Figure 6.5 The Grand Arch, Paris

these two civic monuments a kind of post-rationalized inevitability. As Morris states, Pope Sixtus V had very limited time in which to develop his plan for Rome. The obelisks required a great effort to raise and they were, nevertheless, effective tools in concretizing his intention (Bacon, 1975). They established a critical mass of development which successive urban designers were reluctant or unable to ignore. The location of the monuments established the inevitability of the total layout. Such a sequence of events illustrates Bacon's principle of the second man: 'It is the second man who determines whether the creation of the first man will be carried forward or destroyed.'

Formal monumental schemes, if they are to be human in scale, should not include axial vistas of more than 1500 m. At this extreme distance the 'stopping of the axis' requires a monument of huge bulk. A monument on the scale of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris is necessary to terminate the boulevards radiating from it successfully. It is more usual for vistas of these dimensions to terminate with a building such as the Grand Arch, Paris (Figure 6.5). All of the buildings like the Arc de Triomphe function as important and highly decorative visual cues or landmarks in the city structure. However, following Alexander's suggestion that nodes be placed at 300 m intervals along a path, the long vista of 1500 m would require a series of minor visual events, high points of both activity and decorative interest, interspersing its length. It is this richness of local interest that is sometimes lacking in the monumental layout.

THE ORGANIC PLACEMENT OF CIVIC MONUMENTS

Alongside the tradition where three dimensional decorative elements have been used to enrich the overall monumental city design, the organic or natural location of such elements has often been no less deliberate and subtle. Guided, as Camillo Sitte observed, according to artistic principles:

> Quite incomprehensible choices of location were made, and yet one must grant that a fine sensibility guided that choice since, as in the case of Michelangelo's David, everything always harmonised beautifully. Thus we are presented with a mystery - the mystery of the innate, instinctive aesthetic sense that worked such obvious wonders for the old masters without resort to narrow aesthetic dogma or stuffy rules. We, on the other hand, come along afterwards, scurrying about with T-square and compass, presuming to solve with clumsy geometry those fine points that are matter of pure sensitivity (Collins and Collins, 1986).

Sitte recommended that the location of fountains and other foci of interest should not be

geometrically determined: they should be the result of an artistic activity guided by the invisible hand of creative sensibility.

Adshead, writing in the early decades of this century, appeared to be generally in agreement with the ideas of Sitte rejecting all notions of formal prescriptions for the siting of the main public monuments: 'To lay down hard-and-fast rules and regulations for the placing of statuary in towns would be to clip the wings of the imagination in its most fanciful flights; but to assume that principles cannot be hinted at which would be a guide to its arrangement and distribution would be a weakness amounting to the resignation of the intelligent criticism to the fickle antics of caprice' (Adshead, 1912d).

Sitte, however, was not averse to the examination of successful grouping of organically located monuments in the expectation of deriving a set of general principles to guide the urban designer, devoting a chapter of his book to the topic. For example, he derived a general principle for the placement of monuments, citing the analogy of children building snowmen, noting that they did not build them on the routes through the snow and likened those paths to routes crossing a square: 'Imagine the open square of a small market town in the country covered in deep snow and crisscrossed by several roads and paths that, shaped by the traffic, form the natural lines of communication. Between them are left irregularly distributed patches untouched by traffic. . . . On exactly such spots, undisturbed by the flow of vehicles, rose the fountains and monuments of old communities' (Collins and Collins, 1986). Sitte supported this notion, by pointing out that, as shown in old views and sketches of medieval and Renaissance cities, piazzas were mostly unpaved and the ground rarely levelled. This lead Sitte to speculate that when, for example, a fountain was to be installed it would not be set in the midst of the deep ruts left by wheeled vehicles, but on any of the undisturbed islands lying between the lines of communication. Later as the community grew larger and richer, the square may be graded and paved but the fountain would often remain where it stood. Even if the fountain were itself replaced at a later date, the new fountain was likely to remain at the same location.

One of the best examples of the organic location of a civic monument is the equestrian statue of the *Gattamaleta* by Donatello in front of S. Antonio in Padua, Italy. As Sitte states:

> Its remarkable, totally unmodern position cannot be recommended too highly for study. At first one is struck by its gross offence against today's invariable and solely acceptable manner of placement. Then one notices the admirable effect of the monument at this unusual spot, and, in the end, it becomes clear that if the monument were placed in the centre of the plaza the effect would not be nearly as great. Once the move away from the centre is accepted, all the rest follows naturally, including in this case the orientation of the statue in relation to the entering streets (Collins and Collins, 1986).

One of the finest and most sensitive examples of the organic and piecemeal accumulation of statuary is to be found in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence. Here the statues and monuments assist the eye in forming two interpenetrating spaces from the 'L' shaped Piazza:

> The main square forms two distinct, but interpenetrating, spaces their boundary being defined by an optical barrier of sculpture; Michelangelo's David, Bandinelli's Hercules and Cacus group, Donatello's Judith, Ammanati's large Neptune fountain and the equestrian statue of Cosimo Medici by Giovanni da Bologna. Using this device a formless, medieval space was converted into two spaces with proportions corresponding more closely to Renaissance ideals. The process was started in 1504, with the placing of Michelangelo's David to the left of the palace entrance, a decision given great thought by many experts. The line of sculpture was completed in 1594 by the placing of the equestrian statue at the centre point of the imaginary border line of both squares. The line of statues parallel to the east