

The United States Forest Service, in its 2001 Bonneville Power Administration Annual Report, stated, “[r]estoration of historic landscape components is a primary goal for this land. The United States Forest Service is currently focusing on restoration of riparian forest and wetlands. Restoration of open upland areas (meadow/prairie) would

¹⁰⁵ United States Forest Service, *Draft*, 1-6 – 1-7.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-8.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-11 – 3-12.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-29.

follow substantial completion of the riparian and wetland restoration.”¹⁰⁹ In the years from 2001 through 2007, the United States Forest Service removed the majority of invasive non-native species from the study site and established native shrubs and trees in their place. In the Thousand Acres sub-area, where the *Bird Blind* is located, land management focused on recreating the naturally occurring wetlands that were destroyed by agricultural development.¹¹⁰ The Sandy River Delta is also part of the “Pacific flyway and is used by migratory birds as resting or nesting ground during migration. This area is also used as nesting and wintering grounds by resident and transient wildlife.”¹¹¹ For this reason, the *Bird Blind* was created for this exact location. As the United States Forest Service restores the natural environment to bring back native species, the *Bird Blind* allows for viewing those species (under ideal circumstances) and notes the species observations of Lewis and Clark in 1805.

The specific area where the *Bird Blind* is located (image 23), at the confluence of the Sandy and Columbia Rivers, was originally deemed inaccessible by the United States Forest Service when the artwork was installed. Invasive blackberries measuring up to six feet tall dominated the landscape, pierced by numerous tunnels carved by deer for trails throughout the site and to the river. It became accessible when Friends of the Forest, a volunteer-based non-profit division of the United States Forest Service, cleared trails to the structure. Over 400 volunteers cleared and leveled the trail that would lead to the *Bird*

¹⁰⁹ United States Forest Service, *BPA Report*, 2001, p 1.

¹¹⁰ United States Forest Service, *BPA Reports 2001-2007*.

¹¹¹ United States Forest Service, *Draft*, 3-15.

Blind.¹¹² An Environmental Impact Assessment was completed for the site. This forced the designers to consider various project alternatives and their corresponding environmental consequences. The project plans were altered a few times in order to avoid any unwanted impact on the natural landscape, before settling on the current landscape design.

Although the site was drastically changed by farming and industrial development, important historical evidence could still be present beneath the surface. The restoration process called for replanting and river restoration, but in order to restore the wetlands, bulldozing would be required. To protect possible relics or historical environmental elements, archaeologists were brought in to inspect the site and advise on how to proceed.¹¹³

The *Bird Blind* is currently maintained through volunteer efforts. The maintenance plan for the *Bird Blind* site is informal and also volunteer-dependant. The United States Forest Service, Multnomah County, and Friends of the Sandy River Delta largely share maintenance responsibilities. In addition to restoration efforts, the United States Forest Service executes construction projects and provides minor regulation. Multnomah County police force, along with support from the United States Forest Service, is responsible for security of the site. The site is patrolled by both land and water, particularly when there is a scheduled event in the park. Friends of the Sandy River Delta volunteers are primarily responsible for the maintenance of the trail. They

¹¹² Cagan, 2010.

¹¹³ Ibid.

collaborate regularly with the Confluence Project team to solve maintenance problems and ensure proper care for the site. The site does not currently experience any severe problems with vandalism, crime, or transient populations. Most of the maintenance required is limited to weathering and natural deterioration.¹¹⁴

Without the volunteer efforts, the *Bird Blind* and its site would deteriorate; the artwork would no longer be accessible and possibly no longer exist as an artwork, but as a ruin. While natural deterioration is a possible artwork intention, the Confluence Project and its volunteer organizations do not appear to have this intention. Everything provided, including media and maintenance plans, by the Confluence Project gives every indication that all of the artworks are intended as long-term monuments to the confluence of cultures initiated by the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Friends of the Sandy River Delta has becoming increasingly more involved with this site and is working with Judy Odenheimer, the Confluence Project's Site Manager, and her teammates to develop a more formal maintenance plan for the park. In lieu of this, they send out volunteers on a regular basis to check the status of the trails and to troubleshoot any problems they might find. They also hold monthly work parties where community members and volunteers work together to clean, restore, and otherwise maintain the site. The Confluence Project team attends all Friends of the Sandy River Delta meetings and helped them achieve their non-profit status. They welcome the United

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

States Forest Service at their meetings and often invite them to give talks or updates about recent happenings.¹¹⁵

The Confluence Project is currently seeking to hand-off stewardship responsibility to a Portland-based University. This university would then be responsible for coordinating efforts between the various organizations involved with park maintenance. The idea is to secure an umbrella organization to handle the operational aspects of the site, as well as facilitate the communication necessary to coordinate volunteer efforts. According to the Site Manager, the ideal maintenance plan will properly utilize and foster the community's passion for the site, tapping the resource of social responsibility and land stewardship. Odenheimer believes the outlook for increased organizational and community involvement is very positive considering the immense amount of local support for the project.¹¹⁶ Without this integral site maintenance, access to the *Bird Blind* would be extremely limited to the point that there may not be viewership. Without viewership, the artwork ceases to exist in its intended purpose as a site-specific monument for a historical moment.

One of the initial barriers to the success of this project was Highway 84. Prior to construction, there was no safe exit at the location of the *Bird Blind*. There was simply an open ditch, which did not provide for safe turning or ample deceleration time. As a result, Jacobsen, as the Director of the Confluence Project, alerted the Department of Transportation and successfully petitioned to have a deceleration lane constructed.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Following that project's success, Jacobsen invited The National Guard's Innovative Readiness Training Program to camp onsite and create a parking lot at the trailhead to the *Bird Blind*. She framed it as an ideal opportunity to execute training exercises and allow troops to practice with heavy equipment. The National Guard sent forty soldiers who needed machinery training to construct the parking area; the majority of the gravel needed for the project was donated as well.¹¹⁷

The restoration and improvements made by the United States Forest Service, Friends of the Forest, Friends of the Sandy River Delta, and other volunteer-based organizations have transformed the Sandy River Delta site from overgrown, post-agriculture, and partially inaccessible to a multi-use state park of revitalized native vegetation. Although there are competing users to this site, which characterize the landscape, at this point, the work accomplished in clearing landscape and maintenance efforts can be seen as an undeniable success.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE CONNECTION

The *Bird Blind* has elements in common with previous works by Maya Lin. The reoccurrence of the ellipse form, which is the basic shape of the *Bird Blind*, is found in several works, such as the *Civil Rights Memorial* and the *Yale Women's Table*. Lin has used text in many works as aesthetic elements to assist in conveying subject matter, often used in conjunction with the passage of time, as seen in the chronological ordering of names in the *Vietnam War Veterans Memorial*. More recently, Lin has begun combining man-made materials with more site-specific natural materials, as in the design of the *Langston Hughes Library*.

The ellipse first appeared in Lin's land-art work in the *Civil Rights Memorial* in Montgomery, Alabama, completed in 1989 (image 24). Previously known for her *Vietnam War Veterans Memorial* (1982), this was Lin's second major commission and also a memorial. Not wanting to be typecast as a monument designer, Lin hesitated.¹¹⁸ Ultimately she took on the project because at that time there was not a memorial that addressed the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore her research into this subject brought

¹¹⁸ Lin, 4:26.

to light the dismissive and incredibly shallow information provided in public schools and media.¹¹⁹

The monument is placed in front of the Southern Poverty Law Center. In order to install the design, the entire façade had to be reconfigured. On a curved, black stonewall, Lin has carved a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech; "We are not satisfied and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." In front of this black stone is conically shaped and inverted, the round flat end facing up with water spilling through the middle and over the edges as a fountain, with water emerging from the center and spilling over the text that parallels the rim (image 25). The text is organized as a timeline of Civil Rights events running chronologically clockwise. Historians working on behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center chose the people and events inscribed.¹²⁰

The work is beautiful in its simplicity of design and materials. Repetition of elements and devices, such as the circular form and singular color, add to this simplicity and allow for the subject of the work to resonate with the viewer. In many ways, the *Civil Rights Memorial* is a further interpretation of the artistic vision of the *Vietnam War Veterans Memorial*. The *Vietnam War Veterans Memorial* is presented as a book, with an initial beginning, building height at the middle, and tapering off at the end. The *Civil Rights Memorial*, however, is circular, reminding the viewer that the progress that has

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 4:28.

been made because of certain events must always be in mind and continue to circulate throughout our culture in order to fully realize those same achievements.

This aesthetic intention is repeated in the *Yale Women's Table* (1993) (image 26). The *Yale Women's Table* is also an elliptical stone table with water emerging from the center and spilling out over the sides. In a lighter two-toned stone, it shows the number of women enrolled at Yale from its establishment in 1701 to 1993. The text is merely numbers of women for each academic year, starting with a series of zeroes and spiraling out to the edges of the table (image 27). This shape of text creates visual motion and implies increase, as it mimics the increasing size of the numbers of female students.

