

Mike Davis: 'Fortress LA' (1990)

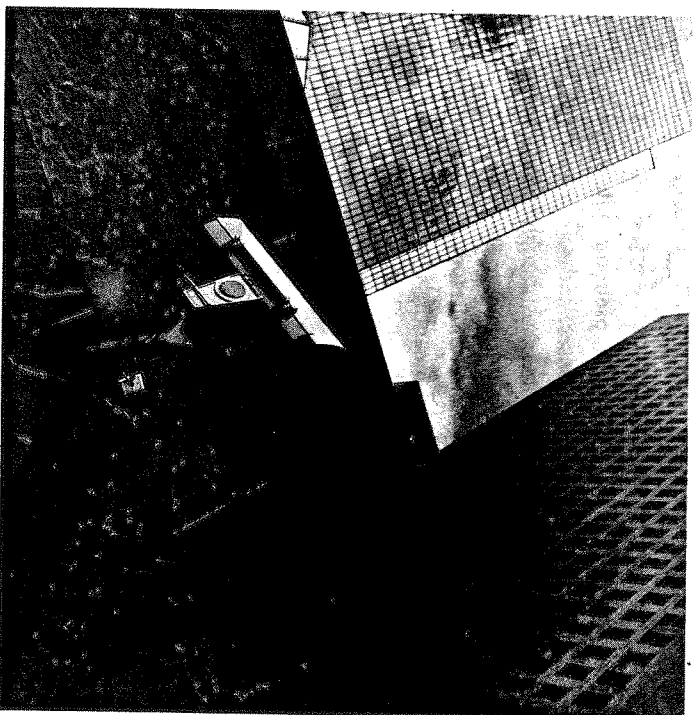
The carefully manicured lawns of Los Angeles's Westside sprout forests of ominous little signs warning: 'Armed Response! Even richer neighborhoods in the canyons and hillsides isolate themselves behind walls guarded by gun-toting private police and state-of-the-art electronic surveillance. Downtown, a publicly-subsidized 'urban renaissance' has raised the nation's largest corporate citadel, segregated from the poor neighborhoods around it by a monumental architectural glacis. In Hollywood, celebrity architect Frank Gehry, renowned for his 'humanism', apothecizes the siege look in a library designed to resemble a foreign-legion fort. In the Westlake district and the San Fernando Valley the Los Angeles Police barricade streets and seal off poor neighborhoods as part of their 'war on drugs'. In Watts, developer Alexander Haagen demonstrates his strategy for recolonizing inner-city retail markets: a panopticon shopping mall surrounded by staked metal fences and a substation of the LAPD in a central surveillance tower. Finally on the horizon of the next millennium, an ex-chief of police crusades for an anti-crime 'giant eye' - a geo-synchronous law enforcement satellite - while other cops discreetly tend versions of 'Garden Plot', a hoary but still viable 1960s plan for a law-and-order armageddon.

Welcome to post-liberal Los Angeles, where the defense of luxury lifestyles is translated into a proliferation of new repressions in space and movement, undergirded by the ubiquitous 'armed response'. This obsession with physical security systems, and, collaterally, with the architectural policing of social boundaries, has become a zeitgeist of urban restructuring, a master narrative in the emerging built environment of the 1990s. Yet contemporary urban theory, whether debating the role of electronic technologies in precipitating 'postmodern space', or discussing the dispersion of urban functions across poly-centered metropolitan 'galaxies', has been strangely silent about the militarization of city life so grimly visible at the street level. Hollywood's pop apocalypses and pulp science fiction have been more realistic, and politically perceptive, in representing the programmed hardening of the urban surface in the wake of the social polarizations of the Reagan era. Images of carceral inner cities (*Escape from New York*, *Running Man*), high-tech police death squads (*Blade Runner*), sentient buildings (*Die Hard*), urban bantustans (*They Live*), Vietnam-like street wars (*Colors*), and so on, only extrapolate from actually existing trends.

Such dystopian visions grasp the extent to which today's pharaonic scales of residential and commercial security supplant residual hopes for urban reform and social integration. The dire predictions of Richard Nixon's 1969 National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence have been tragically fulfilled: we live in 'fortress cities' brutally divided between 'fortified cells' of affluent society and 'places of terror' where the police battle the criminalized poor.¹ The 'Second Civil War' that began in the long hot summers of the 1960s has been institutionalized into the very structure of urban space. The old liberal paradigm of social control, attempting to balance repression with reform, has long been superseded by a rhetoric of social warfare that calculates the interests of the urban poor and the middle classes as a zero-sum game. In cities like Los Angeles, on the bad edge of postmodernity, one observes an unprecedented tendency to merge urban design, architecture and the police apparatus into a single, comprehensive security effort.

This epochal coalescence has far-reaching consequences for the social relations of the built environment. In the first place, the market provision of 'security' generates its own paranoid demand. 'Security' becomes a positional good defined by income access to private 'protective services' and membership in some hardened residential enclave or restricted suburb. As a prestige symbol – and sometimes as the decisive borderline between the merely well-off and the 'truly rich' – 'security' has less to do with personal safety than with the degree of personal insulation, in residential, work, consumption and travel environments, from 'unsavory' groups and individuals, even crowds in general.

Secondly, as William Whyte has observed of social intercourse in New York, 'fear proves itself'. The social perception of threat becomes a function of the security mobilization itself, not crime rates. Where there is an actual rising arc of street violence, as in Southcentral Los Angeles or Downtown Washington D.C., most of the carnage is self-contained within ethnic or class boundaries. Yet white middle-class imagination, absent from any first-hand knowledge of inner-city conditions, magnifies the perceived threat through a demonological lens. Surveys show that Milwaukee suburbanites are just as worried about violent crime as inner-city Washingtonians, despite a twenty-fold difference in relative levels of mayhem. The media, whose function in this arena is to bury and obscure the daily economic



FORTRESS L.A.

Bunker Hill

violence of the city, ceaselessly throw up spectres of criminal underclasses and psychotic stalkers. Sensationalized accounts of killer youth gangs high on crack and shrilly racist evocations of marauding Willie Hortons foment the moral panics that reinforce and justify urban apartheid.

Moreover, the neo-military syntax of contemporary architecture insinuates violence and conjures imaginary dangers. In many instances the semiotics of so-called 'defensible space' are just about as subtle as a swaggering white cop. Today's upscale, pseudo-public spaces – sumptuary malls, office centers, culture acropolises, and so on – are full of invisible signs warning off the underclass 'Other'. Although architectural critics are usually oblivious to how the built environment contributes to segregation, pariah groups – whether poor Latino families, young Black men, or elderly homeless white females – read the meaning immediately.

THE DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC SPACE

The universal and ineluctable consequence of this crusade to secure the city is the destruction of accessible public space. The contemporary opprobrium attached to the term 'street person' is in itself a harrowing index of the devaluation of public spaces. To reduce contact with untouchables, urban redevelopment has converted once vital pedestrian streets into traffic sewers and transformed public parks into temporary receptacles for the homeless and wretched. The American city, as many critics have recognized, is being systematically turned inside out – or, rather, outside in. The valorized spaces of the new megastuctures and super-malls are concentrated in the center, street frontage is denuded, public activity is sorted into strictly functional compartments, and circulation is internalized in corridors under the gaze of private police.²

The privatization of the architectural public realm, moreover, is shadowed by parallel restructurings of electronic space, as heavily policed, pay-access 'information orders', elite data-bases and subscription cable services appropriate parts of the invisible agora. Both processes, of course, mirror the deregulation of the economy and the recession of non-market entitlements. The decline of urban liberalism has been accompanied by the death of what might be called the 'Olmstedian vision' of public space.

Frederick Law Olmsted, it will be recalled, was North America's Haussmann, as well as the Father of Central Park. In the wake of Manhattan's 'Commune' of 1863, the great Draft Riot, he conceived public landscapes and parks as social safety-valves, *mixing* classes and ethnicities in common (bourgeois) recreations and enjoyments. As Manfredo Tafuri has shown in his well-known study of Rockefeller Center, the same principle animated the construction of the canonical urban spaces of the La Guardia-Roosevelt era.³

This reformist vision of public space – as the emollient of class struggle, if not the bedrock of the American *polis* – is now as obsolete as Keynesian nostrums of full employment. In regard to the 'mixing' of classes, contemporary urban America is more like Victorian England than Walt Whitman's or La Guardia's New York. In Los Angeles, once-upon-a-time a demi-paradise of free beaches, luxurious parks, and 'cruising strips', genuinely democratic space is all but extinct. The Oz-like archipelago of Westside pleasure domes – a continuum of tony malls, arts centers and gourmet strips – is reciprocally dependent upon the social imprisonment of the third-world service proletariat who live in increasingly repressive ghettos and barrios. In a city of several million yearning immigrants, public amenities are radically shrinking, parks are becoming derelict and beaches more segregated, libraries and playgrounds are closing, youth congregations of ordinary kinds are banned, and the streets are becoming more desolate and dangerous.

Unsurprisingly, as in other American cities, municipal policy has taken its lead from the security offensive and the middle-class demand for increased spatial and social insulation. De facto disinvestment in traditional public space and recreation has supported the shift of fiscal resources to corporate-defined redevelopment priorities. A pliant city government – in this case ironically professing to represent a bi-racial coalition of liberal whites and Blacks – has collaborated in the massive privatization of public space and the subsidization of new, racist enclaves (benignly described as 'urban villages'). Yet most current, giddy discussions of the 'postmodern' scene in Los Angeles neglect entirely these overbearing aspects of counter-urbanization and counter-insurgency. A triumphal gloss – 'urban renaissance', 'city of the future', and so on – is laid over the brutalization of inner-city neighborhoods and the increasing South Africanization of

its spatial relations. Even as the walls have come down in Eastern Europe, they are being erected all over Los Angeles.

The observations that follow take as their thesis the existence of this new class war (sometimes a continuation of the race war of the 1960s) at the level of the built environment. Although this is not a comprehensive account, which would require a thorough analysis of economic and political dynamics, these images and instances are meant to convince the reader that urban form is indeed following a repressive function in the political furrows of the Reagan-Bush era. Los Angeles, in its usual prefigurative mode, offers an especially disquieting catalogue of the emergent liaisons between architecture and the American police state.

