



**Art:** *Paley Park*

**Site:** Space between two buildings

**Place:** Midtown pocket park

**Location:** New York, NY

**Artist:** Zion & Breen Associates

One might argue that a tiny pocket park in the middle of Manhattan can't be art, let alone sculpture – and that would be wrong. This artwork is about escape and transformation, and the fact that you enter this work rather than walk around it is inconsequential – it completely alters your perception. A bit like a theater set or a tableau, it is tucked between two urban-building walls, a gap in the relentless architectural teeth of a metropolis. One could conceivably walk right past it and never notice its presence because it is inset, a negative space in the upfront, in-your-face positive spaces that form the unyielding streetscape. And, being recessed, it is darker than the shiny storefronts it retracts from. It creates a kind of void, in the solid line of facades and in the sounds it obliterates. The fact that such a thing exists is miracle enough, but ponder the ability to take a mere tenth of an acre of real estate and make it have such a powerful impact, considering its mega environs. Truly remarkable is its ability to both embrace and deny its surroundings. By that I mean, it is completely hard-surfaced: concrete walls, stone stairs lifting it slightly from the street, a floor of cobblestones, a rock-face waterfall wall. But then there is the softening, too: of ivy on two sides, flower planters and wispy locust trees placed in perspectival array to break up the hard edges, an airy green canopy overhead and the constant rush of water drowning out every speck of noise pollution.



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You might think you just fell through a tear in the ozone layer and landed in a rain-forest cafe, someplace else, its transformation is so simple and complete. It creates a world in its compressed area that reacts to, includes and excludes, and becomes something far greater than the sum of its parts. For the urban soul in search of respite for the spirit, this is nirvana.

**Impact:**

- Context/contrast
  - Scale
- Transformative
  - Sound
- Containment
  - Spareness

**Art-to-Site Rating:** High

**View Date:** July 2009