The *Bird Blind* text, like both the *Civil Rights Memorial* and the *Yale Women's Table*, runs the interior edge of the elliptical shape. However in this case, the viewer stands within the artwork, instead of being relegated to the outside. Within the piece, the text surrounds, vertically towering over and horizontally encompassing the viewer. In this way, Lin presents the information of new species to the viewer, as the new world would have seemed to Lewis and Clark – surrounding and towering. Much like the orders Lewis and Clark received before entering the new wilderness, the handrail prepares the viewer for the information within. Upon stepping inside, the realization of merely the number of entries is intriguingly overwhelming.

The Langston Hughes Library built in Clinton, Tennessee in 1999, has a compilation of materials that is intriguing (image 28). The library is a 1860s barn raised on two supporting cribs. In order to accomplish this, Lin added a foundation to the barn and a layer of steel for support. The interior is entirely rebuilt in new materials. Upstairs

in the library proper, the interior space is designed to be flexible, by having separate areas and the ability to combined the spaces into one larger multi-purpose area (image 29). The lower level cribs contain a bookstore on one side and the elevator and stairway on the other. A metal frame supports the interior and each crib space is wrapped in an inner layer of glass that allows the viewer to see through the gaps between the exterior timbers (image 30).

The *Bird Blind* also uses wood and steel in its design, steel for supporting elements, wood as the body. In both works, there is the potential of the viewer's ability to see through the exterior of the structure out to the surrounding landscape. In actuality, the space revealed only provides a glimpse, while functioning as a screen that separates viewer from vision. This creates functional visual tension. However the harmonious material combination invokes the serenity of balance: old and new, natural and processed. The *Bird Blind's* use in the landscape is drastically different from a true building. It functions as a point of entry into the landscape.

In the larger scope of contemporary art, Maya Lin's *Bird Blind* is the aesthetic contrast to Dan Graham's glass pavilions. Whereas Lin gives the experience of visibility in her revealing structure, it actually shields the viewer from exterior vision. Although there are spaces between the wood slats, the space is only large enough to see out through if one puts their eyes right up against the slats. Contrastingly, the glass pavilions of Dan Graham are structures that are as visibly permeable as they appear. Graham describes them as a "kind of two-way mirror, which is both transparent and reflective

simultaneously.”¹²¹ Referencing the urban landscape, Graham has noted the use of mirror glass in office buildings to obscure the people within and, at the same time, allow them full view of the passersby.¹²² This can be seen in his pavilions, such as *Heart Pavilion, Version II* (1992) and *Octagon for Münster* (1987). By using glass that is reflective and transparent from both sides, his artworks create interaction between those on the inside with those on the outside, as well as the interaction between their own reflection and that of those on the other side.

Graham also integrates natural elements into his man-made materials in two works from the 1990s. In *Triangular Pavilion with Shoji Screen* (1990), he combines a wooden screen with his two-way mirrored glass. In *Empty Shoji Screen/Two-Way Mirror Pergola* (1996), a climbing vine is added to the exterior of the screen with a bed of smooth stones inside. Graham’s motivation is to create an anonymous, socially-based structure similar to a phone booth or bus shelter (images 31-32).¹²³ His re-imagining of the glass pavilion in many various forms can be seen as a kind of serialization of a subset within his oeuvre, which stands in direct contrast to the commemorative site-specific works of Lin. However, without Lin’s guiding text, the experience of both types of works is comparable; both provoke the viewer into a visual interactive dialogue of exterior versus interior and the role one plays on either side and whether to be on the inside truly means you have a more secure and informed space.

¹²¹ Mark Francis, “Mark Francis in conversation with Dan Graham” in *Dan Graham* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2001), 21.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., 23.

Maya Lin's work comes out of the Minimalist tradition in connection to land art. The works and writings of Robert Smithson inspired Lin, both having a strong connection to the land as a source of inspiration.¹²⁴ However, earlier land-art artists, such as Smithson, Heizer, and De Maria, imposed their works on the landscape, rather than integrating a response to it. This can be seen in great works such as Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969-70), and De Maria's *Las Vegas Piece* (1969). By contrast, Alan Sonfist states that his "art comes from [his] personal experiences with the land," which is closer to Lin's working methods.¹²⁵ He begins by visiting his site and absorbing the atmosphere.¹²⁶ An excellent example of this is *Time Landscape* in New York City (1965-present) where native vegetation was replanted to simulate the "natural phenomena that once existed on a selected tract of land before colonial settlement." Like Sonfist, Lin visited each of the Confluence sites many times in order to become acquainted with the landscape and to create a work that would specifically speak to the site and its history.¹²⁷ Both bring elements of the landscape into their studios as inspiration.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Jean Dubuffet, Richard Roth, and Susan King Roth, *Beauty Is Nowhere: Ethical Issues in Art and Design Critical Voices in Art, Theory and Culture* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998), 66.

¹²⁵ Robert Rosenblum, *Alan Sonfist: 1969-1989* (Brookville, NY: Hillwood Art Museum, 1990), 21.

¹²⁶ Rosenblum, 11.

¹²⁷ Author interview, 2009.

¹²⁸ In the author's interview (2009), Jane Jacobsen explained how the Confluence board sent rocks, sticks, and feathers from the project region to Lin and the cover of Lin's book *Boundaries* shows the artist holding a stone. Sonfist tells how he keeps objects from the natural landscape as inspiration for sketches, Rosenblum, 11.

A comparable Sonfist work is *Circles of Time* (1986-89) at Villa Celle in Tuscany, Italy (1986-89). The work is composed of a series of rings with the center as a pre-human forest vegetation plot (image 33). Immediately outside this area are cast bronze sculptures of endangered and extinct native tree species. To enter the space, the viewer passes through a ring of laurel through a low opening that forces them to smell the Etruscan herbs planted at the base. Outside of this is a ring of rock exposed by the digging out of this space, then a ring of olive trees, and wheat fields beyond.¹²⁹ Sonfist uses the natural landscape archeologically to convey the passing of time through the presentation of varying landscapes elements. His *Circles of Time* is a microcosm of the changes imposed on the Tuscan landscape from before civilization to present day.

Similar to *Circle of Time*, Lin's *Bird Blind* is set in a landscape that is in the process of being restored to historical conditions. Although the United States Park service does not state that the restoration is intended to return the land to pre-contact/pre-settlement condition, their replanting of native vegetation, landscape creation of wetlands, and removal of levees to allow the land to return to floodplain, results in a pre-settlement-type landscape. Anticipating the return of the floodplain, Lin placed the Bird Blind enclosure on steel, stilt supports and looking out across the river, with a ramp from higher land leading up into it. Within the structure, the species of animals inscribed in text is like the rings of vegetation in *Circles of Time*, each indicating the changing environment over the course of human civilization in the region. Through this historical

¹²⁹ Ibid., 4.

reference, the artists provide a consecration of place that is not linear, but rather exponential as events at the center change and radiate outwards into the site.

The major contrast in site approach between Sonfist and Lin is maintenance. In Lin's works, whether it is the *Bird Blind* in Troutdale or the *Vietnam War Veterans Memorial* in Washington D.C., it is understood that these landscape works are meant to be maintained in the condition that they were installed. In contrast, Sonfist's works are meant to grow and change over the passage of time, becoming fully integrated into the site's life and allowing for changing reception. For example, while exhibiting at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in the early 1970s, Sonfist was invited to create a historic forest to surround castle ruins in England. His intention was to plant the immature trees and then allow them to grow up around and obscuring the view of the castle ruins.¹³⁰ In this way, Sonfist's work is more in harmony with the natural landscape and its life, whereas Lin's *Bird Blind* is an object in the landscape as a point of reference to historical information.

Lin has established a pattern of text usage in her artworks as historical reference and as a guide to reading her artworks. From the beginning, with the *Vietnam Veterans War Memorial*, text serves the purpose of a type of documentation that is knowledgeable and seeking to provide the viewer with an increased sensitivity to the event she is referencing. Like Lewis and Clark's diaries, there is a poetic feeling to the methodical approach of the intensity of documentation that reveals itself thoughtfully in the *Bird Blind*. Through the listing of the species and the additional entries on status, the viewer is

¹³⁰ Ibid., 14.

informed of the changing environment since the moment of commemoration. The living landscape is read and experienced as part of the multiplicity of access points in the artwork's dialogue.

CHAPTER VI

THE PICTURESQUE

One possible reading of the *Bird Blind* artwork is that it is a structure placed in a landscape in order to alter that landscape physically and to contribute to the overall design. This is in contrast to the site-specific reading of the piece as an artwork meant to inform the site and excavate a history from it. Although the external textual information is enriching to the experience of the structure, it is not necessary to the experience derived from its complement to the landscape. As a structure in the design of the landscape, the *Bird Blind* would be considered a folly, a landscape architecture device that developed out of the Picturesque landscape tradition of the eighteenth-century. This is not to say that a structure in the landscape cannot be considered an artwork, rather the break between what is a site-specific artwork and what is a landscape folly is gray and seems to occur in regard to the designer's intention at the intersection of viewer reception.