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

The first militarist of space in Los Angeles was General Otis of the *Times*. Declaring himself at war with labor, he infused his surroundings with an unrelentingly bellicose air:

He called his home in Los Angeles the Bivouac. Another house was known as the Outpost. The *Times* was known as the Fortress. The staff of the paper was the Phalanx. The *Times* building itself was more fortress than newspaper plant, there were turrets, battlements, sentry boxes. Inside he stored fifty rifles.⁴

A great, menacing bronze eagle was the *Times*'s crown; a small, functional cannon was installed on the hood of Otis's touring car to intimidate onlookers. Not surprisingly, this overwrought display of aggression produced a response in kind. On 1 October 1910 the heavily fortified *Times* headquarters — citadel of the open shop on the West Coast — was destroyed in a catastrophic explosion blamed on union saboteurs.

Eighty years later, the spirit of General Otis has returned to subtly pervade Los Angeles's new 'postmodern' Downtown: the emerging Pacific Rim financial complex which cascades, in rows of skyscrapers, from Bunker Hill southward along the Figueroa corridor. Redeveloped with public tax increments under the aegis of the powerful and largely unaccountable Community Redevelopment Agency, the Downtown project is one of the

largest postwar urban designs in North America. Site assemblage and clearing on a vast scale, with little mobilized opposition, have resurrected land values, upon which big developers and off-shore capital (increasingly Japanese) have planted a series of billion-dollar, block-square mega-structures: Crocker Center, the Bonaventure Hotel and Shopping Mall, the World Trade Center, the Broadway Plaza, Arco Center, Citicorp Plaza, California Plaza, and so on. With historical landscapes erased, with mega-structures and superblocks as primary components, and with an increasingly dense and self-contained circulation system, the new financial district is best conceived as a single, demonically self-referential hyper-structure, a Miesian skyscape raised to dementia.

Like similar megalomaniac complexes, tethered to fragmented and desolated Downtowns (for instance, the Renaissance Center in Detroit, the Peachtree and Omni Centers in Atlanta, and so on), Bunker Hill and the Figueroa corridor have provoked a storm of liberal objections against their abuse of scale and composition, their denigration of street landscape, and their confiscation of so much of the vital life activity of the center, now sequestered within subterranean concourses or privatized malls. Sam Hall Kaplan, the crusty urban critic of the *Times*, has been indefatigable in denouncing the anti-pedestrian bias of the new corporate citadel, with its fascist obliteration of street frontage. In his view the superimposition of 'hermetically sealed fortresses' and air-dropped 'pieces of suburbia' has 'dammed the rivers of life' Downtown.⁵

Yet Kaplan's vigorous defense of pedestrian democracy remains grounded in hackneyed liberal complaints about 'bland design' and 'elitist planning practices'. Like most architectural critics, he rails against the oversights of urban design without recognizing the dimension of foresight, of explicit repressive intention, which has its roots in Los Angeles's ancient history of class and race warfare. Indeed, when Downtown's new 'Gold Coast' is viewed en bloc from the standpoint of its interactions with other social areas and landscapes in the central city, the 'fortress effect' emerges, not as an inadvertent failure of design, but as deliberate socio-spatial strategy.

The goals of this strategy may be summarized as a double repression: to raise all association with Downtown's past and to prevent any articulation with the non-Anglo urbanity of its future. Everywhere on the perimeter of

redevelopment this strategy takes the form of a brutal architectural edge or glacis that defines the new Downtown as a citadel vis-à-vis the rest of the central city. Los Angeles is unusual amongst major urban renewal centers in preserving, however negligently, most of its circa 1900-30 Beaux Arts commercial core. At immense public cost, the corporate headquarters and financial district was shifted from the old Broadway-Spring corridor six blocks west to the greenfield site created by destroying the Bunker Hill residential neighborhood. To emphasize the 'security' of the new Downtown, virtually all the traditional pedestrian links to the old center, including the famous Angels' Flight funicular railroad, were removed.

The logic of this entire operation is revealing. In other cities developers might have attempted to articulate the new skyscape and the old, exploiting the latter's extraordinary inventory of theaters and historic buildings to create a gentrified history - a gaslight district, Faneuil Market or Ghirardelli Square - as a support to middle-class residential colonization. But Los Angeles's redevelopers viewed property values in the old Broadway core as irreversibly eroded by the area's very centrality to public transport, and especially by its heavy use by Black and Mexican poor. In the wake of the Watts Rebellion, and the perceived Black threat to crucial nodes of white power (spelled out in lurid detail in the McCone Commission Report), re-segregated spatial security became the paramount concern.⁵ The Los Angeles Police Department abetted the flight of business from Broadway to the fortified redoubts of Bunker Hill by spreading scare literature typifying Black teenagers as dangerous gang members.⁷

As a result, redevelopment massively reproduced spatial apartheid. The moat of the Harbor Freeway and the regraded palisades of Bunker Hill cut off the new financial core from the poor immigrant neighborhoods that surround it on every side. Along the base of California Plaza, Hill Street became a local Berlin Wall separating the publicly subsidized luxury of Bunker Hill from the hitherto world of Broadway, now reclaimed by Latino immigrants as their primary shopping and entertainment street. Because politically connected speculators are now redeveloping the northern end of the Broadway corridor (sometimes known as 'Bunker Hill East'), the CRA is promising to restore pedestrian linkages to the Hill in the 1990s, including the Angels' Flight incline railroad. This, of course, only dramatizes the current bias against accessibility - that is to say, against any spatial interaction between old and new, poor and rich, except in

the framework of gentrification or recolonization.⁸ Although a few white-collar ventures into the Grand Central Market - a popular emporium of tropical produce and fresh foods - Latino shoppers or Saturday strollers never circulate in the Gucci precincts above Hill Street. The occasional appearance of a destitute street nomad in Broadway Plaza or in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art sets off a quiet panic; video cameras turn on their mounts and security guards adjust their belts.

Photographs of the old Downtown in its prime show mixed crowds of Anglo, Black and Latino pedestrians of different ages and classes. The contemporary Downtown 'renaissance' is designed to make such heterogeneity virtually impossible. It is intended not just to 'kill the street' as Kaplan fears, but to 'kill the crowd', to eliminate that democratic admixture on the pavements and in the parks that Olmsted believed was America's antidote to European class polarizations. The Downtown hyperstructure - like some Buckminster Fuller post-Holocaust fantasy - is programmed to ensure a seamless continuum of middle-class work, consumption and recreation, without unwonted exposure to Downtown's working-class street environments.⁹ Indeed the totalitarian semiotics of ramps and battlements, reflective glass and elevated pedways, rebukes any affinity or sympathy between different architectural or human orders. As in Oti's fortress Times Building, this is the architectonics of class war.

Let this seem too extreme, consider *Urban Land* magazine's recent description of the profit-driven formula that across the United States has linked together clustered development, social homogeneity, and a secure 'Downtown image':

HOW TO OVERCOME FEAR OF CRIME IN DOWNTOWNS

Create a Dense, Compact, Multifunctional Core Area. A downtown can be designed and developed to make visitors feel that it - or a significant portion of it - is attractive and the type of place that 'respectable people' like themselves tend to frequent. . . . A core downtown area that is compact, densely developed and multifunctional will concentrate people, giving them more activities. . . . The activities offered in this core area will determine what 'type' of people will be strolling its sidewalks; locating offices and housing for middle- and upper-income residents in or near the core area can assure a high percentage of 'respectable', law-abiding pedestrians. Such an attractive redeveloped core area would also be large enough to affect the downtown's overall image.¹⁰

SADISTIC STREET ENVIRONMENTS

This conscious 'hardening' of the city surface against the poor is especially brazen in the Manichean treatment of Downtown microcosms. In his famous study of the 'social life of small urban spaces', William Whyte makes the point that the quality of any urban environment can be measured, first of all, by whether there are convenient, comfortable places for pedestrians to sit.¹¹ This maxim has been warmly taken to heart by designers of the high-corporate precincts of Bunker Hill and the emerging 'urban village' of South Park. As part of the city's policy of subsidizing white-collar residential colonization in Downtown, it has spent, or plans to spend, tens of millions of dollars of diverted tax revenue on enticing, 'soft' environments in these areas. Planners envision an opulent complex of squares, fountains, world-class public art, exotic shabby, and avant-garde street furniture along a Hope Street pedestrian corridor. In the propaganda of official boosters, nothing is taken as a better index of Downtown's 'liveability' than the idyll of office workers and upscale tourists lounging or napping in the terraced gardens of California Plaza, the 'Spanish Steps' or Grand Hope Park.

In stark contrast, a few blocks away, the city is engaged in a merciless struggle to make public facilities and spaces as 'unliveable' as possible for the homeless and the poor. The persistence of thousands of street people on the fringes of Bunker Hill and the Civic Center sours the image of designer Downtown living and betrays the laboriously constructed illusion of a Downtown 'renaissance'. City Hall then retaliates with its own variant of low-intensity warfare.¹²

Although city leaders periodically essay schemes for removing indigents *en masse* - deporting them to a poor farm on the edge of the desert, confining them in camps in the mountains, or memorably, interning them on a derelict ferry at the Harbor - such 'final solutions' have been blocked by councilmembers fearful of the displacement of the homeless into their districts. Instead the city, self-consciously adopting the idiom of urban cold war, promotes the 'containment' (official term) of the homeless in Skid Row along Fifth Street east of the Broadway, systematically transforming the neighborhood into an outdoor poorhouse. But this containment strategy breeds its own vicious circle of contradiction. By condensing the mass of the desperate and helpless together in such a small space, and denying adequate

housing, official policy has transformed Skid Row into probably the most dangerous ten square blocks in the world - ruled by a grisly succession of 'Slashers', 'Night Stalkers' and more ordinary predators.¹³ Every night on Skid Row is Friday the 13th, and, unsurprisingly, many of the homeless seek to escape the 'Nickel' during the night at all costs, searching safer niches in other parts of Downtown. The city in turn tightens the noose with increased police harassment and ingenious design deterrents.

