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The "Magic of the Mall": An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment

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Abstract. Shopping is the most important contemporary social activity, and, for the most part, takes place in the shopping center. Developers and designers of the retail built environment exploit the power of place and an intuitive understanding of the structuration of space to facilitate consumption and thus the realization of retail profits. They strive to present an alternative rationale for the shopping center's existence, manipulate shoppers' behavior through the configuration of space, and consciously design a symbolic landscape that provokes associative moods and dispositions in the shopper. These strategies are examined to obtain an understanding of how the retail built environment works, and how we might work against it.

Key Words: consumption, shopping centers, malls, megastructures, pseudoplace, spatial system, signification.

> And the truth-sayers of the shopping mall, as the death of the social, are all those lonely people, caught like whirling flotsam in a force field which they don't understand, but which fascinates with the coldness of its brilliance (Kroker et al. 1989, 210).

SHOPPING is the second most important leisure activity in North America, and although watching television is indisputably the first, much of its programming actually promotes shopping, both through advertising and the depiction of model consumer lifestyles. The existential significance of shopping is proclaimed in popular slogans such as: "Born to Shop," "Shop 'Til You Drop," and "I Shop Therefore I am." An advertisement for Tyson's Corner, Virginia, asks: "The joy of cooking? The joy of sex? What's left?" and the answer provided is, of course, "The joy of shopping"! As Tyson's obviously knows, recent market research shows that many Americans prefer shopping to sex (Levine 1990, 187).

Despite increases in catalog sales, shopping remains essentially a spatial activity—we still "go" shopping—and the shopping center is its chosen place. By 1990, there were 36,650 shopping centers in the U.S., providing 4.2 billion square feet (151 square miles!) of gross leasable area and accounting for more than $725 billion of sales, or 55 percent of retail sales excluding automobile sales ("Retail Uses" 1991, 23). The time spent in shopping centers by North Americans follows only that spent at home and at work/school. Centers have already become tourist destinations, complete with tour guides and souvenirs, and some include hotels so that vacationers and conferees need not leave the premises during their stay. Downtown retail complexes often include condominia, and residential development above the suburban mall is predicted to be an inevitable new trend ("The PUD Market Guarantee" 1991, 32). Their residents can literally shop without leaving home (or be at home without leaving the shops?). Moreover, planned retail space is colonizing other privately owned public spaces such as hotels, railway stations, airports, office buildings and hospitals, as shopping has become the dominant mode of contemporary public life.

Nevertheless, there persists a high-cultural disdain for conspicuous mass-consumption resulting from the legacy of a puritanical fear of the moral corruption inherent in commercialism and materialism, and sustained by a modern intellectual contempt for consumer society. This latter critique condemns the system of correspondences between material posses-

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sions and social worth (Veblen 1953; Boorstin 1973), the homogenization of culture and alienation of the individual (Adorno and Horkheimer 1969; Marcuse 1964) and the distortion of human needs through the manipulation of desire (Haug 1986). The contemporary shopper, while taking pleasure in consumption, cannot but be aware of this authoritative censure, and is therefore, like the tourist (Frow 1991, 127), driven by a simultaneous desire and self-contempt, constantly alternating between assertion and denial of identity. This ambivalence is, I think, precisely expressed in the play of the slogans cited above, which cock a snook at the dominant order of values, but in so doing also acknowledge its inevitable authority.

This paper argues that developers have sought to assuage this collective guilt over conspicuous consumption by designing into the retail built environment the means for a fantasized dissociation from the act of shopping. That is, in recognition of the culturally perceived emptiness of the activity for which they provide the main social space, designers manufacture the illusion that something else other than mere shopping in going on, while also mediating the materialist relations of mass consumption and disguising the identity and rootedness of the shopping center in the contemporary capitalist social order. The product is effectively a *pseudoplace* which works through spatial strategies of dissemblance and duplicity.[1]

The analysis proceeds in several parts, elaborating upon a conception of the built environment developed elsewhere (Goss 1988) and employing the professional literature of the retail development industry as well as empirical observation of shopping centers. First, I briefly consider the contemporary cultural context and the connection between the techniques of environmental design and image making in (post)modern society. Second, I examine the retail built environment as an object of value; that is, a private, instrumental space designed for the efficient circulation of commodities which is itself a commodity produced for profit. Third, I discuss the means by which developers have obscured this logic by constructing shopping centers as idealized representations of past or distant public spaces. Fourth, I describe the operation of the shopping center as a spatial system structuring opportunities and constraints for movement and social interaction. Finally, I consider the retail built environment as a system of signification that gives symbolic expression to the cultural values of consumer capitalism, refers to other times and places, and attaches preferred meanings to commodity displays.

This account is necessarily limited to the workings of the design, that is the assumptions made about the retail built environment and its users, and the intent of the developers as inferred from a reading of their professional literature and of the landscape itself. This requires some care lest we fall into the same trap that compromises the modernist critique of consumption, a critique which holds much intellectual force but little political potential. This is to conceive of the consumer as cultural dupe and helpless object of technical control, exactly as the (mostly) male middle-class designers imagine them. Consumers are constructed as passive, sensual, and vulnerable victims of the "force field which they don't understand," just as the designers' discourse is both manifestly elitist and gendered—from "market penetration analysis" to the persistent tropes of seduction, stimulation, and physical manipulation.

Given the gender division of labor and the exploitation of women's social insecurities by the commodity aesthetic, the stereotypical shopper is female—in fact, 67 percent of shopping center users are female (Stores 1989, 43)—and my choice of pronoun form reflects this reality while also recognizing that the label "shopper" applies increasingly to males.[2] The key point is that the shopper is not merely the object of a technical and patriarchal discourse and design, but is also a subject who may interpret the design aberrantly or intentionally appropriate meaning for her/his own purposes. The manner in which the shopping center is read by consumers, both as individuals and social subjects, is a complex and politically vital question in dire need of research, and I agree with Meaghan Morris (1988, 206) that the object of our analysis should be precisely the intersection of the instrumental discourse of design, and its reception and active use by the consumer. One might speculate on this, as many cultural theorists have (see, for example, Fiske 1989), but such speculation surely cannot replace the necessary ethnographic research. With this latter project barely

begun, I will confine my conclusions to an outline of strategies by which consumers might, armed with the conception of shopping centers sketched here, consciously challenge the purpose and operation of the planned retail built environment.

The Commodification of Reality

> This barbarous reintegration of aesthetic consumption into the world of ordinary consumption (against which it endlessly defines itself) has, inter alia, the virtue of reminding us that the consumption of goods no doubt always presupposes a labor of appropriation, to different degrees depending on the goods and the consumers; or, more precisely, that the consumer helps to produce the product he consumes, by a labor of identification and decoding (Bourdieu 1984, 100).

All human societies invest physical objects with sociopsychological meaning, and consumer goods have long marked "invidious distinctions" (Veblen 1953), as well as provided for the satisfaction of socially defined needs. It is only under contemporary capitalism, however, that material and symbolic production occupy the same site—productive activity is organized to produce simultaneously the objects of consumption and the social subjects to consume them (Sahlins 1976, 216). Thus "you are what you buy" *as much as* "you are what you do." All human societies also recognize a specialized class that mediates between the material and symbolic worlds, but again it is only recently that this class can control both sides of this relation, and that they are able to persuade us that our "self-concept" as well as social status is defined by the commodity. Contemporary commodities simultaneously express the social organization of production, communicate social distinctions, sublimate contradictions of the psychological self, and constitute identity (McCracken 1988, 118–19; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 22–38).

The "captains of consciousness" (Ewen 1976) apply highly sophisticated technologies to achieve effects directly analogous to, although infinitely more intensive and far-reaching than, the magic systems of preliterate societies (Diggins 1977, 368; Williams 1980, 185). This modern magic involves a collective superstition that it is the object itself—much like the "primitive" fetish—that confers upon the owner a power over nature and others; whereas such power, in fact, lies in the social relations that ascribe the power of possession. Both religious and secular traditions harbor moral tales about the danger of wrongful possession, from the shameful exposure of the pretentious who acquire objects above their station to the wrath of gods visited upon the unrighteous holder of sacred icons, but with the necessary personal and social qualifications—cultivated taste and cash or credit—the consumer can invoke the magic power of the commodity (Goss 1992).

Advertising does not have to directly instruct its audience, but need only highlight latent correspondences (Sahlins 1976, 217) or homologies (Bourdieu 1984, 137) between the commodity and common cultural symbols, for contemporary consumers are expected to have accumulated a considerable store of cultural knowledge and acquired the skills necessary to interpret complex texts and subtle rhetorical devices used to elicit cultural meaning (Bourdieu 1984, 66). And if the audience is predisposed to believe, the real magic of advertising is to mask the materiality of the commodity—fetishism in the marxist sense—that is, to sever it from the social and spatial relations that structure its productions and the human labor it embodies. This is especially so for mass-produced commodities, which threaten to invalidate the conditions required for rightful and righteous possession, so advertising necessarily divorces the commodity from the labor process that produced it. Whether it is high fashion sewn in immigrant sweatshops or electronic gadgets assembled in Third World factories, few consumers, therefore, know or can afford to give thought to what the commodity is composed of, or where, how and by whom it was made (Jhally 1987, 49).

Critical to the processes by which the commodity is simultaneously severed from its origins and associated with desirable sociocultural attributes is its context—the real or imagined landscape in which it is presented (Sack 1988, 643–44). Advertisers draw upon knowledge of places, and upon the structuration of social space, to create an imaginary setting that elicits from us an appropriate social disposition or action. With the collapse of time-space produced by global electronic media and tourism (Meyrowitz 1985), the stock of place imagery in the consumer's *musée imaginaire* (Jencks 1987, 95), has expanded dramatically, and we are able to read with facility a vast array of clichéd signs of real and fictitious elsewheres.

At the same time, there has been a marked

decline in the textual content of advertising (Leiss et al. 1986), so that appeal to price and utility has been displaced by a system of commodity aesthetics in which appearance has become more important than function, and sign value has subordinated use value, or rather *has become* use value (Haug 1986). With the enhanced technical quality and capacity for quantitative reproduction of images, it is no longer clear whether the value of the commodity originates in the sphere of material or symbolic production. Postmodernists, following the situationists (Bonnett 1989, 134), would generally argue that this is symptomatic of a new societal condition in which consumption dominates production, the symbolic subverts the material order, and the distinction between illusion and reality has become problematical or entirely collapsed (Debord 1983; Baudrillard 1983a; Lyotard 1984). In Debord's (1983) "society of the spectacle," individuals live in a world that is fabricated for them, and what was once directly lived is now experienced as a commodified or bureaucratically administered representation, preferable (cleaner, safer, and sexier) to reality. In Baudrillard's (1983a) society of the simulacrum, the real has been irrevocably replaced by the illusion, and the world is not merely *represented in* commodified images, but *consists of* such images. The image has more substantive effect than reality—it is "hyperreal."

This brief examination is critical to an understanding of the contemporary shopping center, for there is a close connection between the means of the "consciousness industry" (Enzenberger 1974) and environmental design: they are both media of mass communication, employing rhetorical devices to effect hidden persuasions; both may be experienced passively; they both belong unobtrusively to everyday life; and they are both motivated by profit (Eco 1986, 77). Developers, therefore, readily employ the glitz and showcraft of entertainment—literally "learning from Las Vegas" (Venturi et al. 1972); the iconography of advertising (Frampton 1983, 19)—"learning from Madison Avenue"; and the "imagineering" of North American theme parks (Relph 1987)—"learning from Disney." Sophisticated techniques of illusion and allusion enable them to create an appropriate and convincing context where the relationship of the individual to mass consumption and of the commodity to its context is mystified. This technical capacity, the predispositions of contemporary consumers (increasingly well understood due to market research), and the economic and political capacity of speculative capital combine to manufacture a total retail built environment and a total cultural experience.

