Schoolchildren in Space

The side of a fountain in the foreground to the left. We are gazing out past it, across an empty brick plaza around the fountain, to a grassy field. At this moment, the moment the painting depicts, a class of 25-30 schoolchildren play on the grass. They are 3rd or 4th graders. Maybe 5th or 6th. Maybe a mix. They are all African-American, and they are all wearing white polo shirts and khaki pants, their school uniform.

We see the whole field, where it begins and ends on all four sides. It's not very big, and there's nothing besides flat grass and a few trees on the outside looking in. The boys appear to be playing football — there are about fifteen boys, and one football, and they are all either watching the ball that is in the air, or they are running towards it with their heads down. (Football, American football: America). The girls sit on the side, under the trees, in the shade. One teacher, standing with a clipboard, stands all the way to the left, looking over the girls' heads, watching the boys. There's no one else on the field.

Now, about the four sides. The road to the right of it has more lanes than we can see, as it is cut off at the top right corner of the canvas. The road to the left is a four-lane, one-way road, on which we see the back of a truck, and from which a cab is also in the process of turning onto the road behind the field. Above this road behind the field is an overpass. Behind the overpass, a tall building that rises off the canvas.

The brick ground from which we view the scene is the fourth side.

We see that this is a small field surrounded by wide roads that heavily favor automobiles. (A gifted artist would create the impression that such a road also exists behind us, completely enclosing the field). Schoolchildren have been brought here to play, because this field, existing only within its

ring of orbiting automobiles, is often empty. Often available. When the children leave, it will be empty again. Available again. The children will not return here after school, for the roads are not safe to cross. Pedestrians won't walk across it leisurely, as a shortcut to get from one place to the other, for this is not an area of the city that pedestrians normally, casually stroll through. And so people who like to people watch won't stop to sit here. Nor will those looking for a quiet, remote place to sit and read a book — it's too noisy here, there's too many cars.

Thus it occupies a strange space in the community, this urban field. Here is a place both good and bad — useful from 3 to 5 pm on lovely afternoons, useless otherwise. Though always, the people all agree, aesthetically pleasing.