

Figure 6.30 Telephone box, London

Figure 6.31 Arch, China Town, Soho, London



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understanding of the city and therefore its management and use by the individual. An important question arises about the scope for, and desirability of, facilitating this process of district identification through the deliberate choice or design of distinct sets of street furniture for each district in the city. 'China Town' in London's Soho is an example where a policy of street furniture designed specifically for a given location appears to have been successful. The Chinese shops with signs in Chinese, the gateway and telephone kiosks, again in a Chinese style, give the place a unity and a successful decorative quality (Figure 6.31). Can the same be said for the Regency style fittings for London's Regent Street? Glancey (1992), for one, does not think so: 'There should be limits to the British obsession with heritage. When functional, workaday objects such as traffic lights, bus shelters and "No Entry" signs have to be dressed up in Regency fancy dress to keep us Quality Street-sweet, heritage has given way to idiocy. This is what has happened to

Regent Street, London, where a four million pound programme of public works by the Crown Commissioners, . . . has given us the world's first Regency traffic lights.' He regrets that the standard 'blackness' of street fittings associated with London was not used (Figure 6.32). 'If only the signs, lights etc were painted black - the traditional colour of London lampposts, railings and traffic lights - then at least the clutter of urban accessories would be subdued. The vile blue paintwork, however, clashes violently with the red of Regent Street's pillar boxes and buses, . . . the black of its taxis and the muted grey of its buildings and pavements.'

Most utilitarian street furniture is recent in origin with little if any historic precedent for design purposes. The eighteenth-century street would have been free from obstructions such as street furniture. The only exceptions would have been the occasional inn sign and local horse trough. Those utilitarian items, such as lampposts or bollards and chains, used occasionally to furnish the major civic



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spaces were few in number and well placed. The ironwork screen used for the protection of privacy or as an enclosure was carefully sited, as for example, at the corners of Place Stanislas in Nancy. In contrast to this orderly well placed street furniture, modern streets appear to be filled with a clutter of signs, kiosks, lampposts of various size and shape, overhead wires and advertisement hoardings. They are invariably placed with little consideration for their grouping and the effect they have on the street scene. Bringing order out of this chaos is a task of the urban designer. This is an aspect of city design which is beginning to receive the attention it deserves. The prophetic remarks of Adshead (1913d) are beginning to take effect: 'We are only



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commencing to realise that the placing of town furnishings both ornamental and useful can be made a potent factor in adding dignity, formality, and beauty to the public thoroughfare and "place".'

Adshead (1914a) later suggests that the Roman Candelabra is a precursor of the lamp standard or lamppost. This is probably true of the early lamp standards of Adshead's period which were associated initially with gas lighting. It is by no means true, however, of some of the simpler modern examples of tapering steel post surmounted by a globe. Such modern lampposts have more in common with the three elegant poles in front of the Basilica in the Piazza San Marco, Venice; close by in the Piazzetta are some beautifully sculptural light

Figure 6.32 Street furniture, Regent Street, London

Figure 6.33 Street furniture, Piazza of St Mark's, Venice