The Making of the Mall

> Of course, it must be kept in mind that architects do not design malls for architects; they design them for developers and retailers that are interested in creating malls and other shopping centers to attract consumers and keep them coming back (Richards 1990, 23).

The developer's profit accrues from the construction and sale of shopping centers, lease rent, and deductions from retail revenues. Unlike other forms of real estate, where markets have been rapidly saturated and are dependent upon urban and regional economic fortunes, shopping center construction has been a relatively secure investment, whether in the suburbs, always provided a big name department store could be enticed to sign an agreement (Frieden and Sagalyn 1989, 79), or downtown, provided subsidies could be negotiated from cooperative municipal governments. Recently however, there has been a marked slowdown in the speculative development observed in the 1970s and early 1980s. This trend is attributed to a variety of factors: the combination of a shortage of suitable greenfield sites; escalating costs of land assembly, construction, and operation; tightened developmental controls; declining federal government programs that provide infrastructure and capital incentives (Frieden and Sagalyn 1989, 82); organized resistance from local communities ("Building Despite the Obstacles" 1990, 27); the financial vulnerability of highly leveraged retail chains (Hazel 1989; Reynolds 1990a, 34); changing market demographics; and the segmentation of the retail industry (Goss 1992, 168). As a result, many regions are effectively saturated and intercenter competition is intense. An extreme example, is Dallas, where three megacenters (Galleria, Prestonwood and Valley View) are within two miles of each other. Developers have responded by renovating and expanding older malls (investing an estimated 50 percent of today's retail construction dollars ["Retail Uses" 1991]), economizing on tenant and common space, buying out leases of less

desirable tenants, intensifying property management and introducing new shopping center concepts—theme shopping, the specialty center, the power-center, and the so-called "hot mall" (Stallings 1990, 14), which offers "retail as entertainment." Profit increasingly depends, therefore, upon image making and the creative management of shopping centers.

It is important at the outset to realize the scale and detail of the conception. Shopping centers are typically produced by huge corporations or ad hoc coalitions of finance, construction, and commercial capital (typically pension funds, developers, and department stores), and are meticulously planned. They usually involve state agencies and teams of market researchers, geo-demographers, accountants, asset managers, lawyers, engineers, architects, landscape artists, interior designers, traffic analysts, security consultants, and leasing agents. Development, therefore, involves the coordination of a complex of concerns, although always overdetermined by the goals of retail profit.

The costs of initial development, maintenance, and overhead are typically covered by fixed-charges, including lease of floor space, common-area maintenance charges and promotional expenses, levied upon retailers. Profit derives from *overage,* or a proportion (typically 6 percent) of store turnover above an agreed base for each retailer, requiring open-book accounting agreements, and leading to management pressure for high value and volume trade. The measure of success of the center is "operating balance per square foot of Gross Leasable Area [GLA]" ("Retail Uses" 1991) and in the professional literature the figure for "sales per square foot of GLA" is ascribed a special mystique.

The shopping centers profit from an internalization of externalities; that is, by ensuring strict complementarity of retail and service functions through an appropriate tenant mix (Goss 1992, 167). Leasing agents plan the mix of tenants and their locations within the center, inevitably excluding repair shops, laundromats, or thrift stores that might remind the consumer of the materiality of the commodity and attract those whose presence might challenge the normality of consumption. Where resale shops are found, they conventionally indicate difficulty in attracting more desirable tenants (Ricks 1991, 56). Similarly, vacant stores are hidden behind gaily painted hoardings, and we are assured that a store will be "opening soon," in case we might suspect that this, like downtown, is not the thriving place where everyone wants to be. Detailed lease agreements create the appropriate atmosphere by insuring uniform store opening hours; regulating signage, sightlines, lighting, store front design, and window display; and stipulating advertising minima for each store (see Frieden and Sagelyn 1989, 66).

While individual retailers may pursue their own strategies for profit within limited bounds, the center operates as a whole to maximize "foot traffic" by attracting the target consumers and keeping them on the premises for as long as possible. The logic is apparently simple:

> Our surveys show [that] the amount of spending is related *directly* to the amount of time spent at centers. . . . *Anything* that can prolong shoppers' visits are [sic] in our best interests overall (a senior vice-president of leasing and marketing cited in Reynolds 1990b, 52, emphasis added).

The task begins with the manufacture and marketing of an appropriate sense of place (Richards 1990, 24), an attractive place image that will entice people from their suburban homes and downtown offices, keep them contentedly on the premises, and encourage them to return. This occurs in an increasingly competitive retail market resulting from the "overmalling of America" and in response to consumer loyalties shifting from name-retailers to specific shopping centers, the personality of the center is critical (McDermott 1990, 2–3).

Imag(in)ing the Mall

> The sense of place is also a political fact. What can be done to the look of a locality depends on who controls it. . . . People can be excluded, awed, confused, made acquiescent, or kept ignorant by what they see and hear. So the sense of the environment has always been a matter of moment to any ruling class (Lynch 1976, 72–73).

In constructing an attractive place image for the shopping center, developers have, with remarkable persistence, exploited a modernist nostalgia for authentic community, perceived to exist only in past and distant places, and have promoted the conceit of the shopping center as an alternative focus for modern community life. Shopping districts of the early years

of this century, for example, were based on traditional market towns and villages, and a strong sense of place was evoked using stylized historical architecture and landscaping (typically evoking the village green). They were built on a modest scale, functionally and spatially integrated into local communities, in order to provide an idyllic context for consumption by the new gentry (Rowe 1991, 141). The picturesque Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Missouri, built in 1922, is a prototypic example. With the contemporary postmodernist penchant for the vernacular, this original form is undergoing a renaissance in the specialty center, a collection of high-end outlets that pursue a particular retail and architectural theme. Typically these are also idealizations of villages and small towns, chock-full of historical and regional details to convince the consumer of their authenticity (Goss 1992, 172). Examples include Pickering Wharf in Salem, Massachusetts (a New England Village), the Borgata in Scottsdale, Arizona (a thirteenth-century Italian village), the Pruneyard in San Jose, California (a Spanish-American hacienda), the Mercado in Phoenix, Arizona (a Mexican hillside village).

In contrast, the modern regional shopping center was built on a large scale with regular, unified architecture. Its harsh exterior modernism and automobile-focused landscaping refused any compromise with the rustic aesthetic. As Relph (1987, 215) notes, however, "modernism . . . never wholly succeeded in the landscape of retailing," and the interior contained pedestrian walkways, courts, fountains and statuary that referred reassuringly to the traditional urbanism of southern Europe (Gruen 1973; Rowe 1991, 126), Victorian Britain or New England. According to Victor Gruen, the acknowledged pioneer of the modern mall, his "shopping towns" would be not only pleasant places to shop, but also centers of cultural enrichment, education, and relaxation, a suburban alternative to the decaying downtown (Gruen and Smith 1960).

Gruen's shopping centers proved phenomenally successful, and he later argued that by applying the lessons of environmental design learned in the suburbs to downtown, "we can restore the lost sense of commitment and belonging; we can counteract the phenomenon of alienation, isolation and loneliness and achieve a sense of identity" (Gruen 1973, 11). James Rouse, effectively heir to Gruen and heralded as "the savior of downtown America" (Sawicki 1989, 347), similarly argued that shopping centers "will help dignify and uplift the families who use them, . . . promote friendly contact among the people of the community, . . . [and] expose the community to art, music, crafts and culture" (1962, 105). Thus, if the developers could create the illusion of urban community in the suburbs, they could also create this illusion in the city itself. The key, Rouse argues, is not so much the design features of the shopping mall, but centralized retail management (CRM) and leasing strategies (cited in Stokvis and Cloar 1991, 7), which would include levels of security and maintenance well beyond that provided by municipal authorities, market research, cooperative advertising, common business hours, common covenants, and a regulated tenant mix (Cloar 1990). Downtown is now "learning from the mall": as the director of the National Mainstreet Center, an organization established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, argues, "shopping centers . . . are well-planned, well-funded, and well-organized . . . Main streets need management like that" (Huffman 1989, 95).

The new downtown retail built environment has taken two essential forms, which in practice may be mixed. First is the commercial gentrification of decaying historical business and waterfront districts, pioneered by James Rouse with Quincy Market in Boston. Its opening in 1979 supposedly marked "the day the urban renaissance began" (Rouse, cited in Teaford 1990, 253) and subsequently no self-respecting city seems complete without its own festival marketplace, replicating more or less the original formula.[3] Historical landmarks and "water exposure" (Scott 1989, 185) are critical features, as this retail environment is consciously reminiscent of the commercial world city, with its quaysides and urban produce markets replete with open stalls, colorful awnings, costermonger barrows, and nautical paraphernalia liberally scattered around.

A second form is the galleria, the historic referent of which is the Victorian shopping arcade and especially the famous Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan. After Cesar Pelli pioneered the galleried arcade in the early 1970s (at The Commons in Columbus, Ohio and the Winter Gardens in Niagara Falls, New York), glazed gallery and atria became standard fea-

Figure 1. Interior of Miller Hill Mall in Duluth (A) as constructed in 1973 (B) after renovation and "interior softscaping" in 1988. Source: Retail Reporting Corporation.

ture in downtown mixed-use developments, their huge vaulted spaces suggesting a sacred-liturgical or secular-civic function. They have since been retrofitted to suburban malls and natural daylight has enabled support of softscapes—interiorized palms, trees, and shrubs—reminiscent of the street in the model garden city, the courts of Babylon, and most especially, the tropical vacation setting (Fig. 1a and b). Enclosed streetscapes refer to the idealized, historic middle-American Main Street or to exotic streets of faraway cities, including Parisian boulevards, Mexican paseos, and Arabic souks or casbahs, if only because the contemporary North American street invokes fear and loathing in the middle classes. They reclaim, for the middle-class imagination, "The Street"—an idealized social space free, by virtue of private property, planning, and strict control, from the inconvenience of the weather and the danger and pollution of the automobile, but most important from the terror of crime associated with today's urban environment.

The malling of downtown could not work, however, without the legislative and financial support of the local state. These developments exploit historic preservation laws and federal and municipal funds to subsidize commercial development. Newport Center in Jersey City, for example, is the recipient of the largest-ever Urban Development Action Grant (Osborne 1988). Friedmann and Sagalyn (1989) provide a particularly incisive analysis of the coalitions of private capital and municipal government necessary to the successful development of the new urban retail built environment.

In creating these spaces, developers and

public officials articulate an ideology of nostalgia, a reactionary modernism that expresses the "dis-ease" of the present (see Stewart 1984, 23), a lament on the perceived loss of the moral conviction, authenticity, spontaneity, and community of the past; a profound disillusionment with contemporary society and fear of the future. More specifically, we collectively miss a public space organized on a pedestrian scale, that is, a setting for free personal expression and association, for collective cultural expression and transgression, and for unencumbered human interaction and material transaction. Such spaces no longer exist in the city, where open spaces are windswept tunnels between towering buildings, abandoned in fear to marginal populations; nor were they found after all in the suburb, which is subdivided and segregated, dominated by the automobile, and repressively predictable and safe. Such spaces only exist intact in our *musées imaginaire,* but their forms can now be expertly reproduced for us in the retail built environment. Below, I discuss the form and the contradictions inherent in the reproduction of such spaces as conceived in their idealized civic, liminal and transactional forms.

