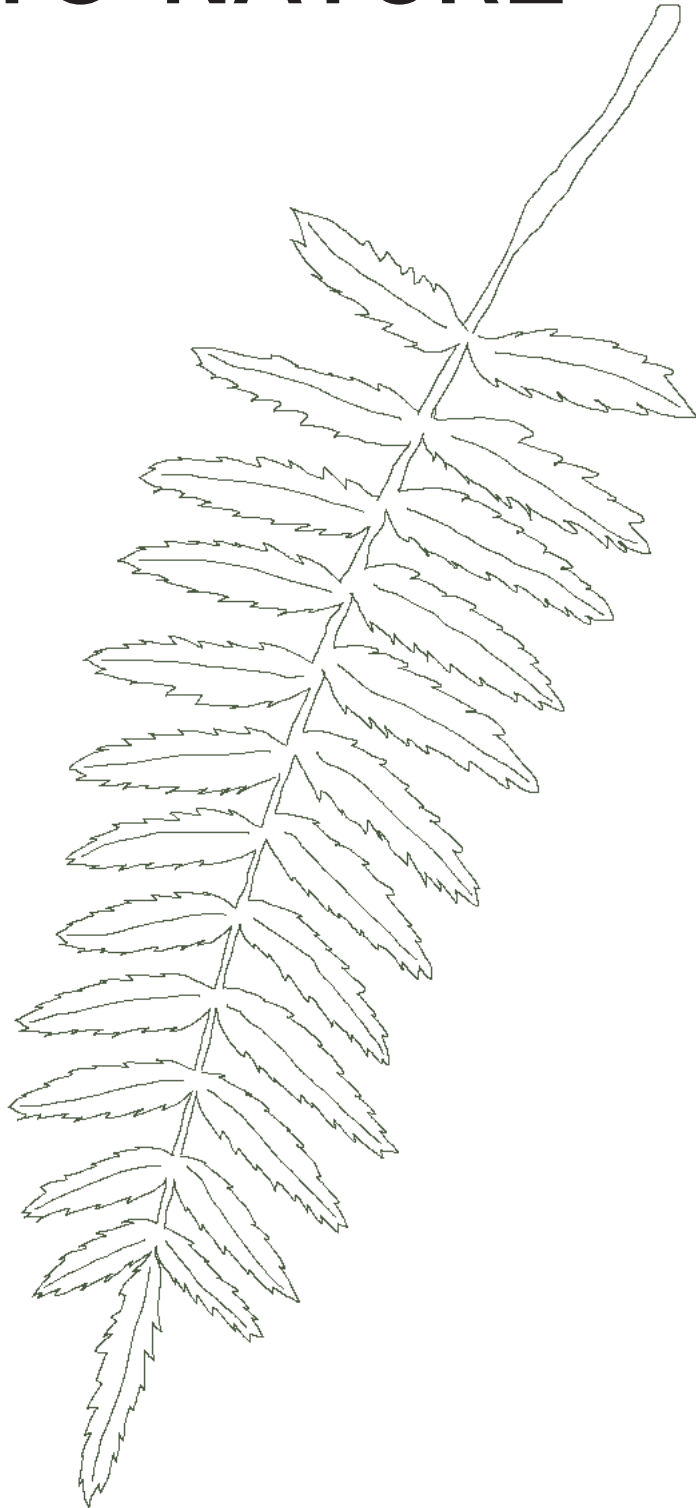


TRUTH-TO-NATURE



Before objectivity, there was truth-to-nature.

Lorraine Daston & Peter Galison
Objectivity

**This was a nature which operated as a metaphor for an ideal
and rational society.**

Hilary A. Taylorn
Urban Public Parks, 1840-1900: Design and Meaning

Poblenou Central Park

Friday, 17:52

I sit on a platform, uncertain of what it was designed for. Wooden ramps lead up to it from four corners. Six large posts meet in a circle above me. Lamps are attached to the posts. They seem like they have another purpose than supporting these lamps and being a climbing aid for plants that have, so far, barely managed to climb halfway up. The platform is covered with a thick layer of fine brown earth, almost like sand and small gravel. The edges of the platform are framed with blossoming hedges. The flowers are blue with a hint of violet. Since I have sat down, an adult and a child walked up to touch the flowers. Two dogs, both accompanied by two humans, also decided to walk across the platform. There are six small trees, barely 2 meters high, one between each post. They form little roofs with their long and thin leaves and their hanging fruits or seed stems. The air in the park is pleasant. A soft, cold wind is caressing my face.

