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Machine for Shopping:
American Postwar Malls, Culture, and the Consumption of Commercial Urbanism

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

by

Robyn Schwartz Siegel

August 2011

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Patricia Morton, Chairperson

Dr. Catherine Gudis

Dr. Liz Kotz

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The Thesis of Robyn Schwartz Siegel is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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INTRODUCTION

“From what we find we like – what we are easily attracted to – we can learn much of what we really are.”¹

When architect Robert Venturi wrote the above in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1966, he supported using both recognizable and obscure references, as well as vernacular and high art architectural illustrations to translate meaning from the built environment. His point seems rather simple: our favored material culture provides revealing cultural insight. Consequently, his works marked a shift into postmodern thought that he, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour put into practice when they took their Yale seminar to Las Vegas in 1968 and subsequently published *Learning from Las Vegas*. With this project, they amended the discourse on not only on Las Vegas but also more globally with regard to architecture: they took lessons from the architecture of the Strip, interpreted meaning, and classified its buildings as *ducks* or *decorated sheds*.² From an architectural perspective, they saw Las Vegas as an exaggerated representation of American culture, trends, and taste and praised popular culture while utilizing it for their work. These studies of the Strip and their admiration for ugly, ordinary, and

¹ Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 19.

² In *Learning From Las Vegas*, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour define a “decorated shed” as utilitarian architecture with a façade that can announce its function or projects ornamentation to the space. An architectural *duck* is characterized “where the architectural systems of space, structure, and program are submerged and distorted by an overall symbolic form.” See Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972), 87.

insignificant architecture challenged contemporaneous modern architecture and elite taste. They honestly explained a built environment that may have been previously dismissed.

In her 1971 article, “Learning from Pop,” Denise Scott Brown recognized what she described as a “changing architectural sensibility” of new forms with regard to Pop.³ She advocated that the pop landscape provided pertinent information of what we need and like, and comparative analysis would bring new forms into the discipline with those already acknowledged.⁴ She was critical of the architectural academy and existing conventions that must first indoctrinate popular culture into elite discourse to discuss and comprehend it. Scott Brown saw “forms of the pop landscape to be equally as important to us as the forms of antique Rome to the Beaux Arts, Cubism and Machine Architecture to the early Moderns” and elaborated:

Unlike these, they speak to our condition not only aesthetically, but on many levels of the necessity, from the social necessity to rehouse the poor without destroying them to the architectural necessity to produce buildings and environments that others will need and like. The pop landscape differs from the earlier models in that it is also the place where we build; it is our context. And it is one of the few contemporary sources of data on the symbolic and communicative aspects of architecture, since it was untouched by the Modern movement’s purist reduction of architecture to space and structure only.⁵

³ Denise Scott Brown, “Learning from Pop,” in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, edited by K. Michael Hays, (2000): 62, accessed April 5, 2011, http://www.arch.kth.se/unrealstockholm/unreal_web/seminar02_2006/learningfrompop.pdf.

⁴ Ibid., 64.

⁵ Ibid., 64.

Scott Brown recognized that social and aesthetic elements of the pop landscape contributed to an overall elucidation of what was relevant, meaningful, and a representation of the culture that built it.

Just over two decades later, John Chase, in “The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture,” analyzed the relationship between buildings and consumerism, and although he didn’t look to Pop, he made a similar case for the inherent meaning in the vernacular, which he referenced as *consumerist architecture*.⁶ He found this architecture to be as remarkable as high art architecture, but overlooked. “Because architecture that responds to consumerism deals in direct, rather than abstract, symbolism, consumerist architecture has fallen outside the realm inhabited by avant-garde architects and their critics.”⁷ Chase saw consumerist architecture as specifically serving consumption and revealing its public relevance.

Consumerism is an important social and economic organizing force. It is a key aspect affecting the production of buildings, and much building production can only be understood by analyzing its relationship to consumerism. Different types of building production have different degrees of relationship to consumerism. A shopping mall may have a strong relationship because its appearance may serve to attract shoppers and add an additional cachet-another value to the experience of acquiring the goods offered inside.⁸

Chase indicated that, unlike avant-garde architecture (which claims autonomy and abstraction from consumption), consumerist architecture exists in service of shopping and

⁶ The *consumerist* vernacular is “an architecture self-consciously concerned with selling the products or the services that it houses.” John Chase, “The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 4 (1991): 214.

⁷ Chase, “The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture,” 211.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 211.

consumption. I wonder, does the architecture enhance the consumerist function, or does the consumerist function prompt a certain style of architecture?

Chase, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour argued for the pertinence of the ordinary, Pop, and vernacular. I find this realm to be a fascinating area in scholarship. As an art historian, I am learning not just from the aforementioned architects, but from historians, sociologists, and other architects who have looked at the history of commercial architecture and consumption. I am interested in what may be deciphered from the forms we erect. In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I will employ their theories with my own interpretation to identify certain changes that have occurred in the development of commercial architecture during the post-World War II period and the contemporary present.

This Introduction will provide a context for the subsequent chapters, in which I will explore three case studies: a modern mall, NorthPark Center, and two contemporary shopping malls, The Americana at Brand and Crystals at CityCenter. I have chosen these shopping malls because they present and problematize specific aspects of American culture and consumption. In each instance, I will explore the mall within its retail history, the intention of the architecture, the art, the references to other buildings, places, or times, and, lastly, how the commercial mall purports to embody positive forms of urbanity in an idealized city center. I speculate about the presence of a mythic nostalgia for a communal past that never existed but is regardless continually updated and presented in amalgamations of high art architecture and commercial architecture in the built environment. I will work through my examples to ascertain particular characteristics of

American culture from the landscape; however, beyond the text, my *Taxonomy* (fig. 1), also provides visual comparisons of these three malls.

History of Postwar Malls

“Shopping has historically developed alongside, sustained amplified, or aspired to the urban.”⁹

From the end of the Second World War to the present, shopping environments have evolved as locales for consumption and community, sites of popular culture and leisure with appeal to a broad public. More than outposts for the exchange of goods, they are destinations for a myriad of activities including dining, entertainment, culture, and even dwelling.¹⁰ Before I analyze any sites, I situate them within the legacy of market-oriented culture.¹¹

The exchange of goods and capital grew alongside nineteenth-century industrialization, with machine mass-production replacing individual handiwork. During this time, obtainable and affordable goods became fashionable, desirable, and an indication of a certain lifestyle. These products were imbued with a myth of pleasure and happiness. As a result, the commercial environment became increasingly invested in

⁹ Sze Tsung Leong, “...And Then There Was Shopping,” in *The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping: Project on the City*, directed by Rem Koolhaas (East Rutherford, NJ: Monacelli Press, 2000), 153.

¹⁰ In 1993, Jon Goss identified shopping as the second most popular leisure activity in North America. (Television trumped shopping, but still, the programming and commercials also promoted shopping.) Jon Goss, “The ‘Magic of the Mall’: An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no. 1 (1993): 18.

¹¹ See William Leach, “Introduction,” in *Land of Desire*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 3.

perpetuating this myth of happiness through consumption and did so through fragmented, fantastical worlds where consumers could immerse themselves in consumption and role-playing.¹² In his unfinished *Arcades Project*, German sociologist, critic, and philosopher Walter Benjamin articulated this modern cultural phenomenon at the dawn of capitalism. His disjointed and densely organized long-term literary project (in thematic *passages*) mirrored the visual and experiential complexity of the Arcades. He regarded the *Arcades*, shop-lined passages in nineteenth-century Paris, as precursors to department stores (fig. 2). They were in fact, the embodiment of the first modern built environment for shopping—a public place to inhabit, a place for the *flâneur* to stroll.¹³ Benjamin quoted from the *Illustrated Guide to Paris* to describe this example of modern commercial architecture:

These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors extending through whole blocks of buildings, whose owners have joined together for such enterprises. Lining both sides of these corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the *passage* is a city, a world in miniature.¹⁴

¹² Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowicz, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22-27.

¹³ The designation *flâneur* stems from the French verb *flâner*, to stroll, but Charles Baudelaire gave it connotation in literature. Beyond strolling, the phenomenon extends to engagement with modern spectacle wherein the *flâneur* moved through locales of urban entertainment as well as different social spheres. Although the idea of *flânerie* is rooted in nineteenth century Paris, and contemporaneous to the Arcades, it also has relevance that extends to contemporary consumption in shopping malls. In her summary of Chapter 3 in her introduction, Anne Friedberg states: “The shopping mall is the contemporary extension of the nineteenth-century passage, offering a site for *flânerie* and for a mobilized gaze instrumentalized by consumer culture.” See Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 12.

¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century, Exposé of 1935,” in *The Arcades Project*, trans. and Rolf Tiedemann (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), 3.

Benjamin saw this “world in miniature” as an idyllic place where everything displayed could be physically or visually consumed and fetishized. As Anne Friedberg explained “the arcade created an enclosed marketplace where consumption itself became the spectacle” and reorganized public life.¹⁵ This was only possible in a space that was separate from reality and had its own distinct codes of conduct.¹⁶ Benjamin understood this environment as a cosmos cloaked in a dream, where it was possible to mediate and occupy both the past and the future:

At the same time, what emerges in these wish images is the resolute effort to distance oneself from all that is antiquated—which includes, however, the recent past. These tendencies deflect the imagination (which is given impetus by the new) back upon the primal past. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history <*Urgeschichte*> — that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society — as stored in the unconscious of the collective—engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions.¹⁷

The Arcades demonstrate how the built environment is able to produce a new, contained, shared, familiar fantasy that is simultaneously unique to the consumer. It promotes consumption of not only the available products, but more globally, the distanced consumerist sphere. As I will discuss later, this fantasy is not specific to the Arcades, but is a necessary component of contemporary shopping malls. However, I question whether a *utopia* is the most appropriate explanation of later commercial environments. Benjamin

¹⁵ Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, 69.

¹⁶ Friedberg references Johann Friedrich Geist’s “The Arcade: History of a Building Type” on page 69 in *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. These characteristics include: access to interior of a block, public space on private property, symmetrical street space, skylight space, system of access, form of organized retail trade, and space of transition.

¹⁷ Benjamin, “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century, Exposé of 1935,” 4.

used the Arcades to document a historical moment in capitalism and Parisian culture. Just as he recognized the Arcades as a microcosm of the nineteenth century, I argue that the shopping mall is the physical embodiment of American culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It originates from a history that Benjamin theorizes, but I will look to other discourse relevant to the postwar American shopping mall.

In *Land of Desire*, William Leach considered the myth surrounding “the new” with regard to consumption. He contextualized the “cult of the new” and the “democratization of desire” in America just before the turn of the nineteenth-century, when America was the first economy dedicated to mass production and capitalism.¹⁸ In response, dry good houses, chain stores, and department stores opened throughout the country to distribute a constant stream of products. Leach saw America as a place of abundance, with satisfaction granted in department stores, theaters, restaurants, and hotels, places of leisure and consumption.¹⁹ As capitalism further flourished and translated into commercial and political power (with government supporting big merchants), manufacturing gave way to retailing on a national scale.²⁰

At the same time, these new commercial environments restructured notions of *public* space, because they were privately owned and not subject to the legalities of true

¹⁸ William Leach, “Introduction,” 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 19, 23.

public space.²¹ In my view, this combination of modern commercial architecture, spaces built to support public consumption, and private ownership allowed for the creation of a separate sphere tailored to facilitate transaction. In *The Fall of Public Man*, Richard Sennett discussed the complicated relationship between public space and industrial innovation wherein capitalism created a stage for public life for all classes, but subsequently produced privatization in capitalism.

The double relation of industrial capitalism to urban public culture lay first in the pressures of privatization which capitalism aroused in the 19th Century bourgeois society. It lay second in the ‘mystification’ of material life in public, especially in the matter of clothes, caused by mass production and distribution.²²

I mention this reformation of the public sphere in the early nineteenth century by privately owned entities because those who owned the commercial spaces and produced the material goods established a precedence that defined public life, behavior, and desire. The public responded by buying into it and seeking individual fulfillment through material subscription and display. This conspicuous consumption within the separate cosmos even still characterizes shopping malls and promotes further consumption.

Sennett established a shift in the connotation of *public space* that arose with modern industrialization, Leach implied that mass production necessitated physical architecture and manifested certain behaviors, but John Chase turned to the spaces explicitly. This is specifically what interests me: what may be gained through analysis of

²¹ For particular cases that contested the shopping mall as public space see Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996): 1050-81.

²² Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, (New York: Knopf, 1977), 347.

environments built to encourage consumption. Chase outlined some of the stakes in such an analysis:

The need for consumerist architecture has been fostered by the growing dominance of the machine in daily life. Large-scale systems of production and distribution become more important than the social mechanism of shared civic life and human interaction. [...] Basic to the concept of consumerist architecture is the idea that the experience of one's surroundings, and more particularly the experience of shopping and being entertained, is always enhanced by being presented in terms other than the actual or expected nature of that experience.²³

The success of consumerist architecture depends upon an effect upon its audience. In

other words, it should mystify the capitalist machine enough to fuel desire and prompt transaction of capital for goods. This may manifest in countless ways; yet, one underlying common trait is that the shopping mall serves as a destination town or city center.

During the first half of the twentieth century, commercial architecture concentrated in central districts of American cities, but transitioned into dispersed shopping centers during the interwar period and, ultimately, a proliferation of larger, suburban shopping malls after the Second World War. According to Roger Silverstone, suburbia became a location built for consumption.

Suburban culture is a consuming culture. Fuelled by the increasing commoditization of everyday life, suburbia has become the crucible of a shopping economy. There is an intimate and indissoluble link between suburbia and buying.²⁴

The leveling of class distinctions combined with the mass production of goods prompted anxiety over the expanded middle class, which converged in a need for agency that theorists began to debate. As mass production and consumption increased in the postwar

²³ Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," 219.