The Shopping Center as Civic Space

By virtue of their scale, design, and function, shopping centers appear to be public spaces, more or less open to anyone and relatively sanitary and safe. This appearance is important to their success for they aim to offer to middle-Americans a third place beyond home and work/school, a venue where people, old and young, can congregate, commune, and "see and be seen" (Oldenburg 1989, 17). Several strategies enhance the appearance of vital public space, and foremost is the metaphor of the

urban street sustained by streetsigns, streetlamps, benches, shrubbery, and statuary—all well-kept and protected from vandalism. Also like the ideal, benign civic government, shopping centers are extremely sensitive to the needs of the shopper, providing a range of "inconspicuous artifacts of consideration" (Tuan 1988, 316), such as rest areas and special facilities for the handicapped, elderly, and shoppers with young children (recently including diaper changing stations). For a fee they may provide other conveniences such as gift wrapping and shipping, coat checking, valet parking, strollers, electric shopping carts, lockers, customer service centers, and videotext information kiosks. They may house post offices, satellite municipal halls, automated government services, and public libraries; space is sometimes provided for public meetings or religious services. They stage events not only to directly promote consumption (fashion and car shows), but also for public edification (educational exhibits and musical recitals). Many open their doors early to provide a safe, sheltered space for morning constitutionals—mall-walking—and some have public exercise stations with health and fitness programs sponsored by the American Heart Association and YMCAs (Jacobs 1988, 12). Some even offer adult literacy classes and university courses. Examples of the former include Middlesboro Mall in Middlesboro, Kentucky and Sunland Park Mall in El Paso, Texas; an example of the latter is Governors State University, University Park, Illinois, which offers 28 classes at Orland Park Place Mall in Chicago. ("College Courses at Malls . . ." 1990).

Such services obviously address the needs of the public and attest to the responsiveness of management. Many facilities, however, are not so much civic gestures as political maneuvers to persuade local government to permit construction on the desired scale. This is particularly the case with day care facilities now featured in many shopping centers (Reynolds 1990c, 30).[4] It is also clear from the professional literature that many concessions are made in order to enhance the atmosphere of public concern precisely because it significantly increases retail traffic (McCloud 1991, 25). Public services not consistent with the context of consumption are omitted or only reluctantly provided, often inadequate to actual needs and relegated to the periphery. This includes, for example: drinking fountains, which would reduce soft drink sales; restrooms, which are costly to maintain and which attract activities such as drug dealing and sex that are offensive to the legitimate patrons of the mall (Hazel 1992, 28); and public telephones, which may be monopolized by teenagers or drug dealers. As a result, telephones in some malls only allow outgoing calls (Hazel 1992, 29).

The idealized public street is a relatively democratic space with all citizens enjoying access, with participatory entertainment and opportunities for social mixing, and the shopping center re-presents a similarly liberal vision of consumption, in which credit-card citizenship allows all to buy an identity and vicariously experience preferred lifestyles, without principles of exclusion based on accumulated wealth or cultural capital (Zukin 1990, 41). It is, however, a strongly bounded or purified social space (Sibley 1988, 409) that excludes a significant minority of the population and so protects patrons from the moral confusion that a confrontation with social difference might provoke (see also Lewis 1990). Suburban malls, in particular, are essentially spaces for *white* middle classes.[5] There have been several court cases claiming that shopping centers actively discriminate against potential minority tenants, employees, and mall users. Copley Place in Boston, for example, has been charged with excluding minority tenants ("Race Is not the Issue" 1990, 32); a Columbia, South Carolina mall was accused of discriminatory hiring practices ("NAACP in Hiring Pact . . ." 1991, A20); and security personnel have been widely suspected of harassing minority teenagers. Security personnel target those who, despite implicit signs and posted notices that this is not the place for them, seek to hang-out, to take shelter or to solicit alms. Rowdy teenagers may spill out of the amusement arcades designed purposefully to keep them on the periphery, or use the parking lot for cruising, disrupting the comfortable shopping process of adults and particularly the elderly. Consequently some managers have even tried to regulate hours during which teenagers can shop without adult supervision ("Retailers Use Bans . . ." 1990, B1), and passed ordinances and erected barricades in parking lots to prevent "unnecessary and repetitive driving" ("Suburbs Rain on Teens' . . ." 1990, 2C1). "Street people" are harassed because their appearance, panhandling,

and inappropriate use of bathrooms (Pawlak et al. 1985) offend the sensibility of shoppers, their presence subverting the normality of conspicuous consumption and perverting the pleasure of consumption by challenging our righteous possession of commodities. Even the Salvation Army may be excluded from making its traditional Christmas collections, perhaps because they remind the consumer of the existence of less-privileged populations and so diminish the joy of buying.

Developers must of course protect their property and guard themselves against liability (Hazel 1992, 29), but the key to successful security apparently lies more in an overt security presence that reassures preferred customers that the unseemly and seamy side of the real public world will be excluded from the mall. It is argued that the image of security is more important than its substance:

> Perception is perhaps even more important than reality. In a business that is as dependent as film or theater on appearances, the illusion of safety is as vital, or even more so, than its reality (Hazel 1992, 28).

In extreme cases, however, overt and pervasive security may itself be part of the attraction, and this applies particularly to the "defensible commercial zones" (Titus 1990, 3) which reclaim part of the decaying inner city for the display of cultural capital and lifestyles of the middle classes. For example, the trademark of Alexander Haagen Development Co., a pioneering inner city developer much celebrated in the professional literature, is an 8-ft. ornamental security fence with remote controlled gates (Bond 1989). Haagen's centers in Los Angeles (Kenneth Hahn Plaza, Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, and Vermont-Slauson Shopping Center), include perimeters patrolled by infra-red motion detectors, manual observation decks, armed security personnel, and closed-circuit TV monitoring, all coordinated through 24-hour command posts with state-of-the-art "alarm processing technology." At Crenshaw Plaza, for example, "a study in state-of-the-art security and stylish consumerism," the "Omni 1000 Security Management System provides around-the-clock surveillance . . . [to] deter crime and attract customers" (Bond 1989, 181). Such pan-optical presence has been enhanced in some cases by donating mall space for local police. Vermont-Slauson Shopping Center, Capital Center in Trenton, New Jersey and Chicago's Grand Boulevard Plaza, all contain police substations, while Crenshaw Plaza has a 200-officer police station on its premises. Of course, many mall security guards are off-duty police officers, but the privatization of the police has been taken a step further in Four Seasons Town Center in Greensboro, North Carolina, where, due to a state law, certified security guards are empowered to issue citations and make arrests ("More Than a Security Guard: . . ." 1992).

Finally, the politics of exclusion involves the exclusion of politics, and there is an ongoing struggle by political and civil liberties organizations to require shopping centers to permit handbilling, picketing, and demonstrations on their premises, on the grounds that they cannot pretend to be public spaces without assuming the responsibility of such, including recognition of freedom of expression and assembly. Courts have generally found in favor of free speech in shopping centers by virtue of their scale and similarity to public places, provided that the activities do not seriously impair their commercial function (Peterson 1985). The Supreme Court, however, has ruled that it is up to individual states to decide (Kowinski 1985, 357), and in a recent case, an anti-war group was successfully banned from leafletting in New Jersey malls ("Judge Bars Group . . ." 1991, 31).

The Shopping Center as Liminal Space

The market, standing between the sacred and secular, the mundane and exotic, and the local and global, has always been a place of liminality; that is, according to Turner (1982), a state between social stations, a transitional moment in which established rules and norms are temporarily suspended (see also Zukin 1991 and Shields 1989). The marketplace is a liminoid zone, a place where potentiality and transgression is engendered by the exciting diversity of humanity, the mystique of exotic objects, the intoxicating energy of the crowd channeled within the confined public space, the prospects of fortunes to be made and lost in trade, the possibility of unplanned meetings and spontaneous adventures, and the continuous assertion of collective rights and freedoms

or *communitas* (Bahktin 1984, 8–9). The market thrives on the possibility of "letting yourself go," "treating yourself," and of "trying it on" without risk of moral censure, and free from institutional surveillance.

Places traditionally associated with liminoid experiences are liberally quoted in the contemporary retail built environment, including most notably seaports and exotic tropical tourist destinations, and Greek agora, Italian piazzas, and other traditional marketplaces. Colorful banners, balloons and flags, clowns and street theater, games and fun rides, are evocative of a permanent carnival or festival. Lavish expenditure on state-of-the-art entertainment and historic reconstruction, and the explosion of apparent liminality is perfectly consistent with the logic of the shopping center, for it is designed explicitly to attract shoppers and keep them on the premises for as long as possible:

> The entertainment at Franklin Mills keeps shoppers at the center for 3–4 hours, or twice as long as a regular mall [and] the more you give shoppers to do, the longer they stay and the more they buy (marketing executive, cited in "Entertainment Anchors: . . ." 1989, 54).

This strategy reaches its contemporary apotheosis in the monster malls that contrive to combine with retailing the experiences of carnival, festival, and tourism in a single, total environment. This includes, most famous, the West Edmonton Mall (WEM), Canada, which has already become a special concern of contemporary culture studies ("Special Issue on the WEM" 1991; Hopkins 1990; Shields 1989; Wiebe and Wiebe 1989; Blomeyer 1988), and others inspired by its extravagant excess: Franklin Hills in Philadelphia, River Falls in Clarksville, Tennessee; the controversial new Mall of the Americas in Bloomington, Minnesota; Meadowhall in Sheffield and Metrocentre in Gateshead in England; and Lotte World in Seoul, South Korea. The shopping center has become hedonopolis (Sommer 1975). Shopping centers have become tourist resorts in their own right, recreating the archetypical modern liminal zone by providing the multiple attractions, accommodations, guided tours, and souvenirs essential to the mass touristic experience, *all* under a single roof.[6] WEM, which receives 15 million visitors a year (and is responsible for more than 1 percent of all retail sales in Canada [Jones and Simmons 1987, 77]), claims that:

> Tourists will no longer have to travel to Disneyland, Miami Beach, the Epcot Park . . . New Orleans . . . California Sea World, the San Diego Zoo, the Grand Canyon . . . It's all here at the WEM. Everything you've wanted in a lifetime and more (Winter City Showcase cited in Hopkins 1990, 13).

There are necessarily strict limits to any experience of liminality in these environments. Developers are well aware of the "more unsavory trappings of carnival life" (McCloud 1989b, 35), and order must be preserved. As a management consultant to Forest Fair (River Falls) says:

> You have to be very cautious. Everything has to be kept very high quality and maintain family appeal. You have to create a safe, secure feeling and make sure it's not intimidating to anyone (cited in McCloud 1989b, 35).

Liminality is thus experienced in the nostalgic mode, without the inherent danger of the real thing: the fairground is recreated without the threat to the social order that the itinerant, marginal population and the libidinal temptations that traveling shows might bring, while the revitalized waterfronts lack the itinerant sailors, the red lights, the threatening presence of foreign travelers and shiphands. The contrived retail carnival denies the potentiality for disorder and collective social transgression of the liminal zone at the same time that it celebrates its form. It is ironic, therefore, that WEM is struggling to cope with the liminality it has unintentionally unleashed, including accidental deaths on fairground rides, terroristic activity, drug trading, and prostitution (Hopkins 1990, 14).

The Shopping Center as Transactional Space

Regardless of the location and scale of the development, a constant theme in contemporary retail space is a nostalgia for the traditional public marketplace, or what we might call *agoraphilia*. In the idealized traditional marketplace, there is an immediate relationship between producer and consumer, and both apply knowledge and skill to judge quality and negotiate price. Vendors ideally sell their own product and have direct responsibility for its quality. They are also in competition with other traders so presentation and service are important, and they acquire considerable interpersonal skill and extensive knowledge of their

customers. Such commitment and initiative is not to be expected among the retail staff of the increasingly large, centralized retail corporations, but in response to the perceived deterioration of service, mall management may organize training sessions to improve sales techniques ("Developers of Big Shopping Malls . . ." 1991, B1), while on-site research is constantly conducted to discover the special desires and problems of customers and the ways in which staff might meet them (1991, 32). Competition for customer service awards motivate personnel, and plain-clothes shopping police, or undercover shoppers, watch for "testy cashiers and inattentive managers" (Levine 1990, 187).