English landscape design developed in the 1700s, while the strict geometric French Baroque gardens, such as Versailles, were enjoying their height of appreciation. The Picturesque Garden involved informal and irregular design that featured natural

landscape elements and revealed in their apparent randomness, in contrast to demonstrably ordered French Baroque gardens. Paths meandered through gently rolling hills and fields, with bodies of water and architectural elements as points of visual reference and delight. This style reached its height in the eighteenth century, however, in the United States, it influenced landscape design well into the twentieth century, as seen in the planning of Portland's green spaces.¹³¹ The English Garden's obsession with showcasing the character of the landscape directly correlated with American land acquisition and development. For the citizens of the United States, it was not enough to own the land from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but it was integral to present the landscape in its varying forms for what it was, sometimes tame and bucolic, often rugged and sublime.

One of the earliest English landscape architects, William Kent (1685-1748), consistently presented four key points necessary to the Picturesque Garden. First, the landscape must be composed like a Picturesque painting with a fore, middle, and background. Other than the visual pleasure of a well-composed scene, the Picturesque Garden was intended as a backdrop to the theater of human interaction. Secondly, Kent's gardens overly manipulated the landscape to provide this picturesque backdrop. For example, in a painting where the house is carefully placed, with the hills rising dramatically behind it and a brook meandering nearby, demonstrates how Kent molded the landscape physically. Thirdly, his designs favored curving lines in artificial elements to mimic the physicality of the natural. Paths followed the curving of the landscape or merely meandered through it and copse of trees grew in organically shaped plots of space

¹³¹ John Dixon Hunt, *The Picturesque Garden in Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2002), 8.

rather than highly controlled geometric beds. Finally, Kent included architectural elements into the landscape. Frequently the main architecture would be a home, however in the sprawling picturesque landscape smaller whimsical structures were placed as points of meeting and/or contemplation, and as points of visual focus as one moves through the landscape.¹³²

These smaller structures are known as follies. They can be almost any structure placed in the landscape, from an obelisk to a castle ruin to a Chinese teahouse. William Shenstone (1714-1763), another famous English landscape architect, discussed the way in which these follies should be used in landscape gardens. Objects should never lie too far to either the right or left of the view and as one walks through the landscape, one should never have the same view of the object twice.¹³³ He goes on to explain that the object need not be beautiful to be visually pleasing, but that “[o]ffensive objects, at a proper distance, acquire even a degree of beauty,” overall variety being “the principal ingredient in beauty.”¹³⁴

The intention of the structure in the landscape is understood in Wallace Stevens’ “Anecdote of the Jar.” He writes that he:

placed a jar in Tennessee
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill
The wilderness rose up to it,

¹³² Ibid., 30-32.

¹³³ William Shenstone, “Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening,” in *The Genius of the Place*, eds. John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis (London: Paul Elek, 1975), 291-292.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 297.

And sprawled around, no longer wild...¹³⁵

By placing an object, like Stevens' jar, in a landscape, that landscape is reshaped in relation to the object. Although the wilderness remains physically as it was, its relational perception has changed due to the object becoming a point of visual and physical reference, thus tethering the wilderness more closely to a place of relational familiarity rather than the former feeling of nowhere-ness.

The object's use as a point of relational and visual reference became an integral device in the Picturesque Garden. First, for its ability to give the viewer a visual and physical goal while moving through the landscape, and secondly, structures conveyed meaning for the landscape garden. For example, at Castle Howard in Yorkshire England, constructed between 1699-1712, an obelisk meets the viewer at the perpendicular intersection of two main paths, which divide the land just before the house into four separate sections. On it is this inscription:

If to perfection these plantations rise
 If they agreeably my heirs surprise
 This faithful pillar will their age declare
 As long as time these characters shall spare
 Here then with kind remembrance read his name
 Who for posterity perform'd the same.¹³⁶

Here the text on the structure informs us, at the most basic level, that this land is the owner's plantation, which will be passed on to his heirs, and as we move through this landscape we are to read it as such. Therefore as we approach the house, we are not

¹³⁵ Wallace Stevens, *The Palm at the End of the Mind* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 46.

¹³⁶ John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 20.

surprised to be first met with a kitchen garden on the right. Other elements placed in the landscape at Castle Howard, such as the pyramid and mausoleum, contribute to the multi-generational reading. Shenstone planned this textual device in his own landscape, pairing Virgil's Tomb with a selection of his mottoes inscribed, to convey "the pensive idea belonging to the place."¹³⁷

Like Shenstone's designs, the *Bird Blind* utilizes the concepts of relational and visual reference with literary reading. Placed at the triangular edge of the Thousand Acres sub-area, the *Bird Blind* becomes a physical goal and a visually intriguing point as the viewer moves through the landscape. The gravel trail to the *Bird Blind* winds its way through the gently rolling fields then brings the viewer around the artwork, until finally meeting with the ramp to the structure. Once on the ramp, text inscribed on the handrail explains to the viewer how to relate the work to the site chosen within the natural landscape, which is a commemoration of Lewis and Clark's historical observations and its revitalization process by the Native peoples of this area of the Lower Columbia. We are to understand that the Native American tribes have placed this object in the landscape in acknowledgement of the Corps of Discovery and that the present-day government agency has, to the best of their abilities, brought the landscape back to its original state.

Of course, landscape restoration for public green space in the United States is not new. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, landscape architecture projects were being implemented, primarily on the east coast, most notably in New York City with the establishment of Central Park. However, these public green spaces were not connected to

¹³⁷ William Shenstone, "Account of an Interview between Shenstone and Thomson," in *The Genius of the Place*, eds. John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis (London: Paul Elek, 1975), 244.

an outside literary context, nor were they intended to acknowledge Native peoples presence in the land before Euro-American settlement.

The site at Minnehaha Falls in Minnesota in the 1880s is a different story. Like the *Bird Blind* site at the Sandy River Delta, Minnehaha Falls was intended as a historic cultural heritage site. It was made famous by the poem, “The Song of Hiawatha” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, published in 1855. In his epic poem, Longfellow took liberties with the legends of the Ojibwa and Dakota tribes and wove them together with his created story of Minnehaha, which was inspired by his visit to the falls. The poem made the falls a destination point for picturesque travel. However, historically, the site was important because Fort Snelling was established there in 1819 and until then (as with Celilo Falls on the Columbia), it was an important meeting site for the Ojibwa and Dakota.¹³⁸

The site at the Minnehaha Falls was not restorative, in the present-day sense of the word. Instead it was a manipulated landscape in the Picturesque Garden tradition, which conveyed the feeling of the rugged wilderness that was the theatrical background for the characters of Longfellow’s poem.¹³⁹ Although the community leaders of that time intended the site to present “a true and pure presentation of nature [that] would help the ‘tribes of man to prosper,’ and would advance the people,” in actuality it was a literary

¹³⁸ Daniel Joseph Nadenicek, “Commemoration in the Landscape of Minnehaha: A Halo of Poetic Association” in *Places of Commemoration: Search for Identity and Landscape Design*, ed. Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2001), 56.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

garden, with a tourist audience.¹⁴⁰ Profit possibilities overcame the naturalistic intention of the landscape, adding structures, both for aesthetics and commerce, along with narrative statues.¹⁴¹

There are many parallels between the Minnehaha site and the Sandy River Delta site. Ultimately, both are intended as scenic tourist destinations. Although the Sandy River Delta has not yet experienced the commercialization of Minnehaha, it is still too young of a site to foresee its development. In addition, they capitalize on the natural landscape presented as historically accurate and equivalent to what Native Americans would have experienced. Both romanticize this pre-conquest time with the idea of the sublime and emphasize Euro-American interaction with the landscape as the catalyst for reading the work. These landscapes are meant by the designers to be read as places set aside by Native Americans for Euro-Americans to experience and now take in stewardship, but with a lesson in the value of the natural landscape. The Euro-Americans originally took the land and abused it, but now must heed the wisdom of Native American land values by first restoring it and then preserving it.

Both sites also derive their reading from outside literature that informed viewers are expected to have first-hand knowledge of before entering the site. At Minnehaha, no textual information was given in the original park. At the Sandy River Delta, the textual information is somewhat limited. As I have pointed out, the viewer of the artwork is expected to make the mental connection regarding the site-specific information on the

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 57.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 72-76.

handrail and the larger Corps of Discovery journey within the enclosure. The viewer must already have knowledge of the distance covered by the Corps of Discovery from St. Lewis, Missouri to Cape Disappointment, Washington, in order to understand the information inscribed on the enclosure slats. Taking one-step back, the artwork assumes that the viewer knows about Lewis and Clark and the mission of the Corps of Discovery. In addition, the viewer is supposed to know what the Confluence Project is and who are the “first peoples of the lower Columbia River Basin.” Without this basic information, the site can only be appreciated at a purely aesthetic level.