The park is small, the surrounding streets are loud. The birds are barely audible. In the distance I see a group, maybe a family, standing under a tree: first two, then three adults with at least three children between three and eight years old. I wonder why they decided to come here. They play with a wooden bat. I can hear the noise of the plastic ball hitting the wood in the distance. Maybe they are celebrating a birthday. My left arm is itching. I was probably bitten by a mosquito.

The park has no benches, only chairs. Sometimes there are two or three next to each other, but mostly it is just a single chair. Maybe there are no benches so nobody will sleep on them. They are made of metal, I think aluminum. Their surface is cool, my thighs touch the metal. The part I sit on has an elevation in the middle that slightly parts my thighs. Mosquitos keep attacking me. I have to leave.

Parc de la Ciutadella

Saturday, 9:50

People are taking pictures of baked goods with the Ciutadella fountain as a backdrop. I hope they will also eat it. First, upon entering, the park seemed almost only populated by people involved in physical activity: outdoor fitness, circuit training, boxing, jogging. They are in every corner of the open sandstone stairs framing the fountain. Lots of American accents are audible. With every minute, more people are entering the park, the outdoor museum. Guided tours arrive, and people are walking their dogs, trying to keep them from jumping into the pond or eating unknown substances off the ground. A new fitness group arrives, others leave. The parrots are doing their rounds: green splashes appear in the air when they fly across. A seagull chases away the pigeons from the Venus sculpture. People are trying to take pictures of themselves, selfies. It is always awkward to watch.

When walking along the stairs, two older couples stand next to the handrail looking at the basin of the fountain while one of the fitness groups is working out to its limits. The women of the two couples have one leg each on the sandstone rail to stretch. I wonder if they had done it also without the fitness group in sight. Were they inspired? A Segway tour starts to populate the area. A group of bikes is leaving the edge of the fountain basin as if the Segways had scared them away. Hierarchies at the water hole, the selfie hole. No traffic audible. An older person jumps off the bench when a puppy is getting too close, its nose covered in its saliva. The trees here are high and create pleasant shade, some needle trees among them.