To further solve the problem of indolent and insolent attendants, contemporary retailing has learned from the theater, and particularly the total theater of North American theme parks (Davis 1991; Aronson 1977). For example, as if the management had read Goffman (or did Goffman read Disney?), sales staff in a Fred Meyer megastore in appropriately named Hollywood West in Portland, Oregon, enter through the Stage Door and are admonished to "get into character" ("Fred Meyer Megastore . . ." 1990, 76). The Disney Store sales staff are "cast members" and customers are "guests," while the staff at Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus stores are educated in Clown College. High-end retailers often train their staff in acting techniques to personalize their services and to manage the transaction to their advantage (Kowinski 1985, 359). Personal service and craft quality of the product is also suggested by reproduction accoutrements of the traditional marketplace. Costermongers' barrows, for example, are increasingly ubiquitous in conventional shopping centers, quoting the traditional marketplace and the virtues of petty trade even when they are franchised and display mass-produced T-shirts.

The modern consumer, like the modern worker, has been threatened by deskilling and loss of identity in the impersonal, abstract relationships of the mass market. Contemporary retailing, however, under the postmodern impulse, seeks to reskill the consumer, and there has arisen an expanded "class" of cultural intermediaries who through TV shows and consumer magazines help the busy consumer process the enormous volume of product information required to correctly interpret the latest advertised commodity and style (Zukin 1990, 45). Perhaps the equivalent in this context is the regional and urban shopping guides produced by tourist bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, or other promotional organizations, and guides published for specific shopping centers.

The Shopping Center *Is* Instrumental Space

> Areas in Tyson's Corner used by the public are not public ways, but are for the use of the tenants and the public transacting business with them. Permission to use said areas may be revoked at any time (text of notice at entrance of Tyson's Corner, cited in Kowinski 1985, 355).

Most shoppers know that the shopping center is a contrived and highly controlled space, and we all probably complain about design features such as the escalators that alternate in order to prevent the shopper moving quickly between floors without maximum exposure to shopfronts (see Fig. 2), or the difficulty finding restrooms (see Fig. 3). Some of us are also disquieted by the constant reminders of surveillance in the sweep of the cameras and the patrols of security personnel. Yet those of us for whom it is designed are willing to suspend the privileges of public urban space to its rela-

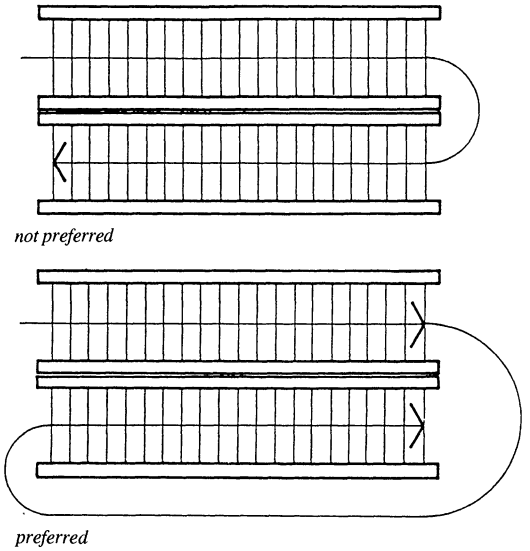

Figure 2. Recommended orientation of escalators from a design manual. Source: Beddington (1982, 75).

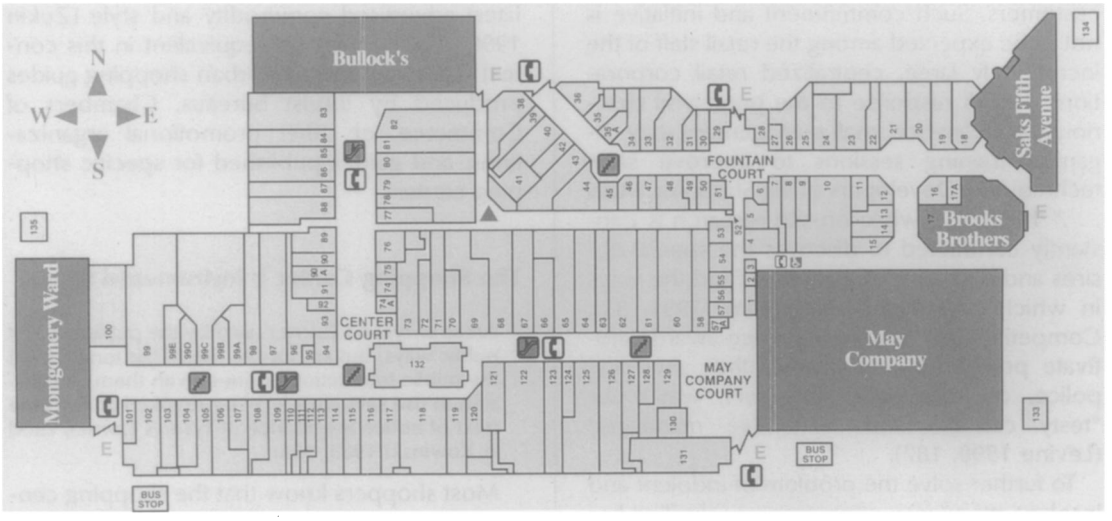

Figure 3. An example of the elusive restroom—the only restroom is shown by the handicapped symbol. Plan of Mission Valley Center in San Diego. Source: Mission Valley Center.

tively benevolent authority, for our desire is such that we will readily accept nostalgia as a substitute for experience, absence for presence, and representation for authenticity. We overlook the fact that the shopping center is a contrived, dominated space that seeks only to resemble a spontaneous, social space. Perhaps also, we are simply ignorant of the extent to which there is a will to deceive us. The professional literature is revealing. *Urban Land,* for example, congratulates the Paseo Nuevo project in Santa Barbara for its deception: it "*appears* to be a longstanding part of downtown" (when it isn't) and is a "*seemingly* random arrangement of shops, tree-shaded courtyards, splashing fountains, and sunny terraces" when it is a carefully designed stage for "*choreographing* pedestrian movement" ("Fitting a Shopping Center . . ." 1991, 28, emphasis added). In this professional literature, the consumer is characterized as an object to be mechanistically manipulated—to be drawn, pulled, pushed, and led to flow magnets, anchors, generators, and attractions; or as a naive dupe to be deceived, persuaded, induced, tempted, and seduced by ploys, ruses, tricks, strategies, and games of the design. Adopting a relatively vulgar psychogeography, designers seek to environmentally condition emotional and behavioral response from those whom they see as their *mall*eable customers.

The ultimate conceit of the developers, however, lies in their attempt to recapture the essence of tradition through modern technology, to harness abstract space and exchange value in order to retrieve the essence of use value of social space (Lefebvre 1971). The original intention may have been more noble, but the contradiction soon became apparent, and the dream of community and public place was subordinated to the logic of private profit. Victor Gruen himself returned to his home city of Vienna disillusioned and disgusted at the greed of developers (Gillette 1985), while James Rouse formed a nonprofit organization engaged in urban renewal.[7] The contemporary generation of developers may still express the modernist faith in the capacity of environmental design to realize social goals, but one somehow doubts that Nader Ghermezian, one of the developers of the monstrous WEM, is genuine when he claims their goal is "to serve as a community, social, entertainment, and recreation center" (cited in Davis 1991, 4).

The Shopping Center as a Spatial System

The built environment forms a spatial system in which, through principles of separation and

containment, spatial practices are routinized and sedimented (Giddens 1985, 272) and social relations are reproduced. First, the locale provides the context in which particular roles are habitually played and actions predictably occur, establishing spatiotemporal fields of absence and presence, and affecting the potentialities for social interaction. The association of regions with particular group membership, activities, and dispositions allows the individual to orient to the context and infer the appropriate social role to play—one literally comes to know one's place. The built environment is, therefore, socially and psychologically persuasive (Eco 1986, 77). Second, the configuration of spatial forms determines the relative permeability of structures, physically limiting the possibility of movement and interaction. The relative connectivity, transitivity, and commutativity of spaces serves to segregate individuals and practices, and to (re)inforce the differential capacities of agents for social action. Social relations are realized in homologous geometrical relations. For example, the dialectic of inside-outside (Bachelard 1964, 215) realizes principles of inclusion-exclusion, while that of open and closed realizes distinctions between public and private realms. The built environment is then also physically persuasive or coercive.

What role does the retail built environment play in the structuration of social class? While a full discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, some preliminary suggestions can be made. Market researchers develop stereotypical profiles of customers and apply a concept of social class, conflated with lifestyle categories into market segments. The center is then designed to explicitly meet the presumed environmental needs and desires of the segments dominating market areas; thus the "look" of centers reflects and reinforces conceptions of social class (see, for example, Levine 1990, 187). The professional literature is quite plain about the conscious social differentiation of the retail built environment and the use of class-loaded cues to effect the sociospatial segregation of consumption activity.

Within the shopping center itself, social segregation is reproduced through separation of specific functions and of class-based retail districts. Fiske et al. (1987, 110) describe an example of the vertical structuring of mall space according to the social status of the targeted consumers, and while the exact homology (high-low level and upper-lower class) is seldom realized so neatly elsewhere, interior spaces are carefully structured to produce appropriate microcontexts for consumption. Bridgewater Commons in Bridgewater, New Jersey, for example, has three distinct leasing districts designed to appeal to specific market segments and, by implication, not to appeal to others: The Commons Collection contains upscale boutiques and includes marble floors, gold leaf signage, brass accents, individual wooden seating, and extensive foliage; The Promenade contains stores catering to home and family needs, storefronts have a more conservative look, and aluminum and steel features and seating are predominant; The Campus contains stores catering to a "contemporary clientele" with dynamic window displays, plastic laminate, ceramic tiling, bright colors, and neon signage (see Rathbun 1990, 19–21). Almost every shopping center marks the distinction between high-end and low-end retail by such environmental cues.

The shopping center is designed to persuade the targeted users to move through the retail space and to adopt certain physical and

Figure 4. *Entrancing* the shopper with a dramatic doorway and red carpet, at the renovated Lakeshore Mall in Gainesville, Georgia. Source: Retail Reporting Corporation.

social dispositions conducive to shopping. Let us begin with the entrance to the regional mall. The approved mode of approach is obviously the automobile, and the shopper proceeds across the bleak desert of the parking lot towards the beckoning entrance, usually the only break in the harsh, uniform exterior and typically announced with canopies, columns, and glass atria, surrounded by lush vegetation, all suggestive of an oasis or sanctuary inside. Formal entrances are increasingly dramatic (Rathbun 1990), providing an appropriate sense of grand arrival and literally "entrancing" the shopper into the fantasy world inside (Fig. 4). Here external reality is immediately displaced: the temperature is kept at a scientifically determined optimum for human comfort, typically a pleasant 68 degrees in winter and a refreshing 72 degrees in summer. Shophouse-style storefronts are often reduced to 5/8 scale (as in Disney's theme parks) to give shoppers an exaggerated sense of importance, transporting them into a looking glass world.