²⁴ Roger Silverstone, introduction to *Visions of Suburbia*, edited by Roger Silverstone, (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 8.

period, shopping became about more than the products sold. Stores catered largely to the middle class consumer and made shopping a social activity, a performance of conspicuous consumption that could define an individual. In a way not dissimilar from the Arcades or the earlier American downtown department stores, engagement in this modern life and the mystique of the products served to distinguish products and make them a means for self-fashioning.²⁵ They offered a platform upon which one could confront the uniformity and alienation of the new environment.

The byproducts of so much production and innovation were the obsolescence of older goods and a desire to purge the old and obtain as much of the new as possible.²⁶ This was an obvious consequence of a world that functioned to endorse and privilege everything up-to-the-minute. This phenomenon became even more evident within post-World War II malls. As evidenced simply by the progression of style from straightforward modern to a themed commercial environment (see *Taxonomy* row 1), I also argue that the notion of obsolescence extends beyond the marketed products to the physical architecture as well. In 1960, Vance Packard brought the actual concept into the spotlight in his book, *The Waste Makers*. Planned obsolescence succeeds in promoting consumption by weaving a myth that the latest products and environments are fresh and appealing while the former models are outdated in function, design, quality, and most of

²⁵ Nigel Whiteley, "Toward a Throw-Away Culture. Consumerism, 'Style Obsolescence' and Cultural Theory in the 1950s and 1960s," *Oxford Art Journal*, 6. The role of design became as much *social* as utilitarian: design is used as a social language to broadcast status in society.

²⁶ Vance Packard, *The Waste Makers*, (New York: D. McKay Co., 1960), 40.

all, desirability.²⁷ This is fostered through marketing, advertising, and the actual commercial environment. Window displays, bright lights, customer services and newest fashions are only a few indicators of ways in which the commercial environment endorses consumption.

The themes of consumption and obsolescence became increasingly relevant during the postwar period when families relocated from dense urban cities to new decentralized suburban homes. Postwar suburbs such as Levittown, New Jersey were built to ease overcrowding in the cities and to make available affordable single-family homes. They lacked community amenities and were consequently a refuge from the central city but still dependent upon the city for work, culture, and commerce. The development of the shopping mall was significant as an accessible destination that provided goods for sale and also public interaction. In providing services previously sought elsewhere, however, the mall altered public space by physically moving social congregation away from public downtown streets to privately controlled suburban shopping malls.

Mall designer Victor Gruen recognized the lack of community centers in suburbia. In 1956, he designed the first enclosed shopping mall outside of Minneapolis, Southdale Center in Edina, Minnesota (fig. 3) and created an influential expression of suburban urbanism. Southdale was Gruen's solution to the changing landscape of commercial architecture. He viewed shopping as a component of social activity and felt

²⁷ Ibid., 55.

that for good business, the mall should serve as more than a place to purchase goods, a locale for a myriad of activities.

As many nonretail urban functions within the complex of the center as feasible, in creating opportunities for cultural, artistic, and social events and in striving for environmental climate and atmosphere which in itself becomes an attraction for the inhabitants of a region.²⁸

Howard Gillette analyzed Gruen's intended accommodation of civic life, social exchange, and recreation within the mall, and equated them with urban values. The safe, indoor pedestrian world at Southdale granted a destination for any time of day or weather. The corridors were planned with landscaping, fountains, and carnival-themed entertainment. Gruen projected only positive and aesthetic elements of urbanism and this worked to establish the mall as the primary destination for social exchange, leisure, and consumption. He viewed the mall as *the* place for communal life, to provide the same human contact as on urban streets.

By interweaving all experience of human life within the urban tissue, 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 identification and participation.²⁹

Because the mall was not actually *public* space, but rather an appropriation of public activity in the private space, the reality was that the mall merged community and culture within the environment of consumption, reminiscent of Sennett's fall of public space by way of capitalism.

²⁸ Victor Gruen from *Centers for the Urban Environment: Survival of the Cities*, (New York: Reinhold, 1973), 22 quoted by Howard Gillette in "The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 51, no. 4 (1985): 452.

²⁹ On page 452 in "The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City," Gillette references Victor Gruen's words from *Centers for the Urban Environment: Survival of the Cities*, 11.

Jon Goss commented more realistically on the underlying mechanism that resulted from Gruen's architecture, arguing that while Gruen planned retail amenities and environments with the idea of beneficial communal services, the spaces also functioned to distract individuals about any associated guilt from spending. This distraction became known as the *Gruen Transfer*, an effect caused by a deliberately disorienting environment that would cause the shopper to forget the original motive for visiting the mall and shop more.

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....³⁰

Regardless of his philosophy, Gruen architecturally conflated the civic and public with the capitalist and private.

Malls that followed Southdale's precedent offered community amenities beyond retail space: restaurants, stops for sitting, fountains, visual and performing cultural arts, meeting rooms, child care, grocery stores and university outposts, and landscaping. The shopping mall improved on amenities that were also downtown. As Silverstone put it:

The hybridity displayed in the shopping mall is a re-representation, a reflection and a revelation, of the hybridity of suburbia. Not nature, not culture, not country, not city; suburbia is a physical embodiment of a mythical solution to an essential contradiction.³¹

³⁰ Jon Goss, "The 'Magic of the Mall': An Analysis of Form, Function, and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment," 40.

³¹ Silverstone, Introduction, 8.

Silverstone characterized the mall as a monument to the conflicted nature of suburbia, a fabricated space dependent upon, but simultaneously parasitic to the genuine city. He regarded this complicated world as a microcosmic contestation of its suburban location. While I agree with this characterization, I find that the simultaneous paradoxes of the suburban shopping mall in relation to its locale became even more pronounced as they were further divorced from reality and sub/urban distinctions in the contemporary mall.

In the literature on the immediate postwar period, *suburbia* is synonymous with uniformity, and consumption, but the designation of categories for more recent environments is not quite as polarizing.³² Suburbia today is not equivalent to suburbia directly after the war. Today urbanists and historians define areas of low-density expansion on the periphery of the suburbs as *technoburbs*, *edge cities*, and *exurbia*.³³ In my case studies, I will note the relevant character and history of urban development. Areas that never had a central business district or traditional urbanism now have malls that reference urban environments in architectural program, theme, and public spaces. These malls embody a new kind of city center. As I will show, they appear to reconstruct what postwar malls destroyed in the wake of new suburban growth, layering a new urbanity on top of the suburban mall. I ask, what is the intention behind the recreation of the old in recent consumerist architecture? Is it nostalgia? Are we appropriating themes further entrenched in consumption or are we learning from our past mistakes? Did the

³² Greg Hise speaks to this in his introduction in *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

³³ See Robert Fishman *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992) and *Regional City* and Michael Leccese and Kathleen McCormick, eds., *Charter of the New Urbanism* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000) for proposed recent solutions.

fracture from modernism to postmodernism pave the way for the creation of such disjointed worlds? Like the products sold in the malls, commercial architecture has a shelf life. It is too soon to tell but current architecture may be the newest incarnation of capitalist driven consumption, drawing on nostalgia for a crowded urban center.

The experience of the contemporary mall is no longer explained by the idea of the earlier utopian town center. I suspect that the increasing element of fantasy programmed into the architecture allows for a more enticing heterotopic narrative. I will elaborate later upon lessons learned from Disney, but suffice to say, with accumulating hyper-stimulation and entertainment came a world of self-indulgence that, by nature of the disjointed fantasy, was never to be fully realized. I see the irreconcilable tension and differentiation between the two worlds to be characteristic of a *heterotopia*, theorized by Michel Foucault. In "Of Other Spaces," Foucault explained that a heterotopia is an abstract space that operates in relation and opposition to another space. It is the *Other*. A heterotopia may be a physical location, but its true effect occurs in its function, transcendence, and juxtaposition of "slices in time."³⁴

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society - which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.³⁵

³⁴ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 26.

³⁵ Ibid., 24.

By nature of its reinterpretation of another place, heterotopia is distanced from the original. As a heterotopia, the mall takes vignettes of reality and transposes them to fit the purposes of commerce. One may not simply access the mall; one must submit to the heterotopia and its rules of conduct.

Through the case studies in this paper, I will reveal how the shopping mall operates as a world of consumption and fantasy that replicates forms and locations from reality, but employs them within a commercial context that accordingly, creates a place unto its own. Even in an example from the mid-60s, in NorthPark Center, my first case study, I see that despite stylistic nuances, the mall presented a solution to innate social needs.

CHAPTER 1

NorthPark Center

“I wanted a center that could be planned as a single piece of sculpture.”³⁶

Ray Nasher

History

When NorthPark Center opened in August 1965, it was located in a rural area outside the city of Dallas, Texas (fig. 4). The site, at the intersection of Northwest Highway and Central Expressway, was cotton farmland at the edge of the city.³⁷ When developer Raymond Nasher was unable to purchase the land, he negotiated a ground lease from the landowners, the Hillcrest Foundation, and planned an enclosed single-story modern shopping mall that was the largest climate-controlled building at the time.³⁸ Retail existed in either downtown Dallas or in nearby village shopping centers, indicating that a regional shopping mall was a gamble. NorthPark was, therefore, designed to be the incarnation of “a total city within a city,” negating such older forms of retail and also

³⁶ Michael Ennis, "Post-Modern Times: NorthPark Dared to Be Different. It Dared to Be Good," *Texas Monthly*, November 1985, 14.

³⁷ “NorthPark History: How we came to be,” accessed October 12, 2010. <http://www.northparkcenter.com/history.html>.

³⁸ NorthPark was the first shopping mall undertaken by local architectural firm Omniplan. Omniplan’s architects, George Harrell and E.G. Hamilton also designed anchors JC Penny and Titcher-Goettinger department stores and Eero Saarinen & Associates designed Neiman Marcus, with Kevin Roche as the chief architect. Richard Vignola did the original landscape with Landscaping by Lawrence Halprin & Associates, San Francisco and Richard B. Myrick, Dallas. The former designed the landscaping for the Seattle World’s Fair. North Haven Gardens was contractor for exterior landscaping and Lambert Landscape Co. handled the interior landscaping. (See: “Landscape Artistry Enhances NorthPark’s Visual Aspects” August 22, 1965.) Henry C. Beck Co. was the builder.

providing amenities beyond retail.³⁹ Its development parallels similar stories of the symbiotic relationship between the growth of suburbia, the development of shopping malls and the proliferation of upper middle class northern sprawl in Dallas.

Much of the history of Dallas as a modern city revolves around business and the city's role as a market center. Dallas was a conservative, unchallenged, self-sufficient city that experienced continued growth and momentum.⁴⁰ Dallas developed initially because of its location as a Trinity River-crossing settlement in the 1840s. From the beginning, it was a marketplace and central location for industries that spanned processing cotton, to lumber planning, to publishing. The Texas and Pacific railroad that ran one mile south of downtown contributed to its reputation as a destination where merchants and agriculturists could scale their business ventures, engage in trading, purchase land, and participate in shaping what became the city. This led to the expansion of both the local economy, and the development of land; many business owners annexed to Dallas for greater property-value without greater taxation.⁴¹ The city grew mostly east and north and by 1935, many residents were living in new residential areas north of downtown and commuting by automobile to their jobs in the central business district.⁴² Consequently, fewer people traveled downtown daily and when they did, they did not venture far on foot.

³⁹ These words, "a city within a city," are often used to describe shopping malls in general and are quoted in "NorthPark Portrays Great Diversity," *The Dallas Morning News*, August 19, 1965, 3F.

⁴⁰ See Patricia Evridge Hill, introduction to *Dallas: The Making of a Modern City*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), xv-xvi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 132.

The Neiman Marcus department store provides relevant insight into this progression. Its flagship store first opened in downtown Dallas in 1907, but in 1951, the department store opened its first branch in Preston Center, a decentralized, residential location north of the central business district. This location was only short-lived and ultimately closed in 1965 when Ray Nasher convinced owner Stanley Marcus to move his store to NorthPark. Stanley Marcus was initially reluctant to this proposal, as he believed that his customers would not be interested in shopping at a mall. He agreed to Nasher's offer only when Nasher purchased Neiman's existing location on Preston Road. Accordingly, he planned the store's entrance under a porte-cochere with a separate garden and sculpture entrance, placed a small make-up kiosk at the door to the mall, and chose the location closest to his previous store.⁴³

NorthPark's location within the city of Dallas is of note. Within the *Taxonomy*, image A1 displays the mall as a self-contained indoor structure surrounded by sprawling parking lots. Beyond the structure was open green space and proximity to freeways. The freeway interchange in particular influenced the logo and the branding of NorthPark. As seen in the corner of figure 4, its cloverleaf shape was depicted as a tree with one additional "leaf" to represent "north" and the cardinal location of NorthPark. A "park" was also implied in the leaf formation, and for that matter, Park Lane, a street, also bordered the north end of the mall. The suggestion of a park-like setting was integral to

⁴³ Nancy A. Nasher, "A Tour of NorthPark," walking tour and interview by Robyn Siegel at NorthPark Center, Dallas, Texas, May 10, 2011.

NorthPark but ironically the surrounding built environment concurrently replaced nature with a privatized, developed version.⁴⁴

As was customary of this period as well, both public and private transportation were factors in retail development. Consequently, no parking space was more than 350 feet from an entrance and the Dallas Transit Company brought those who did not have cars to the mall every twenty minutes.⁴⁵ With the enclosed and climate controlled interior and nearby ample parking, NorthPark was designed for visitation at all hours and seasons.⁴⁶ This anticipated the city's growth northward and became a component in that growth. In the years that followed, other regional malls were developed north of NorthPark where land was still available and affordable.⁴⁷ However, I conjecture that NorthPark shifted retail habits and patterns, especially when it offered easily accessible retail, cultural, and civic components. As a result, I believe that NorthPark solidified the death of downtown Dallas as the primary retail destination.

⁴⁴ "Landscape Artistry Enhances NorthPark's Visual Aspects."

