Figure 6.27 Sculpture, Broadgate, London
Figure 6.28 Sculpture, Bogota

6.27

6.28

The equestrian statue has a long pedigree. It is best placed commanding an expanse of open space. Where occupying favoured sites of this type they are seen to greatest advantage when placed on lofty pedestals. There are two particularly fine examples of equestrian statues dating from the Renaissance. They are the Colleoni by Verrochio for the Piazza di SS Giovanni e Paolo in Venice and its great rival the Gattamelata at Padua by Donatello. According to Zucker (1959), Verrocchio's equestrian sculpture is powerful enough to charge the space around with a tension that keeps the whole composition together, evoking the impression of a square despite the amorphous and disconnected building shapes which form the edge of a highly irregular shape.

There seem few, if any, opportunities, outside totalitarian states, for the use today of the colossus, the great national monument such as the Statue of Liberty or the monumental statues of Christ in Rio and Lisbon. For example, the former Stalin Monument in Prague, once visible from almost every part of the city – a 30 m high granite sculpture portraying a procession of people being led to Communism by the Pied Piper figure of Stalin, popularly dubbed 'the bread queue' – provided identity for the city. In townscape and decorative terms, it made sense as the terminal feature of the

vista along the Parizska leading from the Old Square. However, its symbolism of oppression and subjugation of the Czech people outweighed townscape considerations and it was dynamited in 1962 following Khrushchev's denouncement of his predecessor. The monument has been replaced by a metronome which does not have the same townscape qualities while the base has become a site for protest and graffiti. There are also few opportunities to celebrate the deeds of the national hero or heroine either on foot or on horse. The city sculpture which decorates the contemporary city is likely to be a shark protruding from a rooftop, or the nose of an aeroplane bursting through a façade or fanciful neon lights decorating the theatre front. Such decorative features of the city defy analysis and result from playful creativity (Figure 6.28).

UTILITARIAN STREET EQUIPMENT

The street furnishings so far discussed are necessary for the complete decoration of the city; like the fine pictures on the living room wall or flowers in the centre of the dining room table, their chief purpose is to delight. There is, however, some street equipment with a function that is primarily utilitarian. It could be argued that columns, clock towers and fountains also have a function, even if it is simply of a symbolic nature. It can also be argued that the bus shelter, street light and park bench, though functional, can be and should be well designed attractive street sculpture in purely formal terms.

An important purpose of all street equipment is to establish, support or strengthen the *genius loci* of a place. Pevsner (1955) wrote 'The genius of the place, the *genius loci*, is a mythological person taken over from antiquity and given a new meaning. The *genius loci*, if we put it in modern terms, is the character of the site, and the character of the site is, in a town, not only the geographical but also historical, social and especially the aesthetic character.' The choice of sets of compatible street furniture can give identity to a particular city, district in a city or institution of a city. For example, the entrances to the Paris Metro are in a quite distinctive art nouveau style (Figure 6.29). Designed by Hector Guimard (1867–1942) they are highly evocative of Paris, possessing far more charm and identity than their utilitarian equivalents in other major cities. Similarly, the red telephone boxes in English villages designed by George Gilbert Scott, have made a significant contribution to the *genius loci* of the English rural scene (Figure 6.30). British Telecom's and Mercury's replacements, though functional have none of the character of the red telephone box. To a lesser extent, the art deco kiosks and fittings designed by Rowse for the entrances to the Mersey Tunnel performed the same function of 'identity'; in this case, however, it was the institution not Liverpool or Birkenhead which was identified.

Figure 6.29 Metro, Paris

According to Lynch's theories, the city with clearly identifiable and distinct districts lends itself to the creation of a strong perceptual image in the viewer. This strong visual image facilitates the user's