Indoor lighting is soft to prevent glare on shopfronts and to highlight the natural colors of the commodities on display. Lights act as "silent salesmen . . . [which] showcase the most pricey merchandise to stellar advantage and transform the most pedestrian goods into must-haves" (Connor 1989, 191) and may be engineered "according to the mood or emotion they are seeking to elicit within the shopper" (Connor 1989, 193). Similarly, psychologically researched music covers the silence and soothes shoppers in "an anesthetic or tonic aural fluid" (Boorstin 1961, 176), although the traditional Muzak has been replaced by customized foreground music which research shows may increase retail sales by up to 40 percent (Pyle 1990, 23). Mirrors and reflective glass add to the decorative multiplication of images and colors, double the space and the shopping crowd (Fiske et al. 1987, 101), and reflect shoppers, asking them to compare themselves with the manikins and magical commodities on display in the fantasy world of the shop window. Even in glasshouse malls, there are no windows that look out on the world except up at the sky; there are no means but the seasonal promotional activities to determine the time of year, no clock to tell the time of day, and no means but the identity of retail chains to determine regional location. The modern shopping center is literally a Utopia, an idealized nowhere (*ou* = no; *topos* = place), and thus on a Saturday afternoon at about 2 pm, the terror of time and space evaporates for the millions of Americans at the mall.

This utopia is kept scrupulously clean and orderly, without any material contamination nor hint of the gradual obsolescence that characterizes material objects. It is kept perfect and ageless by personnel who may be employed to do nothing else but constantly polish or touch up the spotless shiny surfaces. At the Esplanade Center in New Orleans, for example, the walls of the telephone recesses are washed at least twice a day, and completely repainted every two weeks (Scott 1989, 69).[8] The backstage areas, where commodities are delivered, prepared and serviced, are concealed by landscaping, painted panels, and underground construction to protect the customers from knowledge of the activities that take place there, so preserving the myth of the pure, abstract commodity for sale. Access to these areas is impossible for those who do not know the plan.

The floorplan exerts strong centripetal tendencies, and the shopper is drawn further into the fantasy by tantalizing glimpses of attractive central features, past the relatively drab marginal tenants (mostly services) into the colorful and well-lit wonderland of consumption. In WEM, for example, "from each of the 58 entrances an unusual sight *pulls* visitors toward an *illusive* vortex" (Davis 1991, 13, emphasis added). Escalators sweep them up to galleries decorated with mobiles—typically birds, flags and balloons that dramatically evoke flight and colorful action—or take them down to underworld grottos, under arches and hanging gardens. This experience disorients the shopper and, just as in the fantasy worlds of popular literature and film, it is then notoriously difficult to find one's way out. According to one designer, "a too direct and obvious a route between the entrance and exits must be avoided" (Beddington 1982, 16), and exits must be carefully designed because "if too prominent and inviting as seen from within they may sweep the unsuspected (sic) shopper from the centre" (Beddington 1982, 27). Even fire exits are disguised as shopfronts or hidden behind mirrors almost to the point of invisibility (Scott 1991, 192–93). The mall is thus designed as a noncommutative space, and the goal is to trap the consumer in the world of consumption.

An extreme form of this disorienting experi-

ence is characteristic of downtown megastructures, typified by Peachtree Development in Atlanta, the Bonaventure Center in Los Angeles, the Renaissance Center in Detroit, and to a lesser extent, the Eaton Center in Toronto. Slightly more modest versions are now appearing in downtowns across the country, such as the Trump Tower in New York, Water Tower Plaza in Chicago, St. Louis Center in St. Louis, Tower City Center in Cleveland, and Louisville Galleria in Louisville. These hyperspaces (Jameson 1984) are as isolated from the city street as the suburban shopping mall (see Whyte 1980) and are similarly artificial fantasy worlds hermetically sealed against the unsanitary and unsafe outside world. Yet these spaces do not offer quite the comfortable seduction of the suburban mall. They organize a postmodern experience, what Jameson (1984, 76) calls the "hysterical sublime," a mixture of excitement and terror felt at the instant of total alienation from historical reality. As Walter Benjamin saw the Victorian arcade as the spatial metaphor for the cultural experience of commercial capitalism, so Jameson sees the hyperspace as a metaphor for global capitalism. Individuals cannot orient themselves within a "cognitive map" of this complex and confusing space, just as they cannot locate their immediate experience within the unimaginable totality of class relations and cultural institutions structured on a global scale. This sign-saturated place and its constant motion represent the spatial and temporal displacement characteristic of the postmodern world. We have, therefore, progressed from the shopping center as a modern rational Utopia to a postmodern Heterotopia—"a disorder in which the fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately . . . without law or geometry" (Foucault 1970, xvii).[9]

Nevertheless, the megastructure, like the conventional shopping center, expresses the will of the plan, effecting circulation of patrons in order to optimally expose them to commodities on display and offer them the opportunity to make impulse purchases. The shopping center is a machine for shopping: it employs crude, but very effective, behaviorist principles to move patrons efficiently through the retail built environment. The developer's first law of shopper behavior says that the American shopper will not willingly walk more than 600 feet (Garreau 1991, 117–18, 464). Mall length is conventionally limited to this distance lest shoppers be disinclined to walk to the next department store (or be tempted to get into their cars to drive to it!). There are a number of generic designs depending on the number of anchors: a wheelspoke layout draws customers to a single anchor from surrounding car parks; the classic dumbbell design (developed by Gruen) channels consumers along a corridor between two anchors; and a T or L shape is used for three and a cruciform for four anchors. If mall distances are longer, this fact must be concealed from the consumer, typically by breaking the space with strong focal points and attractions, or by obscuring the view with pop-out shopfronts. One developer, for example, explains:

> throughout the mall, towers, fountains and dramatic shop fronts are partially revealed to shoppers as they pass a bend. . . . Sensing the promise of another reward 100 ft ahead, shoppers are encouraged to head towards this next destination ("Fitting a Shopping Center . . ." 1991, 28).

An innovative solution to this problem and to the weakening draw of the department store anchor is the curved mall (to be introduced in Carolina Place in Charlotte, North Carolina), which increases circulation because it fosters a sense of anticipation. It makes storefronts stand out, and "even if the corridor is long, it seems shorter. It doesn't seem like such a burden to walk to the end. The curve acts like a funnel and pulls people through the center" (developer, cited in Richards 1990, 27).

Another strategy designed to keep shoppers circulating while reducing the friction of distance is the construction of a narrative which unfolds around the center, such as numbered plants with botanical descriptions, or "historic" markers. Pier 39 in San Francisco, for example, uses numbered plaques narrating the story of the construction of the shopping center in appropriately heroic terms and directing the shopper further into the center to read the next installment (Fig. 5). Signs or environmental graphics can also help direct shoppers purposefully around the center, and it is suggested that "some type of informative signage should be provided at every point where a shopper is faced with a decision" (Manson 1991, 127).

Progress through the mall is encouraged by careful pacing of attractions and displays, and even the width of storefronts is regulated by covenant to create a sense of predictable rhythm ("Nice Trick . . ." 1991, 32). Mall widths are conventionally restricted to about 6 m in

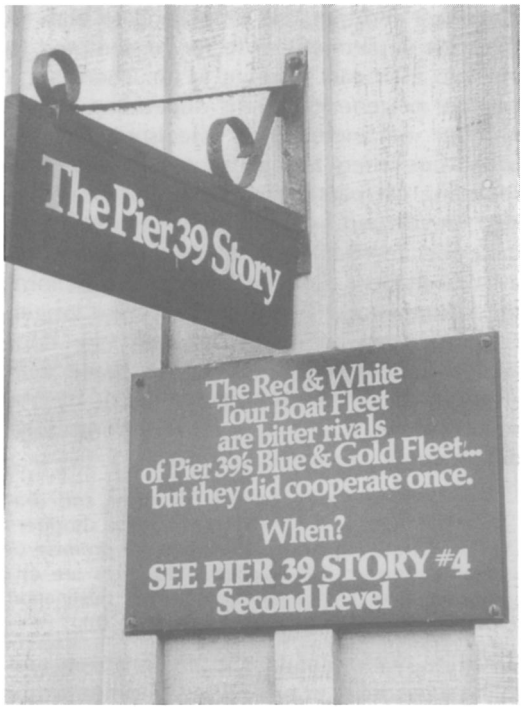

Figure 5. Constructing a narrative and directing the shopper through the mall: Pier 39 in San Francisco. Source: author.

order to allow shoppers to take in shopfronts on both sides, and to maintain the sense of intimate, human scale. Wider malls allow for placement of seating, softscape, and kiosks in the center, obstacles that might draw shoppers along while also deflecting them towards intervening stores (Gottdiener 1986). Pop-out displays and open storefronts are designed to coax shoppers into the interior to make the impulse purchase. An excellent example of this spatial manipulation is provided by San Diego's Horton Plaza, where, from the vantage of an overhead walkway or its cloisters, one can watch shoppers enter the center at the top of escalators, hesitate, and make forward to a goal, only having to immediately negotiate vendors' carts and sculpted plants which deflect them toward storefronts. The strategy does not always work, of course, but some shoppers dally in front of the window display and a few enter the store, perhaps to make purchases where their original path would not have taken them. More subtle is the use of floor patterns to suggest pathways through the mall and towards open storefronts, a strategy employed, for example, in Pearlridge Shopping Center in Pearl City, Hawaii.

In multistory shopping centers, the design must also encourage vertical movement so that pedestrian traffic is exposed to shop displays on all floors. Maitland (1990, 49–50), in a design manual, suggests "devices" to "persuade" and "invite" people to move upward; these include "glass-bubble" elevators, stacked escalator banks (as in the Trump Tower), overhanging platforms and aerial walkways (as at Pier 39 and Horton Plaza respectively), towering waterfalls and fountains, and mobiles of birds, manikins, balloons and aircraft. Such design features celebrate the drama and aesthetics of motion, drawing the eye and the person to upper levels.

Shoppers cannot be kept moving all the time, of course; they must be allowed to rest from the arduous tasks of shopping, particularly as the average trip to the shopping center has reportedly increased from only 20 minutes in 1960 to nearly three hours today (Crawford 1992, 14). However,

> Pause points for shoppers to rest, review their programmes and re-arrange their purchases etc. also need planning with care. Seating, while offering a convenient stopping point, must not be too luxurious or comfortable. Shoppers must move on and allow re-occupation of seating and the danger of attracting the 'down and outs' of various categories must be avoided (Beddington 1982, 36).

The need to rest for longer periods is recognized mainly in the food court, where, of course, shoppers will be consuming at the same time. Food courts have become an absolute necessity, in part because of the increased role of food as a marker of social taste, in part also because the presentation of diverse culinary experiences enhances the sense of elsewhere (food courts now typically present a range of "ethnic" cuisines), and because it provides a vantage point for watching others display their commodified lifestyles (Goss 1992, 174). Although development costs are greater than for other outlets, food courts are significant determinants of the shoppers' choice of shopping center, and are the main attraction for downtown office workers during lunch hour. Located in the interior or on upper floors, they can also, like department stores, draw customers past the specialty stores. Research finds that food courts can prolong a visitor's

stay an average of 10–15 minutes (Reynolds 1990b, 51).

The space created by the developer—pedestrian malls and mock street cafes—and the activity it is designed to sustain—relaxed strolling, window-shopping, and people-watching—seem reminiscent of *flanerie,* the progress of the voyeuristic dandy who strolled the streets and arcades of Paris in the nineteenth century. Several authors have drawn on the work of Benjamin (1973) in making this observation, and, with appropriate gender neutralization of the term, have been predisposed to see in it a recovery of a lost form of public behavior and personal expression (see for example, Shields 1989; Friedberg 1991; Hopkins 1990). But while the "mallies" (Jacobs 1988) seek pleasure in the display, the commercialization of the context has radically altered meaning, and what we witness, I suspect, is not the recovery of *flanerie,* but a nostalgia for its form which only marks its effective absence. Shopping centers would not function if shoppers were not asked to validate their presence by purchases, in questions posed both in environmental cues and, if necessary, by the security personnel. The contemporary flaneur cannot escape the imperative to consume: she or he cannot loiter in the mall unless implicitly invited to do so, and this generally only applies to the respectable elderly[10]; those without shopping bags and other suspicious individuals (teenagers, single men, the unkempt, and social science researchers) will draw the attention of security, who use the charge of loitering as grounds for eviction. Moreover, shoppers do not independently pick their way like the leisurely flaneur, but follow the meticulously conceived plan which has plotted paths, set lures, and planted decoys for its purpose. There is little chance of taking a route or occupying a position unforeseen by this plan (Bukatman 1991, 69).