⁴⁵ Originally, Dallas transit argued that there wasn't enough volume to solely support additional routes and wanted to be subsidized by the mall. "Special Schedules Offered: City Buses Bring Shoppers to NorthPark Mall Entrance," in *The Dallas Morning News*, March 9, 1967, 2F and "NorthPark Seeks More Bus Service," *The Dallas Morning News*, October 5, 1965, 1D.

⁴⁶ NorthPark took a toll on the downfall of retail and commercial space in the downtown Dallas central business district. See Joel Warren Barna and Blackmon Winters Kuhner, "Chapter 10. The Dallas Arts District: The Last Ditch," in *The See-through Years: Creation and Destruction in Texas Architecture and Real Estate, 1981-1991* (Houston: Rice University Press, 1992), 197-198.

⁴⁷ As demonstrated in figure 4, NorthPark was unable to expand for over three decades due to many factors, one of which were due to the original plan which included a gasoline station and movie theater in the location where an expansion would go.

“A Machine for Shopping”: The Suburban Shopping Mall

Architecturally, NorthPark is a rather non-descript modern structure. I would even describe its exterior as a *decorated shed*. It does not announce its function, which allows for flexibility within the interior, but this style is typical for the regional shopping mall and emblematic of the suburban experience. As architectural historian Richard Longstreth described regarding destination retail centers in general:

The regional center was clean and neatly maintained; it was new, sporting a cool, nonreferential modernist vocabulary; it lacked vehicular congestion, jostling crowds, street noise, the ‘wrong’ social elements, and crime—departures from qualities associated with downtown. The regional center was a bastion of middle-class ingenuity, respectability, and order; it was touted as a cure for the purportedly ailing condition and antiquated arrangement of the core.⁴⁸

I would argue that the sterility of this period style may be to intentionally distinguish the new commercial architecture from its predecessors and to create a new connotation of experience and customer that Longstreth mentions. However, even though NorthPark may be in the same style as Gruen’s malls, I do not argue for similar utopian goals in its design. At this time, American modern architecture projected an unavoidable association with progress. The clean architectural lines, the industrial materials, and overall lack of adornment demonstrated the potential of streamlined, mass production and a new way of life in middle-class suburbia. The actual architecture is direct and modern to the point that NorthPark could be called a “machine for shopping.” Because the mall is manageable but not exhausting in size, the concourses are short, the storefronts are uniformly set back and framed in the same material, and the courts are programmed and

⁴⁸ Richard W. Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), XV.

landscaped, visitors are able to actively navigate the space. It is a single-story mall scaled for the pedestrian. I maintain that the space itself is unremarkable to the point that it is simply a continuous modern container designed for shopping and communal activities.

NorthPark's overall design is consistent, constructed with basic materials that were chosen both for their low cost and restrained aesthetic quality (*Taxonomy* A3, A5, A14, and fig. 5).⁴⁹ The space is simple and proportionate; it is not disorienting or transformative. The entire mall is comprised of basic polished dark cement floors, brick that is smooth to the binding cement, and linear corridors. The mall is enclosed, but natural light comes through the skylights indirectly and blends with artificial light.⁵⁰ Living plants and trees populate both the exterior of the mall as well as the concourses and courts. This repeats the attention to detail in the art and architecture and is often in direct dialogue with the characteristics of each.⁵¹ These basic elements soften, humanize, and keep steady the transition from exterior into interior space. Since all activity occurs inside the private space, the exterior is not as visually stimulating, although it maintains the same white brick that lines each storefront inside.⁵² The retailers and content differs

⁴⁹ Ray Nasher wanted the mall to be white as he viewed historical, iconic architecture to often times be white, (for instance, the Taj Mahal and the U.S. Capitol. The materials were also brick and cement instead of stone and marble simply because of cost. Nancy A. Nasher, "A Tour of NorthPark," May 10, 2011.

⁵⁰ See *Taxonomy* A11. There is a baffle made of strips of wood at the clearstory, that keeps the light from shining unabatedly but it's also a florescent light fixture so during the day the light comes from the corners which helps the ceiling float a little so there is not a dark corner up above the shops. At night, that's where light drops in, in the same place. Mark Dilworth, "NorthPark History and Expansion," (interview by Robyn Siegel, digital recording, October 25, 2010.)

⁵¹ "Landscape Artistry Enhances NorthPark's Visual Aspects."

⁵² The benches at NorthPark were designed based upon those at the Kimbell and the trash receptacles are steel and sculptural. Mark Dilworth, "NorthPark History and Expansion," October 25, 2010.

but the visual look of each store remains subtly the same, which is mandatory to create overall architectural uniformity. Such an exercise in control contrasts with the lack of attention to design and detail given to neighboring and later regional shopping centers, wherein various anchor stores design their own branded outposts.

Beyond Shopping, a Community Space

The mall proved its worth by resolving problems basic to shopping center design on a large scale. The inward-looking orientation encouraged movement throughout the premises. Once divorced from their cars and walking amid what seemed like an entirely different world, customers tended to spend greater blocks of time meandering, meeting friends, having meals and buying goods. Patrons also were inclined to think of the complex as a whole rather than just of the one or two stores frequented on a given trip. Perambulation was further stimulated by a seeming compactness.⁵³

The shopping mall perfected elements both sampled from and lacking in earlier retail destinations, as seen by the mentioned improvements to parking and traffic, and a greater variety in stores and cultural activity in a pedestrian format. Even though Longstreth focused on Southern California, I find his description to resonate with the experience of other American shopping malls of that time.⁵⁴ The mall became the alternate downtown, the *suburban* town center only made possible by the convergence of an alternate, privatized commercial and community space that became the new form of social space. Appropriately, spaces throughout NorthPark are designated for activities: shopping,

⁵³ Richard W. Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, 310-311.

⁵⁴ For a comprehensive history of shopping centers see: Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1999), and *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1997).

sitting, dining, and play. Shifts in ceiling height throughout the mall signal a change from pedestrian shop-lined concourses to open community-gathering courts. The mall was designed to be a walkable, park-like locale planned in an “L” formation alongside the natural seventeen-foot grade of the land. Three anchor department stores were located through the half-mile long mall that had a north-south and east-west orientation and six open public courts with fountains, landscaping, and elevated ceilings signified a change and place for congregation between the concourses (*Taxonomy* A2, A7, A9, and A12).⁵⁵ Accordingly, a few steps signal a transition from court to concourse. These spaces provide places for activities other than shopping. These figures also show how the spaces were designed and utilized for activity; specifically, an east-west court that was planned as a theater in the round with balconies wired for sound and lighting for performances and another north-south area planned as the civic community hall for musicals, fashion shows, and theater groups.⁵⁶ The list of programs within the space was extensive, but they were united in the fact that they were cultural events within a retailing environment. The mall hosted an exhibit of comics, Dallas Symphony Orchestra performances, a Henry Moore exhibition, local galleries and student art shows, dance, drama, music summer festivals, even Eskimo art.⁵⁷ A national television affiliate (WFAA) also broadcast from a studio located in the east wing of the mall, and mall walkers came for exercise during off-

⁵⁵ EG Hamilton, Mark Dilworth, and Mark Gunderson, “Shopping Texas Style: EG Hamilton, Omniplan, and NorthPark Center,” (symposium discussion at Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas, April 30, 2010.)

⁵⁶ “Orchids to Fish: Civic, Cultural Events Slated,” *The Dallas Morning News*, Aug. 19, 1965, 3F.

⁵⁷ “A glance at NorthPark’s many years of activities,” *The Dallas Morning News*, August 17, 1980, and “Art & Artists: NorthPark Arts Festival Opens,” *The Dallas Morning News*, June 16, 1970, 16A.

hours. Children were drawn to the oversized planters that were designed by Richard Vignola to display plants, but coincidentally functioned as perfectly scaled modernist playscapes (*Taxonomy* A10). Not one of these activities was truly related to shopping, but they were events that brought people to the mall.

Shopping was also a significant draw to the mall. At the time of the opening, the stores at NorthPark included: Neiman-Marcus, Titcher-Goettinger, J.C. Penney, Kroger's, NorthPark National Bank, Woolworth's and Super-X Drugs.⁵⁸ Additionally, NorthPark offered everyday stores like Texas State Optical, hairstyling salons, two Texaco Service stations, NorthPark National Bank, American Express, Zenith Cleaners, Zinke's Shoe Repair, and the city's only twin indoor motion picture theater.⁵⁹

In the introduction, I referenced the post-World War II economy and society that fostered a national culture of consumption. NorthPark was part of this development. It was free to visit; yet it was privately owned and therefore, subject to a greater control with specific intent. Lizabeth Cohen argued that greater individual buying power led to more production, which resulted in an expanding economy with limitless potential. Suburbia and the mall were at the center of this.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ "Mall Ready for Shoppers: Thursday Ceremonies Mark Debut of NorthPark," August 19, 1965, 2F.

⁵⁹ "NorthPark Portrays Great Diversity" *The Dallas Morning News*, August 19, 1965. Over time many general needs stores were they were replaced by more specialized shops.

⁶⁰ Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," 1050. Also, see page 295 in Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2003).

Mass consumption in postwar America created a new landscape, where public space was more commercialized, more privatized, and more feminized within the regional shopping center than it had been in the traditional downtown center. This is not to romanticize the city and its central business district. Certainly, urban commercial property owners pursued their own economic interests, political activity in public spaces was sometimes limited, and the priorities of women and men did not always peacefully coexist. Nonetheless, the legal distinction between public and private space remained significant.⁶¹

In short, Cohen believed “here was the ‘new city’ of the postwar era, a community center suited to an economy and society built around mass consumption.”⁶² NorthPark fits into this lineage as both a retail destination and cultural programming. As a mediated downtown with indoor streets within a controlled, scaled, standardized pedestrian environment, it was not a civic space, but an example of the new postwar civic culture, where commercial and civic spheres not only co-exist, but they in fact merge under the rubric of the postwar commercial environment that conveniently boasted a bit of everything.

The Art Mall

NorthPark is also notable for its public display of sculpture. When the mall’s developers, the Nashers, began to collect modern and contemporary sculpture (by such artists as Jonathan Borofsky, Henry Moore, Joel Shapiro, Roy Lichtenstein, and Frank Stella), they organically began to incorporate the pieces into the mall. In addition to the collection, NorthPark also hosted art exhibitions and fairs in the mall. The art works with

⁶¹ Ibid., 1077-1078.

⁶² Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, 259. Cohen maintains throughout her text that the government promoted American consumption and malls proliferate.

the architecture to establish a brand for the center, but the mall opened before the Nashers began collecting art. Ray Nasher believed that artists were ahead of everyone else in understanding society, and that an involvement with art helps one interpret a sense of space and place for people's use.⁶³ Consequently, the Nashers recognized the importance of art in public places to expose everyone to art. Aside from the two sculptures in the Neiman Marcus garden, the first work of art specific to the mall's collection was Beverly Pepper's *Dallas Land Canal* (1971), sited in the main drive (fig. 6). The Nashers commissioned this piece with prize money obtained when NorthPark won the A.I.A. Design of the Decade Award.⁶⁴ Since NorthPark did not have a large sign to announce its location, the art was to serve as the sign. It was installed to be visible from the automobile in the approach to the mall, (a much more subtle kind of sign relative to those identified along the Strip by Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour.) I find this gesture—with art as the sign—to be remarkable as it marked the moment that art became a part of NorthPark's identity.

NorthPark bridges the commercial and the civic with its public art. Even though the mall and the art collection were privately owned and managed, the space was free to visitors and the art was easy to access in a manner parallel to a public institution. Art provides culture within the location. It is simply for public exposure and enjoyment and again, is similar to the museum. For instance, as demonstrated by Jonathan Borofsky's *Hammering Man*, 1979 (*Taxonomy* A13), the sculpture within the sparse, clean

⁶³ Vicki Goldberg, "Great Private Collections: A Texas Garden of Treasures," *Saturday Review*, 1980, 39.

⁶⁴ NorthPark won the award for the best building of the 1960s.

environment commands attention and creates communal, experiential space. There is nothing (advertisements, kiosks, seasonal decorations) that competes. Meanwhile, the inclusion of art in the consumerist environment may also reach a different audience than the museum. Does such museum-quality art elevate the space or does its presence at a mall erode the erudite quality of the art? I believe its presence in the space mediates the commercial function of the space and softens the austerity of the architecture. It allows a break from shopping and provides character to the otherwise box-like mall space.

Rather than compare NorthPark to nondescript predecessors or period malls in the Dallas metroplex, it is more appropriate to think of it with the modern rigor and cultural sophistication of a museum. NorthPark's exterior is minimal and unembellished; it does not embrace consumption and escape. Instead, the architecture reads with commanding austerity and can be perceived as a serious environment that demands attention and rivals a civic institution.⁶⁵ The Philip Johnson designed Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas 1961, (fig. 7), has a classical-inspired exterior loggia that frames two-story windows that express the museum's interior and transition from exterior to interior. The building is high art architecture that alone can be a destination. I argue that both the Amon Carter museum and NorthPark shopping mall relay visual seriousness and simplicity that fails to announce any particular function. The social activity that fills each space and the corresponding material culture within is not obvious from the exterior.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Interpretations of the museum are worth further exploration. In Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008), McClellan explores the history and social function of the museum. He discusses with a frame of reference as an elitist, populist, utopian, and commercial institution.

⁶⁶ This is not to negate the separate spheres in which each building operates. In Rosalind Krauss's,

Like gallery space, the interior space at NorthPark is flexible to accommodate different activity with courts for gathering and installation of art in concourses. For that matter, as demonstrated in figure 5, the uniform storefronts are akin to galleries.

I am not trying to jumble the museum with the mall, nor do I wish generalize their social functions in making this comparison.⁶⁷ Regardless of the quality of the architecture or art, it is evident that NorthPark remains a mall with commercial goals— it is not a public institution grounded in collective civic pride and meant for education and preservation. Still, I see an overlap in art and space that positions NorthPark close to the museum, especially in the postwar period when the museum was navigating between elitism and populism.