The use of the landscape by fishermen and dogs-walkers has created trails around and under the *Bird Blind*, disconnecting it from its use-purpose. Even the gravel trail leading to the artwork is regularly ignored for the more direct dirt path created by park goers. If the viewer does not have the basic information necessary to read the landscape as intended, the *Bird Blind* changes from an artwork in the landscape to a whimsical folly, a “jar” placed in a clearing of the wilderness. However, this is assuming the viewer is actually experiencing the landscape as an aesthetic journey. Local newspapers are celebratory of the community effort in conjunction with the Confluence Project and the United States Forest Service in creation of this site.¹⁴² However, my observations of park goers on two occasions revealed a disregard of and something like irritation with the structure.¹⁴³

¹⁴² An excellent example of this is Allan Brettman’s article for the *Oregonian*, “Art unites, as outdoor users coalesce around ‘The Bird Blind’ near Troutdale to achieve a greater good.”

¹⁴³ Unofficially I observed park-users walk around and under the artwork, not one entering it. And when asked if anyone of them knew what it was for, the general response was, “I don’t know.”

Regardless of media reception and outside literary context, the *Bird Blind* is successful as an object that reshapes the landscape and introduces dialogue between the users and the park on a new level of interaction and movement. Although former paths continue to be used, the new gravel path is preferable during rain, which is frequent at the site. The park users may not know what the structure is, but by walking around and under it, they interact with it and it provokes thought, even if only to contemplate why it is there at all. Its ramp invites the users into the structure and turns them into art viewers. The trees and rivers surround it becoming a part of the artwork's environment, instead of merely trees in the landscape. The negative reactions of park users only serve to validate how the *Bird Blind* has molded the landscape around it and given it context.

Despite these observations and regardless of media promotion, the ultimate reception of the *Bird Blind* is not yet achieved. It is a part of the living landscape of the Sandy River Delta, which is not static, but ever changing despite efforts of preservation. Currently, it seems that the majority of average park goers dismiss the *Bird Blind*. However as time passes and the artwork becomes integrated into the site within the memories of these park goers, reception may change. Initially, viewers of the artwork may not be fully informed, but over the course of several visits, they may become intrigued and search out information or piece it together over visits and through conversations with other viewers. Consequently reception for the *Bird Blind* cannot reasonably be gauged within the space of one visit or static perceptive circumstances.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONCLUSION

Maya Lin's oeuvre consists largely of commissioned site-specific artworks. She was abruptly brought to public view for her *Vietnam War Veterans Memorial* (1982) in Washington D.C. and since that project Lin has always engaged the site of her works specifically as an integral part of the holistic art experience completed by the viewer. Kwon defines this as the earliest formation of site-specific work provoked by Minimalism.¹⁴⁴ The *Bird Blind* addresses its site at this basic level; however, it also engages the site at the level of cultural framework by tapping into the intersection of established Native American cultural and land-stewardship with Euro-American territory documentation/exploration. Lin also adds academic literature to the artwork's site by the inclusion of a partial diary entry by Captain Clark and a species list informed by the Sierra Club's publication.¹⁴⁵ This makes the artwork engaging on multiple levels, however a significant portion of the artwork's subject matter is not included visually or

¹⁴⁴ Kwon, 11.

¹⁴⁵ Sierra Club, *What's Lost, What's Left: A Status Report on the Plants & Animals of the Lewis & Clark Exhibition in 2002* (Seattle, WA: Sierra Club, 2002).

textually within the site or work, which potentially excludes a significant portion of viewers.

Lin's notoriety is also a barrier to interpretive reading of the artwork. Because she is so admired and well received, her artist statement obscures other potential readings of her work. This is the fourth site of the artwork, which is the artist's oeuvre. Due to this reception of the artist, currently there is no critical academic examination of Lin's artworks. Interpretations of her works strongly follow her artist statements and praise her artistic genius and sensitivity to site.¹⁴⁶ As Rosalind Krauss has noted, "there is no reason to privilege the intention of the artist," because once a work enters the public sphere, it enters into a dialogue with viewers and other works creating a meaning of its own within this larger context.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, to privilege the artist's statement is to severely limit the work to one individual's meaning and deny the socially dynamic characteristic of an artwork and how it can change over time, speaking to various viewer groups in different ways over the course of its life.

The *Bird Blind* and its site attempt to subvert the issues created by dependency on the artist's statement by not providing anything to indicate Lin's connection with the site, at least within the site. Instead, there is the leading textual information on the handrail, the species documentation within the elliptical enclosure, and the revitalization information provided by the United States Forest Service at the entrance to the area. The Confluence Project and media promoting the site all make a point of noting Maya Lin as

¹⁴⁶ An academic example is found in: Ruth Laurine Fox, "Ground/Work: Extracting a Design Process from Landscape Form" Master's Thesis, (Iowa State University, 2002).

¹⁴⁷ Hal Foster et al., 1993, 6.

the designing artist. It is Lin's notoriety that provides the publically perceived legitimacy in subject matter and monument design, making it integral to community success for the Confluence Project. Without Lin, the Confluence Project would not have received the overwhelming private financial support and perhaps have not happened at all. The artist's reputation opens the doors for the projects to happen. However, because of Lin's reputation it is assumed that the artworks are successful and suited to the sites. This may be true, but this conclusion should only be drawn through critical analysis and not be blinded by the artist's statement nor her successful reputation with other site-specific works.

Kwon defines "iterant" artists as those who are repeatedly commissioned by institutions to create artworks specifically for local sites. In this relationship, the artist researches the site, along with repeated visits, and with the collaboration of local community leaders, produces the site-specific work.¹⁴⁸ Although each artwork, or monument in the case of Lin, is created individually for the unique locale, it creates a lineage of works interconnected by the genius of the artist and the artist's intention. It was this authorial genius that Antone Minthorn desired when he stated that Lin was one who could truly speak to the heart of Native peoples.¹⁴⁹

Now having completed the site and bringing the *Bird Blind* artwork into the public realm, the Confluence Project, media, and the established art reception of the Lin are sustaining limited interpretation of the artistic genius of Lin, the one historical

¹⁴⁸ Kwon, 46-47.

¹⁴⁹ Author interview, 2009.

perspective, and one reading of the artwork. Therefore it is necessary to approach the artwork primarily as an art object integrated in a public site with its own history that is both addressed and neglected by the artwork.

When the Sandy River Delta was obtained by the United States Forest Service in 1991, it was intended as a public park that would be revitalized with native vegetation and restored to its natural landscape. In creating recreational areas, the government established a certain, regular group of users accustomed to walking their dogs, hiking, horseback riding, and fishing. Its choice as the site for a Confluence Project artwork was coincidentally based on the convergence of public land, Native American historical significance, and documentation in the diaries of Lewis and Clark. Although the significance of the Lewis and Clark journey and how it changed the landscape of the Pacific Northwest is important, critically no single history can be privileged over any other just as the artist's intention alone cannot define the meaning of a work.

Having discussed regional and site history, as well as the contemporary use of the site, I have placed the *Bird Blind* in a comprehensive site context. I explored the connections to other contemporary artworks and other works within Lin's oeuvre to place the *Bird Blind* in the tradition of art and landscape design, how it lies within the tradition and how it moves forward. In this way, I have addressed the various ways in which the *Bird Blind* may be received, from a vital community memorial, or an aesthetic landscape folly, to an interesting and possibly frustrating object detached from the usable landscape.

However, even the most negative initial reception can, over time, become familiar with the artwork as part of the expected and enjoyed landscape. Perhaps the fisherman is

not happy having to walk around the artwork, but as years passed, irritation mellows to acceptance and then the relationship of familiarity occurs between users and the landscape. After time, that same fisherman could become intrigued with the structure and approach it in his own time, discovering for himself its meanings and intention, which could be something entirely different than the Confluence Project's intention, but just as rich and rewarding. This is because anything placed within the environment becomes, for better or worse, a part of the viewer/user's personal environment. Whether that object remains in place is at the discretion of the government since it controls the landscape. In this case, the *Bird Blind* has won the larger community support and has the promise of being a permanent part of the Sandy River Delta landscape.