The shopping center is, therefore, a *strategic* space, owned and controlled by an institutional power, which, by its nature, depends upon the definition, appropriation and control of territory (De Certeau 1984). Its designers seek to deny the possibility of *tactics,* an oppositional occupation by everyday practices; that is, activities which do not require a specific localization or spatially but which may temporarily use, occupy or take possession of strategic space (De Certeau 1984). There are no spaces that might be claimed by uninvited gestures or unprescribed "pedestrian utterances" (De Certeau 1985, 129) since potential microspaces are preemptively filled: whether dignified by static features (such as sculptures or potted plants), "animated" by active, permanent features (such as mobiles, mechanical displays, or fountains), or "programmed" with a performance by musicians, mimes, or street artist (see Garreau 1991, 443, 456). Performers are carefully screened and hired by the management, of course, and "real" street performers should only be found outside. In case anyone should be inspired to spontaneous performance, the stages and gazebos provided for programs are inevitably roped off and signposted to discourage them. When activated, these installations nevertheless provide a sense of public space and help draw shoppers through the mall. Graphics and murals are also used to enliven routes, dramatize motion, and avoid "the depressing effects of dead areas" (Beddington 1982, 82), such as the hoardings obscuring vacant stores. Spaces and surfaces should be filled because, if everywhere in this environment there is a sign, the absence of a sign becomes a sign of absence: perhaps signifying a lack of anticipation and consideration on behalf of the developer, or more seriously, the perceived emptiness of consumption itself, but inevitably inviting a motion to fill the void.

On the other hand, designers may provide spaces precisely to contain any such gestures that individuals may be disposed to make. Small, intricate and irregular openings—what Relph (1987, 253) calls quaintspace—invite a personal claim, and the planned concession of such spaces for sanctioned private or interpersonal activities then facilitates surveillance. This is not to deny the possibility of tactics entirely, for "mall rats" will claim public space, by sitting on the floor or "mallingering" (Kowinski 1985, 26); threaten quaintspace, by disturbing adults or engaging in unsanctioned activities; or programming their own spaces by performing "The Robot" etc., until chased off by security guards.

The Shopping Center and Signification

Elements of the built environment are signifiers which refer, through culturally determined systems of association, to abstract con-

cepts, social relations, or ideologies. In combination, they constitute texts which communicate social meaning to acculturated readers. The built environment first denotes its function, informing the user of its practical purpose. Thus, for example, the shopping center announces itself through its location and its conventional form as a p(a)lace of consumption. A wide range of styles is practicable, however, in realizing this basic function, and even the most technologically constrained architectural solutions give symbolic expression (Winner 1980, 127). The built environmental is also always, therefore, connotative of meaning, consistent with, but extending beyond its immediate function. As Barthes (1979, 6) expresses it: "architecture is always dream and function, [an] expression of a utopia and instrument of a convenience." I have suggested, for example, that shopping centers present an image of civic, liminal, and transactional spaces, forms consistent with, but not identical to, the function of selling commodities. In addition to the thematic imaging of space, however, carefully selected and highlighted elements of design communicate specific meaning, which, through the operation of an environmental rhetoric, can float free and attach to the act of consumption or to the commodities on display.

I have already suggested that the plants and water features of the shopping center ask to be contrasted with the degraded nature of the suburbs and the decaying second nature of the city. They also apparently soothe tired shoppers, enhance the sense of a natural outdoor setting, create exotic contexts for the commodity, imply freshness and cleanliness, and promote a sense of establishment (Maitland 1985). More important, the presence of nature, albeit tamed in a garden setting, naturalizes consumption, and mitigates the alienation inherent in commodity production and consumption. Hence the recent proliferation of natural products stores and the extraordinary lengths developers may go to in order to capture and display commodified nature for this premium.[11]

Water seems to be particularly important. Fountains signify civilized urban space, while on a larger scale, the importance of the waterfront to retail environments is due to their association with sport and recreation, historic trade, and the potential for a new life of adventure (being cast away, press-ganged or ticketed on a departing ship). Perhaps also the value of water is due to the fact that the ocean is the only remaining natural environment and is the habitat of the only uncolonized minds, or noble Other (whales and dolphins). Hence shopping centers with large-scale aquaria, including Scottsdale Galleria, the Mall of the Americas (with its walk-through adventure, "Underwater World"), Newport City (with the Cousteau Ocean Center), and, of course, WEM (with its definitive Deep Sea Adventure).

Similarly pervasive is the signification of the past in the retail built environment, as the "heritage industry" (Hewison 1989) exploits our collective nostalgia for real places and historic roots. This is best illustrated in the festival marketplaces, which reproduce historical landscapes in the city with restored architectural details, antique material artifacts strewn almost casually on the landscape, and professional actors in period costume portraying historical characters (Rouse Co.'s "Art in the Marketplace" program, for example, now has a performing arts programs to create "Living History"). Even the older suburban centers are now retrofitted with Victorian, Colonial, or Art Deco detailing. Needless to say this historical vernacular effects an idealization of the past and mystifies its relationship with the present. Although extreme attention is paid to minor details, the reconstruction is fitted with modern facilities, and no reference is made to exploitative social relations that may have actually structured life at the time. No attempt is made to critically interrogate the present through creative juxtaposition—it offers pastiche, not parody (Jameson 1984, 64–65). Ironically too, even while idealizing noncommodified social relations, this historicism normalizes the commodity aesthetic by projecting it backwards into the past and rewrites history as a sequence of style.

If the sense of history is violated in the shopping center, so is time itself. A symptomatic and almost universal new feature of the postmodern retail environment is the clock (Goss 1992, 174). Previously banished because of its reminder of the precious value of time and the power of its regime over the modern individual, it is now often set prominently in a plaza or court, where it quotes public places of the past, or is mounted on towers and bracketed to facades, quoting the respectable historical institutions of the church and main street busi-

Figure 6. A clock as a focal point, reminiscent of a Victorian railway station. The Galleria, San Francisco. Source: author.

ness. It is, therefore, almost invariably an antique analog clock, visually punning history and the way things were—referring literally to *times past*. The passage of time is recorded, but the time of the antique clock is not a threat to the idyll of consumption for it always stands at the threshold of the present, or just before the dreaded future began. For the postmodern consumer, temporality has collapsed, time is an extension of the moment, and, punning again, past time signifies the *pastime* of shopping. Finally, the combination of the prominent clock and atria or gallery bears a resemblance to the nineteenth-century railway station (see Fig. 6), a place that marks liminality, with its prospects for romance and mystery extolled in countless popular novels and movies. Shopping centers occupy restored railway stations (such as St. Louis Station), and miniature railways—as "people movers"—are increasingly common. The railway rhetoric may go further in the analogy between window shopping and the gaze upon exotic landscapes passing by the carriage window.

One of the most dramatic innovations, a part of the carnivalization of the retail built environment, is the carousel (Fig. 7). The first was introduced in Southcoast Plaza in Costa Mesa, California in 1967, but the last decade or so has seen restored antique and reproduction carousels introduced to literally dozens of malls, the basis of a startling renaissance in the carousel industry.[12] The Columbiana Center in Columbia, South Carolina, boasts an "*authentic reproduction* of an antique carousel" (Bivins 1989, 36, emphasis added), and River Falls Mall "a full-size carousel *authentically reproduced* with antique styling and handpainted horses" (Risley 1990, 72, emphasis added). These oxymoronic conceits represent the fairgrounds of an imagined childhood, and play upon a collective nostalgia for the lost innocence of youth and for *old-fashioned* fun—hence the carousel must be a restored antique or exact reproduction. The 49th Street Galleria, part of Franklin Mills in Philadelphia, even advertises a "turn of the century family outing" and indoor Family Fun Centers are now replacing the banks of video games with more wholesome "old-fashioned modes of fun" (Sicard 1991, 26).

In such retail playgrounds, the "pleasure of innocence is meant to leak outside its sphere" (Chaney 1990, 62) for, as I have noted, the magic of the commodity depends upon an innocence about the relations of production and the social construction of consumption. The sense of innocent fun mitigates the guilt of conspicuous consumption and a residual innocence may similarly attach to the commodities for sale. The carousel itself is inevitably located at a focal point of the shopping center, and consumers are drawn into the aura of unworldliness and artlessness of its orbit as the whole merry-go-round world of commodity appears to revolve around its axis. Moreover, reference is inevitably made in advertising the carousel to the handpainted horses and handcrafted components (for example, the painstaking restoration of the Broadway Flying Horses of Seaport Village, described in texts and photos) and this quality also naturally attaches itself to commodities on sale. In one of the most dramatic diffusions of retail innovations, miniaturized carousels, particularly as music boxes, and the horses themselves, as ornaments or nursery toys, have themselves become hot commodities and are now rapidly becoming clichéd icons in toyshops, candyshops, and other specialist stores. A fetish of

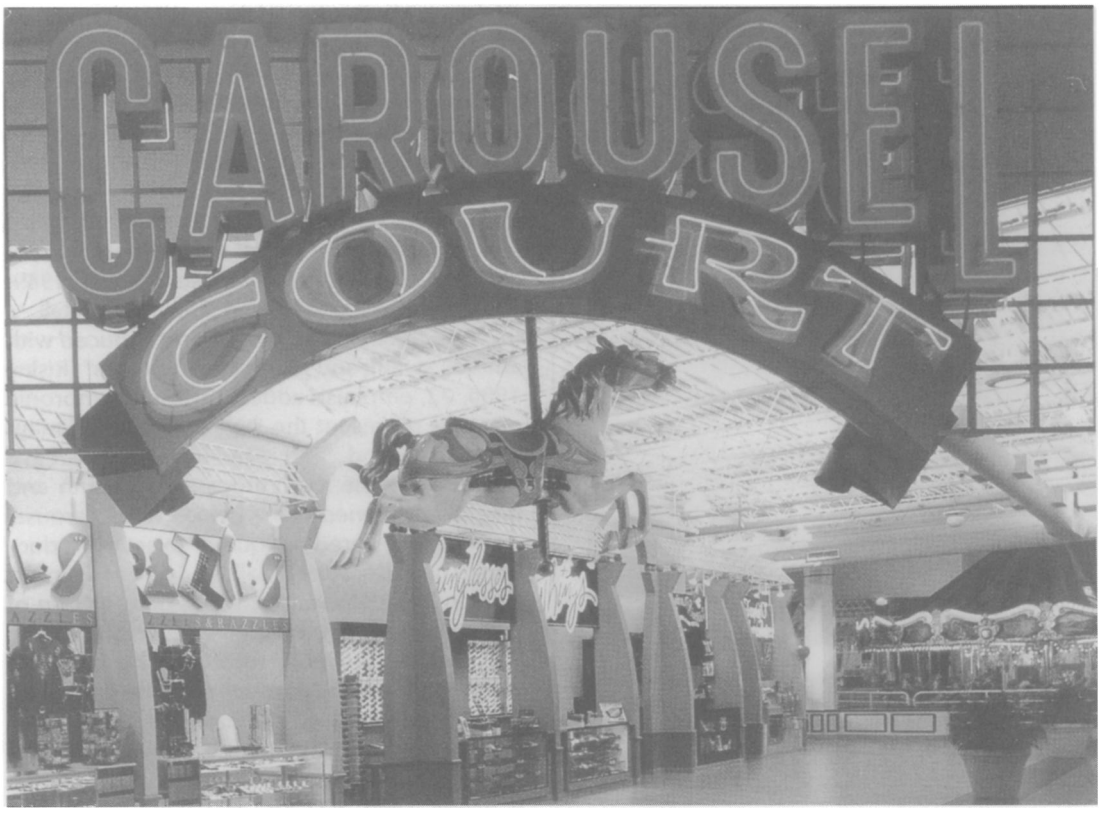

Figure 7. The carousel theme: Carousel Court in Myrtle Square Mall, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Source: Retail Reporting Corporation.

childhood past is rehabilitated—we might even speak of the commodification of the fetish—and I suspect that the carousel horse has caught on so rapidly because it is the epitome of the commodity that *is really* real, that literally comes to life *as if by magic,* for righteous believers. One can now even have carousel horses printed on one's checks, so that spending money is mystified as innocent, old-fashioned fun.