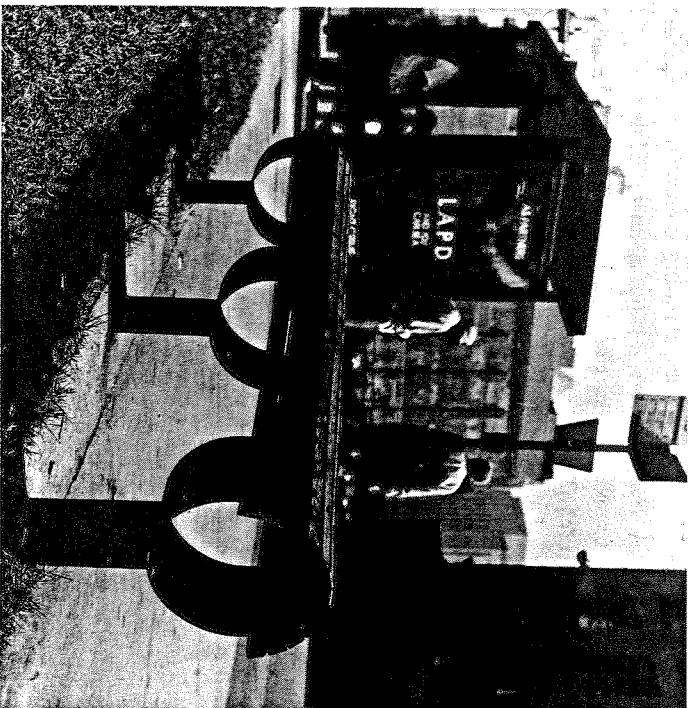
One of the most common, but mind-numbing, of these deterrents is the Rapid Transit District's new barrelshaped bus bench that offers a minimal surface for uncomfortable sitting, while making sleeping utterly impossible. Such 'bumpproof' benches are being widely introduced on the periphery of Skid Row. Another invention, worthy of the Grand Guignol, is the aggressive deployment of outdoor sprinklers. Several years ago the city opened a 'Skid Row Park' along lower Fifth Street, on a corner of Hell. To ensure that the park was not used for sleeping - that is to say, to guarantee that it was mainly utilized for drug dealing and prostitution - the city installed an elaborate overhead sprinkler system programmed to drench unsuspecting sleepers at random times during the night. The system was immediately copied by some local businessmen in order to drive the homeless away from adjacent public sidewalks. Meanwhile restaurants and markets have responded to the homeless by building ornate enclosures to protect their refuse. Although no one in Los Angeles has yet proposed adding cyanide to the garbage, as happened in Phoenix a few years back, one popular seafood restaurant has spent \$12,000 to build the ultimate bag-lady-proof trash cage: made of three-quarter inch steel rod with alloy locks and vicious outturned spikes to safeguard priceless moldering fishheads and stale french fries.

Public toilets, however, are the real Eastern Front of the Downtown war on the poor. Los Angeles, as a matter of deliberate policy, has fewer available public lavatories than any major North American city. On the advice of the LAPD (who actually sit on the design board of at least one major Downtown redevelopment project),¹⁴ the Community Redevelopment Agency bulldozed the remaining public toilet in Skid Row. Agency planners then agonized for months over whether to include a 'free-standing public toilet' in their design for South Park. As CRA Chairman Jim Wood later admitted, the decision not to include the toilet was a 'policy decision

and not a design decision'. The CRA Downtown prefers the solution of 'quasi-public restrooms' - meaning toilets in restaurants, art galleries and office buildings - which can be made available to tourists and office workers while being denied to vagrants and other unsuitables.¹⁵ The toiletless no-man's-land east of Hill Street in Downtown is also barren of outside water sources for drinking or washing. A common and troubling sight these days are the homeless men - many of them young Salvadorean refugees - washing in and even drinking from the sewer effluent which flows down the concrete channel of the Los Angeles River on the eastern edge of Downtown.

Where the itineraries of Downtown powerbrokers unavoidably intersect with the habitats of the homeless or the working poor, as in the previously mentioned zone of gentrification along the northern Broadway corridor, extraordinary design precautions are being taken to ensure the physical separation of the different humanities. For instance, the CRA brought in the Los Angeles Police to design '24-hour, state-of-the-art security' for the two new parking structures that serve the Los Angeles Times and Ronald Reagan State Office buildings. In contrast to the mean streets outside, the parking structures contain beautifully landscaped lawns or 'microparks', and in one case, a food court and a historical exhibit. Moreover, both structures are designed as 'confidence-building' circulation systems - miniature paradigms of privatization - which allow white-collar workers to walk from car to office, or from car to boutique, with minimum exposure to the public street. The Broadway Spring Center, in particular, which links the Ronald Reagan Building to the proposed 'Grand Central Square' at Third and Broadway, has been warmly praised by architectural critics for adding greenery and art (a banal has relief) to parking. It also adds a huge dose of menace - armed guards, locked gates, and security cameras - to scare away the homeless and poor.

The cold war on the streets of Downtown is ever escalating. The police, lobbied by Downtown merchants and developers, have broken up every attempt by the homeless and their allies to create safe havens or self-organized encampments. 'Justiceville', founded by homeless activist Ted Hayes, was roughly dispersed; when its inhabitants attempted to find refuge at Venice Beach, they were arrested at the behest of the local councilperson (a renowned environmentalist) and sent back to the inferno of Skid Row.



'BUM-PROOF' BUS BENCH
Hill Street, Downtown

The city's own brief experiment with legalized camping – a grudging response to a series of exposure deaths in the cold winter of 1987¹⁶ – was ended abruptly after only four months to make way for construction of a transit repair yard. Current policy seems to involve a perverse play upon Zola's famous irony about the 'equal rights' of the rich and the poor to sleep out rough. As the head of the city planning commission explained the official line to incredulous reporters, it is not against the law to sleep on the street per se, 'only to erect any sort of protective shelter'. To enforce this prescription against 'cardboard condos', the LAPD periodically sweep the Nickel, confiscating shelters and other possessions, and arresting resisters. Such cynical repression has turned the majority of the homeless into urban bedouins. They are visible all over Downtown, pushing a few pathetic possessions in purloined shopping carts, always fugitive and in motion, pressed between the official policy of containment and the increasing sadism of Downtown streets.¹⁷

FRANK GEHRY AS DIRTY HARRY

If the contemporary search for bourgeois security can be read in the design of bus benches and mega-structures, it is also visible at the level of *auteur*. No recent architect has so ingeniously elaborated the urban security function or so brazenly embraced the resulting *frisson* as Los Angeles's Pritzker Prize laureate, Frank Gehry. As we saw earlier, he has become one of the principal 'imagineers' (in the Disney sense) of the neo-boosterism of the 1990s. He is particularly adept as a crossover, not merely between architecture and modern art, but also between older, vaguely radical and contemporary, basically cynical styles. Thus his portfolio is at once a principled repudiation of postmodernism and one of its cleverest sublimations; a nostalgic evocation of revolutionary constructivism and a mercenary celebration of bourgeois-decadent minimalism. These amphibian shifts and paradoxical nuances in Gehry's work sustain a booming cottage industry of Gehry-interpretation, mostly effused with hyperbolic admiration.

Yet, as suggested in chapter one, Gehry's strongest suit may simply be his straightforward exploitation of rough urban environments, and his



THE NEW COMMANDMENT
Vermont near Olympic

blatant incorporation of their harshest edges and detritus as powerful representational elements in his work. Affectionately described by colleagues as an 'old socialist' or 'street-fighter with a heart', much of his most interesting work is utterly unromantic and anti-idealistic.¹⁸ Unlike his popular front mentors of the 1940s, Gehry makes little pretense at architectural reformism or 'design for democracy'. He boasts of trying 'to make the best with the reality of things'. With sometimes chilling luminosity, his work clarifies the underlying relations of repression, surveillance and exclusion that characterize the fragmented, paranoid spatiality towards which Los Angeles seems to aspire.

A very early example of Gehry's new urban realism was his 1964 solution of the problem of how to insert high property values and sumptuary spaces into decaying neighborhoods. His Danziger Studio in Hollywood is the pioneer instance of what has become an entire species of Los Angeles 'stealth houses', dissimulating their luxurious qualities with proletarian or gangster facades. The street frontage of the Danziger - on Melrose in the bad old days before its current gourmet-gulch renaissance - was simply a massive gray wall, treated with a rough finish to ensure that it would collect dust from passing traffic and weather into a simulacrum of nearby porn studios and garages. Gehry was explicit in his search for a design that was 'introverted and fortress-like' with the silent aura of a 'dumb box'.¹⁹

'Dumb boxes' and screen walls form an entire cycle of Gehry's work, ranging from his American School of Dance (1968) to his Gemini G.E.I. (1979), both in Hollywood. His most seminal design, however, was his walled town center for Cochiti Lake, New Mexico (1973): here ice-blue ramparts of awesome severity enclose an entire community (a plan replicated on a smaller scale in the 1976 Jung Institute in Los Angeles). In each of these instances, melodrama is generated by the antithesis between the fortified exteriors, set against 'unappealing neighborhoods' or deserts, and the opulent interiors, open to the sky by clerestories and lightwells. Gehry's walled compounds and cities, in other words, offer powerful metaphors for the retreat from the street and the introversion of space that characterized the design backlash against the urban insurrections of the 1960s.

This problematic was renewed in 1984 in his design of the Loyola Law School located on the western edge of Downtown Los Angeles in the

largest Central American barrio in the United States. The inner-city situation of the Loyola campus confronted Gehry with an explicit choice between the risks of creating a genuine public space, extending into the community, or choosing the security of a defensible enclave, as in his previous work. The radical, or simply idealist, architect might have gambled on opening the campus to the adjacent community, giving it some substantive stake in the design. Instead, as an admiring critic explained, Gehry chose a fundamentally neo-conservative design that was:

open, but not *too open*. The South Instructional Hall and the chapel show solid backs to Olympic Boulevard, and with the anonymous street sides of the Burns Building, form a gateway that is neither forbidding nor overly welcoming. It is simply there, like everything else in the neighborhood.²⁰

(This description considerably understates the forbidding qualities of the campus's formidable steel stake fencing, concrete bloc ziggurat, and stark frontage walls.)