APPENDIX

IMAGES



Image 1: Maya Lin, *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author



Image 2: Maya Lin, *Fish Cleaning Table and Dock*, Cape Disappointment, Washington, 2009, photo by author



Image 3: Maya Lin, *Viewing Platform*, Cape Disappointment, Washington, 2009, photo by author



Image 4: Maya Lin, *Amphitheater Trail and Cedar Circle*, Cape Disappointment, Washington, 2009, photo by author



Image 5: Maya Lin, *Boardwalk to Waikiki Beach*, Cape Disappointment, Washington, 2009, photo by author



Image 6: Johnpaul Jones and Associates, *LandBridge*, Vancouver Washington, 2009,
photo by author



Image 7: Johnpaul Jones and Associates, *LandBridge*, Vancouver, Washington, 2010,
photo by author



Image 8: Maya Lin, *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author

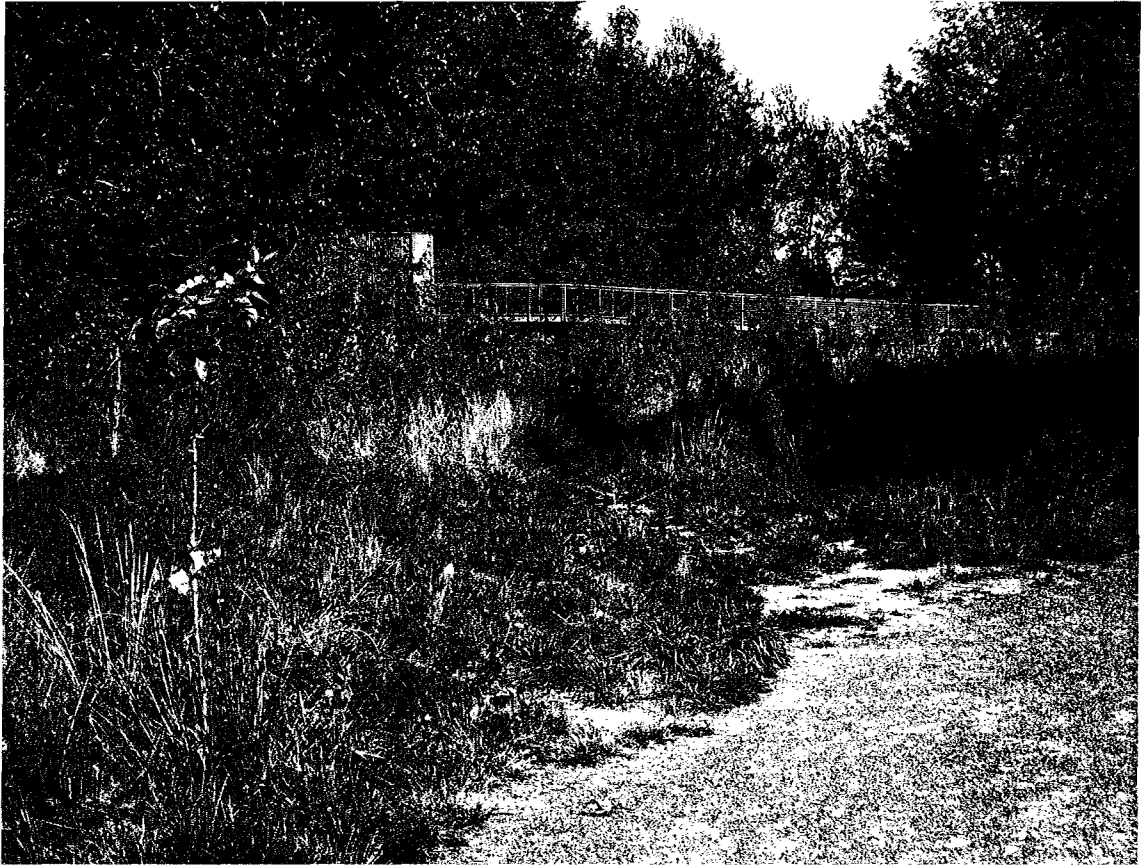


Image 9: Gravel trail bends to the right before meeting with the ramp into the *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author



Image 10: Ramp to the *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author

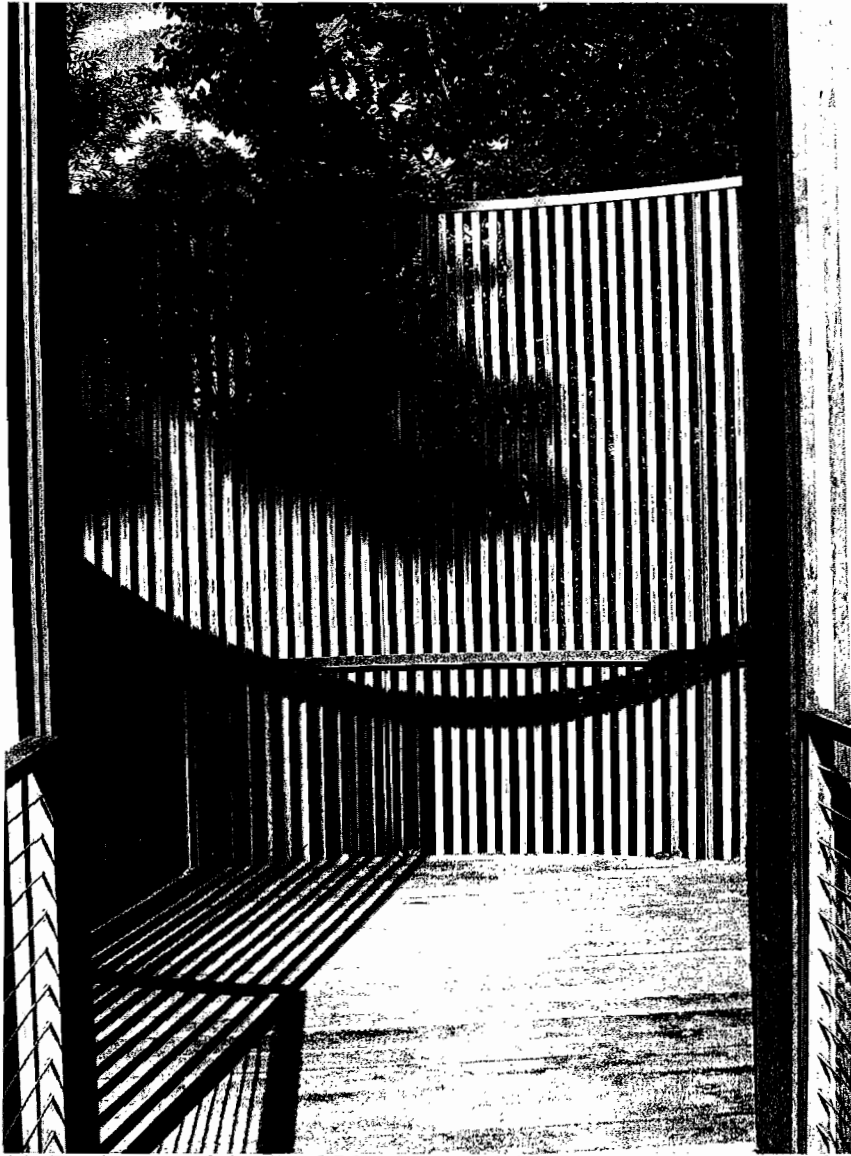


Image 11: Enclosure of the *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author



Image 12: Trail to *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author



Image 13: Trails around *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2010, photo by author

