



Figure 5.3 Stairway to Bunker Hill, Los Angeles.

Some designs of walkways, staircases, experiential trails, plazas, street beautifications and parks sit more easily under the rubric of urban design than others. The design of an open space is, however, really simply landscape architecture unless designed as a unit with surrounding buildings (as in Pariser Platz, Berlin; see Chapter 8). Such designs occur more frequently in the creation of new towns and *de novo* precinct designs (e.g. Paternoster Square; also in Chapter 8) than when redesigning open spaces in existing cities (Figure 5.3).

More and more city administrations recognize the importance of open-space design in creating positive images of their cities. For example, this attitude is clear in Canary Wharf (see Chapter 8). Portland, Oregon, with its variety of squares in its downtown and attention to streetscape has been particularly successful in creating a positive image of its central area. Lively squares, stairways (often as pieces of sculpture), and well-paved sidewalks add a sense of dignity to urban life and provide places at which to pause. We have learnt much about their design from examining those that are regarded as lovely, and are well used (see, for example Broto, 2000; Billingham and Cole, 2002; Gehl and Gemzøe, 2003). We need to learn as much from those that are deserted, and those that have decayed rapidly (e.g. Plaza d'Italia in New Orleans, 1975–8, a sculpture; see Figure 5.4). In these cases it is often not the design itself that was the problem but the surroundings. The context was either not considered in terms of what it offered a new design or else the predicted catalytic value of the new landscape did not materialize.

Deeply embedded in both architectural and landscape architectural thinking is that open spaces in cities are always a good idea, anywhere and everywhere. One of the lessons of the twentieth century is that in terms of urban life this belief