The historical account of museums as sites of moral improvement, ideological acculturation, and social distinction, richly articulated by Pierre Bourdieu, Tony Bennett, Carol Duncan, and Alan Wallach, among others, is incontestably important. But are museums still the engines of bourgeois assimilation they once were?⁶⁸

Museums were experiencing a shift toward popular culture that was contemporaneous with NorthPark. NorthPark also began displaying art during a time when art, although suitable for museum display, was no longer bound to it.⁶⁹ The art object also began to

“Postmodernism’s Museum without Walls,” edited by Ressa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 241-245, the art historian notes museology to be its own discourse with particular norms and values. The museum itself is a building, an all-encompassing space (container) with series of sequential galleries that functions to re-contextualize the objects. With supplementary criteria, the objects take on specific and consequential meaning.

⁶⁷ See Chapter 1, “Ideals and Mission” in Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* for a history of museums and their social functions.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁹ Ray Nasher opened The Nasher Sculpture Center, a museum designed by Renzo Piano. The collection now is owned by the Sculpture Center and rotates between spaces.

take on issues of mass production and the commodity. Art historian Rosalind Krauss specifically cited the Minimalist art movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s to explain how these physical objects served to shift focus from the art and into the space of the museum. Minimalist art opened up discourse into the blurred lines between culture, commerce and the machine.

Within this experience, it is the museum that emerges as powerful presence and yet as properly empty, the museum as a space from which the collection has withdrawn. For indeed, the effect of this experience is to render it impossible to look at the paintings hanging in those few galleries still displaying the permanent collection.⁷⁰

Minimalist art works were made from mass-produced, commercial, inexpensive materials and objects (such as florescent light tubes, concrete, and plywood,) that were selected for their simple, serial, industrial character. The selection and designation of the resulting art, its position as a multiple without an original, and its relationship and subjectivity as a commodity were elements that made Minimalist works about more than the actual object.⁷¹ Art was not precious, nor did it need to be located within a museum to designate it as such. Rather, it depended upon an audience to experience the work. In identifying the commercial side of the museum, Krauss considered the institution in a realm equivalent with other corporate ventures such as the shopping center: the museum was a business like other industries, with assets and capital.⁷² In this vein, the “industrialized museum” promoted the consumption of the said experience.⁷³

⁷⁰ Rosalind Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum,” *October* Fall (1990): 4.

⁷¹ In a footnote on page 10 in “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum, Rosalind Krauss quotes Hal Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” 180.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 15.

The presence of art in a shopping mall offers a different connotation for art and how it functions within commercial space.⁷⁴ NorthPark's sculpture presentation evolved during a time when art was blending with popular culture and the museum was moving into realms beyond the academic or humanist. Museums were increasingly audience driven and dependent upon capital, marketing, and even blockbuster shows, sponsorship, and museum stores to drive the crowds, encourage continued support, and to bring financial support.⁷⁵ I view NorthPark as an alternate museum, an accidental museum, a fluctuating sociological site from which to glean particular characteristics and values of our culture. The amalgamation of art within the space in conjunction with community programming, pedestrian concourses, landscaped plazas, and retail, made NorthPark a comprehensive suburban town center and foster an innate need for social congregation.

⁷³ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁴ I do not wish to argue this point, but on the flipside, the mall and museum could be deconstructed and explored as utopian spaces.

⁷⁵ See Andrew McClellan, "Chapter 5: Commercialism," *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*.

CHAPTER 2

Urbanity Revisited: The Americana at Brand

The relationship between shopping and the city has, over the last half century, inverted from shopping as a component of the city to shopping as the prerequisite to urbanity. Rather than shopping (as an activity) taking place in the city (as a place), the city (as an idea) is taking place within shopping (as a place).⁷⁶

In *Project on the City 2: Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, John McMorrough equates urbanity with shopping and suggests that shopping has trumped the city. In the previous chapter, I noted that suburban mall design created new commercial architecture that replaced earlier central business districts and shopping centers, and was situated away from the urban core. Today, however, malls increasingly reference a concentrated urbanism that was intentionally excluded in suburban sprawl. This new mall design is detached from any original referent and negates any specific pre-existing history, even while maintaining characteristics of the suburban shopping mall.

In this chapter and the subsequent chapter, I turn my focus to contemporary malls with a marked return to elements of urbanism, an urbane disguise, or perhaps a suburbanized-urbanity. Mixing the suburban with the urban, these consumerist spaces may also be described as new, ersatz, gentrified, and fantastic. Ironically, in their creation, just as with suburban sprawl, they destroy existing urban life to recreate fabricated, tempered, bastardizations of urbanity. What is synthesized and what meaning is inherent in this commercial architecture? What reference and significance lies behind

⁷⁶ John McMorrough, "City of Shopping," in *The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping: Project on the City*, directed by Rem Koolhaas (East Rutherford, NJ: Monacelli Press, 2000), 194.

reproductions of urbanity? If there is an exchange between urban and suburban architecture, what old ideas transpire within the new construction? What is fabricated and programmed into the architecture? Does this new mall design destroy the reality of older forms of urbanity to construct a false, pastiche of urbanism? Is this fabricated urban consumerist environment an antidote to suburban sprawl? I ask these questions as corollaries to a more global question: what may be learned from two contemporary examples, The Americana at Brand in Glendale, California as well as Crystals at CityCenter on the Strip in Las Vegas, Nevada?

The Americana at Brand

Both Glendale and Las Vegas serve as interesting backdrops as neither is remarkably urban or suburban. As an outdoor pedestrian environment, the Americana visually represents a romanticized vision of a past densely urban city center (*Taxonomy* B1, B5, B15).⁷⁷ Like earlier malls, the space however remains a privately owned mall. The Americana layers upon the confusion of private and public space in the mall because it is an outdoor enclosed world that also offers living quarters and outdoor park space. It may be even more of a town center than NorthPark or possibly a mimicry of a city within the context of a mall. I will also explore how the Americana employs urbanism as a theme to foster feelings and ideas of another world, a heterotopia.

⁷⁷ The Americana was originally to be named “The Town Center.” Rick Caruso, “Developing a Center,” *Glendale News-Press*, August 5, 2003, accessed February 15, 2011 through carusoaffiliated.com, http://www.carusoaffiliated.com/newsroom/glendale_August_5_2000.shtml.

Glendale and its Central Business District

The Americana at Brand, opened in May 2008, is located in downtown Glendale, California. Glendale is an autonomous city within Los Angeles County, although it is often regarded as a suburb of Los Angeles. It is a quiet bedroom suburb of ethnically diverse working and middle classes, but Glendale also has urban aspects, including a downtown central business district along Brand Boulevard that developed because the Pacific Electric mass transit system ran down the thoroughfare.⁷⁸ In the first decades of the twentieth century, department stores and the Alexander Theater made Brand Boulevard the retail and cultural core of the city.⁷⁹ In the 1970s, Glendale experienced a business and resident surge, which prompted reconsideration of the purpose of Brand Boulevard and a subsequent revitalization with company headquarters and offices amongst the shops and restaurants. The Jon Jerde-designed Glendale Galleria regional shopping mall opened in 1976 to encourage the public to patronize downtown Glendale. The Alex Theater reopened in 1993 as an anchor for local performing arts and film in downtown Glendale.

Caruso Affiliated, the developers of the Americana at Brand, claim to recognize this history at the same time they seek to improve downtown Glendale.⁸⁰ This brings to mind, Michael Sorkin's recognition of a paradox in urban mall design.

⁷⁸ "Downtown Glendale," accessed April 19, 2011, <http://glendalehistorical.org/history.html>.

⁷⁹ "About the Alex," accessed April 19, 2011, <http://www.alextheatre.org/about/aboutthealex.php>.

⁸⁰ Retail development is driving the redevelopment and transformation of downtown Glendale. See Bill Kisliuk, "Brand Boulevard Businesses Leaning Toward Improvement District," *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 2011, accessed April 19, 2011 through carusoaffiliated.com, http://www.carusoaffiliated.com/newsroom/latimes_01042010.shtml.

Today, the profession of urban design is almost wholly preoccupied with reproduction, with the creation of urbane disguises. Whether in its master incarnation at the ersatz Main Street of Disneyland, in the phony historic festivity of a Rouse marketplace or the gentrified architecture of the ‘reborn’ Lower East Side, this elaborate apparatus is at pains to assert its ties to the kind of city life it is in the process of obliterating.⁸¹

Even if Rick Caruso, the President and CEO of Caruso Affiliated, acknowledges Brand Boulevard’s history, capitalization on the urban real estate is not altruistic; rather, Caruso imposes a new form of fantastic retail urbanism that is not tied to Glendale. Instead, he recreated nineteenth century urbanism in downtown Glendale and, interestingly, the city supported this conversion of the commercial landscape. Since the initial development of the Americana, Caruso continues to expand his property portfolio, acquiring adjacent properties that include an old warehouse and the Golden Key Hotel.⁸² As a result, the Americana may very quickly replace many existing retail and entertainment destinations, (particularly the Galleria,) and drain the streets of a critical mass.⁸³ I posit that these improvements may substitute real urbanism, not with Gruen’s idealistic utopia, but rather a heterotopic variety of urbanism that erodes traces of the former. As Sze Tsung Leong states:

The latest stage in the urbanization of shopping is the spread of the suburban reurbanization of the city to the suburbs. Seeking to capitalize on the economic success that the city/shopping hybrid has generated, suburbs are attempting to urbanize, but according to the model of the suburbanized city. With the decline of

⁸¹ Michael Sorkin, “Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park,” in *Variations on a Theme Park: Scenes from the New American City*, edited by Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), xvi.

⁸² Kris Hudson, “Glendale Gambit for Mr. Caruso,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 18, 2011, accessed April 20, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704678004576090451462716050.html>.

⁸³ Some stores have decamped from the Galleria to Americana. See Roger Vincent, “Nordstrom to Move from Glendale Galleria to Americana at Brand Shopping Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 2011, accessed April 19, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/mar/17/business/la-fi-glendale-mall-20110317>.

the mall, suburbs are searching for shopping forms that offer new experiences yet provide the familiar conveniences of suburban shopping.⁸⁴

I wonder if the Americana is surpassing older forms and locales for shopping and entertainment and combining everything into a catchall environment. Thus, I conjecture that the consumerist architecture creates a myth of an urbanism that never was.

Although the Americana is situated in an urban location, it is as an enclosed themed environment, its own cosmos with no relationship to the boulevard. Caruso defines the Americana as more than a shopping mall, rather a “lifestyle center,” or an “urban resort.”⁸⁵ He found this formula to be profitable and influential in the Grove at the Farmer’s Market in Los Angeles.⁸⁶ While the Grove and the Americana share many characteristics of an urban outdoor shopping and entertainment center, the Americana differs by also providing residences. It is a mixed-use space with residential housing above retail shops, or a shopping mall where one may live. The architecturally varied storefronts and residences face outdoor pedestrian paths and a trolley line around a large fountain and green space (*Taxonomy* B5, B7, B9, and B14). The visual references include Georgian town homes, early American town greens, trolley cars, and industrial structures that serve to foster an intentional mood of fantasy for the visitor.

⁸⁴ Leong, “...And Then There Was Shopping,” in *The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping: Project on the City*, 154.

⁸⁵ The formula of merging retail, entertainment, with the themed-environment moves beyond precedent set by Jon Jerde. Also, see Matthew Garrahan, “Wise to Ways of the Street,” *Financial Times*, April 15, 2008, accessed April 22, 2011 through carusoaffiliated.com, http://www.carusoaffiliated.com/newsroom/financialtimes_4-15-2008.shtml.

⁸⁶ Victoria Harker, “Talk about Walkabout,” *National Apartments Association UNITS Magazine*, January 2009, accessed February 15, 2011 through carusoaffiliated.com, http://www.carusoaffiliated.com/newsroom/units_1-2009.shtml, and <http://www.carusoaffiliated.com/partnerships>.

Architectural Style and Design at the Americana

Caruso claims to honor Glendale architecture at the Americana, but I fail to locate any local referents. Rather, the storefronts that line the outdoor pedestrian streets range more globally in period and place. Furthermore, unlike earlier shopping malls such as NorthPark, the Americana intentionally lacks any architectural consistency. This allows for the space to be fantastical and consumable. The pastiche of styles ranges from Haussmann's Paris and Georgian, but regional styles such as Craftsman or Spanish Colonial Revival are noticeably lacking.⁸⁷ The result is a placeless visual cacophony that may hold historical reference, but most importantly, entertains visitors. John Chase identified this patchwork approach to architecture as customary in consumerist architecture, an indulgence in service of consumption.

Consumerist architecture exhibits a love of eclecticism similar to that found in post-modernism, but it is an eclecticism similar to that founded on the belief that memories of other eras and places can legitimately be represented, rather than ironically deconstructed.⁸⁸

The Americana embraces specific allusions, but I wonder if it is a distillation of history to create a generalized feeling that is generalized enough so that it is impossible to place. Each façade is historical reference from moments of innovation in urban domestic planning. For example, the seventeenth and eighteenth century Georgian townhouse is

⁸⁷ According to the Business Wire, The Glendale Historical Society is now working with Caruso to relocate an existing Mission-Revival warehouse façade so that it may be incorporated into the pedestrian walkway to Nordstrom in the expansion at the Americana, (which is projected to open in 2013.) Caruso will include boxes in the façade for the Historical Society to promote Glendale's history as well as events. "Caruso Affiliated and the Glendale Historical Society Announce Plan for Architectural Preservation in the Expansion of the Americana at Brand," Press Release, accessed April 28, 2011, <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/caruso-affiliated-and-the-glendale-historical-society-announce-plan-for-architectural-preservation-in-the-expansion-of-the-americana-at-brand-2011-04-25>.