But if the Danziger Studio camouflages itself, and the Cochiti Lake and Loyola designs bunch frontage in stern glares, Gehry's baroque fortified Frances Howard Goldwyn Regional Branch Library in Hollywood (1984) positively taunts potential trespassers 'to make my day'. This is undoubtedly the most menacing library ever built, a bizarre hybrid (on the outside) of dry-docked dreadnought and Gunga Din fort. With its fifteen-foot security walls of stucco-covered concrete block, its anti-graffiti barricades covered in ceramic tile, its sunken entrance protected by ten-foot steel stacks, and its stylized sentry boxes perched precariously on each side, the Goldwyn Library (influenced by Gehry's 1980 high-security design for the US Chancellery in Damascus) projects the same kind of macho exaggeration as Dirty Harry's 44 Magnum.

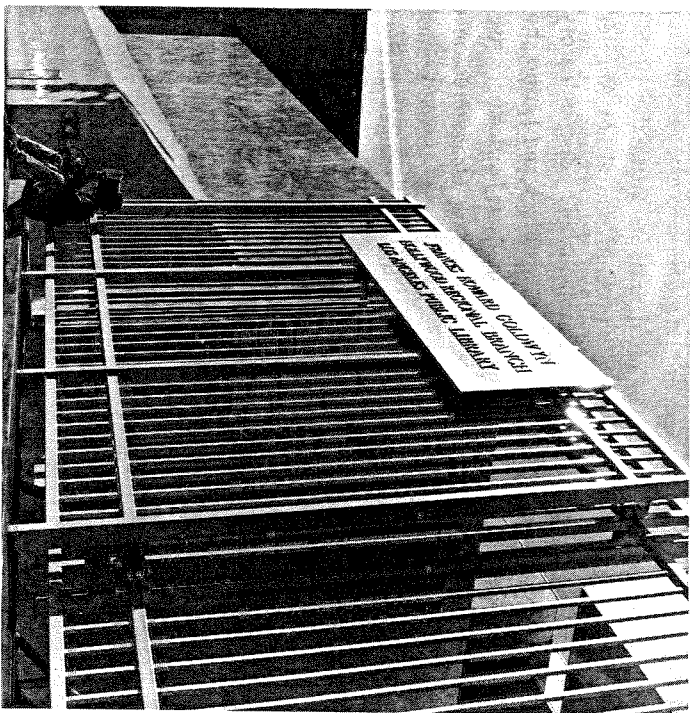
Predictably, some of Gehry's intoxicated admirers have swooned over this Beirutized structure as 'generous' and 'inviting', 'the old-fashioned kind of library', and so on. They absurdly miss the point.²¹ The previous Hollywood Regional Branch Library had been destroyed by arson, and the Samuel Goldwyn Foundation, which endows this collection of filmland memorabilia, was fixated on physical security. Gehry accepted a commission to design a structure that was inherently 'vandalproof'. The

curiosity, of course, is his rejection of the low-profile, high-tech security systems that most architects subtly integrate in their blueprints. He chose instead a high-profile, low-tech approach that maximally foregrounds the security functions as motifs of the design. There is no dissimulation of function by form; quite the opposite, Gehry lets it all hang out. How playful or mordantly witty you may find the resulting effect depends on your existential position. The Goldwyn Library relentlessly interpellates a demonic Other (arsonist, graffitiist, invader) whom it reflects back on surrounding streets and street people. It coldly saturates its immediate environment, which is seedy but not particularly hostile, with its own arrogant paranoia.

Yet paranoia could be a misnomer, for the adjacent streets are a battleground. Several years ago the *Los Angeles Times* broke the sordid story about how the entertainment conglomerates and a few large landowners, monopolizing land ownership in this part of Hollywood, had managed to capture control of the redevelopment process. Their plan, still the object of controversy, is to use eminent domain and public tax increments to clear the poor (increasingly refugees from Central America) from the streets of Hollywood and reap the huge windfalls from 'upgrading' the region into a glitzy theme-park for international tourism.²² Within this strategy, the Goldwyn Library - like Gehry's earlier walled compounds - is a kind of architectural fire-base, a beachhead for gentrification. Its soaring, light-filled interiors surrounded by bellicose barricades speak volumes about how public architecture in America is literally being turned inside out, in the service of 'security' and profit.

THE PANOPTICON MALL

In other local instances, however, the 'fortress' is being used to recapture the poor as consumers. If the Goldwyn Library is a 'shining example of the possibilities of public and private-sector cooperation', then developer Alexander Haagen's inner-city malls are truly stellar instances. Haagen, whose career began as a jukebox distributor in the honky-tonks of Wilmington, made his initial fortune selling corner lots to oil companies (since recycled as mini-malls). He now controls the largest retail



DIRTY HARRY'S LIBRARY
Goldwyn Library, Hollywood

development empire in Southern California, responsible for more than forty shopping centers. As we saw in chapter two, Haagen is a savvy political donor who swings with both Democrats and Republicans. He is also the past master at exploiting public-sector redevelopment for private gain – or, if you prefer, ‘the father of the inner city’s rebirth’.

He was the first major developer in the nation to grasp the latent profit potentials of abandoned inner-city retail markets. After the 1965 Watts Rebellion the handful of large retailers in Southcentral Los Angeles took flight while viable small businesses were asphyxiated by discriminatory bank ‘redlining’ practices. As a result, half a million Black and Latino shoppers were forced to commute to distant regional malls or bordering white areas even for ordinary grocery and prescription shopping. Haagen reasoned that a retail developer prepared to return to the inner city could monopolize very high sales volumes. Aware of the accumulating anger of the Black community against decades of benign neglect by redevelopment authorities, he also calculated that he could induce the city to subsidize this commercial recolonization. While the Community Redevelopment Agency had raced ahead to assemble land for billionaire developers Downtown, it had floundered in Watts for years, unable to attract a single supermarket to anchor a proposed neighborhood shopping center. Haagen recognized that the Bradley regime, in unprecedented hot water with its Southcentral constituency, would handsomely reward any private-sector initiative that could cut the Gordian knot of the ‘anchor tenant problem’. His ingenious solution, which won national acclaim from the commercial development industry, was a comprehensive ‘security-oriented design and management strategy’.²³

The first move was made in 1979 when Haagen Development took title over an old Sears site at Vermont and Slauson, in the heart of Southcentral. Then in 1983 the redevelopment agency turned over to him the completion of its long-delayed Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Watts. A year later he won the bid for the \$120 million refurbishing and expansion of the Crenshaw Plaza in Baldwin Hills, followed by a County contract to create a shopping complex in the Willowbrook area just south of Watts. In each case the guarantee of fail-safe physical security was the *sine qua non* in persuading retailers and franchisees (and their insurers) to take up leases. The prototype plan shared by all four shopping centers plagiarizes brazenly

from Jeremy Bentham’s renowned nineteenth-century design for the ‘panopticon prison’ with its economical central surveillance. Consider, for example, the layout of Haagen’s Watts center:

The King center site is surrounded by an eight-foot-high, wrought-iron fence comparable to security fences found at the perimeters of private estates and exclusive residential communities. Video cameras equipped with motion detectors are positioned near entrances and throughout the shopping center. The entire center, including parking lots, can be bathed in bright four-foot candle lighting at the flip of the switch.

There are six entrances to the center: three entry points for autos, two service gates, and one pedestrian walkway. The pedestrian and auto entries have gates that are opened at 6:30 a.m. and closed at 10:30 p.m. The service area located at the rear of the property is enclosed with a six-foot-high concrete block wall; both service gates remain closed and are under closed-circuit video surveillance, equipped for two-way voice communications, and operated for deliveries by remote control from a security ‘observatory’. Infra-red beams at the bases of light fixtures detect intruders who might circumvent video cameras by climbing over the wall.²⁴

The ‘unobtrusive’ panopticon observatory is both eye and brain of this complex security system. (In the Willowbrook center it is actually hidden above a public library branch.) It contains the headquarters of the shopping center manager, a substation of the LAPD, and a dispatch operator who monitors the video and audio systems as well as maintaining communication ‘with other secure shopping centers tied into the system, and with the police and fire departments’. At any time of the week, day or night, there are at least four center security guards on duty: one at the observatory and three on foot patrol. They are trained and backed up by the regular LAPD officers operating from the substation in the observatory.

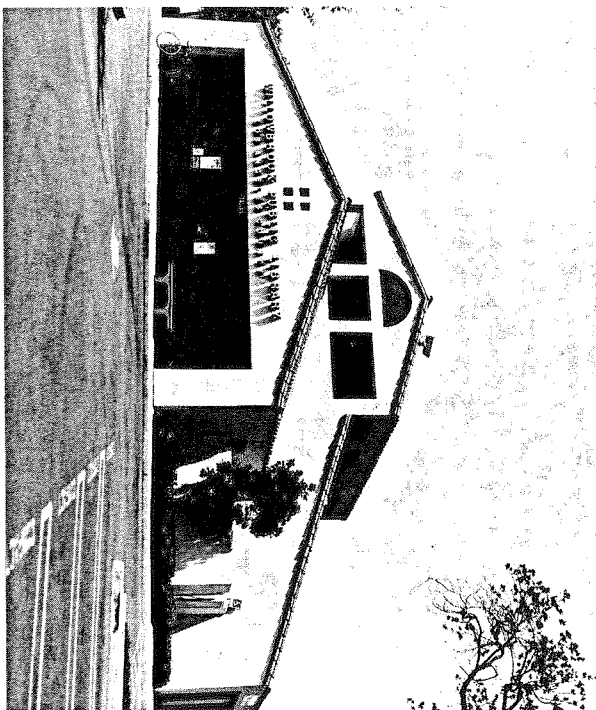
While these security measures may seem extraordinary, shopping center security issues have risen to the forefront of management’s concerns during the last few years. With insurance carriers reviewing the security operations of shopping centers before writing new policies or even renewing existing ones, and, in some cases, insisting on upgraded security programs as a condition of insurance, centers in locations other than inner-city neighborhoods have started to focus on security operations as an integral part of their design and management strategy. Indeed protecting shopping center owners and managers from lawsuits can make a strong security program extremely profitable over the long run.²⁴

These centers, as expected, have been bonanzas, averaging annual sales of more than \$350 per leasable square foot, as compared to about \$200 for their suburban equivalents.²⁵ Moreover Haagen has reaped the multiple windfalls of tax breaks, federal and city grants, massive free publicity, subsidized tenants and sixty- to ninety-year ground leases. No wonder he has been able to boast: 'We've proved that the only color that counts in business is green. There are huge opportunities and huge profits to be made in these depressed inner-city areas of America that have been abandoned.'²⁶

Meanwhile the logic of 'Haagenization' has been extended to the housing as well as shopping areas of the ghetto. The counterpart of the mall-as-panopticon-prison is the housing-project-as-strategic-hamlet. The Imperial Courts Housing Project, just down the road from the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, has recently been fortified with fencing, obligatory identity passes and a substation of the LAPD. Visitors are stopped and frisked, while the police routinely order residents back into their apartments at night. Such is the loss of freedom that public housing tenants must now endure as the price of 'security'.