Art, on the other hand, has always had a place in the retail built environment because it symbolizes a noncommercialized aesthetic, and because it is a form of object display sanctioned by high culture (Harris 1990). Its auratic content is also meant to spill over into the commodities on sale and to sanctify shopping by association with the legitimate activity of aesthetic appreciation. Hence shopping centers host symphonies (Southland hosted the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra), operas (the Bel Canto competition is held in shopping centers across the country) and Shakespearean plays (staged, for example, at Lakeforest Mall in Gaithersburg, Maryland) (see Goss 1992, 174). Considerable sums are invested in fixed art displays; both Horton Plaza in California and The Gardens of the Palm Beaches in Florida boast more than $1 million worth, much of which can fairly be described as "plop art," so-called because it seems to have been dropped in place without regard to the scale and quality of the surrounding environment. It is, therefore, like the commodities on display, abstracted from its origins and so fetishized. This art rarely demands to be interpreted, so one suspects that its purpose is merely to be recognized as a sign of what it is—that is *Art,* a mystified quality of high culture. At the same time, of course, it does allow those with cultivated tastes to exercise and display their cultural capital and so mark their distinction from

the mass consumer (see Bourdieu 1984). Art exhibits also act as focal features drawing customers along the mall, filling empty spaces, and enhancing the sense of public space ("City's Love of Art . . ." 1991, 103). Like other corporate art, shopping center displays signify a commitment to public edification expected of a benevolent authority and are a means to express and legitimate the power of the owner. Solid, weighty pieces displayed in sculpture courts best achieve these goals, and prestigious displays of sculptures by world-renowned artists are found in several shopping centers, including Northpark Center in Dallas, Horton Plaza, Southcoast Plaza, and Newport Center Fashion Island.

Art has, of course, long been deployed in marketing, and the separation of the commercial and aesthetic was always problematical, yet the distinction has definitively ruptured under the assault of contemporary commodification. The ultimate collapse of the categorical distinction is presaged by the fact that art and cultural museums are now sited in mixed-use retail centers (these include, for example, the Museum of Fine Arts in Faneuil Hall Marketplace, Boston; the California Crafts Museum in Ghiradelli Square, San Francisco; the Laguna Beach Museum in Southcoast Plaza, Museo Chicano, at the Mercado, a folk art museum at Horton Plaza, and two whaling museums at Whalers Village, Lahaina, Hawaii). Moreover, museums have opened retail outlets in shopping centers where "authentic reproductions" and souvenirs of artifacts are sold (for example, satellite stores of the Museum of Modern Art sell high-quality reproductions of art and souvenir merchandise). Most telling, however, is that the first funds ever awarded to a private corporation by the National Endowment for the Arts went to Rouse and Co. to develop art projects in shopping malls (NEA Funds Art . . . 1990, C1). While both museums and shopping centers are designed to display commodities, they are equally a part of the "consciousness industry" (see Silverman 1986; Harris 1990), and it is undoubtedly the retailers that benefit most from this conflation.

More recent too is continuous reference to the television and the emulation of televisual experience within the retail built environment. The shopper strolls through experiences as he or she might scan through TV channels (see Kroker et al. 1989, 109; Davis 1991, 5; Kowinkski 1985, 71–73) and is bombarded by simultaneous images of multiple places and times; spatial narratives dissolve and individual pedestrian trajectories or narratives are constantly broken by contrived obstacles. Developers recognize that their customers expect drama, excitement, and constant visual stimulation thanks to the effect of television, and they seek to provide a surrogate televisual experience (O'Connor 1989, 290). Perhaps the best example of this is Horton Plaza, which is saturated by visual imagery quoting from an incredible diversity of sources and is designed purposefully to confuse and literally lose the shopper in its multidimensional programming.

The connection with TV goes further. As noted earlier, both the retail built environment and the TV function primarily to display and sell commodities and the lifestyles associated with them; both are escapes from suburban everyday life, a means of transport from reality; and both are highly controlled media that play to the cultural bottom-line, presuming a passive, psychologically manipulatable public. Commercial video walls—banks of TV screens—provide a new point-of-purchase promotion so that the shopper can watch TV in the mall, and in fact the TV is impossible to escape. There has been recently a phenomenal televisualization of the retailing concept, that is, the direct lifting of retail concepts from television shows in stores such as Cartoon Junction, the Disney Store, Hanna Barbera Shop, NFL for Kids, Circle Gallery of Animation and Cartoon Art, Sanrio Co., and the Sesame Street General Store). Thus it can truly be said that "shopping malls are liquid TVs for the end of the twentieth century" (Kroker et al. 1989, 208).

Also analogous to the TV, in its capacity to allow viewers to be simultaneously in multiple times and places even while sitting at home, the shopping center creates a diverse range of temporal and spatial experiences within a comfortable landscape for consumption. Hopkins (1990), for example, has described the metonymical strategies by which shopping centers exploit "myths of elsewhere" to elicit specific behavioral responses. First, they employ semantic metonyms or place names. Typically, early centers favored names redolent of Arcadia or pastoral scenes (Country Club, Highland Park, Farmers Market etc.), while modern suburban malls employ Utopian, placeless

names (Northland, Southland etc.), and contemporary centers may imply tourist and other liminal destinations (Harborfront, Seaport Village, Forest Fair, etc.). Garreau (1991, 471) suggests facetiously that such evocative names are used in direct proportion to their distance from the reality they describe. More effective perhaps is the use of iconic metonyms, or objects which function as signs of other places and times, to evoke stereotypical associations. Standing synecdochally for other places, such icons are also metaphors for the spatial experience of other places, in the manner by which, say, the Eiffel Tower, which first stands for Paris, then evokes *haute cuisine,* cosmopolitan sophistication, and relaxed elegance. Generic icons such as fountains, benches, statuary, and clocks signify traditional urban public space, and evoke notions of community and civic pride. More elaborate reconstructions of other places, whether generic—such as fairgrounds, Greek agora, Italian piazzas, Parisian sidewalk cafes, and Mediterranean villages—or specific—such as Bourbon Street and Miami Beach—quote well-worn clichés of place from our collective *musée imaginaire.* These simulated places exude an "aura of familiarity" (Davis 1991, 2) and provoke predictable associations and dispositions facilitating consumption. Drinking capuccino coffee in a sidewalk cafe on Europa Boulevard, WEM, for example, is likely to elicit fantasies conducive to the purchase of luxury items in the nearby fashion stores. These simulations exploit another contemporary dis-ease, that is *otherwheritis,* the spatial equivalent of nostalgia, a social condition in which a distant place is preferable to here and now.

Moving on the Mall: Reclaiming the Shopping Center

> Fer sure, we have the wolfpacks and kyotes comin down from the hills, and the freewaymen robbin us, but we are lucky because we live in the Great Mall, where the Wall portect us, and we have the Warmth and Stuff inside. After the fal de rol, isn't the Mall the winner of our disconnect? (Kowinski 1985, 394).

The shopping center appears to be everything that it is not. It contrives to be a public, civic place even though it is private and run for profit; it offers a place to commune and recreate, while it seeks retail dollars; and it borrows signs of other places and times to obscure its rootedness in contemporary capitalism. The shopping center sells paradoxical experiences to its customers, who can safely experience danger, confront the Other as a familiar, be tourists without going on vacation, go to the beach in the depths of winter, and be outside when in. It is quite literally a fantastic place, and I suspect the disappointment that some experience at the mall may result from the impossibility of these paradoxes (psychoanalysis tells us, of course, that the inability to attain the goal of the desire is precisely its necessary condition). It is a representation of space masquerading as a representational space (Lefebvre 1991, 38–39); that is, a space conceptualized, planned scientifically and realized through strict technical control, pretending to be a space imaginatively created by its inhabitants. The shopping center is conceived by the elitist science of planning, which operates under the calculus of retail profit and applies behavioral theories of human action for purposes of social control, and yet part of that conception is its disguise as a popular space which has been created by the spontaneous, individual tactics of everyday life. The alienation of commodity consumption is concealed by the mask of carnival, the patina of nostalgia, and the iconic essences of elsewhere.

While it is an insult to the shopper to suggest that she or he is totally duped by the spatial strategies described above (Hopkins 1991, 270; Shields 1989, 157), the postmodernist celebration of the *jouissance* experienced by the knowledgeable consumer and of the *flanerie* of the new dandy, involves an equally problematical elitist position. The "captains of consciousness" perhaps understand as well as the academic culture theorists the class structuration of consumption, and they have exploited this in the design of a multiply-coded retail built environment that communicates particular meanings to different audiences, as in the conceit of postmodernism, which nods condescendingly to the majority and winks knowingly at the cognoscenti (see Jencks 1986, 373). The shopping center apparently caters to all, with circuses for the masses and fine art for the elite, consciously providing those "in the know" with the means to mark their distinction. More seriously, this optimistic assessment underestimates the capacity of the

organizational intelligence behind the spatial strategies of control. A sophisticated apparatus researches consumers' personal profiles, their insecurities and desires, and produces a space that comfortably satisfies both individual and mass consumers and manipulates the behavior of both to not-so-different degrees.

The question then is how to retrieve these spaces from such calculated control, and there are a number of possible tactics directed at each of the conceptions of the retail built environment developed above. First is the exposure of the fetishism of the commodity and the re-problematization of the relations of consumption. Consumer activists, for example, have exposed the materialism of the commodity by organizing information campaigns and consumer boycotts undermining the magic of commodities such as Coors beer, Burger King fast foods, and Ratners jewelry (see also Smith 1990). Advertisers have been forced by the increasing environmental consciousness and social awareness of consumers to make some progressive changes in their campaigns, but they have also countered effectively by further mystifying the connections, exploiting the magic of advertising to associate even the most environmentally culpable products, such as nuclear power and oil, with nature, cleanliness, and justice, as a browse through any liberal magazine will attest.

Consumers may also infer meanings unintended by the captains of consciousness, or appropriate meanings to which they are not socially entitled, such as the manner in which surplus military clothing becomes a skinhead's uniform. There are, however, inherent limits to this form of subversion of commodity symbolism, in that while temporarily challenging the established order of the image, it still employs the object code and is thus relatively easily coopted—radical soon becomes radical chic.

