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NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: PROSPECT PARK; Olmsted Fails As Sound Bite, by Lynette Holloway (September 23, 1993)

One addition to the meadows and graceful woods of Prospect Park are 20 towering yellow sign-sculptures featuring quotes from one of the park's designers, Frederick Law Olmsted.

The signs stand 16 to 20 feet tall on thin black legs of iron, and the quotes, in Olmsted's austere, abstract and proper English, are intended to help visitors envision the park as he did during its design.

For instance, a sign at the center of the park talks about a bridge over a nearby stream: "The arches are as short, as narrow, and in all respects as unobtrusive as they can well be made, consistently with their objects, with sound, permanent construction, and with an honest expression of their purpose."

But rather than helping parkgoers, the signs -- designed by David Schafer, a Brooklyn sculptor -- seem to have confused some of them. Since their installation in July, the park's office has received dozens of phone calls from people asking what they mean, said Barbara Caldwell, a spokeswoman for Prospect Park. L.H.