FROM RENTACOP TO ROBCCOP

The security-driven logic of urban enclavization finds its most popular expression in the frenetic efforts of Los Angeles's affluent neighborhoods to insulate home values and lifestyles. As we saw in the last chapter, new luxury developments outside the city limits have often become fortress cities, complete with encompassing walls, restricted entry points with guard posts, overlapping private and public police services, and even privatized roadways. It is simply impossible for ordinary citizens to invade the 'cities' of Hidden Hills, Bradbury, Rancho Mirage or Rolling Hills without an invitation from a resident. Indeed Bradbury, with nine hundred residents and ten miles of gated private roads, is so security-obsessed that its three city officials do not return telephone calls from the press, since 'each time an article appeared . . . it drew attention to the city and the number of burglaries increased'. For its part, Hidden Hills, a Norman Rockwell painting behind high-security walls, has been bitterly divided over compliance with a Superior Court order to build forty-eight units of seniors'

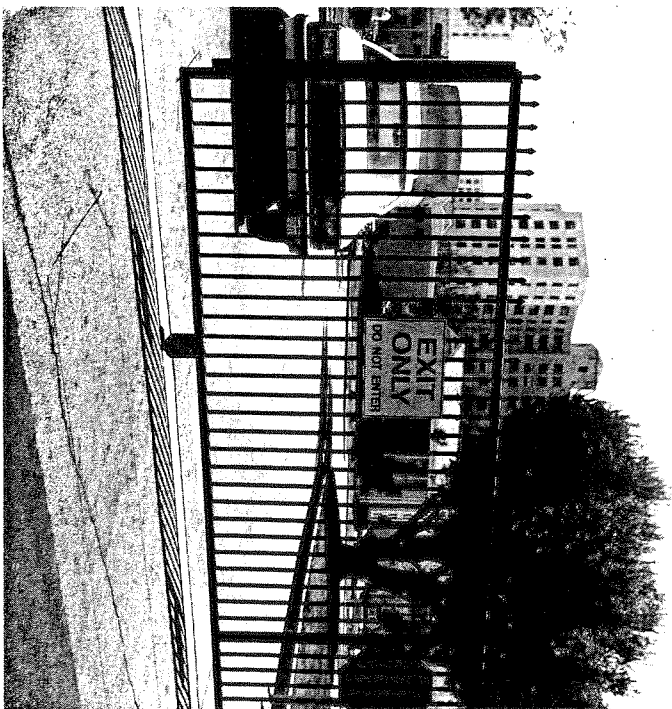


PANOPTICON EYE
Police observatory above library in Haagen shopping mall,
Willowbrook district

housing outside its gates. At meetings of the city's all-powerful homeowners' association (whose membership includes Frankie Avalon, Neil Diamond and Bob Eubanks) opponents of compliance have argued that the old folks' apartments 'will attract gangs and dope' (sic).²⁷

Meanwhile, traditional luxury enclaves like Beverly Hills and San Marino are increasingly restricting access to their public facilities, using baroque layers of regulations to build invisible walls. San Marino, which may be the richest, and is reputedly the most Republican (85 per cent), city in the country, now closes its parks on weekends to exclude Latino and Asian families from adjacent communities. One plan under discussion would reopen the parks on Saturdays only to those with proof of residence. Other upscale neighborhoods in Los Angeles have minted a similar residential privilege by obtaining ordinances to restrict parking to local homeowners. Predictably, such preferential parking regulations proliferate exclusively in neighborhoods with three-car garages.

Residential areas with enough clout are thus able to privatize local public space, partitioning themselves from the rest of the metropolis, even imposing a variant of neighborhood 'passport control' on outsiders. The next step, of course, is to ape incorporated enclaves like Rolling Hills or Hidden Hills by building literal walls. Since its construction in the late 1940s Park La Brea has been a bit of Lower Manhattan *chutzpah* moored to Wilshire Boulevard: a 176-acre maze of medium-rent townhouses and tower apartments, occupied by an urbane mix of singles, retirees, and families. Now, as part of a strategy of gentrification, its owners, Forest City Enterprises, have decided to enclose the entire community in security fencing, cutting off to pedestrians one of the most vital public spaces along the 'Miracle Mile'. As a spokeswoman for the owners observed, 'it's a trend in general to have enclosed communities'.²⁸ In the once wide-open trachlands of the San Fernando Valley, where there were virtually no walled-off communities a decade ago, the 'trend' has assumed the frenzied dimensions of a residential arms race as ordinary suburbanites demand the kind of social insulation once enjoyed only by the rich. Brian Weinstock, a leading Valley contractor, boasts of more than one hundred newly gated neighborhoods, with an insatiable demand for more security. 'The first question out of their [the buyers'] mouths is whether there is a gated community. The demand is there on a 3-to-1 basis for a gated community than not living in a gated community'.²⁹

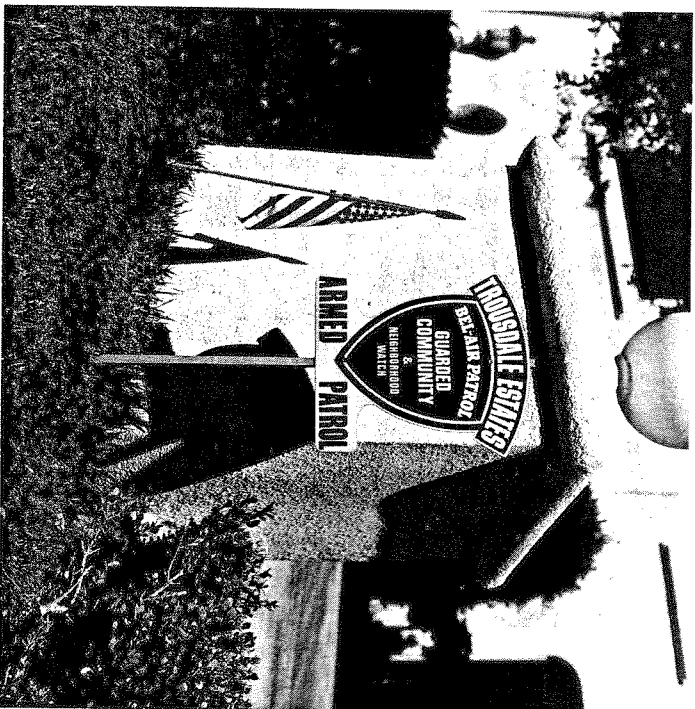


CHUTZPAH DENIED
Park La Brea

The social control advantages of 'gatehood' have also attracted the attention of landlords in denser, lower-income areas. Apartment owners in the Sepulveda barrio of the Valley have rallied behind a police program, launched in October 1989, to barricade their streets as a deterrent to drug buyers and other undesirables. The LAPD wants the City Council's permission to permanently seal off the neighborhood and restrict entry to residents, while the owners finance a guard station or 'checkpoint charlie'. While the Council contemplates the permanency of the experiment, the LAPD, supported by local homeowners, has continued to barricade other urban 'war zones' including part of the Pico-Union district, a Mid-Wilshire neighborhood, and an entire square mile around Jefferson High School in the Central-Vernon area. In face of complaints from younger residents about the 'Berlin Wall' quality of the neighborhood quarantines, Police Chief Gates reassured journalists that 'we're not here to occupy the territory. This isn't Panama. It's the city of Los Angeles and we're going to be here in a lawful manner.'³⁰

Meanwhile the very rich are yearning for high-tech castles. Where gates and walls alone will not suffice, as in the case of Beverly Hills or Bel-Air homeowners, the house itself is redesigned to incorporate sophisticated, sometimes far-fetched, security functions. An overriding but discreet goal of the current 'mansionizing' mania on the Westside of Los Angeles - for instance, tearing down \$3 million houses to build \$30 million mansions - is the search for 'absolute security'. Residential architects are borrowing design secrets from overseas embassies and military command posts. One of the features most in demand is the 'terrorist-proof security room' concealed in the houseplan and accessed by sliding panels and secret doors. Merv Griffith and his fellow mansionizers are hardening their palaces like missile silos.

But contemporary residential security in Los Angeles - whether in the fortified mansion or the average suburban bunker - depends upon the voracious consumption of private security services. Through their local homeowners' associations, virtually every affluent neighborhood from the Palisades to Silverlake contracts its own private policing: hence the thousands of lawns displaying the little 'armed response' warnings. The classifieds in a recent Sunday edition of the Los Angeles *Times* contained nearly a hundred ads for guards and patrolmen, mostly from firms



BELLIGERENT LAWNS
Hollywood Hills

specializing in residential protection. Within Los Angeles County, the security services industry has tripled its sales and workforce (from 24,000 to 75,000) over the last decade. 'It is easier to become an armed guard than it is to become a barber, hairdresser or journeyman carpenter', and under California's extraordinarily lax licensing law even a convicted murderer is not automatically excluded from eligibility. Although a majority of patrolmen are minority males earning near the minimum wage (\$4-7 per hour depending on qualifications and literacy), their employers are often multinational conglomerates offering a dazzling range of security products and services. As Michael Kaye, president of burgeoning Westec (a subsidiary of Japan's Secom Ltd), explains: 'We're not a security guard company. We sell a *concept* of security.'³¹ (This quote, as aficionados will immediately recognize, echoes the boast of Omni Consumer Products' Dick Jones - the villain of Paul Verhoeven's *Robocop* - that 'everything is security concepts . . . sometimes I can just think of something and it makes me so horny'.)

What homeowners' associations contract from Westec - or its principal rival, Bel-Air Patrol (part of Borg-Warner's family of security companies, including Burns and Pinkerton) - is a complete, 'systems' package that includes alarm hardware, monitoring, watch patrols, personal escorts, and, of course, 'armed response' as necessary. Although law-enforcement experts debate the efficiency of such systems in foiling professional criminals, they are brilliantly successful in deterring innocent outsiders. Anyone who has tried to take a stroll at dusk through a strange neighborhood patrolled by armed security guards and signposted with death threats quickly realizes how merely notional, if not utterly obsolete, is the old idea of the 'freedom of the city'.