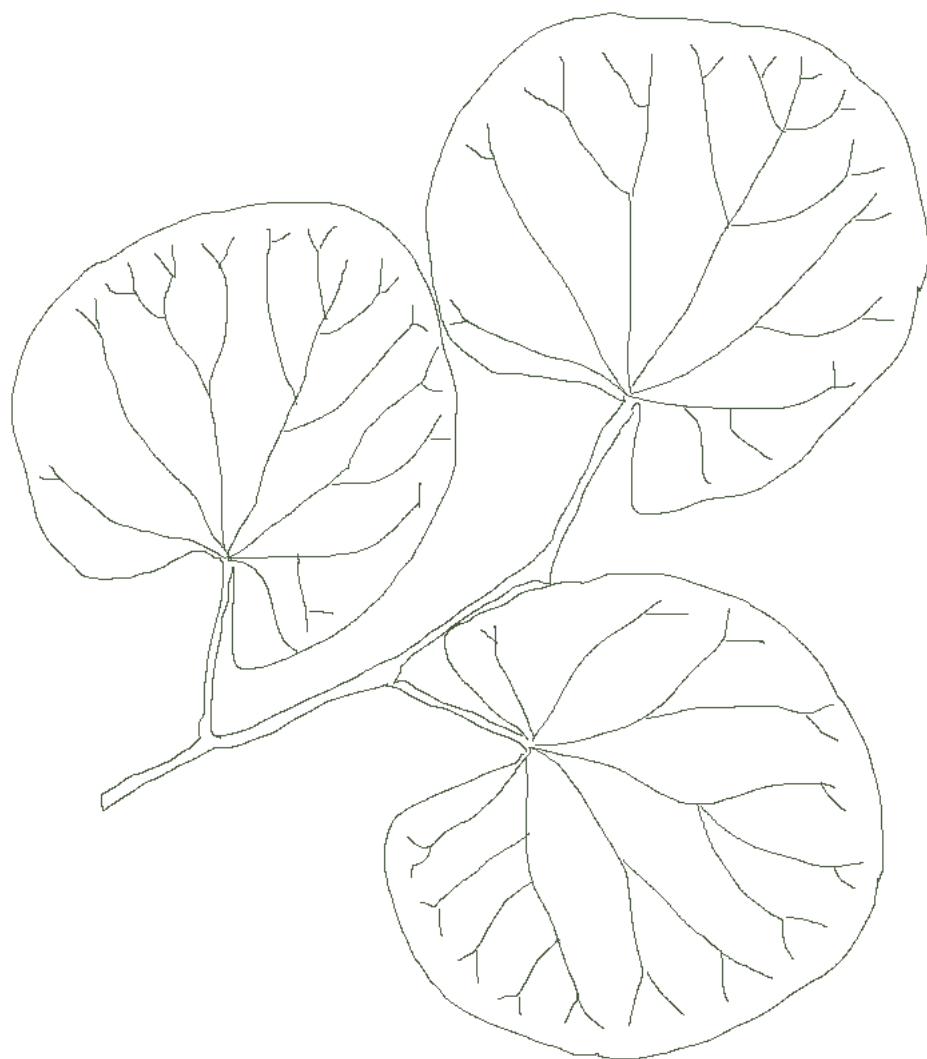
At a distance, I can see two people boxing, I hear the sound of boxing gloves meeting the bats. Somehow, this adds a strange air to the scene. When I arrived, I thought at least parts of the park were Barock and tried to imagine what a Duke or King of the time would have thought about people using this place as a gymnasium. But since it used to be an army compound before it was turned into a park in the late 19th century, it seems appropriate.

Aurora on top of the fountain is welcoming the sun in her horse cart while a seagull is pooping on her head. Venus is getting a tan or doing morning stretches, maybe she is part of the fitness crew. She is joined by two other women, although one appears to have no head, and two naked men staring at them.

Controlled nature, clean and symmetric.

Wooden benches, long enough to sleep on them, but probably well attended. However, inside the park, between the bushes, people have set up tents or placed their mattresses directly on the ground: better accommodation than a bench.

Two kids walk around with whistles that make sharp noises, like the ones to attract geese.



Jardins de Walter Benjamin

Saturday, 11:00

The park is closed off with construction fences, and each bench, there are a lot, considering the size of the park, is closed off with a piece of red and white ribbon. Still, someone is sleeping on one of them. It almost seems like a private house with this setup. Just a few steps away from the port. The streets are loud and still, the place is soothing and inviting. The contrast between the well-organised park that is partially paved with stones and the graffiti art on the walls that separate it from a sports court is pleasing. A sign informs that the small trees in this park are called Judas tree or love tree. I remember that I had looked up this tree before because I was curious about the name. The legend says that this was the kind of tree in which Judas hanged himself after betraying Jesus. It seems grim to have a tree like this in a garden for someone who also killed himself, but for very different reasons – the last resort not to be turned in to and then killed by the Nazis.

Parc del Mirador del Poble-sec

Saturday, 11:20

The park of the sleeping women.

Many benches stand in the shade although a substantial part of them are unusable because they are populated by pigeons and covered in their excrement. Two clean-looking benches are the beds of two homeless women. One of the sleepers has her bra lying over the back of the bench. I wonder why they did not decide to sleep closer to each other for safety – something I would never have thought if I had read them as male. But maybe they don't even know about each other's existence. It might be a coincidence. In this park there are also many men – they are not asleep – and most of them are trying to get my attention. I don't understand what they are saying apart from “¡Buenos Dias!”

I sit on the stone edge of a foamy and motionless pond. A small bird rests on a rock in the water, its brown feathers all fluffed up.

There is a small drinking fountain, but apart from one person everyone stops there to get water for their dogs and not for themselves.

