



Art: *Embodying Thoreau*

Site: The Woods

Place: Pennypack Park

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Artist: Ed Levine



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There are three elements to the subtitle of this art installation: *Dwelling, Sitting, Watching* – all found in various parts of the park, along a trail that skirts the Pennypack Creek. It is a deeply wooded site where one could easily forget that this is an urban park, so much the better for an homage to Thoreau and his experiment in living in nature. The material for the tripartite pieces is wood, so, in that sense, they are in synch with their environment. They are follies in a landscape but have more substance than the decorative 19th-century ones did. Each has its own source in, and point of departure from, *Walden*. Each is well-matched to its site, and the sites are surprisingly varied, as are the works. The *Dwelling – Thoreau's Hut*, seen above – is built to the same dimensions as Thoreau's house, although this is a far grander vision – an indoor/outdoor pavilion, a chapel in the woods. The *Sitting* is a triad of benches, all looking like wedges cut from a giant cheese wheel, situated on a plateau above the creek with a lovely view, and having the appearance of some sort of wayfinding markers. The *Watching* is a bird blind, a half-circle of a building with a 180° horizontal viewing window. All take advantage of their settings and create a nice dynamic between built and unbuilt, man and nature, showing us our need for both in an integrated way.

Impact:

- Context/contrast
 - Scale
- Integrated in setting
 - Materiality
 - Color
 - Minimal

Art-to-Site Rating: High

View Date: November 2009



Sculpturehead

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