THE L.A.P.D. AS SPACE POLICE

This comprehensive urban security mobilization depends not only upon the imbrication of the police function into the built environment, but also upon an evolving social division of labor between public- and private-sector police services, in which the former act as the necessary supports of the latter. As *Police Chief* magazine notes, 'harsh economic realities of the 1980s' - for instance, the tax revolt, rising rates of crime against property, and

burgeoning middle-class demands for security - have catalyzed 'a realignment of relationships between private security and law enforcement'.³² The private sector, exploiting an army of non-union, low-wage employees, has increasingly captured the labor-intensive roles (guard duty, residential patrol, apprehension of retail crime, maintenance of security passages and checkpoints, monitoring of electronic surveillance, and so on) while public law enforcement has retrenched behind the supervision of security macro-systems (maintenance of major crime data bases, aerial surveillance, jail systems, paramilitary responses to terrorism and street insurgency, and so on). The confusing interface between the two sectors is most evident in the overlapping of patrol functions in many neighborhoods and in the growing trend to subcontract jailing (with the privatized supervision of electronic home surveillance as another potentially lucrative market).

In many respects this division of labor is more elaborated in Los Angeles than elsewhere, if only because of the LAPD's pathbreaking substitutions of technological capital for patrol manpower. In part this was a necessary adaptation to the city's dispersed form; but it has also expressed the department's particular definition of its relationship to the community. Especially in its own self-perpetuated myth, the LAPD is seen as the progressive antithesis to the traditional big-city police department with its patronage armies of patrolmen grafting off the beat. As reformed in the early 1950s by the legendary Chief Parker (who admired above all the elitism of the Marines), the LAPD was intended to be incorruptible because unapproachable, a 'few good men' doing battle with a fundamentally evil city. *Dragnet's* Sergeant Friday precisely captured the Parkerized LAPD's quality of prudish alienation from a citizenry composed of fools, degenerates and psychopaths.

Technology helped insulate this paranoid *esprit de corps*. In doing so, it virtually established a new epistemology of policing, where technologized surveillance and response supplanted the traditional patrolman's intimate 'folk' knowledge of specific communities. Thus back in the 1920s the LAPD had pioneered the replacement of the flatfoot or mounted officer with the radio patrol car - the beginning of dispersed, mechanized policing. Under Parker, ever alert to spinoffs from military technology, the LAPD introduced the first police helicopters for systematic aerial surveillance. After the Watts Rebellion of 1965 this airborne effort became the

cornerstone of a policing strategy for the entire inner city.³³ As part of its 'Astro' program LAPD helicopters maintain an average nineteen-hour-per-day vigil over 'high crime areas', tactically coordinated to patrol car forces, and exceeding even the British Army's aerial surveillance of Belfast. To facilitate ground-air synchronization, thousands of residential rooftops have been painted with identifying street numbers, transforming the aerial view of the city into a huge police grid.

The fifty-pilot LAPD airforce was recently updated with French Aerospace helicopter equipped with futuristic surveillance technology. Their forward-looking infra-red cameras are extraordinary night eyes that can easily form heat images from a single burning cigarette, while their thirty-million-candlepower spotlights, appropriately called 'NightSun', can literally turn the night into day. Meanwhile the LAPD retains another fleet of Bell Jet Rangers capable of delivering complete elements of SWAT personnel anywhere in the region. Their training, which sometimes includes practice assaults on Downtown highrises, anticipates some of the spookier Hollywood images (for example, *Blue Thunder* or *Running Man*) of airborne police terror. A few years ago a veteran LAPD SWAT commander (apparently one of the principals in the infamous SLA holocaust in Southcentral Los Angeles) accidentally shot his own helicopter out of the sky while practicing a strafing run with a machine-gun.

But the most decisive element in the LAPD's metamorphosis into a technopolice has been its long and successful liaison with the military aerospace industry. Just in time for the opening of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, the department brought on line ECCCS (Emergency Command Control Communications Systems), the most powerful, state-of-the-art police communications system in the world. First conceptualized by Hughes Aerospace between 1969 and 1971, ECCCS's design was refined and updated by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, incorporating elements of space technology and mission control communications. After the passage of a \$42 million tax override in May 1977, the City Council approved Systems Development Corporation of Santa Monica as prime contractor for the system, which took more than seven years to build.

The central hardware of ECCCS is encased in security comparable to a SAC missile silo in Montana. Bunkered in the earthquake-proofed and security-hardened fourth and fifth sublevels of City Hall East (and inter-

connecting with the Police pentagon in Parker Center), Central Dispatch Center coordinates all the complex itineraries and responses of the LAPD using digitalized communication to eliminate voice congestion and guarantee the secrecy of transmission. ECCCS, together with the LAPD's prodigious information-processing assets, including the ever-growing databases on suspect citizenry, have become the central neural system for the vast and disparate, public and private, security operations taking place in Los Angeles.

But this is hardly the ultimate police sensorium. As gang hysteria and the war on crack keep the city's coffers open to police funding requests, it is likely the LAPD will continue to win political support for ambitious capital investment programs in new technology. Having brought policing up to the levels of the Vietnam War and early NASA, it is almost inevitable that the LAPD, and other advanced police forces, will try to acquire the technology of the Electronic Battlefield and even Star Wars. We are at the threshold of the universal electronic tagging of property and people – both criminal and non-criminal (small children, for example) – monitored by both cellular and centralized surveillances. Of the latter, ex-Los Angeles police chief, now state senator, Ed Davis (Republican – Valencia) has proposed the use of a geosynclinal space satellite to counter pandemic car theft in the region. Electronic alarm systems, already tested in New England, would alert police if a properly tagged car was stolen; satellite monitoring would extend coverage over Los Angeles's vast metropolitan area. Once in orbit, of course, the role of a law enforcement satellite would grow to encompass other forms of surveillance and control.

The image here is ultimately more important than the practicality of the proposal, since it condenses the historical world view and quixotic quest of the postwar LAPD: good citizens, off the streets, enclaved in their high-security private consumption spheres; bad citizens, on the streets (and therefore not engaged in legitimate business), caught in the terrible, Jehovan scrutiny of the LAPD's space program.

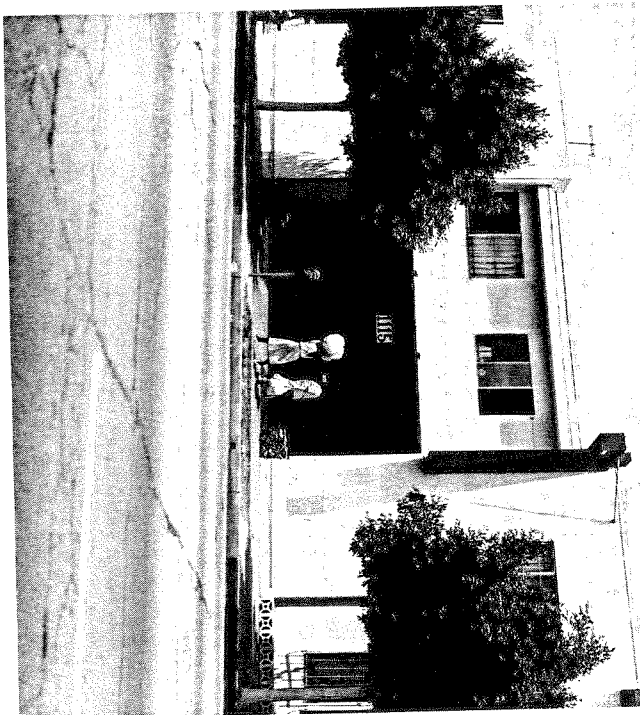
THE CARCERAL CITY

All this airborne surveillance and engridding, endless police data-gathering and centralization of communications, constitutes an invisible

'Haussmannization' of Los Angeles. No need to clear fields of fire for cannon when you control the sky; less need to hire informers on every block when surveillance cameras are universal ornaments on every building. But the police also reorganize space in far more straightforward ways. We have already seen their growing role as Downtown urban designers, indispensable for their expertise in 'security'. But they also lobby incessantly to enlarge law-and-order land use: additional warehouse space for a burgeoning inmate population, and administrative-training facilities for themselves. In Los Angeles this has taken the form of a de facto urban renewal program, operated by the police agencies, that threatens to convert an entire salient of Downtown-East Los Angeles into a vast penal colony.³⁴

Nearly 25,000 prisoners are presently held in six severely overcrowded county and federal facilities – not including Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detention centers – within a three-mile radius of City Hall – the largest incarcerated population in the nation. Racing to meet the challenge of the current 'War on Drugs' (which will double detained populations within the decade), authorities are forging ahead with the construction of a new state prison in East Los Angeles as well as a giant expansion of the County Jail near Chinatown. Both projects are vigorously contested by community coalitions opposed to further dumping of jail space in the inner city. Yet at the same time agencies like the Bureau of Prisons and County Jail, together with the innumerable private security companies, have become major community employers in the wake of plant closures and deindustrialization in East Los Angeles during the 1970s and early 1980s. Jails now vie with County/USC Hospital as the single most important economic force on the Eastside.

The conflict of interest between community and law enforcement land use is also sharply focused on the fate of Elysian Park, the home of Dodger Stadium and the Police Academy. Consisting of steep hillsides and ravines immediately northwest of the original El Pueblo de Los Angeles, Elysian Park was once upon a time a prime tourist attraction, one of the foremost 'City Beautiful' parks in the country. Through an extraordinary circumvention of local government, the police department has managed to turn its occupancy of the 1932 Olympic pistol range (under temporary lease to the Police Athletic and Gun Club) into an occupation of the entire park. Although lawyers for 'Friends of Elysian Park' were able to prove that the



NEIGHBORHOOD PRISON
INS Detention Center, MacArthur Park district

development of the Police Academy was an unauthorized, even illegal appropriation of public land, the LAPD cowed the City Council into ratifying the status quo. Then in 1989 fine print attached to a larger police bond issue, fueled by the gang and drug crisis, provided authority and funds for the three-fold expansion of the Academy in the park. To suggest an analogy, it is almost as if the San Francisco police were to occupy Golden Gate Park or the New York Police Department to commandeer half of Central Park.