⁸⁸ John Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," 211.

indicated, the typical merchant's home in London that was the nucleus of bourgeois familial and commercial life, serving as both home and office. Architecturally, the exterior was brick or stone for durability and uniformity and drew from Classical and Renaissance architecture. Overall, the pastiche of architecture at the Americana aesthetically samples references to formality, power, and urban concentration. But it is a ruse: the exterior townhome façade does not correspond with the interior levels of apartments, lofts, condominiums and townhouses. There are additional levels above the three-story townhouse that are not expressed on the townhouse facade (*Taxonomy B2*). This is probably not obvious to a pedestrian on the street as the townhome's cornice masks the floors above. The interior spaces are separate from the ersatz exterior architecture, which means that the styled facades are not functional and only serve the theme at the Americana.

The Green

At the Americana, storefronts surround the outdoor paths, fountain, and green space, known as "The Green." The Green differentiates the Americana from earlier enclosed malls, like the neighboring Galleria, as it is not only the central focal point of the complex, but it is also a public destination for leisure activity. From the ancient Greek agora to Europe and New England, the idea of the central-town-green-as-communal-space is nothing new. Town greens provided agricultural space and open areas for gatherings, an open public retreat beyond the private home. For instance, one of the oldest public greens in America is the Green in New Haven, Connecticut (fig. 8). New

Haven Green dates back to 1638 when it was included as the religious and civic core of the first planned American city.⁸⁹ It was also a commercial marketplace and site of schools, including Yale University. The Green at the Americana directly references such past town greens, while it also generalizes the historical context of the green as an idealized communal, natural, space among industry. Restaurants and playscapes line the grass. The Green boasts a place for yoga classes, book readings, farmers markets, and visits with Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. Whereas landscaping at NorthPark brought beautiful, planned nature inside, at the Americana, with music piped in through hidden speakers and timed water shows in the fountain, the Green is part of a greater strategy to use nature to visually reference simpler living in the past (*Taxonomy* B7 and B15).⁹⁰ The village green represents a rural or pre-industrial gathering place and the multi-storied, multi-tenant town homes and store-lined streets allude to the urbanism of an industrial city. There is even unremarkable, decorative public art (*Taxonomy* B13). These cues conflict and fail to pinpoint a particular time or location. Since they are intended for visual consumption, I propose that they are referents to evoke nostalgia in the visitor. The fragmentary nature of the histories fosters a heterotopic environment that masks reality in the creation of a fantasy past.

⁸⁹ “New Haven: The Elm City,” accessed April 19, 2011, <http://www.towngreens.com/exhibits/index.cgi/2/index.html>.

⁹⁰ The fountain is not used for recreational activities, but rather as a showpiece for water shows and visual enjoyment. “The Americana at Brand Property Features,” accessed April 19, 2011, http://www.americanaatbrand.com/glendale/concierge_services/tourist-information.php.

The Trolley

In a further confusion of referents, even though the Americana honors walking as the preferred movement, a trolley also runs throughout the development (*Taxonomy* B6.) The electric trolley has a history in both Western Europe and the United States and is emblematic of turn-of-the-century urban transportation. It symbolizes mobility and also the promise of progress granted by the Industrial Revolution. Powered by cables along rails, the trolley transported people throughout cities so they could commute to work. At the Americana, the trolley forms a sharp contrast to both public transportation as well as the car-culture of Southern California. Those who visit Americana must drive to the development and park in the parking garage, ultimately to walk or travel by trolley. As it only moves the short distance around the property, the trolley is like the trolleys and antiquated transportation at Disneyland; it functions as a fantastical presence and for entertainment value than any actual necessary transportation.

The Industrial Tower

Another prop caps the exposed steel and glass elevator shaft that services the parking garage (fig. 9), one reminiscent of the Eiffel Tower although it cannot be entirely attributed to a particular structure. For that matter, the referent is not as important its purpose. The tower stands as a soaring landmark, like Sleeping Beauty's Castle at Disneyland (fig.10). Its exposed industrial materials glorify the limitless promise achievable through engineering and innovation. This is for visual allusion, not function, as the elevator counterweights are merely decorative and do not operate.

Contradictions: Heterotopias

Is the Americana a lifestyle center / urban resort or is it just a shopping mall? It purports to be an urban landscape within a decentralized city, which raises a question: has the Los Angeles region become so decentralized that the public craves community and urbanity, even if it is fabricated? As already discussed, the architecture of the Americana is not tied to Glendale, and, despite the mall's name, is not even entirely American. Thus, the theme at the Americana is demonstrated through a shared vernacular understanding of referents that represent influences upon American history and its urban landscape. They come together as disjointed elements would at a theme park, for an overall sense of entertainment and joy. At the same time, the disparate nods to industrialization confuse any actual history and urbanism with an excessive combination. The theming, entertainment, and community programming create a new kind of place. It is what makes the Americana a heterotopia. It is a placeless, disjointed self-contained fantastic world created strictly for consumption where the historical architecture, the brick and stone streets, and the impeccably manicured landscaping create an urban experience built for consumption. I equate this collection of unrelated cues to urban history as heterochronies and the representation of the urban space with Foucault's definition of "a sort of mixed, joint experience which would be the mirror."⁹¹ Foucault selects the mirror to explain the complicated nature of a heterotopia: he can see himself in the mirror, but his reflection is within a placeless location that relates to, but also counteracts, reality and time. The heterotopia is disconnected from reality, but resembles

⁹¹ Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 24.

reality. Hence the Americana aggressively pushes an urban program, but, as an enclosed, ersatz, private, capitalist development, it is separate from any true and organic urbanism that lies just beyond the property in downtown Glendale. I argue that Walt Disney was the first to recognize and exploit this power inherent in the themed built environment. Disneyland, and particularly Main Street, U.S.A., proved that the themed architecture could distract one from reality and form a heterotopia of consumption.⁹² This influence is palpable at the Americana.

Disneyland: Virtual Tourism

Walt Disney planned Disneyland to be the physical embodiment of a storybook fantasy and a collection of separate environments (“sets”) and experiences, that included clean modern amenities, walkways of retail with planned movement that prompted a confusion of time and space, world travel within a walkable distance, themed unrealities, and coded language that provide an element of fantasy and play.⁹³ Architectural historian Diane Ghirardo notes that the fusion of time and space was remarkable at the time of Disney’s opening: “With its opening in 1955, Disney made a quantitative conceptual and spatial leap to a new zone, where time and space collapsed in a new organizational

⁹² In his chapter “See You in Disneyland,” *Variations on a Theme Park: Scenes from the New American City*, edited by Michael Sorkin (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992) 205-232, Sorkin explains that Disneyland was built on a model of theme parks, circuses, festivals, and fairs. The world fairs in particular, included thematically arranged pavilions that become small cities and forms of urbanism beyond the impromptu cities, sponsorships, and movement systems throughout.

⁹³ In box 1.2 on page 11 in *The Disneyization of Society* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publishers, 2004), Alan Bryman discusses the shift in language at Disneyland. Specifically, the theme park visitor/customer is a *guest*. An employee is a *cast member*, a public area is *onstage* and a restricted area is *backstage*, a theme park ride is an *attraction* and a crowd is an *audience*.

scheme for the consumption of leisure.”⁹⁴ Every element within the park purposefully relays a piece of a narrative intended for each visitor to encounter, embody, and act out.⁹⁵ For instance, noticeable objects at axes points, also named *wienies*, facilitate movement by enticing visitors to continue their journey.⁹⁶ The intended outcome is that the built environment transports guests to another place, but, because of the lack of explicit location, this passage is not to any genuine place.

Main Street, U.S.A., and the Americana

The Americana clearly draws upon these theming strategies, but more specifically from the outdoor shopping thoroughfare at Disneyland: Main Street, U.S.A. (fig. 11). At a time when postwar suburban shopping centers and malls were on the rise in the United States, Main Street, U.S.A. revived a vision of a small-town America street at the turn-of-the-century; it reproduced the urbanism that was displaced, but in a perfected, familiar manner. In *Designing Disney*, lifelong Disney designer John Hench describes Main Street, U.S.A.

The windows of the shops lining the street are full of bright displays; the doors are open; the shelves inside are stocked. The colors are bright. Every detail creates a feeling of comfort and intimacy. The street is planned so that you don't

⁹⁴ Diane Yvonne Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism* (World of Art. New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 46.

⁹⁵ John Hench and Peggy Van Pelt, *Designing Disney: Imagineering and the Art of the Show*, 1st ed. (New York: Disney Editions, 2009), 1.

⁹⁶ For a definition of a *wienie*, see John Hench and Peggy Van Pelt, *Designing Disney: Imagineering and the Art of the Show*, 50.

have to think about it; you know where you are, because your senses tell you by evoking a fantasy of what you already know.⁹⁷

Even though the referents differ between Main Street and Americana, the two environments operate as outdoor shopping malls that imitate, mediate, and valorize a collective memory of earlier forms of urbanism. It is virtual tourism. They incorporate entertainment with shopping in a form that ironically mimics the shopping environments that the mall replaced (which was also outmoded by the privatization of consumerist space.) Although the storefronts vary in design on Main Street, they remain pedestrian in scale, with an overall lack of competition and discord that encourages movement along the walkway. There is consistency in style, color palate, and pedestrian scale, but at the Americana, the changes in architecture and scale of the buildings are more pronounced and dwarf the pedestrian. This indicates that the imitation urban environment is for visual consumption and fantastical play. With reverence for the past, the distilled architectural style of Americana's various storefronts (*Taxonomy* B1 and B14) tells a selective history that is not too specific or brash.

Navigating the Heterotopia

Even though Disneyland claims to be the "happiest place on earth," in reality, it encourages multi-faceted experiential consumption.⁹⁸ Like the Gruen Transfer, Disneyland provides non-retail entertainment to cajole visitors into consumption. It is a

⁹⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁹⁸ As noted on page 5 by John Hench and Peggy Van Pelt in *Designing Disney: Imagineering and the Art of the Show*, the mystery of Disneyland is maintained through controlled behind-the-scenes information so that nothing negative is released.

safe pedestrian environment without crime, pollution, or litter, where visitors not only pay for parking and admission, but inside the park, they continue to pay for entertainment, food, and souvenirs. Instead of providing an urban experience, the Americana is also an example of planned commercial architecture that capitalism built, stocked with forms of entertainment. The fantasy is perpetuated through programs that create a mirage of community. For instance, the Americana advertises yoga or story time in their central park but a fitness retailer and a bookstore, both of which are national chains, host these events. The mall also features concierge services that are actually provided for anyone who takes the time to join. Therefore, the community is not exclusive and these amenities are in fact, unnecessary. The shops do not offer daily essentials that were once in downtown districts, shopping centers, and early shopping malls, like a grocery store, dry cleaners, or a bank, but instead: clothing, high-end electronics, dining and films.

Non-retailing stratagems at the Americana entice consumers to stay longer and spend more. While community programs like farmers' markets, sensory cues like ambient music, and visual devices like cobblestone streets and streetcars are certainly transformative, there is a greater phenomenon that also comes through architectural devices like the forced perspective and scale of the storefronts, [as seen in *Taxonomy* B2 or even in the grandiose size of the planters (fig. 12)]. The discordance between architectural styles or even between fantasy and reality and past and present, results in disorientation that alters the behavior of visitors in the space. One must chose to either leave reality to enter and consume the heterotopia, or to refrain from engagement and see

the operation in action. Beyond the Gruen Transfer, the *Jerde Transfer* can better explain the effects of architecture and programming on human behavior.⁹⁹

Jerde Transfer: Experiential Shopping

Just as the Gruen Transfer was born out of the experience of Gruen's suburban malls, the Jerde Transfer arose from Jerde's experiential and over-stimulating revitalized urban shopping malls.¹⁰⁰ However, I view the Gruen Transfer to be a gentler phenomenon in comparison to the Jerde Transfer, the sensory deprivation and complete disorientation associated with the postmodern mall.¹⁰¹ For instance, the mall, Horton Plaza in downtown San Diego, (fig. 13), was inserted into the central business district remained noticeably different from the surrounding space. Jerde reconciled the past cues of an urban environment with modern-day society and accordingly, designed spaces to keep one contained within, moving, seeking a destination, overwhelmed and simultaneously delighted in a cosmos that is anywhere and everywhere all at once. This total confusion and melding of time, space, and reality resulted in physical dislocation.

Jerde claims he is not interested in shopping. What really interests him is theater. He throws large amounts of architectural matter at the shopper: countless turns and counterturns, unlikely ramps stuck to soffits, thresholds over thresholds that dislodge the visitor of certainty, sending the 'keyed up' over the top and into a drone state of consumption.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ See Daniel Herman, "Jerde Transfer," *The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping: Project on the City*, directed by Rem Koolhaas (East Rutherford, NJ: Monacelli Press, 2000), 402-407.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 405.

¹⁰¹ Jerde disrupted space to coerce visitors into consumption and to move them throughout the space, but these tactics are not new. Rather, the stratagem from Disney's theme parks (blending experience and commerce, retail, and entertainment all to facilitate consumption) can be seen in Jerde's malls.

Consequently, the mixed-use commercial space is a dissonance of architecture, one-way movement, and bright colors that made this novel, urban, pedestrian experience a draw, especially when it opened in 1985. It was a shift in the function of the architecture that Daniel Herman equated with the difference between a visual disruption versus a bodily assault, “the moment when a shopper’s movements break down under excessive spatial stimulation” and shoppers become deferential to the space.¹⁰³

Jerde’s *placemaking* allowed for submersion in a heterotopia.¹⁰⁴ His program influenced Caruso; both Horton Plaza and the Americana divorce themselves from the landscape to replicate separate presentations and amalgamations of urbanism that are themselves attractions. The Gruen Transfer may have been associated with minimal, modern, suburban malls that housed retail and community functions, but the Jerde Transfer is evident at the Americana in features like the oversized scale and variation in architectural style, and the simulacrum of an urban sphere. The Americana is a blatant showpiece, a set that welcomes the theater. It is not a true city center, but as the theme park tempered such environments so much that a suspension of disbelief can be assumed; the greater truth is that the Americana provides a destination for greater immersion in social experiences. It is this combination in themed architecture and space that encourages congregation that proves to be successful.

