

Figure 8.14 The Zeil,
Frankfurt

Figure 8.15 Rusting steel
sculpture, Broadgate,
London



8.14



8.15

Broadgate in the City of London is an example of fine urban development accomplished by using a mixture of Modern and Post-modern design elements. The area is decorated by building façades which enclose a variety of squares. The public spaces are also used for the location of sculpture giving human scale to them. Broadgate contains two contrasting styles of city decoration. It has a 'high-tech' but decorative environment and also a derivative Post-modern decorative environment. Deciding which part of the development is most successful is a matter for individual taste. The effort to decorate the urban realm in both cases is a commendable achievement (Figures 8.15 to 8.17). The decorative quality of the spaces is in stark contrast to the grey

foreboding of Paternoster Square near St Paul's Cathedral.

In Birmingham there has been another major effort to revive a city centre and regain civic pride. Having been devastated by the intervention of the traffic engineer, Modernist architecture and the voracious commercial interests which spawned the humiliation of the 'Bull Ring', the city authorities are trying to counteract a past planning failure. Once again the main element used in this effort to revive the centre is a combination of an attractive floorscape, carefully selected street furniture and civic sculpture. The redesigned square uses sculpture, water and a changing ground plane to create a richly decorated multi-functional civic area.

Birmingham plans to create other new squares endowed with sculpture and enclosed by decorated façades. The austerity of the Modernist city is being rejected. Where possible the city is being remodelled in order to create a humane and decorated environment which has the approval of the general public (Figures 8.18 and 8.19).

CONCLUSION

Ornament and decoration in the city is expensive and involves the use of scarce human and material resources; it must, therefore, be used with economy and discretion. As a consequence some places in the city will be more decorative than others; some locations will be less decorated. The location of decoration should be part of a plan so that its impact can be maximized. A strategy and policy for the colour and decorative scheme for a city is a prime requirement for healing or unifying the city. Such a strategy could be based upon a Lynch type study; decoration being used to emphasize districts, paths, nodes, edges and landmarks (Lynch, 1960). Each city district should be analysed to reveal the colours and decorative effects which distinguish it from neighbouring areas and the details discovered therein, used as a basis for any future developments. The city paths and nodes should each be analysed to discover those elements of façade, floorscape and furniture by which they are currently distinguished. These local visual themes should be reinforced by all new additions. The city's landmarks and edges are locations where ornament can be used to great effect. It is on these special features that urban designers of the past have often used a wealth of decoration, for example, the great sculptural roofs associated with landmarks or the dramatic quayside landscaping of the waterfront.

Ornament and decoration whether it is on façade or floor plane, whether it is in street or square is of limited expanse compared with the undecorated backcloth. Its location has to be chosen with care.



8.16

Figure 8.16 Leaping Hare,
Broadgate, London
Figure 8.17 Broadgate,
London



8.17