



Nature's Makers

Mia Taylor Wavrek

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Riverside Landing Park, Knoxville, TN

Considering natural forms, one notices something about the way nature makes. Nature's shapes curve and flow, yet sometimes they seem "messy" and disorganized. In this way, nature is full of curiosities, waiting to be explored. But it is also incredibly complex and sometimes uninviting. Relying solely on nature is not easy. Nature doesn't make boats to cross its rivers. After a long walk in the woods, the forest doesn't provide a grocery store, or a microwave to heat up food. If you stumbled across these, it would be obvious that they had a maker. With right angles and crisp, clean corners, these forms provide something that nature cannot and thus, are arguably as fascinating. As nature's makers, humans invite the built environment. Settlements and cities beckon exploration, foster human interaction, efficiency, and culture. Ultimately, humans rely on nature for the resources to create our urban spaces. As the products of people, they are the welcoming curiosity of the city in nature.

Petunias sans Café

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Old City Java, Knoxville, TN

Coffee: an essential part of my morning routine. For most, the coffee shop is an urban social hub, a place to meet up and chat with friends or plug in a laptop and work among students and professionals alike. In a rush, I stop by a local favorite to grab a quick coffee. Competing with the graffitied alleyway, bold, pink petunias greet me as I walk by. Not yet fully open, the flowers are still too sleepy to welcome any insects in search for pollen. Having not yet had my coffee, I can relate. In the early morning, the Old City harbors a quiet, quaint feel. But despite it being only one city block, energy swells throughout the day. As people move busily to and from their destinations, nature longs to capture their attention. It flies overhead, peaks through cracks in the sidewalk, and is tucked away between buildings. Nature in the city waits patiently to be noticed.



Transmission

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Greensboro Arboretum, Greensboro, NC

The arboretum, with its wide variety of well-placed, labeled plants, represents a manicured “city-nature.” People visit the arboretum to stroll and wander rather than to rush and reach a destination. It is a place that invokes a natural setting rather than an urban one, yet contains familiar built structures: defined pathways, bridges, arches, and sculptures. A reminder of city and settlement emerges like tall trees from either side of a paved path. The transmission lines hybridize the pastoral and structured greenery with the infrastructure that powers our cities. One can imagine the once-vacant swath of landscape that surrounded the tall, lonely towers before it was transformed into an attraction, a place to explore. Much like the transmission of energy through lines from power plant to urban center, the arboretum is a place to pass through on foot, transmitting information, curiosity, and aesthetic. It is the city as nature.