¹⁰² Herman, “Jerde Transfer,” 403.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 405.

¹⁰⁴ “Jerde: About Jerde,” accessed April 25, 2011, <http://www.jerde.com/about>.

CHAPTER 3

Instant City: Crystals at City Center

CityCenter, a development on the Las Vegas Strip owned by MGM Resorts, is an instant city defined by starchitecture, innovation, and extravagance. Unlike a true city, it was not planned over time; rather it was developed at a quick pace, at times breaking records and receiving consequential publicity.¹⁰⁵ Comprised of hotels, residences, a casino and a shopping mall, each building was designed by one of eight internationally recognized architects: Pelli Clarke Pelli, Kohn Pedersen Fox, Helmut Jahn, RV Architecture LLC led by Rafael Viñoly, Foster + Partners, Studio Daniel Libeskind, David Rockwell and Rockwell Group, and Gensler.¹⁰⁶ Crystals is the shopping and entertainment component of the complex (*Taxonomy C1*). It was envisioned to be the destination within the complex and accordingly, features a “Grand Staircase,” shops, and restaurants.¹⁰⁷ Unlike other shopping malls on the Strip, Crystals is a freestanding building that is only accessible through controlled points of access. It is also unique as it is simultaneously sparse and complicated. Its exterior was designed by Studio Daniel Libeskind, the architectural firm known for cultural institutions that include the Jewish

¹⁰⁵ The CityCenter property is 18 million square feet. Totalling \$8.5 billion dollars, it is sustainable and certified as the largest private green development to-date.

¹⁰⁶ Press Release, “CityCenter: Designing a City within a City,” accessed February 24, 2011, http://www2.citycenter.com/press_room/press_room_items.aspx?ID=625.

¹⁰⁷ Press Release, “Crystals Retail and Entertainment District Embodies Dynamic Sense of Place at CityCenter’s Core,” accessed February 24, 2011, http://www2.citycenter.com/press_room/press_room_items.aspx?ID=1117 and “Feature > Vegas Bets on Retail,” *The Architects Newspaper*, April 4, 2011, accessed on April 5, 2011, <http://archpaper.com/news/articles.asp?id=5271>.

Museum in Berlin, the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester, UK, and the Grand Canal Theater in Dublin. David Rockwell and Rockwell Group, whose other projects include the interior of the neighboring Cosmopolitan development and the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles, designed the interior at Crystals.¹⁰⁸

Crystals differs from traditional urban design and urban-themed shopping malls. Since it is a part of a fabricated city that serves no true purpose, for that matter, located in a city that exists for escape, I ask: how does the development imitate genuine urbanism? Does it overcome or succumb to this inherent paradox? The development intentionally marries architecture, design and art to create an urban mall, yet it is also consumerist architecture. I will problematize this convergence of high art and consumerist architecture. I wonder if this daring innovation is merely disguised advertising or if it does, indeed, provide an urban component to the Strip. Furthermore since this example is substantially different from anything that is on the Strip, I will also examine its development as an antidote to existing themed casino-resort malls or if it is just the next incarnation of the existing model on the Strip?

Design or Theming?

The three-storied interior space at Crystals is notable for Libeskind's archetypal angular architecture. It is a space comprised of glass panes that are faceted to create specific intersections (*Taxonomy C2 and C11*). Accordingly, the horizontal and vertical walls intersect perpendicularly to create complex shapes. The natural light streams

¹⁰⁸ For more projects see the architecture firm's website: "Rockwell Group: Projects," <http://www.rockwellgroup.com/projects/view/category/architecturePress>.

through the angular glass and combines with artificial light to project angular shadows along the soaring walls. In consequence, there is an observable competition between interior elements that in the vast, open space, feels cold and jarring (*Taxonomy* C5, C6, and C15). This stands in contrast to the lighting program at NorthPark (as seen in *Taxonomy* A5, A7 and A11) that subtly blends with the artificial light in a way that is unnoticeable, but simple.

Libeskind's artistic signature at Crystals is reminiscent of earlier projects such as the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco (fig. 14). I question how to correlate a project devoted to Jewish history, culture, and perspectives with a shopping mall intended to entice consumption through architecture and high-end retailers. Whereas NorthPark borrowed from the museum to elevate the purpose of the mall and give it scope as a communal destination, the lack of distinction between Libeskind's museum and contemporary mall signifies that architecture is meant to be the showpiece regardless of the vastly different intentions of the spaces and their content. In other words, the uniformity in the architect's style indicates that the architecture is primarily about exerting his brand onto a location over the nuances of the physical space. As a result, the space is about the architecture. It is to be moved through but lacks much to occupy.

Design is noticeably the program at Crystals and this intention extends into the interior of the mall. Aside from a few decorative hanging planters, water, and floral sculptures, the mall's architecture and the luxury retailers' storefronts are the only visual foci. The retailers were encouraged to push their store's design to support the property's

goal for innovation.¹⁰⁹ As a result, the intricacies in Crystals' architecture contrast with the experience of the space in the neighboring Forum Shops at Caesars Palace. In the vein of *wienie* and the Jerde Transfer, a visitor at the Forum Shops wanders along cobblestone streets, past frescoed depictions of ancient architecture and landscapes, deep into the themed ancient Roman shopping mall. The space is built for the visitors. Like Main Street at Disneyland, the Forum Shops are designed for the scale and speed of the pedestrian with visual stimulation ranging from shifting day-to-night skies, animatronic performing Roman statues, and reproductions of sculptures within fountains (fig. 15).¹¹⁰ At Crystals, not only does the mentioned towering open space dwarf the shoppers, but the sparse pedestrian streets also take a backseat to the retailers' design. As a result, the features within each store become the enticement, but the design dominates the product, and the former is not working in promotion of consumption of the latter. Comparatively, both Caesars and Crystals feature a replica of the Trevi Fountain in Rome.¹¹¹ The massive ersatz fountain at Caesars is one of many events positioned as a *wienie* to lure, distract, and transport visitors into and through the mall. At Crystals, Fendi features a scaled down fifty-foot-wide marble replica of Trevi Fountain, which is easily overlooked as it is within the store. Instead of serving as a dramatic fountain, Fendi's Trevi is a small dry sculpture, as though the marble material and the craftsmanship of the sculpture might

¹⁰⁹ "Feature > Vegas Bets on Retail."

¹¹⁰ "Caesars Shopping The Forum Shops," accessed April 21, 2011, <http://www.caesarspalace.com/casinos/caesars-palace/casino-misc/the-forum-shops-detail.html>.

¹¹¹ Sarah Feldberg, "New Fendi Store Unveils Own Trevi Fountain," *Las Vegas Sun*, February 18, 2010, accessed April 20, 2011, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2010/feb/18/new-fendi-store-unveils-own-trevi-fountain>.

align the fashion house with Italian iconography. Other brands at Crystals also reveal themselves architecturally: Paul Smith's façade is a square and rectangle primary color pattern, Louis Vuitton subtly ghosts its "LV" logo into their storefront and in an interior chandelier, and Prada incorporates escalators within the shop. The stores, like the architecture overall, are aesthetically interesting, but, as attractions, they are not entirely accessible or more importantly, consumable by their Las Vegas audience. They are to be seen while passing through the space.

Art at CityCenter

Art has a brief history on the Strip. Beginning in 1998 and lasting roughly ten years, it was possible to pay admission to visit mini-museums that included the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum, the Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art, and the Wynn Collection. These galleries brought art to the public on the Strip, but in a format much like a show in Las Vegas: to be actively consumed for a shorter period of time and, of course, for a fee. CityCenter follows a different model in putting its art collection on public display, but arguably, not in locations that are readily discoverable or accessible. The property boasts a Nancy Rubins sculpture made of salvaged rowboats, kayaks, surfboards at an automobile roundabout and Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's *Typewriter Eraser, Scale X*, 1999 sculpture of an enlarged eraser set along an exterior pedestrian walkway (fig. 16 and 17).¹¹² Henry Moore's sculpture, *Reclining Connected*

¹¹² Press Release, "MGM MIRAGE Unveils \$40 Million Fine Art Program at CityCenter," accessed April 20, 2011, <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/mgm-mirage-unveils-40-million-fine-art-program-at-citycenter-56871772.html>.

Forms, 1969-1974 (*Taxonomy* C13) greets visitors at a crowded main entrance to Crystals where it lacks distance to truly encounter and move around it. Contemporary works are evidently displayed throughout other areas of the property, but it is peculiar that even though Crystals is intended to be a place for congregation within the overall property, little except a few gardens and decorative water and ice sculptures (*Taxonomy* C9 and C12) are incorporated into the interior of mall. In contrast, the art at NorthPark is placed along the corridors and within the plazas as a sculpture park and to denote gathering places. It is a strong component to filling the space with community as well as culture. Meanwhile at CityCenter, the art is featured along thoroughfares, but not at places for natural assembly. Again, the art is to be seen while in motion, from a distance such as an automobile roundabout, a pedestrian bridge, or transition between towering buildings. The art is not a focus, but instead, it is strangely equivalent to the architecture and retail spaces — another product for observation but not for complete engagement. It remains intangible. This presentation is paradoxical and at the same time, it is true to the mythic history of the Strip to offer an influx of materials to construct a fantasy, (in this instance, cultural and urban indicators,) but to make no guarantee that the fabricated world will become an obtainable reality.

Urbanity

Las Vegas History

The signs and architecture of the Strip advertise a fantastical world of affordable luxury and escape. If they weren't looking back, they were projecting forward, but they were never grounded in reality. They are impelled by a need for constant change and improvement to maintain allure and to bring income. As Tom Wolfe asserted, "In this town you've got to move ahead in quantum jumps."¹¹³ Expendability is characteristic of American consumption in postwar culture and Las Vegas is a hyped-up reflection of this truth. In "Learning from Pop," Denise Scott Brown argued for looking at Las Vegas where there was more flexibility and less subscription to fixed norms.¹¹⁴ The pace and trends on the Strip have always been in constant flux. It is a world of consumption that still capitalizes on America's desire for prosperity and possessions but it is also a reflection of new ideas – those of preservation and high arts.

Before Las Vegas was *Sin City* or *Lost Wages*, it was a remote desert town, unable to sustain agriculture. In the 1800s, the water from wells made it attractive as a stop on the Spanish Trail to Los Angeles. Later in the century, it served as a Mormon settlement and a gold site.¹¹⁵ In May 1905, the town officially became the City of Las Vegas. Fremont Street was at that time, the main thoroughfare and remained as such for

¹¹³ Tom Wolfe, "Las Vegas (What?) Las Vegas (Can't hear you! Too Noisy) Las Vegas!!!!," *Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*, 3-28, (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965) 17.

¹¹⁴ See Denise Scott Brown, "Learning from Pop."

¹¹⁵ Mark Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins, and David R. Dickens, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1999), 2.

some time.¹¹⁶ It was only with the Boulder Canyon Act that authorized spending for the Boulder (Hoover) Dam that people begin to make their way west for work and also to visit what also became marketed as a “Wild West” tourist destination. Las Vegas also expanded to accommodate those seeking divorces, military training and bases, and, around the Second World War, those seeking affordable housing in a temperate climate. The population growth came about because of direct federal spending around World War II.

The city metamorphosed through investments in gambling-associated-enterprises intended to promote tourism. One of the earliest establishments was the El Rancho Vegas “resort hotel” established by Thomas Hull a few feet south of city lines to avoid taxes and government regulation.¹¹⁷ This location also appealed to tourists from southern California who traveled in automobiles. Properties that followed set a protocol from which later Las Vegas took its cues. The Last Frontier,¹¹⁸ with its Western cowboy themed resort, bar, restaurant, and adjacent village was not only the first themed resort,¹¹⁹ but also exemplary of the kitsch style which began to take hold at this time.¹²⁰ Buggy

¹¹⁶ Fremont Street is considered to be downtown Las Vegas to the Strip and has its own more affordable, although less attractive casino hotels.

¹¹⁷ Mark Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins, and David R. Dickens, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City*, 17.

¹¹⁸ Barbara Land and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 86. R.E. Griffith opened the *Last Frontier* in 1942. It later expanded to become the *New Frontier* and in 1967, became *The Frontier* under the ownership of Howard Hughes.

¹¹⁹ Mark Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins, and David R. Dickens, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City*, 18.

¹²⁰ The Last Frontier adapted a themed model before Disneyland began its operations.

Siegel's Miami-styled Flamingo Hotel brought elegance and sophistication to the desert and in doing so, elevated and forever altered Las Vegas. He provided a temporal mirage of fortune for his visitors.

With Jay Sarno's 1962 interpretation of life in the time of Roman emperors at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas shifted away from motels and Wild West themes into something taller, bigger, and more developed.¹²¹ It was not surprising that this new space disrupted the status quo on the Strip and defied other properties by pushing the limits of excessiveness. However, the success of the property proved that Las Vegas visitors were not as interested in gambling as much as they were in consuming the fantasy. Sarno exploited and capitalized upon this world of commerce veiled under themed attractions. With the Wynn Las Vegas, developer Steve Wynn demonstrated that commercial architecture on the Strip did not need to be quite as explicit. Instead, it only required an overall theme of luxury, grandeur, and features that included high-end dining, shopping, nightlife, gambling, pools, spa, gym and attractions such as Wynn's master artworks. The property offered relief from the hyper-stimulation of the Strip. It is fascinating that the building is no longer a decorated shed, and the sign and façade are no longer *ducks*. The Wynn proved that a *name* could represent a brand or an experience.