Second is the attempt to resist the economic and spatial logic of the shopping center. As noted, the struggle of community groups against large-scale retail development in their neighborhoods has had some limited success in some parts of the U.S., particularly the northwest, through delaying construction and negotiating environmental concessions from developers ("Building Despite the Obstacles . . ." 1990). In most places, however, these strategies are more limited due to what is generally perceived by localities and states to be the need for capital investment in their communities. Most urban communities, in particular, are only too happy, if financially capable, to provide developers with incentives, and in this context, development offers an undoubted improvement in environmental quality. Moreover, environmental and community-based resistance is only effective against new development, while renovation of existing centers is fast becoming the dominant trend.

There have been several critiques of the mall as a spatial system from within popular culture, most recently and explicitly in the movie, *The Phantom of the Mall,* which exposes the terror of pan-optical surveillance and sociopsychological control in a mall gone bad. A greedy developer and corrupt mayor have destroyed homes and attempted murder to assemble land, and one of their victims inhabits the labyrinthine service tunnels and ventilation ducts waiting to wreak revenge. While the security personnel use the closed-circuit TV to leer at women in changing rooms, the "phantom" uses the system to protect his former girlfriend, a mall employee, from voyeurs and would-be rapists. The backstage is the scene of brutal killings, and the labyrinth is complete with rats, snakes, corpses, and other terrors. The teenage heroes gradually uncover the secret of the mall, beginning with the discovery that the piped Muzak contains subliminal messages. In the end, the greedy and corrupt are gruesomely dispatched, and the malevolent mall is destroyed by a bomb—surely the nightmare of all developers. The limits of this kind of critique, however, are revealed in the ultimate resolution: that the phantom turns out, according to the soundtrack song by the Vandals, to be nothing but "a retard in a broken hockey mask"; that the hero who gets the girl is a young photographer, and therefore himself a professional image-maker (he sees nothing particularly wrong in the surveillance or the messages of the subliminal Muzak); and that the female victim preserves her innocence and righteousness in the field of corrupt consumption. Although the movie can be read to inform tactics of resistance, it is not critical of the strategies systematically applied by mall developers as much as of an exceptional evil developer and a wayward mall.

Third is the struggle to open the shopping center to all activities consistent with public space, even those that may affront the sensi-

bilities of the consumer or disrupt the smooth process of consumption. This requires sustaining and broadening the pressure upon management already being exerted by civil rights groups in courts of law, and by teenagers and others in petty, everyday skirmishes with security. While ideologically interpreted as assaults upon the rights of private property, such political and tactical actions must be supported as a struggle for public space and at least minimal rights of citizenship for all in the consumer society. By confronting the rights of exclusion, encouraging the presence of undesirable activities, and challenging the legality of such rights in court, we can expose the ersatz and profoundly undemocratic nature of public space and the controlled carnival manufactured in the contemporary retail environment.

Fourth is the tactical occupation of spaces, particularly by actions that would be excluded by the signs and security guards of private property. No architectural form is entirely effective, and all spaces must open up some possibilities as they shut others down. As Eco (1986, 77) notes, architecture fluctuates between being coercive, forcing one to live and behave in a particular way, and indifferent, allowing one freedom to move, express oneself, and dream. Users of the shopping center may pursue such freedoms and exploit the opportunities that shopping centers present. It is only the overwhelming normalcy of everyone and everything in the shopping center that allows the will of the plan to remain unquestioned. The unpredictabilities of the world are constantly penetrating the mall, of course, and designers and managers must keep up a constant rate of architectonic innovation to keep it at bay. Petty vandalism, such as graffiti, packets of detergent thrown into mall fountains (Scott 1989, 74), and increasing occurrences of interpersonal violence (Hazel 1992, 27) are examples of some of the more overt and male-dominated tactics, while increasing theft is an example of a covert, female-dominated tactic. Teenagers in *The Phantom of the Mall* also "moon" at cameras, enter forbidden places, and skate-board after hours. These are unlikely to be viewed sympathetically by most consumers and lead only to new levels of preventive response. An alternative spatial tactic that disrupts the efficient flow of consumers, breaches the perfect context of the commodity, and reconnects it to its material and social origins without alienating other patrons can perhaps kindle the critical faculties of shoppers and provoke their own tactical responses.

Finally there is the attempt to subvert the systems of signification operating in the retail built environment. This involves recognizing the intention behind the sign—which I have attempted—and a far more creative appropriation, or reassignation of meaning. The built environment is always complexly and multiply coded, and the assignation of specific meaning depends upon the predisposition of the reader. There is always the potential for consciously perverted interpretation, a challenge to the meaning of sign and to the class structuration of the signification system.

The shopping center is, like television, a "leaky medium" (Enzenberger cited in Stam 1988, 116), in the sense that, while corporatively controlled, it must respond to popular desire and must rely upon some relatively autonomous creative imagists. This has allowed the addition of ironic signifiers to the retail built environment, that, for example, satirize upon the emptiness of conspicuous consumption and so apparently preempt the high-cultural critique. With the multiplication of signs in the postmodern retail built environment, such counter-significations can be absorbed unproblematically into the environment, or worse, may be coopted as markers of social distinction.

More significant then will be attempts by the users themselves to subvert meaning through strategies of social parody and "detournement of pre-existing aesthetic elements" (Knabb 1981, 45; see also Bonnett 1989, 135). This is to accept the limitations placed upon resistance: that there is no possibility of a critique from outside the dominant representational discourses, for there is no position that is not implicated in the object code; and that there is also no possible alternative to the totalizing logic of social relations within this society of the spectacle. One cannot imagine, say, the rational planning, construction, and successful operation of a genuinely alternative shopping center, nor practically conceive of nonalienating forms of consumption. Instead, effective tactics can only employ the means of the strategy against itself, by taking it at its word and taking its word to extremes. Users already do this to a limited extent, treating the mall as the social space it pretends to be, 25 percent freely

enjoying its facilities without making a purchase ("Who Shops in Shopping Malls?" 1989, 43). What I have in mind, however, is the construction of situations; that is, the collective staging of games and farcical events, by artists, activists, and the shopping center patrons themselves, that can temporarily bring carnival into the shopping center, upsetting the conventional play of signification, subverting the cultural codes that are strategically deployed. The psychogeographers of the retail environment are perhaps pushing the limits of their spatial and representational strategies, and the shopping center may become too successful, as users take what is contrived as merely a *realistic* experience of public place as *really real.*

Ultimately, however, we must realize that the nostalgia we experience for authenticity, commerce, and carnival lies precisely in the loss of our ability to collectively create meaning by occupying and using social spaces for ourselves. While developers may design the retail built environment in order to satisfy this nostalgia, our real desire, as Frow (1991, 129) notes, is for community and social space free from instrumental calculus of design.

Notes

1. The term is borrowed from Wood (1985, 81), who uses it to describe "places made over to be something they never were."
2. Although the industry wishes to assure us that "Real Men Do Like Shopping" (International Council of Shopping Centers 1990, 16), it is significant that there are at least two games designed for girls based on the mall experience. The object of the board game "Meet Me at the Mall" is to fill shopping bags with merchandise and "shop 'til you drop"; an electronic game, "Mall Madness," uses pretend credit cards and automated voice product descriptions ("The Short Run" 1992, 5).
3. Rouse's other schemes include Harborplace in Baltimore, South Street Seaport in New York, Santa Monica Place in Santa Monica, California; the Tivoli Brewery in Denver, the Grand Avenue in Milwaukee, St. Louis Union Station in St. Louis, Portside in Toledo, and Waterside in Norfolk. Other festival marketplaces based on this model include, for example, Harbour Island in Tampa, Trapper's Alley in Detroit, Rainbow Center in Niagara Falls, New York, Marina Marketplace in Buffalo, Pier 39 in San Francisco, and Charleston Place in Charleston, South Carolina. Less publicized failures include 6th St. Marketplace in Richmond and Water St. Pavilion in Flint (Sawicki 1989, 348).
4. Although required by some local governments, day care is not proving very successful because of the difficulty and cost of obtaining liability insurance and of parental distrust of strangers (Reynolds 1990b, 29). More in keeping with the commodified setting is a novel enterprise, part day care, part entertainment for children, pioneered in Evergreen Plaza in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. Children may be deposited at "Kids Only Cartoon Theaters," where they are "barcoded" with identification tags and constantly monitored by video while they watch continuous cartoons. The parent is given a pager in case problems arise or they fail to return within the prescribed time. Electronic doors prevent children leaving, and the same adult must collect them with the barcode on the pager also matched with that on the child.
5. Note, however, that downtown developers have recently discovered the "positive demographics" of minorities and have designed centers and tenant mix explicitly to capture these underserved markets. This applies especially to Hispanics; centers directed explicitly at Hispanic markets include, for example, the Mercado in Phoenix, Fiesta Marketplace in Santa Ana, California, Galleria of the Americas in New York, and Palm Plaza in Hialeah, Florida.
6. Hotels and conference centers act as anchor tenants, drawing tourists and conventioneers to shopping centers. Examples include Central Coast Plaza in San Luis Obispo, California; Pickwell Center in Pickwell, Ohio; Carnation Mall, Alliance, Ohio; Greenbrier Mall, Chesapeake, Virginia; and Harbour Island. The Riverchase Galleria, Birmingham, Alabama, for example, markets weekend shoppers' specials that keep its hotel full with busloads of people from neighboring states (McCloud 1989a, 23).
7. Gruen claimed that "the inventiveness which expressed itself so clearly in the first pioneering centers has given way to repetition and routine" (1973, 42), and that "financial greed has debased . . . the idea . . . [The] environmental and humane ideas underlying, though not perfectly expressed, in the original centres . . . were completely forgotten" (1978, 350–51).
8. An exception to this rule is noted by Garreau (1991, 51), citing one manager who reduced the shine on his marble floors to avoid the inadequacy experienced by some consumers when they inevitably compared it with their own at home. Such anecdotes suggest the totality of the enterprise.
9. Foucault (1986) later expands upon his conception of Heterotopia, and there are several ways in which his notion works here. For example, a heterotopic space involves an absolute break with traditional time (fourth principle) and rules of exclusion by which entry into the space is necessarily restricted (fifth principle).
10. The elderly are specifically encouraged to the shopping center by free transport and "specials" because they impart a sense of safe public space and enhance the reputation of the management as civic-minded. Also, the "mature market" (over

fifty years old), is expanding rapidly as "yuppies" become "grumpies" (grown-up mature professionals), has the highest disposable income and greatest assets, and spends more on grandchildren's clothes than do the parents ("Sixty Something" 1991, 31).

11. The developer personally chose the 29 thirty-foot palms that grace Tyson's Corner in Fairfax County, Virginia. Trees were dug up in Florida and kept for 18 months in shade houses to gradually acclimatize them to indoors before being taken in temperature-controlled trucks to their new home.
12. Including, for example, Arkansas Mall in Fayetteville, Metro Center in Phoenix, Superstition Springs Mall in Mesa, Arizona; Pier 39, Lakewood Center Mall in Lakewood, California, Lakeland Mall in Lakeland, California, Myrtle Square Mall in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Seaport Village, Central City Mall in San Bernardino, California, Manchester Center in Fresno, Belz Factory Outlet Mall in Orlando, Lakeshore Mall in Gainesville, Georgia; Savannah Mall, Ford City in Chicago, River Falls Mall, Oak Park Mall in Overland Park, Kansas; Festival Marketplace in Lexington, Kentucky; Northwest Grand Traverse Mall in Traverse City, Michigan; Birchwood Mall in Port Huron, Michigan; Mall of the Americas, Forest Fair Mall in Cincinnati, Southwyck Mall in Toledo, Jantzen Beach Center in Portland, Oregon; Columbiana Center in Columbia, South Carolina; Hickory Ridge in Memphis, Newmarket Fair in Newport News, Virginia, St. Lawrence Center in Niagara, Wisconsin; and Morgantown Mall in Morgantown, West Virginia.

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