

As a boy I used to climb over the fence into the neighbor's garden. There I would crawl to a certain bush at the backside of the house and hide behind it. I would sit there silently and observe. Often a man would be on the terrace reading a book. I remember how I would wait for the moment he finished a page and turn to the next. I remember birds landing on the lawn which separated the bush from the terrace and lifting up in the air again. Every now and then there would be an afternoon tea. Then two women would sit at the table, one of them constantly talking and gesturing. The man, sitting in his chair, would not say much, sometimes refill the cups for the women. There were times when I would even sit behind the bush without anyone else in the garden. Those days I would just wait for a curtain to move behind the windows or a door to open.

One day I found out about a possibility to climb up to the rooftop of my parents house. From there it was easy to crawl over to the rooftops surrounding our house. This discovery would entirely change my perception of the neighborhood. For one I was now able to overlook several gardens at once, and secondly, the heightened position made me feel separated and somehow withdrawn from the sceneries. I could lie on the rooftops looking down into the gardens as if each one of them was a stage, and the neighbors around my parents' house acting infinite versions of 'scenes of daily life'. Even though I was following their daily habits meticulously I never felt that I was intruding their privacy. I wasn't judging anything they would do. I was there almost without purpose. I imagined I could spend my whole life on those roofs watching all kinds of variations of stories unfold, repeat and vanish with the sun setting.

In those years I went with my father to an Aeroflight festival. We took a round trip in a small Cessna 172. When we took off I was staring out of the window expecting to see the world from above. But what was there unfolding underneath us took my breath. I could see an immaculate miniature world, with perfect roads, cars driving on them, and houses, all beautifully set up. The small trees looked almost real. I even spotted a traffic light turning from red to green. I asked my father if he knew about this place. He replied that he did. Overwhelmed by its beauty and detail I begged him to go there immediately after returning from the flight. He promised to me that we would do so as soon as we were back down on the ground.