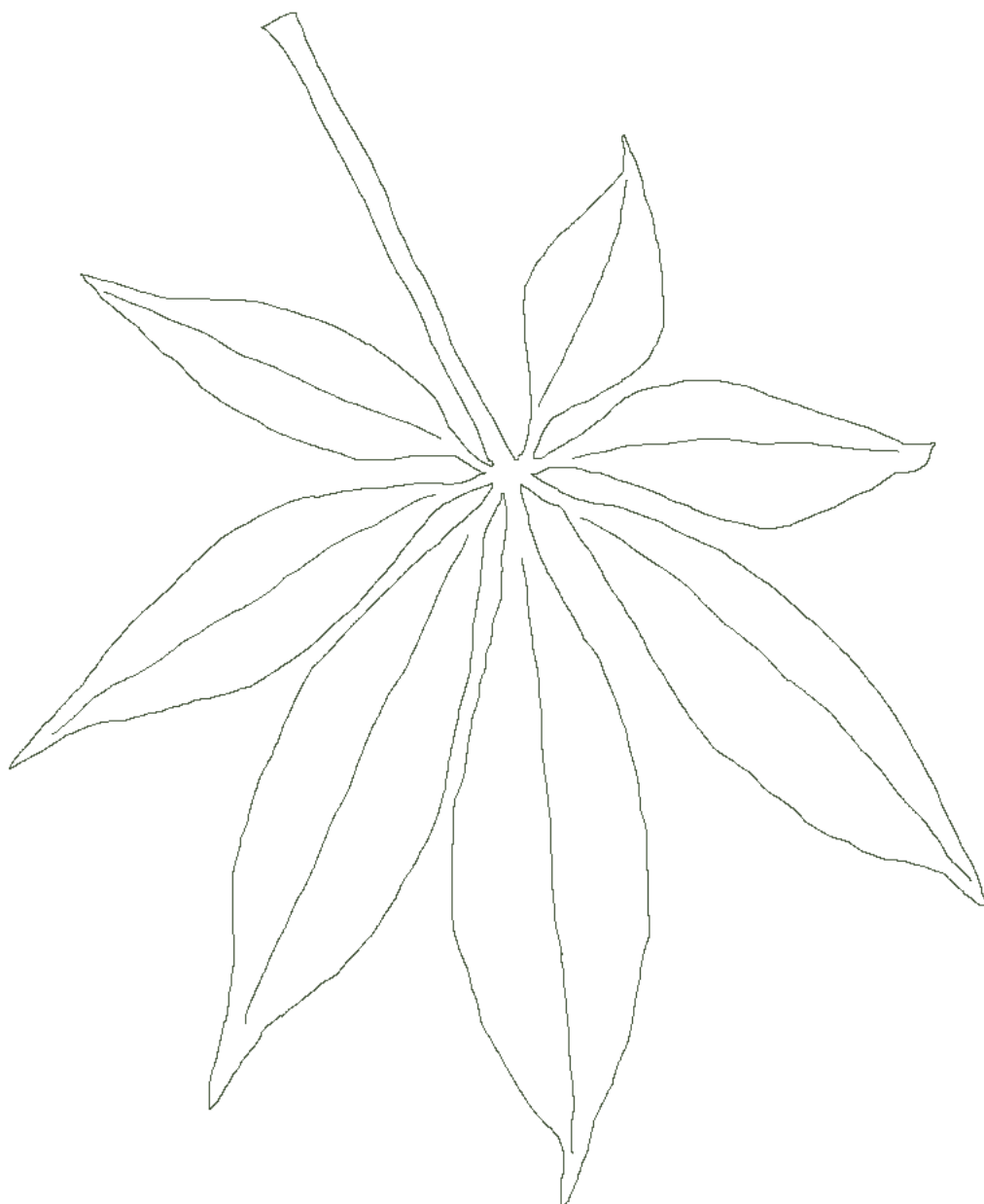
This area of the park is at the foot of the Montjuïc, the mountain that is also the destination of the cable car, a very touristic destination. The stairs leading up to the mountain are therefore frequented by touristic-looking people. Somehow it feels like a strange place, the buffer zone between mundane and precarious life, and the clean image of the tourist experience. A tiny dog lies down in the shade looking at me, then starts barking at a man who stirred up a group of pigeons he first lured towards himself. It seems like he is looking for company, for attention. When I hear the noise that stirred up the pigeons again, I realize he seems to have a hole in his throat. When he tries to clear it, it sounds like someone is blowing his nose.