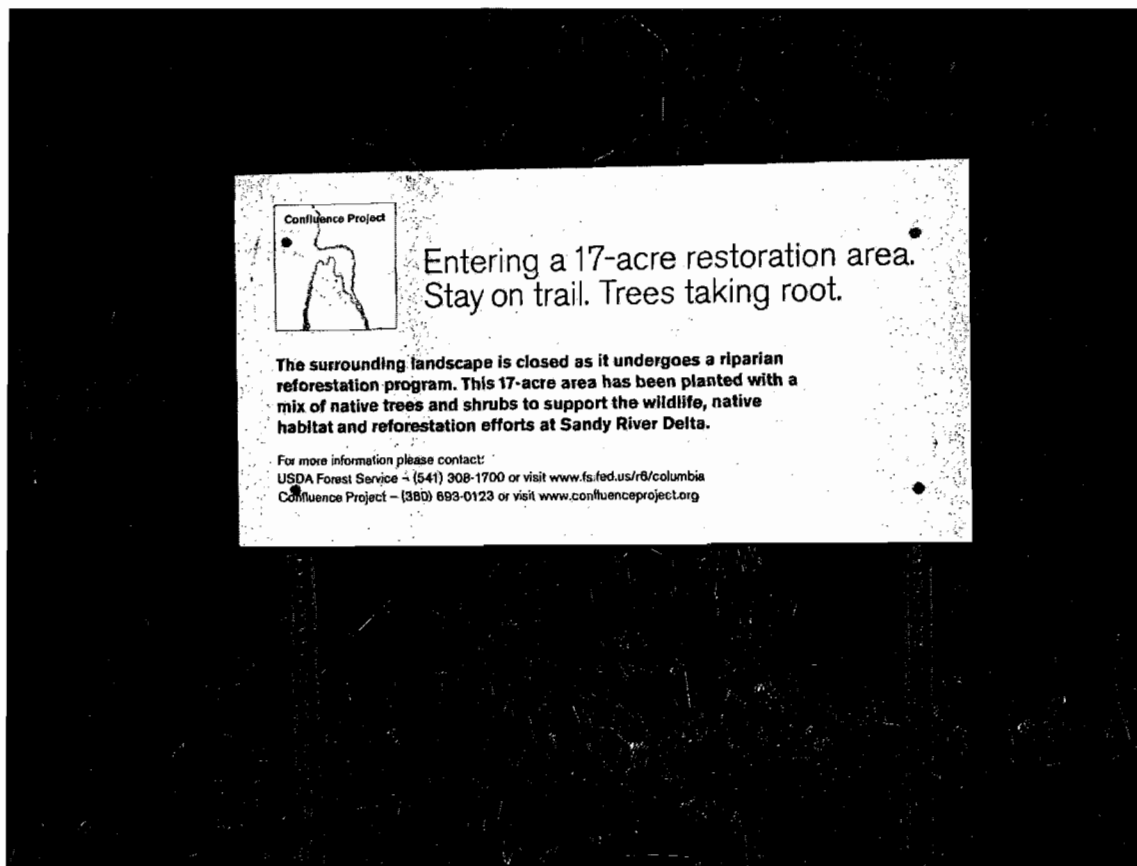


Image 14: Sign posted by the United States Forest Service at the entrance to the *Bird Blind* site, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author



Image 15: Trails to *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2010, photo by author



Image 16: Trails around *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2010, photo by author

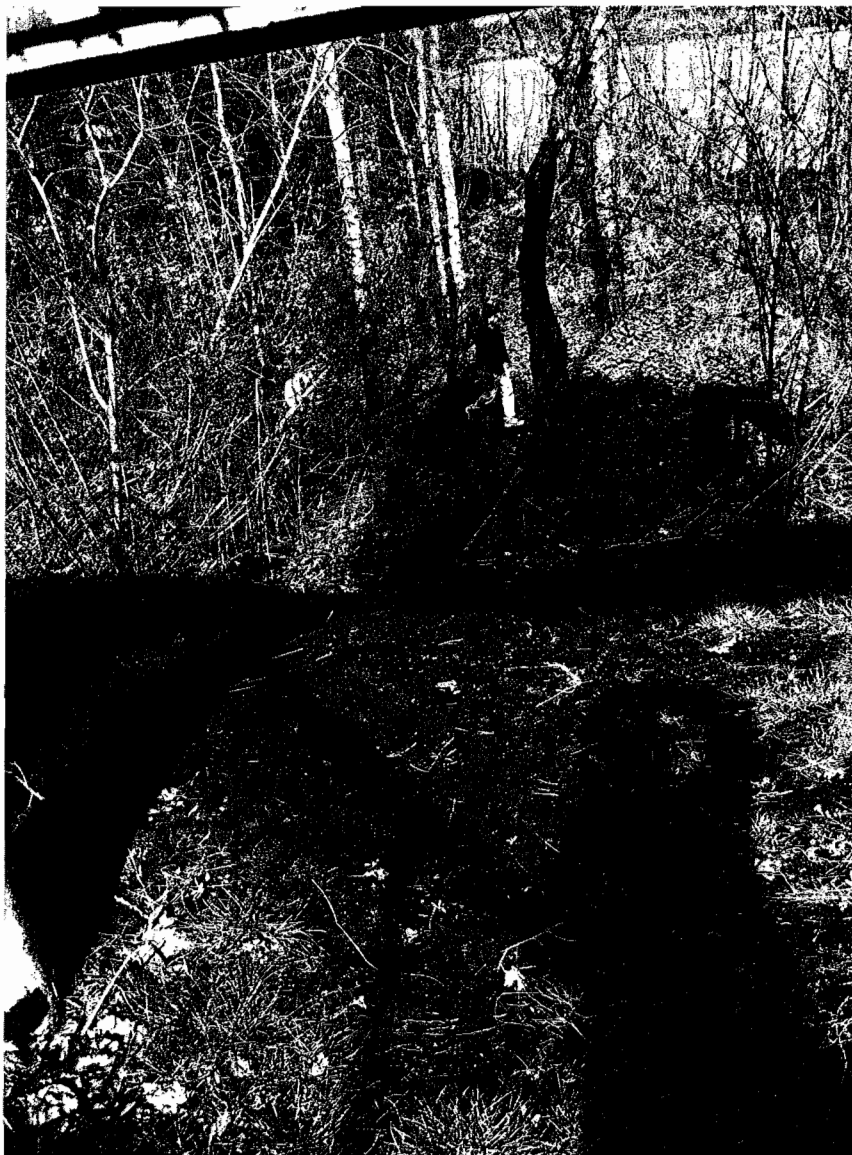


Image 17: Trails beneath *Bird Blind* to the river, Troutdale, Oregon, 2010, photo by author



Image 18: Erosion at the base of *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2010, photo by author



Image 19: Title slat on far left with observed species information on following slats, *Bird Blind*, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author



Image 20: Composite photo of a portion of the handrail text for the *Bird Blind*, photos by author, composite by Rena Schlachter, 2010



Image 21: View through *Bird Blind* slats, Troutdale, Oregon, 2010, photo by author



Image 22: Wasps' nest in the *Bird Blind* enclosure, Troutdale, Oregon, 2009, photo by author



