



Figure 5.6 Pavement,
Pienza

landscaped parks, and ornamental areas of soft landscape set within otherwise hard pavements. It is this latter type of soft landscaped area which will be considered in this chapter. In terms of hard pavements, there are the heavily trafficked streets or roads and those that carry pedestrian traffic or a mix of pedestrian and light vehicular loads. It is the

ornamental pavements and traffic calmed areas of the city which are the subject matter of the following paragraphs.

THE FUNCTION OF THE GROUND PLANE

The main function of any paved area is to provide a hard surface. The function of a soft landscaped area is to introduce nature into the built environment. These functions of the two main methods of covering the urban ground plane are so obvious that the more subtle minor functions are sometimes dismissed as unimportant or are ignored completely. Beazly (1967), whose work is a standard text for the design of paved areas, states: 'It is a safe rule, though it must occasionally be broken, never to change the material without a practical reason. Today, the re-awakening of interest in paving materials has sometimes led to their use simply for the sake of textural pattern; the result can be very precious.' It is true that in many traditional examples of paving, the reason for change of material or for the pattern is the result of some very practical reason. The opportunities for a decorative floor plane resulting from such considerations naturally should be maximized. Beazly, however, was writing in the 1960s when the prevailing sentiment was for subdued ornament and an almost total reliance upon the functional creed as the justification and excuse for patterning. St Mark's Square, Venice and the Campidoglio in Rome exploit and celebrate patterning if not for its own sake then for purely aesthetic reasons. These examples are not isolated. Throughout Italy and the Iberian peninsula there are pavings of intricate beauty, truly the 'rich rug' beneath the feet (Figures 5.6 and 5.13).

THE PAVED SURFACE

The main function of a paved area is to provide a hard, dry, non-slippery surface which will carry the

traffic load, both wheeled and pedestrian, without early disintegration. A change of traffic may therefore require a change of flooring material, and where this change occurs, careful use of materials offers an opportunity to create a decorative edge. The most common edge between vehicular and pedestrian traffic is the ubiquitous granite or concrete kerb with a drop in pavement level of ten to fifteen centimetres. If vehicular traffic is heavy then a double kerb may be an effective method of giving added pedestrian protection. Adding further parallel lines to the edge gives greater definition to the change of function and also added decorative effect. The kerbstone may be either upstanding or not, and a drainage channel can be added at the edge of the carriageway, in three bands of granite sets, for example. In addition, if space permits, a grass verge separating the pedestrian from the vehicular traffic (Figure 5.7).

Three practical functions of a pavement are to indicate ownership; to act as a hazard; or to give warning. Flooring material can be changed for any of these reasons. Patterning can be introduced when changing the flooring material and, if used consistently, a decorative rhythm is developed for the micro structure of the city. The floorscape has the potential to become a language which can be read, memorized and can impart meaning. The use of textured paving at road crossing points is essential to allow the blind and partially sighted to successfully negotiate dangerous points in the environment: in essence it is an extension of braille. As a concept it is just as useful for the fully sighted to negotiate the hazards of city life. Its use also adds a new aesthetic dimension to that experience. The use of setts in a flag stone pavement where a private road or drive crosses it to reach the street is a traditional and highly decorative way of indicating a hazard to the pedestrian. It immediately makes him or her aware that the pedestrian footpath ends (Figure 5.8). 'Ankle breaking' cobbles set in concrete is a modern technique to prevent pedestrians wandering onto a busy road (Figure 5.9). This use of cobbles,



5.7

Figure 5.7 Grass verge,
New Earswick, York



Figure 5.8 Obstruction
warning by textured paving

5.8