The water stairs leading to the pond are turned off. The pigeons sing their song that echoes from the walls of the mountain. Maybe they are mourning their dead. Further up the stairs are two dead pigeons, one without a head.

Jardins Miramar

Saturday, 11:59

City birds seem to love the heads of stone women. The park of a hotel, just a winding road further up from the park at the foot of Montjuïc. A different world up here. Everything is in order, everybody seems very relaxed. The wooden benches are comfortable and clean. There is also no lawn, only flower beds, mostly populated by small bushes, easy to control, to keep in shape. The sandstone sculpture with the pigeon on its head holds fleshy grape vines. Many people speak German. I wonder how much a night in this hotel with a direct view of the Mediterranean costs.



Jardins dels Tres Tombs

Saturday, 13:47

Is a garden a park? And what differentiates one from the other? This garden I am in feels more like a playground with some trees, palm trees. They are so high that they somehow don't create a very park- or garden-like feeling. And they are inhabited by parrots. Does the fact that parrots are usually up in the trees and pigeons on the ground reflect upon a hierarchy between them? Or do pigeons just not like trees? There seem to be two different types of pigeons around: the generic city pigeon and a more slender, almost fragile type. The dead and sick ones I saw along the way were all of the 2nd type. Maybe the generic city pigeon is killing the others over a fight for territory.

A fly tried to sit inside my ear. I wonder why flies are present specifically at this park. Maybe the surrounding apartment buildings that frame the garden provide more interesting destinations for flies than parks without this proximity to housing. It feels almost private, and I feel a bit out of place. I chose a bench far away and also facing away from the playground section.

Even though there is not enough green and too much concrete, this place feels like a little oasis. It also feels comparably quiet concerning the nearby roads.

It is the first park where I didn't encounter a single dog. They are probably not allowed here due to the focus on playing children.

What gets these parrots so worked up? I cannot see them up in the trees. But I am certain there are not as many as their volume makes one believe.

Parc Joan Miró

Saturday, 14:40

The palm trees have large holes in their trunks, all the way through. They seem too low for a safe bird's nest. There is garbage in many of them. Yet, they are not decorated with graffiti which I saw with similar trees in other places. To spray a tree with tags seemed odd and somehow violent.

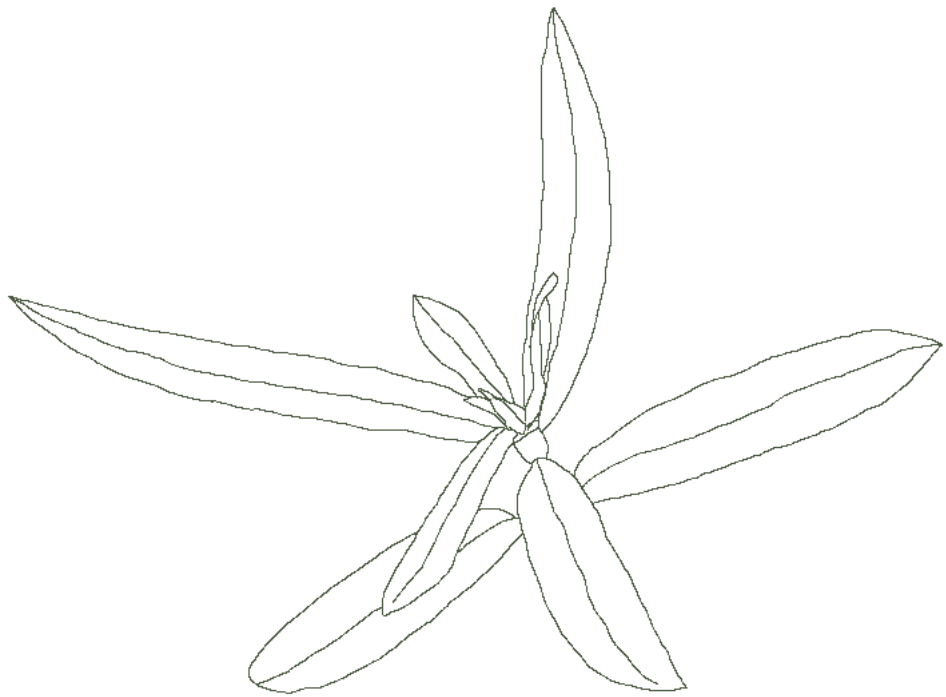
Three greyhounds walk past with one person holding their leashes. This type of dog I see a lot around here.