The Strip has a legacy of architectural obsolescence and of autonomy from the city's central business district. In only a few decades, it progressed from Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour's tribute to the ordinary and ugly, to a postmodern pastiche, and now

¹²¹ He named his development 'Caesars Palace' and removed the apostrophe so that it would not be one emperor but a place where each visitor could be Caesar. Barbara Land and Myrick Land, *A Short History of Las Vegas*, 159.

to a showcase for contemporary architecture. It serves as the visual evidence of a shift on the Strip that may signal a return to the modern, urban, anonymous architecture that Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour once rebelled against. Yet even though it recognizes the history, it is a transformation from what was. It is a change from the typical kitsch or glitz most often equated with the Strip and replaces it with an ambiance of sophisticated design as themed architecture. However, even though the architecture is different, the adaptation of urbanism remains close to former themed environments: to provide representational cues. For instance, at Caesars, the Roman architecture, statues, and fountains fabricate an idea of an ancient era. In the example of CityCenter, the development is within a setting distanced from any true urban environment. I ask, could CityCenter be a heterotopia based upon urbanism, and like the themed resorts, a fantasy for consumption? While it pushes commercial architecture into the realm of high art architecture, it remains branded, with its name signifying its objective. In fact, I believe CityCenter represents a form of consumerist architecture that employs high-art-architecture-as-starchitecture to attract a public through destination architecture.

The Bilbao Effect

The distinguishing consumerist characteristic of commercial vernacular architecture that makes it consumerist is that its relationship to the consumer is a central concern in determining the appearance of the building as part of a consciously planned strategy of marketing.¹²²

¹²² Chase, "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture," 215.

When John Chase explained consumerist and high art architecture, he implied that they do not have to be so divergent. It is the intention behind the architecture, as a tangible expression of an idea (a Roman world or a modern city,) that can make architecture an object for consumption.

High art or avant-garde architecture by contrast is an internally oriented self-referential art form that does not necessarily have to communicate with or involve the public. High art architecture itself has in many ways become a consumerist commodity itself.¹²³

It is not necessary for the distance between vernacular and high art architecture to be so polarized, especially not today. CityCenter is a testament to this. The built incarnation is the architect's monument and its esoteric quality is part of its appeal within the realm of consumption. The architecture may be described as iconic, forward-looking, and prominent enough to attract a greater public and to resonate in popular culture. At the hands of a well-known architect, a *starchitect*, conspicuous qualities of high art architecture serve both the creator and the intention of the built environment to drive consumption.

This designation is given to architects who have achieved celebrity status to a degree that their association with a project or building heightens its appeal and recognition. The Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, in particular, demonstrates the link between starchitecture and tourism, and how capitalization on high art architecture can draw a mass audience and profits. The phenomenon is now known now as the *Bilbao Effect* and can be succinctly explained as destination architecture that

¹²³ Ibid., 211.

drives consumption in unexpected locations.¹²⁴ Because of the Guggenheim, the Basque city of Bilbao has experienced revitalization and is now an international destination. Furthermore, since the museum's opening in 1997, Bilbao has become synonymous with Gehry's identifiable sweeping organic, contoured, titanium planes (fig. 18).

Starchitecture has become a part of popular culture and as such, not only revitalized museums as cultural spaces, but is also the mediator between high art architecture and consumption. It makes an otherwise mystifying space accessible. Starchitect spaces, designed by architects such as Richard Meier, Norman Foster, Renzo Piano, Tadao Ando, Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, Santiago Calatrava, Jean Nouvel, Steven Holl, and Herzon & de Meuron are now tourist destinations.¹²⁵ When international architects were tasked with their respective buildings at CityCenter, each was already known for their architecture which is not necessarily reflective of a location or local architecture, but, instead, attributable to the individual architect. This is of course fitting with the established nowhere-ness of the Strip. But is it viable on the Strip? CityCenter exists within the framework and history of Las Vegas, an environment that already exists for obsolescence and consumption. It may intend to fill a lacking cultural gap in Las Vegas but couches it within the context of the Strip, where the project must be over the top to get attention, and high culture must be a form of consumable leisure. Therefore, the resulting showy architecture acts in service of the overall CityCenter brand. Is CityCenter evidence of a desire to attract tourism, or in a fashion similar to Americana, is it to re-

¹²⁴ See Witold Rybczynski, "The Bilbao Effect," *Atlantic Monthly* 290, no. 2 (September 1, 2002): 138-142.

¹²⁵ McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*. 53.

establish a form of commercial urbanism within the perimeters of a private development? Since malls along the Strip already provide a fabricated urbanism in a city that lacks a core urbanity, I argue that Crystals is another example within the lineage of consumption but one that falls short. In this instance, the showmanship is a byproduct of high art architecture in service of consumerist architecture, but even if high art architecture and urbanism are the theme, Crystals lacks consumable content programmed into the space.

CityCenter is not an actual city; it is a simulacrum of a metropolis. It asserts to be the city center in a city where the population is trying to escape. The development is a contained urban world that is both dislocated and does not relate to the larger environment. Even the name— *CityCenter*—is unequivocal in indicating what it purports to be, what it references. When the themed megaresorts such as Caesars Palace overpowered and replaced the function of the physical signs, the buildings themselves became the embodiment of the sign to allure visitors. Without such decorated architecture, the name took on a responsibility.¹²⁶ Therefore, the resort need not reference a different historical time and place to be appealing; visitors are able to understand what the experience is to be through the name and the architecture.¹²⁷

Whereas The Americana simulates corresponding content, the architecture is the only cue to urbanity at CityCenter. The content associated with a city (congestion, city noise, taxis, street vendors, and visual clutter), or forms of entertainment (street

¹²⁶ This is of course the result of much branding, advertisement, and publicity.

¹²⁷ In “Ch. 7. Tall Buildings” in Joel Warren Barna and Blackmon Winters Kuhner’s *See-through Years: Creation and Destruction in Texas Architecture and Real Estate*, the historians discuss the intention behind downtown Dallas’s modern and postmodern skyscrapers to advertise “progressiveness” and “sophistication” in the overall metropolis.

performers, souvenir sales, and public art) are not. A large population doesn't truly live and work there, they are only inhabitants for a short time. Moreover, the space is clean and even borders on sterile. Movement is also disjointed. As journalist Valli Herman remarked:

The complex is connected by sometimes-confusing ramps, escalators and a three-station monorail, which make the place look more like a futuristic airport than a distillation of Manhattan.¹²⁸

One may move freely throughout a city, but movement throughout CityCenter and within Crystals is guided. With such emphasis on movement (the monorail, steps, escalators, and disjointed concourses), but a lack of architectural events or community programs (as seen at NorthPark or Americana), Crystals is starchitecture without greater content. It proves that retail alone is not enough to populate a mall. In Richard Sennett's words: "The erasure of alive public space contains an even more perverse idea- that of making space contingent upon motion."¹²⁹ CityCenter consists of continuous movement without a purpose or destination. Some corridors narrow and meander while others soar up to three stories of open air resulting in an inconsistency in space and a humbling and anonymous effect. Consequently, the corridors appear to be long and the scale of the space appears to be vast and the space feels cool and vast in character and in content. It may be argued that the slowed state of the economy translates into an observable vacancy in Crystals, but I argue that at the core, the architecture itself does not encourage congregation. The *Taxonomy* images C2 and C5 demonstrate that while the multi-stories and angular planes

¹²⁸ Valli Herman, "The Strip's CityCenter hotels up the ante," *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 2009, accessed March 12, 2010, <http://travel.latimes.com/articles/la-tr-threnewvegas3-2010jan03>.

¹²⁹ Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 343.

are dynamic, this quality results in a distracting environment with very little beyond storefronts for focus and a lack of areas that encourage repose. I attribute this as the reason that the space is passed through more than it is occupied. To this effect, the “Grand Staircase” (fig. 19), made of bamboo and pink agate may have been intended, like the Roman Spanish Steps, to act as a gathering point, in reality, it is not a public space. Rather, the steps function solely as a movement device. Sennett speaks to the association between public space and motion through space with regard to the Brunswick Centre apartments.

The real lesson of Brunswick Centre is contained in its central concourse. Here there are a few shops and vast areas of empty space. Here is an area to pass through, not to use; to sit on one of the few concrete benches in the concourse for any length of time is to become profoundly uncomfortable, as though one were to exhibit in a vast empty hall.¹³⁰

This is something that is felt even if it is not readily seen. In comparison, even though NorthPark is modern in design, the *Taxonomy* images A2, A5, and A6 show that the pedestrian scale and transition between courts and corridors remains simple and provides both consistency and certainty in the designation of space.

CityCenter as a Heterotopia?

In its attention to design, it is apparent that CityCenter focuses on brand possibly before the consumer. Consequently, CityCenter’s “city” is nothing like Manhattan or other diverse cities that evolved over centuries with a distinct past, character, and content, but a disjointed, instant city that may be better thought of like Walt Disney’s futuristic

¹³⁰ Ibid., 343.

Tomorrowland at Disneyland, a mid-century distillation and solution of the modern city where modernity is associated with innovative design but also the license to create a separate cosmos with a particular set of codes. Michael Sorkin theorized on operational tactics at Disneyland:

The architecture of this city is almost purely semiotic, playing the game of grafted signification, theme park building. Whether it represents generic historicity or generic modernity, such design is based in the same calculus as advertising, the idea of pure imageability, oblivious to the real needs and traditions of those who inhabit it.¹³¹

CityCenter fits within this lineage, as a self-contained reflection of our culture's consumable values. It rises from the landscape according to its own laws but is it a heterotopia? I argue that CityCenter is a new form of architecture as sign within the legacy of themed Las Vegas Strip. Like those that came before, it remains true to a formula of sampled architectural styles that through appropriation are removed from original symbolism. This disconcerting, fragmented reality becomes a substitute cosmos, a unique locale where one can move from Paris, New York, Hollywood, ancient Rome, Venice, and other worlds of extravagant leisure. The reality remains that the properties on the Strip present the same experiences of entertainment, dining, shopping, and gambling. As tourist destinations, they provide a combination of escapism in unreality, a spectacle, a hyperreality, a simulacrum, and a pastiche of popular styles, among other classifications.

The individual buildings of CityCenter should be the *wienies* that draw consumers between fantasy worlds, signifying escape through a themed environment. However, in

¹³¹ Sorkin, "Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park," xiv-xv.

the curving hallways to nowhere within Crystals, there is truly no sense of place and a lack of meaning. In conjunction with the large scale and emphasis on the visual, one may not reach a deeper connection to the space as prompted by the consistent scale and simplicity of NorthPark Center, nor do they marvel at the creation of another world like at the Americana. Simply stated, while the Strip is for consumption, there is not enough to ingest at Crystals. There is no overt escape. Its architecture very well may indicate that a curiosity for high art starchitecture and innovation in brand-name retailers' design may draw a crowd, but dependence upon the Bilbao Effect is not enough, and as seen with CityCenter, it does not always work. I don't think CityCenter can be understood on the Strip by its architecture alone. As a consumerist space, it must also contain distractions and stimuli to bring about any form of submersion in the environment. At the very least, there should be inviting communal space to keep a crowd.

CONCLUSION

Architecture also has the capacity to embody the often conflicted feelings a place harbors about its own past and future, its insecurities about being provincial, its fantasies and desires for a reality that is alternative to the present. The assimilation of foreign tendencies within a local situation is in this sense not just, or not necessarily, a hegemonic process, but sometimes, as at Bilbao, one of voluntary adaptation and a consciously or unconsciously acknowledged need for change.¹³²

Joan Ockman here equates the recognizable, celebrated architecture of Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao Museum to a delicate irony that it reveals about its site. I find that beyond the Guggenheim Bilbao, her words reveal a truth that is inherent in each of my case studies in this thesis. Each site desires to be a destination that is unto itself, but that consequently elevates the recognition and positions its location. Ockman goes on to note that the Museum

Raises the possibility of a new kind of *politics of appearance*. By this I mean a way to confront and reverse some of the forces that have historically produced the obsolescence and marginality of certain cities. Architecture is inherently a positive form of enunciation; it allows something that was previously latent to become visible.¹³³

Even though Ockman is speaking specifically about Bilbao, I propose that not only can the uniqueness or spectacle of new architecture be a draw, but it may also represent a desire for each location to establish an identity for itself. At the same time, this is dependent upon the construction of an independent sphere for social gathering. Through particular manifestations of urbanity, NorthPark, the

¹³² Joan Ockman, "'Bilbao' and the Global Imagination," *Architecture and Tourism: Perception, Performance, and Place*, edited by D. Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren, (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2004), 235.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 235.

Americana, and Crystals expand the potential of commercial architecture to create a cultural core that provides more than what already exists while also giving new character to a place.

While these are not true city centers, their overlap suggests that the public lacks something that the mall can provide. Consumers of these spaces are not duped by the irony that these malls incorporate urban cues within commercial environments that concurrently kill any existing architectural uniqueness, but still, the malls answer a human need for collective urban pedestrian experiences. The perfect balance of new in symphony with shopping and social space thereby determines success. In other words, they reveal that there was an inherent truth in Gruen's model so much so that the mall or specifically, shopping, in its popularity, is taking over urbanity, as Sze Tsung Leong sees it.