Image 24: Maya Lin, *Civil Rights Memorial*, Montgomery, Alabama, 1989

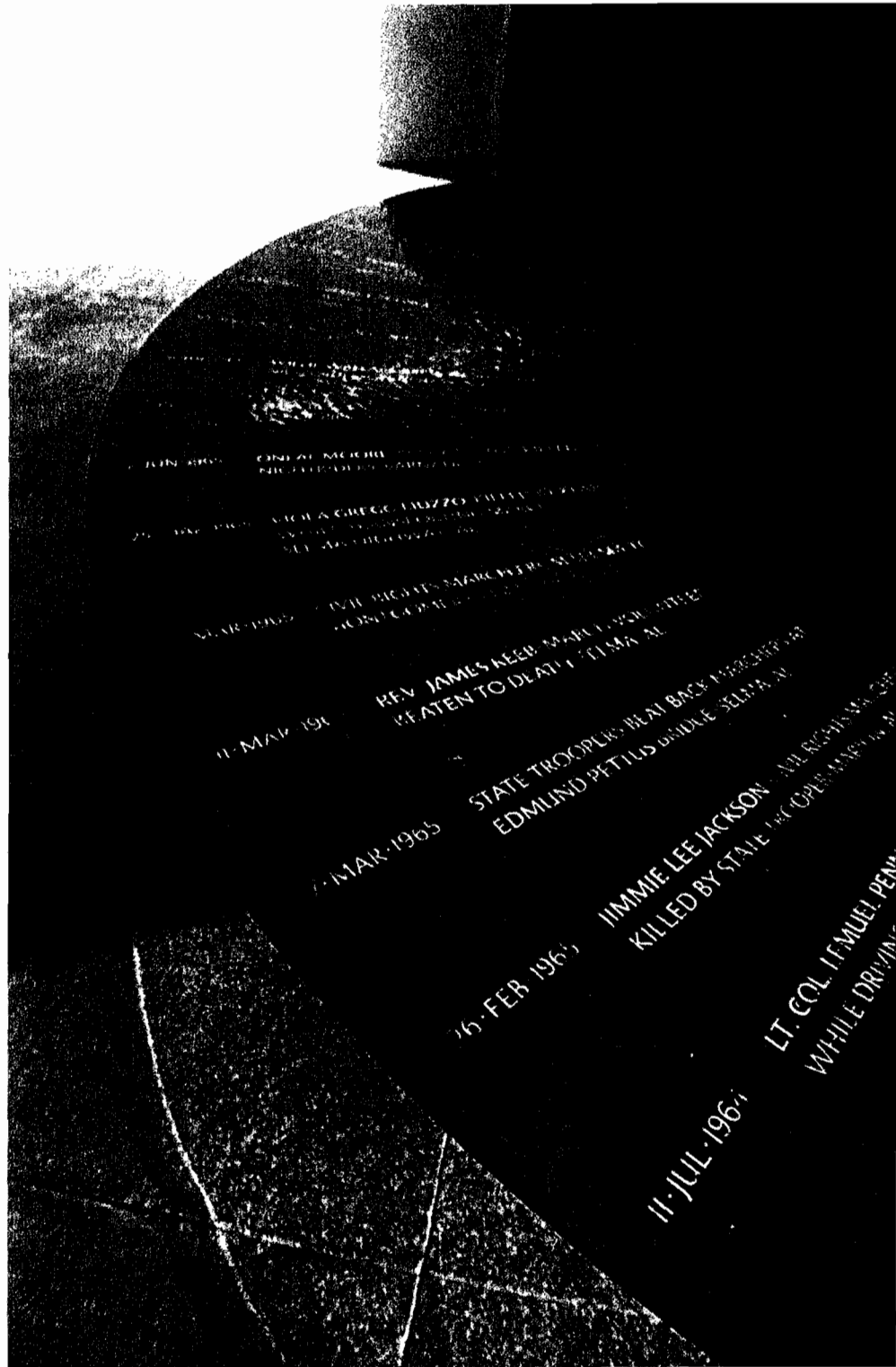


Image 25: Maya Lin, detail *Civil Rights Memorial*, Montgomery, Alabama, 1989

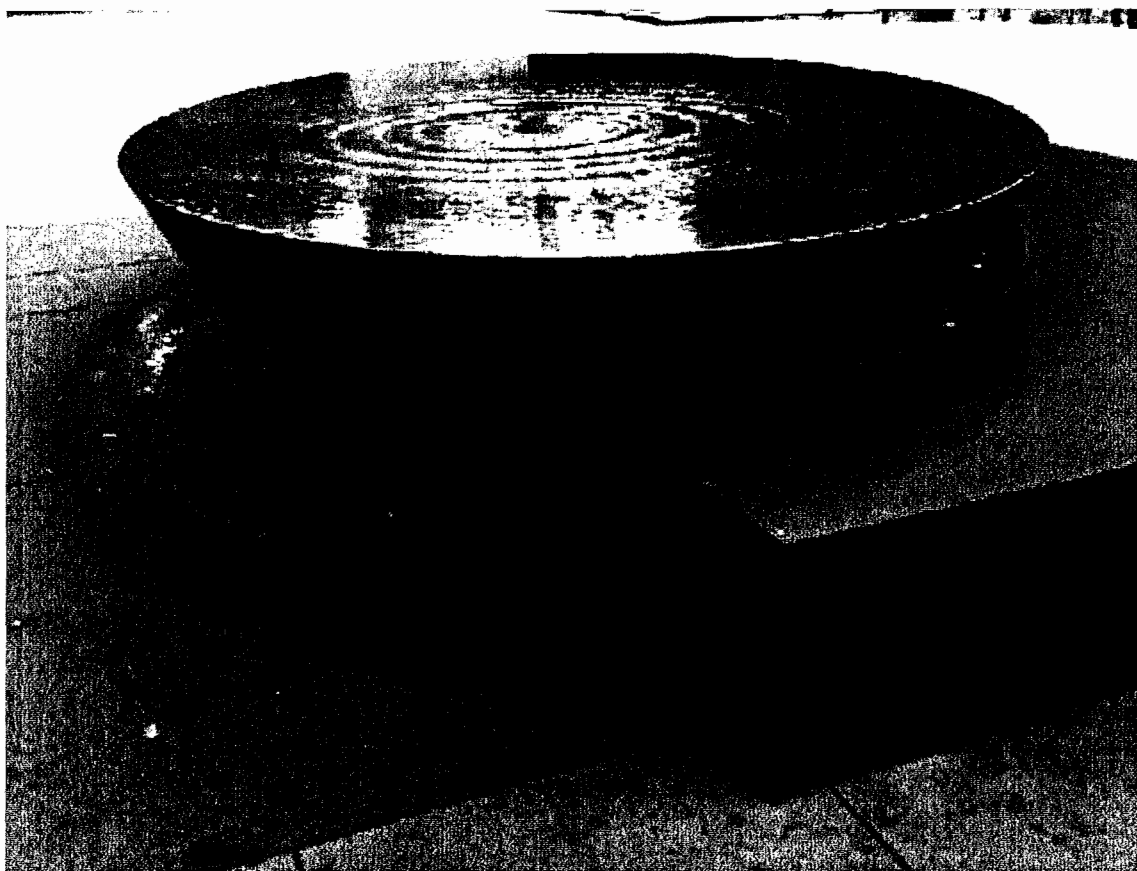


Image 26: Maya Lin, *Yale Women's Table*, New Haven, Connecticut, 1993

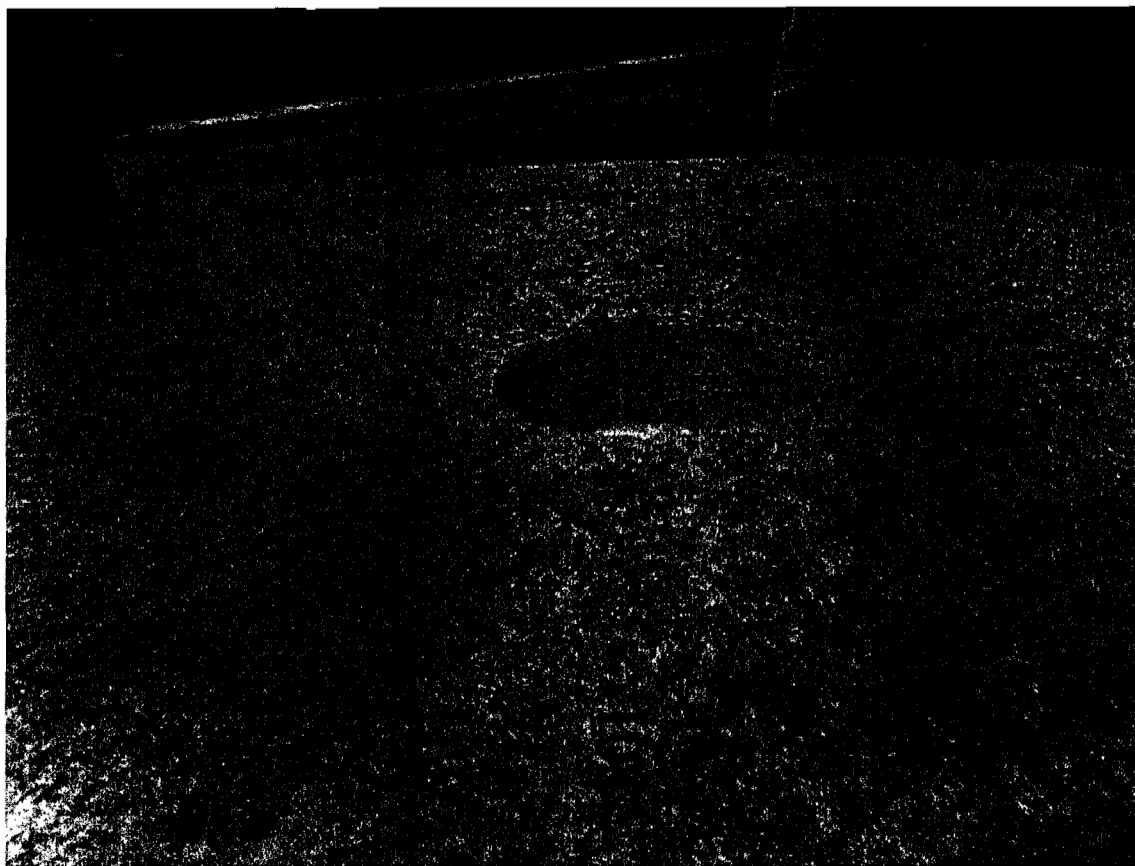


Image 27: Detail, *Yale Women's Table*

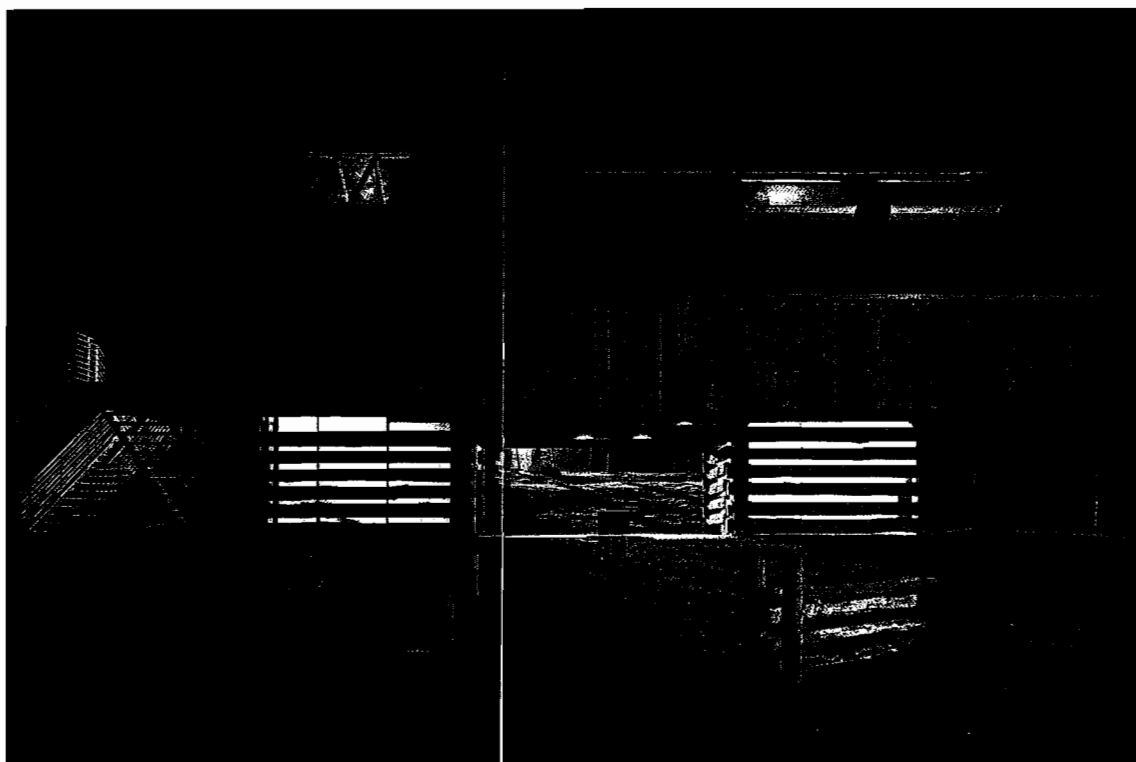


Image 28: Maya Lin, *Langston Hughes Library*, Clinton, Tennessee, 1999



Image 29: Upstairs interior, *Langston Hughes Library*