The INS, meanwhile, has been trying to shoehorn privatized 'micro-prisons' into unsuspecting inner-city neighborhoods. Facing record overcrowding in its normal facilities, *La Migra* has commandeered motels and apartments for operation by private contractors as auxiliary jails for detained aliens - many of them Chinese and Central Americans seeking asylum. The disclosure of one of these centers caused a community uproar in Hollywood in 1986, and again in early 1990 in the MacArthur Park neighborhood after an audacious escape by eight female detainees led by a Chinese political dissident. The women claimed that the detention center (an anonymous, barred storefront on the area's main shopping street) lacked basic hygiene and that male guards spent the night in the women's cells.³⁵

The demand for law enforcement *lebensraum* in the central city, however, will inevitably bring the police agencies into conflict with more than mere community groups. Already the plan to add two highrise towers, with 2,400 new beds, to County Jail on Baucher Street downtown has raised the ire of planners and developers hoping to make nearby Union Station the center of a giant complex of skyscraper hotels and offices. If the jail expansion goes ahead, tourists and prisoners could end up ogling one another from opposed highrises. One solution to the conflict between carceral and commercial redevelopment is to use architectural camouflage to finesse jail space into the skyscape. If buildings and homes are becoming more prison- or fortress-like in exterior appearance, then prisons ironically are becoming architecturally naturalized as aesthetic objects. Moreover, with the post-liberal shift of government expenditure from welfare to repression, carceral structures have become the new frontier of public architecture. As an office glut in most parts of the country reduces commissions for corporate highrises, celebrity architects are rushing to design jails, prisons, and police stations.³⁶

An extraordinary example, the flagship of an emerging genre, is Welton Becket Associates' new Metropolitan Detention Center in Downtown Los

Angeles, on the edge of the Civic Center and the Hollywood Freeway. Although this ten-story Federal Bureau of Prison's facility is one of the most visible new structures in the city, few of the hundreds of thousands of commuters who pass it by every day have any inkling of its function as a holding and transfer center for what has been officially described as the 'managerial elite of narco-terrorism'. Here, 70 per cent of federal incarcerations are related to the 'War on Drugs'. This postmodern Bastille - the largest prison built in a major US urban center in generations - looks instead like a futuristic hotel or office block, with artistic charms (like the high-tech trellises on its bridge-balconies) comparable to any of Downtown's recent architecture. But its upscale ambience is more than mere facade. The interior of the prison is designed to implement a sophisticated program of psychological manipulation and control: barless windows, a pastel color plan, prison staff in preppy blazers, well-tended patio shubbery, a hotel-type reception area, nine recreation areas with nautilus workout equipment, and so on.³⁷ In contrast to the human inferno of the desperately overcrowded County Jail a few blocks away, the Becket structure superficially appears less a detention than a convention center for federal felons - a 'distinguished' addition to Downtown's continuum of security and design. But the psychic cost of so much attention to prison aesthetics is insidious. As one inmate whispered to me in the course of a tour, 'Can you imagine the mindfuck of being locked up in a Holiday Inn?'³⁸

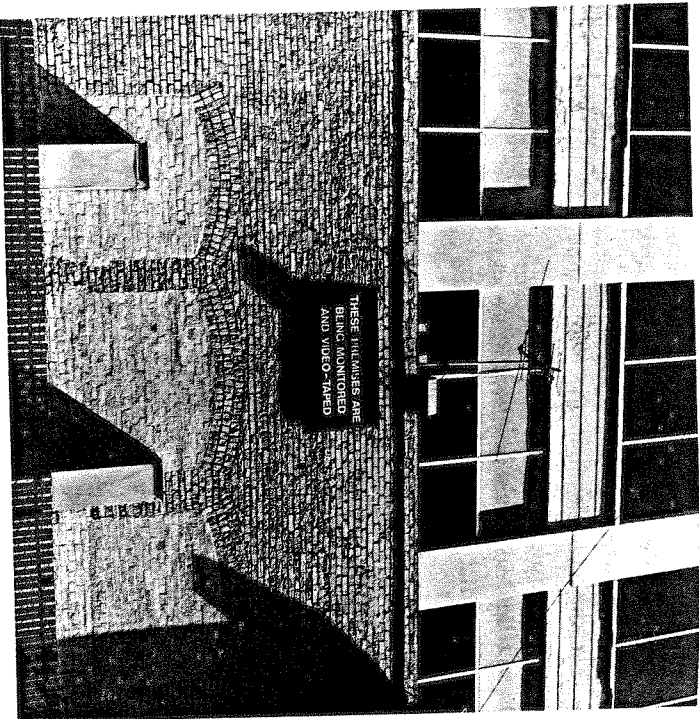
THE FEAR OF CROWDS

Ultimately the aims of contemporary architecture and the police converge most strikingly around the problem of crowd control. As we have seen, the designers of malls and pseudo-public space attack the crowd by homogenizing it. They set up architectural and semiotic barriers to filter out 'undesirables'. They enclose the mass that remains, directing its circulation with behaviorist ferocity. It is lured by visual stimuli of all kinds, dulled by musak, sometimes even scented by invisible aromatizers. This Skinnerian orchestration, if well conducted, produces a veritable commercial symphony of swarming, consuming monads moving from one cashpoint to another.

Outside in the streets, the police task is more difficult. The LAPD, true to its class war background, has always hated certain kinds of public gatherings. Its early history was largely devoted to bludgeoning May Day demonstrators, arresting strikers and deporting Mexicans and Okies. In 1921 it arrested Upton Sinclair for reading the Declaration of Independence in public; in the 1960s it indiscriminately broke up love-ins and family picnics in battles to control Griffith and Elysian Park. Subconsciously it has probably never recovered from the humiliation of August 1965 when it temporarily was forced to surrender the streets to a rebellious ghetto.

Whatever the reasons, the LAPD (and the County Sheriffs as well) continue relentlessly to restrict the space of public assemblage and the freedom of movement of the young. In the next chapter we will examine in some detail the history of 'Operation HAMMER' and other Vietnam-style police tactics in Southcentral L.A.³⁹ But long before the LAPD and the Sheriffs launched their famous anti-gang dragnets, they were operating extensive juvenile curfews in non-Anglo areas and barricading popular boulevards to prevent 'cruising' (in Hollywood this directly abets the current gentrification strategy). And now, of course, they are sealing off entire neighborhoods and housing projects under our local variant of 'pass law'. Even glided white youth suffer from this escalating police regulation of personal mobility. In the erstwhile world capital of teenagers, where millions overseas still imagine Gidget at a late-night surf party, the beaches are now closed at dark, patrolled by helicopter gunships and police dune buggies.

A watershed in the dual architectural and police assault on public space was the rise and fall of the 'Los Angeles Street Scene'. Launched in 1978 the two-day festival at the Civic Center was intended to publicize Downtown's revitalization as well as to provide Mayor Bradley's version of the traditional Democratic barbecue. The LAPD were skeptical. Finally in 1986, after the failure of the Ramones to appear as promised, the youthful audience began to tear up the stage. The LAPD immediately sent in a phalanx of one hundred and fifty helmeted officers and a mounted unit. In the two-hour mêlée that followed, angry punks bombarded the police cavalry with rocks and bottles, and fifteen officers and their horses were injured. The producer of the Street Scene, a Bradley official, suggested that 'more middle-of-the-



FEAR OF CROWDS
Downtown

road entertainment' might attract less boisterous crowds. The prestigious *Downtown News* counter-attacked, claiming that the 'Street Scene gives Downtown a bad name. It flies in the face of all that has been done here in the last thirty years.' It demanded 'reparations' for the wounded 'reputation of Downtown'. The Mayor's office cancelled the Scene.⁴⁰

Its demise suggests the consolidation of an official consensus about crowds and the use of space in Los Angeles. Since the restructuring of Downtown eliminated the social mixing of crowds in normal pedestrian circulation, the Street Scene (ironically named) remained one of the few carnival-like occasions or places (along with redevelopment-threatened Hollywood Boulevard and Venice Boardwalk) where pure heteroglossia could flourish: that is to say, where Chinatown punks, Glendale skinheads, Boyle Heights lowriders, Valley girls, Marina designer couples, Slauson rappers, Skid Row homeless and gawkers from Des Moines could mingle together in relative amity.

Until the final extinction of these last real public spaces – with their democratic intoxications, risks and unscented odors – the pacification of Los Angeles will remain incomplete. And as long as this is the case, the various insecure elites, like the yuppie-aliens in John Carpenter's *They Live!*, will never know when some revolt may break out, or what strange guise it may wear. On Halloween eve 1988 – a week before the law-and-order climax of the Bush campaign – the LAPD attempted to disperse 100,000 peaceful revelers on Hollywood Boulevard. Police horses charged into crowds while squad cars zigzagged onto curbs, pinning terrified onlookers against storefront windows. Displaying what the police would later characterize as 'a complete lack of respect for the spirit of the holiday', part of the crowd angrily fought back, tossing bottles and smashing the windows of the Brown Derby. By midnight the rioters, mainly costumed, were looting storefronts. The next morning's *Times* carried the following description, evocative of Nathanael West:

At one souvenir store, the Holly Vine Shoppe, looters smashed windows and took stuffed animals, Hollywood postcards, Hollywood pennants and baseball caps emblazoned 'LAPD'.⁴¹