Ironically, this return of shopping to the city has been nothing short of triumphant, in the sense that shopping, after decades of sucking the public away from urban centers, has proven to the city that it can now create all the qualities of urbanity—density of activity, congestion, excitement, spectacle—better than the city itself has been able to do in recent memory. Once, shopping needed the city survive. Now, the urban has been reduced to a theme of shopping.¹³⁴

Since shopping is one of the most recognizable and popular American leisure activities, the location of the activity may be seen as a representation of values, or a heterotopia of our world today. Sze Tsung Leong comments that

Not only is shopping melting into everything, but everything is melting into shopping. Through successive waves of expansion—each more extensive and pervasive than the previous—shopping has methodically encroached on a

¹³⁴ Leong, "...And Then There Was Shopping," 153.

widening spectrum of territories so that it is now, arguably, the defining way of public life.¹³⁵

Shopping now structures consumption in places from airports to offices, hospitals, and cultural institutions; the malling of our landscape is now the public space.¹³⁶ As public destinations, these spaces project a fabricated sense of what was missing; a myth of genuine public space and the experience of urban density and a life that never was in cities like Dallas, Glendale, and Las Vegas. Each of these monuments to urbanism and consumption defines an idea of public space differently and consequently serves a certain cultural function. NorthPark is the literal suburban downtown while the Americana and Crystals embody forms of urbanism within a contained heterotopia: one is an ersatz theme park while the other is the materialization of global high art. In both instances, the built environment creates a mirage of urbanism, in a fictitious nineteenth-century town center at Americana, and in art as ornamental, spectacular urbanism at CityCenter.

By replicating ideals of community and institutional space, NorthPark took on qualities of what had been public space and created a new suburban, consumerist town center. It accomplished this through streets and plazas in the form of corridors and courts, but without elements of fantasy. It was an antidote to congestion, the solution to city life within the suburbs, and a safe place for business as well as cultural and civic life. As seen in the *Taxonomy* images A2, A7, and A10, the architectural program at NorthPark was

¹³⁵ Ibid., 129.

¹³⁶ From Leong, "... And Then There Was Shopping," 152 quoting Joseph F. Sullivan, "Court Protects Speech in Malls," *New York Times*, December 21, 1994, B6: "In 1994 the mall officially replaced the civic functions of the traditional downtown. In a New Jersey Supreme Court case regarding the distribution of political leaflets in shopping malls the court declared that "shopping malls have replaced the parks and squares that were 'traditionally the home of free speech,' siding with the protesters 'who had argued that a mall constitutes a modern-day Main Street.'"

intended to be a beautiful, clean town center in suburbia without any negative associations. However, like other modern postwar shopping malls, NorthPark was threatened by obsolescence in a culture grounded in consumption.¹³⁷

The obsolescence of mall architecture is evident in the transformation of the modern shopping mall to a pseudo-urban experience at the Americana or the starchitecture spectacle at Crystals. This evolution does not, however, negate the suburbanization of the space; rather the theme builds upon the earlier mall paradigm while providing the experience of another world, a planned consumerist escape. As a result, consumers are now dependent upon the added value of experiential shopping within this cosmos. I ask however, to what degree has the contemporary mall become a consumption of experience and the desire to inhabit a more profound heterotopia?

Americana is not too different from other contemporary mixed-use malls that now populate urban, semi-urban, suburban, and exurban areas. It establishes its location, Glendale in this instance, as a destination to consume products and come into contact with a lively atmosphere. I believe that much of Americana's intrigue lies in the themed architecture that converges history and memory and creates a visual, tempered myth of early industrial cities. By sampling architectural styles and applying them to create fantastical placeless environments, the architecture pays homage to its legacy in a way that rewrites history through a spectacular experience that is programmed to facilitate commercial transaction. As seen by comparing B5 and B15 with C5 and C15, at Crystals the scale appears to disregard the pedestrian, but at the Americana, the architecture and

¹³⁷ See Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, 109.

scale also promote a non-threatening spatial and temporal displacement.

Correspondingly, the fantastical experience of the space may trump the actual commodities. The outdoor streets and the Green at the Americana (B7, B10 and B13) simulate older public sidewalks and public gathering spaces, yet it is not a city street and park, but a controlled and planned private mall. This is the layering and exchange between urban, to suburban, and back to a suburbanized urban.

The Strip, in contrast to downtown Las Vegas, is growing out into the desert as a pedestrian-oriented, dense, escapist environment. As its own self-sustained cosmos, the Strip is dependent upon novelty and spectacle. Solidifying its theme, CityCenter projects forward with sophisticated high art architecture and design. Within the context of the Strip though, might CityCenter be understood as the latest spectacle with its own obsolescence? Is it just a new incarnation of high-end pastiche and anonymity? Crystals within CityCenter features architecture and art for display, attention, and transformation to the Strip, but in practice as an urban space for gathering and consumption, it falls short. The coded architecture actually trumps and overwhelms any subsequent experience within the space. Urbanity at CityCenter is only symbolized in the consumerist architecture that is sold as unobtainable high art architecture.

Separation from reality is exciting for a time, but there is a threshold for consumption. The bold, different, and fantastical becomes saturated and ultimately more of the same: it is a shopping mall. The desire to be entertained through fantasy is countered by the realization of the mechanisms at work, causing an ambivalent reaction of love and hate. We desire external entertainment, but with this want is also an

awareness of how the entertainment is working. Overstimulation in conjunction with familiarity produces exhaustion and dissolution ensues. Eventually too much stimulation in a themed environment or heterotopia brings about a numbness. I argue that there is now a massification, a leveling of everything into one form of a mall, no longer urban or suburban. This movement between the worlds and the realization that the architecture of the site is intended for more than what is on the surface is the core of Ockman's quote that commenced the chapter. These locations are in flux and subject to cultural interpretation and values. They teach us something about our inclinations. We desire places for communal activity, but these seemingly public spaces, these shopping malls, continue to be dominated by private commerce. Today the mall has to be a more enticing destination to customers, grounded in the social power of shopping, which remains tied to cities. Our continual architecture demonstrates that we prefer for the mall to be like an experiential city.

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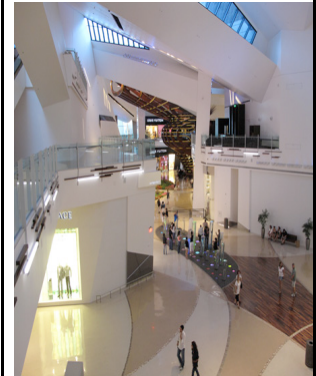



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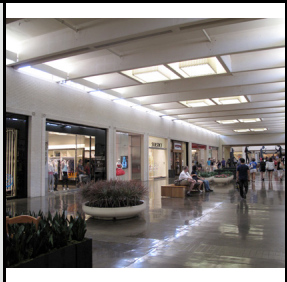










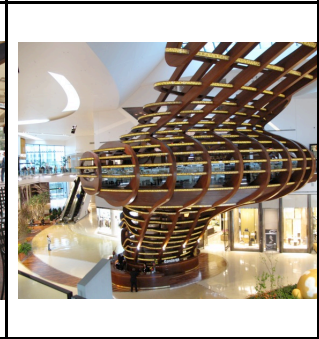
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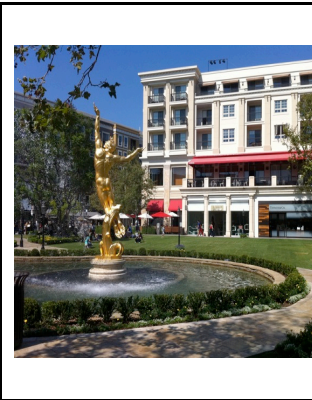


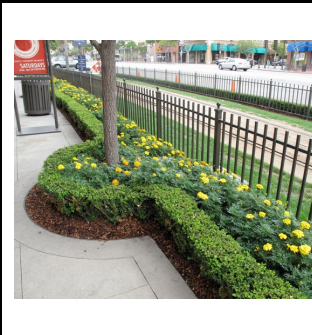

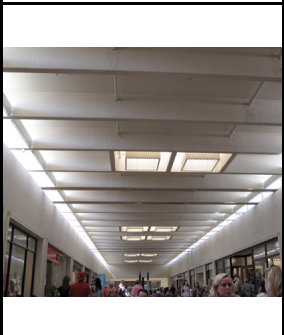

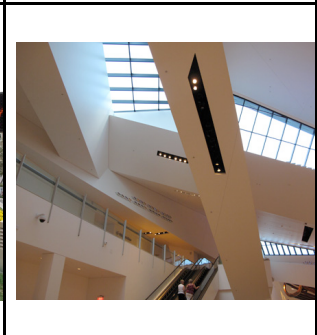



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FIGURES

Shopping Malls	NorthPark Center A	Americana B	CityCenter C
Categories			
Year Built	1965	2008	2009
Style 1			
Stories/ Scale 2			
Material 3			

<p>Signage/ Semantics</p> <p>4</p>			
<p>Corridors</p> <p>5</p>			
<p>Movement Systems</p> <p>6</p>			
<p>Public Spaces</p> <p>7</p>			
<p>Dining</p> <p>8</p>			

<p>Fountains 9</p>			
<p>Landscaping 10</p>			
<p>Windows/ Lighting 11</p>			
<p>Entertainment & Culture 12</p>			










<p>Art 13</p>			
<p>Storefront 14</p>			
<p>Summation 15</p>			

Figure 1. Taxonomy of NorthPark Center, The Americana at Brand, and Crystals at CityCenter.



Figure 2. Parisian Shopping Arcade built in the 1800s (image 1967 by Raymond Lifchez, UCB Visual Resources Collection, College of Environmental Design, artstor.org).



Figure 3. Southdale Center Interior, Edina, Minnesota, 1954-1956 (image by George Everard Kidder, Rotch Visual Collections: <http://libraries.mit.edu/rvc/index.html>, artstor.org).



Figure 4. Aerial of NorthPark Center, Dallas, Texas, 1965 (courtesy of NorthPark Center Archives.)



Figure 5. Brick-lined storefronts and polished cement floors, NorthPark Center, Dallas, 2010.



Figure 6. Beverly Pepper, *Dallas Land Canal*, 1971, NorthPark Center, Dallas, Texas.



Figure 7. Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Philip Johnson, 1961 [image by Ezra Stoller, Ezra Stoller Archive (Esto)].



Figure 8. Yale College and New Haven Green, sepia and gouache by W.H. Bartlett (Stokes Collection, New York Public Library, artstor.org)



Figure 9. The Americana Tower, Glendale, California, 2010.



Figure 10. Sleeping Beauty's Castle at Disneyland, Anaheim, California, 1955 (University of California, Santa Cruz, Visual Resource Collection, artstor.org).

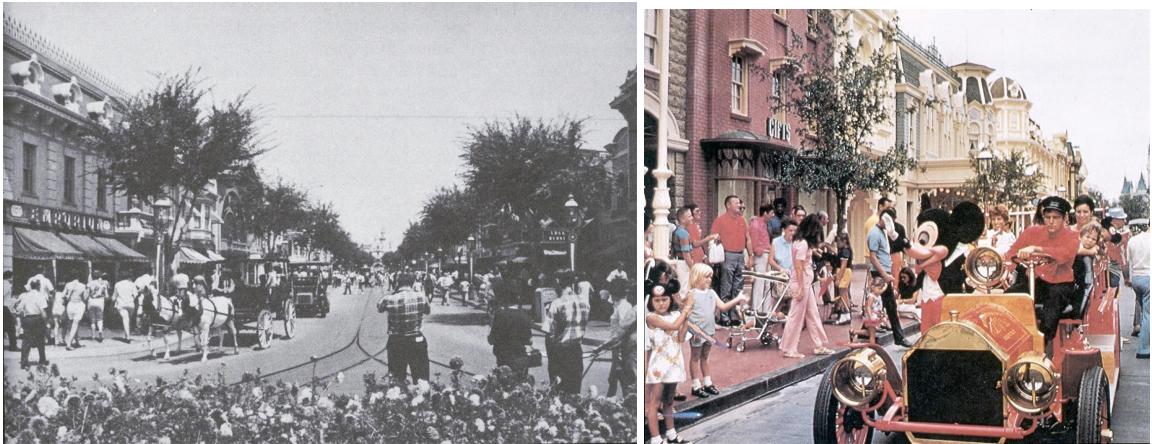


Figure 11. Main Street, U.S.A, Disneyland, Anaheim, California, 1955 (University of California, San Diego, artstor.org.)



Figure 12. Oversized Planters at the Americana, Glendale, California, 2010.



Figure 13. Overview from level two, Horton Plaza, Jerde Partnership, San Diego, California, 1985 (artonfile.com.)



Figure 14. Contemporary Jewish Museum, Studio Daniel Libeskind, San Francisco, California (daniel-libeskind.com).



Figure 15. Forum Shops, Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, Nevada (myrealvegas.com).



Figure 16. Nancy Rubins, *Big Edge*, 2009 (lasvegassun.com).



Figure 17. Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, *Typewriter Eraser, Scale X*, 1999 (citycenter.thedigitalcenter.com).

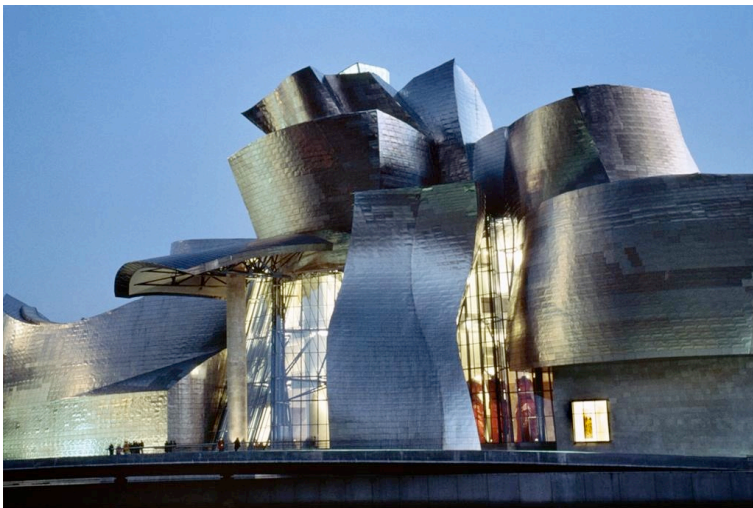


Figure 18. Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, Frank O. Gehry, Bilbao, Spain, 1998 (image by Daniel Scott for Magnum Photos, artstor.org.)



Figure 19. The Grand Staircase, Crystals, Las Vegas, Nevada, 2010.