Image 30: Ground floor interior view into bookstore from stairwell, *Langston Hughes Library*

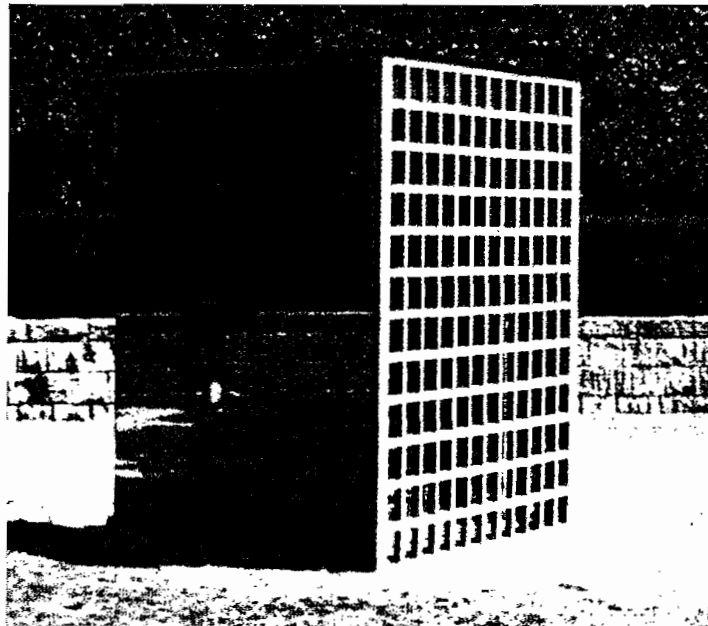


Image 31: Dan Graham, *Triangular Pavilion with Shoji Screen*, 1990

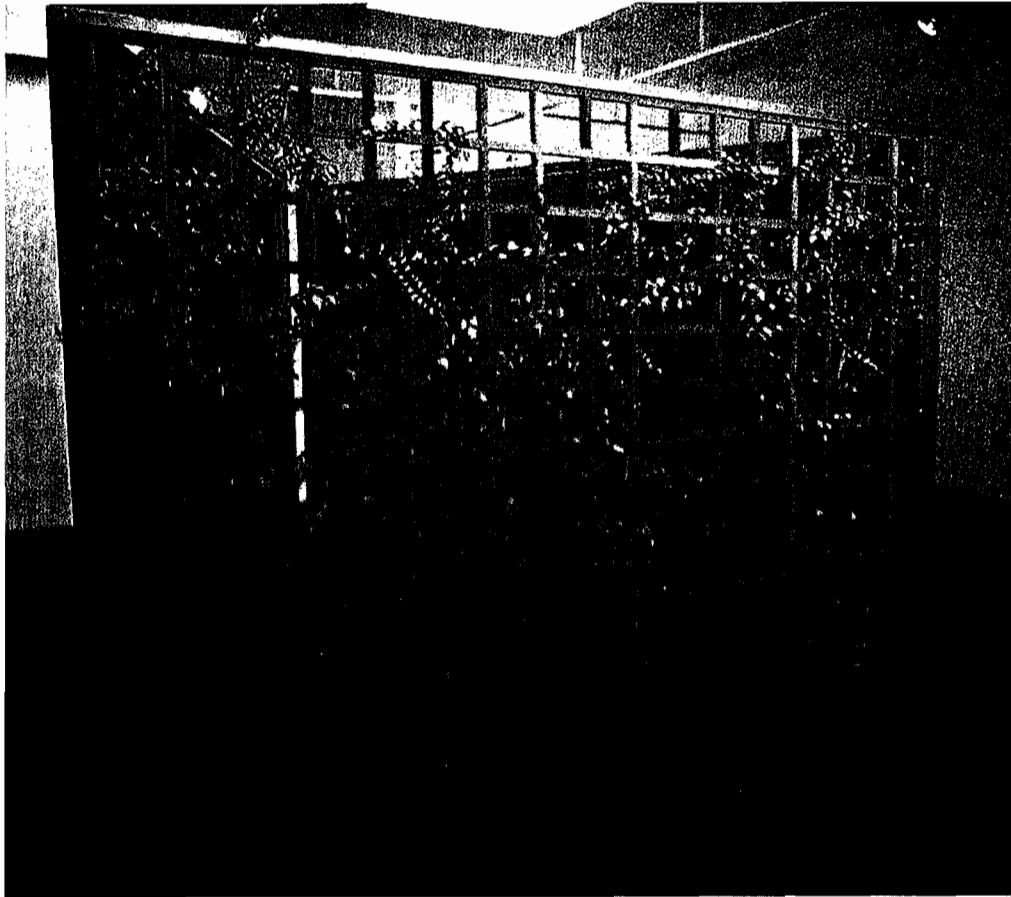


Image 32: Dan Graham, *Empty Shoji Screen/Two-Way Mirror Pergola*, 1996



Image 33: Alan Sonfist, *Circles of Time*, Villa Celle, Tuscany, 1986-1989

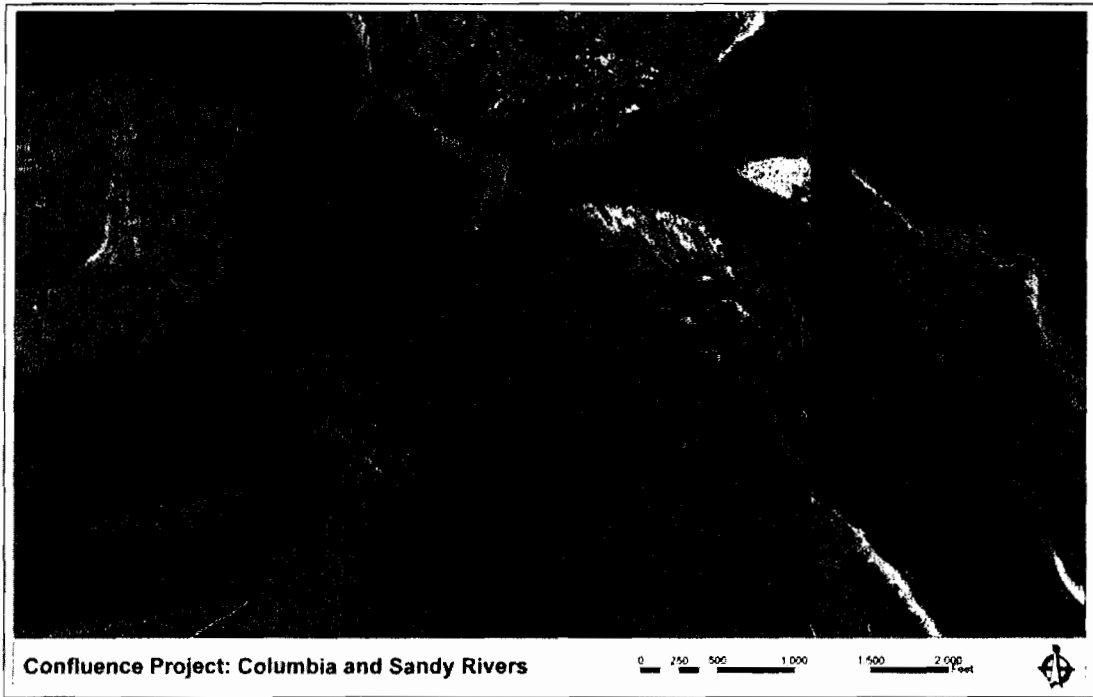


Image 34: Aerial photo of *Bird Blind* site, courtesy of the Confluence Project website

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