NOTES

1. See National Committee on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, *To Establish Justice, To Ensure Domestic Tranquility (Final Report)*, Washington D.C. 1969.
2. 'The problems of inversion and introversion in development patterns and ambiguity in the character of public space created within them, are not unique to new shopping center developments. It is commonplace that the modern city as a whole exhibits a tendency to break down into specialised, single-use precincts – the university campus, the industrial estate, the leisure complex, the housing scheme . . . each governed by internal, esoteric rules of development and implemented by specialist agencies whose terms of reference guarantee that they are familiar with other similar developments across the country, but know almost nothing of the dissimilar precincts which about their own.' (Barry Manland, *Shopping Malls: Planning and Design*, London 1985, p. 109)
3. Cf. Geoffrey Blodgett, 'Frederick Law Olmsted: Landscape Architecture as Conservative Reform', *Journal of American History* 62: 4 (March 1976); and Manfredo Tafuri, 'The Disenchanted Mountain: The Skyscraper and the City', in Giorgio Ciucci, et al., *The American City*, Cambridge, Mass. 1979.
4. David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be*, New York 1979, p. 102.
5. *Los Angeles Times*, 4 November 1978, X, p. 13. See also Sam Hall Kaplan, *L.A. Follies: A Critical Look at Growth, Politics and Architecture*, Santa Monica 1989.
6. Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, *Violence in the City – An End or Beginning?*, Los Angeles 1965.
7. In the early 1970s the police circularized members of the Central City Association about an 'imminent gang invasion'. They urged businessmen 'to report to the police the presence of any groups of young Blacks in the area. These are young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen, both boys and girls. One gang wears earrings and the other wears hats. When encountered in groups of more than two they are very dangerous and armed.' (*Los Angeles Times*, 24 December 1972, I, p.7)
8. Gentrification in this case is 'Reorganization'. In a complex deal aimed at making the north end of the Broadway corridor an upscaled 'bridge' linking Bunker Hill, the Civic Center and Little Tokyo, the CRA has spent more than \$20 million inducing the State to build the 'Ronald Reagan Office Building' a block away from the corner of Third and Broadway, while simultaneously bringing the Union Rescue Mission \$6 million to move its homeless clientele out of the neighborhood. The 3,000 civil servants from the Reagan Building are intended as shock troops to gentryify the strategic corner of Third and Broadway, where developer Ira Yellin has received further millions in subsidies from the CRA to transform the three historic structures he owns (the Bradbury Building, Million Dollar Theater and Grand Central Market) into 'Grand Central Square'. The 'Broadway-Spring Center' – discussed in the text – provides 'security in circulation' between the Reagan Building and the Square.
9. In reflecting on the problem of the increasing social distance between the white middle classes and the Black poor, Oscar Newman, the renown theorist of 'defensible space', argues for the federally ordered dispersion of the poor in the suburban residential landscape. He insists, however, that 'bringing the poor and the black into the fold' (sic) must be conducted 'on a tightly controlled quota basis' that is non-threatening to the middle class and ensures their continuing social dominance. (*Community of Interest*, Garden City 1981, pp. 19–25). Such 'tightly controlled quotas', of course, are precisely the strategy favored by redevelopment agencies like Los Angeles's as they have been forced to include a small portion of low or very-low income housing in their projected 'urban villages'. It seems inconceivable to Newman, or to these agencies, that the urban working class is capable of sustaining their own decent neighborhoods or having any voice in the definition of public interest. That is why the working poor are always the 'problem', the 'blight' in redevelopment, while the gilded middle classes always represent 'revitalization'.

10. N. David Miller, 'Crime and Downtown Revitalization', in *Urban Land*, September 1987, p. 18.
11. *The Social Life of Small Spaces*, New York 1985.
12. The descriptions that follow draw heavily on the extraordinary photographs of Diego Cardoso, who has spent years documenting Downtown's various street scenes and human habits.
13. Since crack began to replace cheap wine on Skid Row in the mid 1980s, the homicide rate has jumped to almost 1 per week. A recent backpage *Times* story - 'Well, That's Skid Row' (15 November 1989) - claimed that the homeless have become so 'inured to street violence' that 'the brutal slayings of two people within two blocks of each other the night before drew far less attention than the taping of an episode of the television show, "Beauty and the Beast"'. The article noted, however, the homeless have resorted to a 'buddy system' whereby one sleeps and the other acts as 'spotter' to warn of potential assailants.
14. For example, the LAPD sits on the Design Advisory Board of 'Miracle on Broadway', the publicly funded body attempting to initiate the gentrification of part of the Downtown historic core. (*Downtown News*, 2 January 1989)
15. Interviews with Skid Row residents; see also Tom Chorney, 'Quandary Over a Park Restroom', *Downtown News*, 25 August 1986, pp. 1, 4. In other Southern California communities the very hygiene of the poor is being criminalized. New ordinances specifically directed against the homeless outlaw washing oneself in public 'above the elbow'.
16. See 'Cold Snap's Toll at 5 as Its Iceiest Night Arrives', *Times*, 29 December 1988.
17. See my 'Chinatown, Part Two? The Internationalization of Downtown Los Angeles', *New Left Review*, July-August 1987. It is also important to note that, despite the crack epidemic on Skid Row (which has attracted a much younger population of homeless men), there is no drug treatment center or rehabilitation program in the area. Indeed within the city as a whole narcotic therapy funding is being cut while police and prison budgets are soaring.
18. 'Old socialist' quote from architect and 'Gehry Kid' Michael Rounadi of Morphosis; Gehry himself boasts: 'I get my inspiration from the streets. I'm more of a street fighter than a Roman scholar.' (Quoted in Adele Freedman, *Progressive Architecture*, October 1986, p. 99)
19. The best catalogue of Gehry's work is Peter Arnell and Ted Bickford, eds, *Frank Gehry: Buildings and Projects*, New York 1985. Also cf. Institute of Contemporary Art, *Frank O. Gehry: An Exhibition of Recent Projects*, Boston 1982; and University of Southern California, *Frank Gehry: Selected Works*, Los Angeles 1982.
20. Mildred Friedman, ed., *The Architecture of Frank Gehry*, New York 1986, p. 175.
21. Pilar Viladas, 'Illuminated Manuscripts', *Progressive Architecture*, October 1986, pp. 76, 84.
22. See David Ferrell's articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, 31 August and 16 October 1987. In a letter to the *Times* (16 September 1987) the former Los Angeles Director of Planning, Calvin Hamilton, corroborated that the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce 'dominated and aggressively manipulated for their own purposes the decision process. In most areas of planning concern, in my opinion, they were only interested in maximizing their own profit, not in doing a comprehensive, balanced plan for the improvement and long-term benefit of all the people in Hollywood'.
23. See portrait in *Times*, 7 October 1987.
24. Jane Buckwalter, 'Securing Shopping Centers for Inner Cities', *Urban Land*, April 1987, p. 24.
25. Richard Titus, 'Security Works', *Urban Land*, January 1990, p. 2.
26. Buckwalter, p. 25. As some longtime community activists have pointed out, there is rich irony in all this: namely, that the same forces (reclining banks, negligent politicians, discriminatory insurance companies, etc.) who share responsibility for the lunar retail landscape of Southcentral Los Angeles are now celebrating its reoccupation by security-concept entrepreneurs like Haagen. Having allowed the public spaces and shopping streets of the inner city to deteriorate to the point where the only extant enterprises are storefront churches and a few heavily fortified liquor stores, the city suddenly gushes subsidies to create private shopping fortresses whose profits flow outside the community.

27. Cf. *Daily News*, 1 November 1987; and television interview, Fox News, March 1990.
28. *Los Angeles Times*, 25 July 1989, II, p. 2.
29. Quoted in Jim Carlton 'Walled In', *Los Angeles Times*, 8 October 1989, II, p. 1. The mania for walls has also caught up with the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce who are planning to wall off the base of the famous 'Hollywood Sign' on Mount Lee, as well as installing motion detectors and video surveillance.
30. *Times*, 15 November 1989.
31. Quoted in Linda Williams, 'Safe and Sound', *Los Angeles Times*, 29 August 1988, IV, p. 5.
32. William Cunningham and Todd Taylor, 'A Summary of the Halcrest Report', *The Police Chief*, June 1983, p. 31.
33. The following section is based on LAPD publicity and interviews with personnel. (See also, Don Rosen, 'Bleu Thunder', *Herald-Examiner*, 28 May 1989, pp. 1, 12.) During February of 1989, elite Army anti-terrorist units from the First Special Operations Command in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, conducted a series of simulated helicopter assaults and battles over Bunker Hill skyscrapers. 'The Army declined to give any further details about the troops and equipment involved or the nature and purpose of the training.' (*Los Angeles Times* 18 February 1989, I, p. 23.)
34. In the exact words of Aurora Castillo, leader of *Las Madres* (the East Los Angeles group fighting further prison construction): 'It seems like they're making our area into a penal colony'. (*Los Angeles Times*, 3 August 1988, II, p. 1)
35. *Times*, 23 January 1990.
36. Aside from the Welton Becker example discussed here, another flamboyant local instance is the new Pasadena Police and Jail facility designed by Robert Stern, one of the conservative high priests of postmodernism.
37. The Detention Center's upbeat 'Fact Sheet' seems designed with federal tourists in mind: 'The institution is of a modern architectural design with no external characteristics of the traditional jail. . . . Program services . . . emphasize an intensive short-term education experience and supervised recreational activities for all inmates. . . . The mission is to provide the pretrial detainee with safe and humane care, custody, and control; to maintain a positive environment for detainees and staff. . . .'
38. Thanks to Lynden Crossman, Executive Assistant to the Warden. I was able to tour the Metropolitan Detention Center in October 1989.
39. The 'HAMMER' may only be a mild prefiguration of draconian measures yet to be introduced in the war on drugs. For years the alternative press has reminded us that extreme martial law plans, devised by the Pentagon in the aftermath of the 1967 Detroit Rebellion, are still alive, cultivated by the Armed Forces as well as by national guard and local law enforcement. As Tim Redmond of the *Bay Guardian* explains: 'California was one of the most enthusiastic participants in the national program. Between 1968 and 1973, three major exercises, code-named Cable Splicer I, II and III, took place in California, bringing together police and military officials from across the state for seminars and war games at a special "anti-terrorist" training center near San Luis Obispo.' (9 September 1987, p. 17.) A variant of these plans, labeled Garden Plot, was recently revealed as part of the contingency planning for civil disturbances in the wake of the homeporting of the battleship Missouri in San Francisco (ibid.). Students of the LAPD generally believe that similar, comprehensive planning has long existed to deal with civil disturbances in the ghetto or barrios, and, possibly now, to assert a virtual military occupation over areas of high gang density.
40. Cf. *Los Angeles Times*, 22 September, II, p. 1, and 25 September, II, p. 1, 1986; and reprint of 'best editorial', 'Trouble at Street Scene', *Downtown News*, 2 March 1987, p. 12.
41. George Ramos, 'Hollywood Halloween: Some Came as Vandals and Looters', *Los Angeles Times*, 2 November 1988, II, pp. 1, 8. Also interviews with eyewitnesses.