Is this place a library with a park or a park with a library? Or a sports court with a park and a library? Actually, it is a former slaughterhouse turned into a park.

Someone with a city service uniform passes. They are bright green with darker green elements and look really fashionable. I saw a person in one in a museum the other day. Lots of young and cool-looking people work for the city cleaning services, as I have noticed. The color of the uniform seems to give people more visible pride than the orange ones I know from Germany. No park would last long without these departments. We love to produce and leave behind waste just too much.

There are many trees here. I cannot make out an exact pattern. It seems like the palm trees frame the paths. Then there is a dark, high, slender, pointy needle tree and a light, small, bushy kind that populate the plains. Just close enough to each other to never leave too much space exposed to the sun. There are stone benches along the paths and wooden benches on the plains. There are not a lot of blossoming plants all over the city. Yet, here is some pink blossoming oleander. But maybe it is also too late in the year for blossoms.

Having a regular park like a favorite bar – is this a thing? Most people probably come here more often. The park, the place where the working class is meant to be civilized through their exposure to organized and idealized nature. The place to escape cramped living quarters and breathe some fresh air.



Muñoz Ramonet Gardens

Saturday, 15:50

Parrots are everywhere.

At first, I thought this person was writing something in a very thick notebook. Then I realized it had printed text on the pages in two columns: either a bible or a law book. The pond we are sitting at is surrounded by three pedestals on each side. All but the one next to the person with the book has sculptures on them. The person uses it to position their phone. The phone becomes the sculpture. They prepare themselves as if they are rehearsing. Once the phone is filming, they start reciting the text from the book, marked with neon green and pink. The water fountain in the pond is too loud, but I feel like I heard the word psalm. Once they are done and sit down again, I get a glimpse of the cover. It is a bible, most likely only the New Testament – it is too thin for both parts. The recited words were from one of the earlier chapters, considering where it was opened, something between Matthew and Luke. I wonder who they sent the video to or where they posted it. The reciting was not very interesting or captivating. The text was read out with slightly too much excitement as if they were giving a pitch for a new business idea. No one took notice of the event.

Two other people sharing this space with us seem to present books to each other, or more specifically, one is the presenter and the other the audience – one of the books has Che Guevara on the cover. A fourth person is just reading for themselves.

The chairs remind me of other places. Light aluminum chairs painted in a light, mottled color. There are two different kinds of backrest inclinations: a regular chair and one lower, leaning backward. I think I have seen them before in courtyards of art institutions.

There are magnolia trees, which I see here for the first time. The park is trying to have a classical appearance, it emanates an intellectual air. This also rubs off on its visitors. Of course, people come here to read. But now, some are also on their phones. Maybe this will be my regular park, my retreat to feel inspired to great thoughts.

Parc del Turó

Saturday, 16:45

This park is clearly situated in a wealthy neighborhood. Even the people sleeping on the benches look bourgeois. One looks like an aged skater or surfer chilling on a bench with his two backpacks. The other looks like an academic, but more like one from the 19th century, a humanities professor and natural explorer. There is a picnic party with tablecloths on small boxes. Everybody is wearing wide and long linen clothing. A young guy with a skateboard is reading a book by Yuval Harari. There are many more blossoming plants, the most diverse constellation of plants so far, as well as fewer parrots and pigeons than anywhere else. There is a café in the center with a little stage where a puppet theatre for kids is about to be performed. A woman in a bikini is sunbathing.

There is also a small outdoor gym which almost seems out of place here. Everyone walking past me has a very personal and intriguing style.

Social class and park standard seem interrelated. This park has something magical. The fluffy red pepper trees seem like miniature willows whose bark will turn into faces any moment. There are corners to hide and hidden corners. Something only a responsible audience can be entrusted with.

