

junction so formed becomes an important marker for orientation within the city.

PATRONAGE OF DECORATION

Richness and profusion of decoration is usually associated with the wealth and power of patronage. The use of ornament and decoration in the city, whether it is on the façade of buildings, the detailing of pavement, the munificence of park provision, the endowment of sculpture or fountains, can be seen as a display of power and the confirmation of status. At those times in the past when society, or more particularly a group in society, rejected decoration for ascetic or moral reasons, even its absence and the resulting iconoclastic or severe townscape is symbolic of the power of a group which is able to impose its puritanical will upon large sections of the community. For this reason city decoration must be examined in the light of prevailing social, economic and political conditions.



1.19



Figure 1.19 Interior,
Burlington Arcade, London

Figure 1.20 Unity of
pavement and façades,
Tours

1.20

The legacy of the architecture and city design of some periods stands as testimony to the conscious exercise of power by some omnipotent, but now decayed, authority. This may not have been unchallenged power, for example, in many cities there was conflict between the autocratic and the mercantile elements, epitomized in their conflicting views of the city: one of grandeur or one of business. For example, Wren's grand plan for London was ultimately rejected by the merchants who wanted to rebuild their city quickly and get back to their businesses. Similarly John Nash was only able to proceed by displacing the poor (he was unable to displace the rich), and was effectively the forerunner of the even more high-handed railway companies of the mid-nineteenth century. In the middle of the same century there was Haussmann's destruction of the remains of medieval Paris. The attitude was that slums did not matter and that civic and national interests were more important than the local community. In a twentieth-century context, Adolf Hitler, in *Mein Kampf* (1971), lamented the disappearance of a tradition of monumental building in Germany, and in 1929 he promised that when the party took power 'out of our new ideology and our political will to power we will create stone documents'. It is not surprising that the Nazis' use of monumentality in architecture to advance their cause tainted, and continues to taint, this concept for the architectural profession.

In addition to changing technological, political and economic contexts which have limited or constrained the use of decoration, there has been and, to some extent still is, an ideological reluctance to engage in a monumental development of the city. The antipathy to monumentalism has also been accompanied by an equal abhorrence of decoration and city embellishment. This attitude of the orthodox Modern Movement in architecture was less concerned with the nature of traditional ornamental expression and more concerned with the need for a polemical stance that satisfied the political and social agenda of the early twentieth

century and its implicit international, socialist and egalitarian viewpoint. Thus Modernists had concerns about ornamentation, and particularly about its commissioning, as a political and social expression of society. A problem for many in the Modern Movement was the inherent symbolism and legitimacy of monument and of monumentality, and thus of ornament and decoration. The question was who had the 'right' to decorate the city - individuals, autocratic rulers, autocratic landowners, Governments or developers? - and secondly how should it be decorated? Paradoxically, despite the reasons, origins and beneficiaries of many past monumental developments that have survived, such developments tend to be valued in today's democracies. How far Ceausescu's triumphal architecture in Bucharest will be appreciated by future generations, however, is difficult to predict.

An opposing view held by some revisionists of Modernism and advocates of some strands of Post-modernism hold that monumentality is made manifest by the architect who merely interprets the physical form of the city based on his or her knowledge of architectural history. One Post-modern critique of Modernism has sought to remove the concept of monumentality in architecture from its political and economic origin in order to justify, within our pluralistic and diverse contemporary society, the traditional manner of monumental expression (Krier, 1983). However, some would argue that monumentalism, when divorced in this way from its root causes, becomes little more than expensive pastiche. This reconstructed Post-modern attitude to monumentality is well expressed by Rob Krier. For Krier, monumentality is quite simply an inevitable fact of human settlement and civilization. Because of their mere existence, urban buildings obtain some significance in the public's perception of the city:

Building is always about the occupation of a place. Architecture is about setting marks. In the free countryside we come across a tower. It directs our