



Courtesy for the Olin Partnership, Philadelphia

Figure 5.20 The 16th Street Mall, Denver.

The quality of the detailing depends on how the elements are handled, their composition, patterns, colours, the precision of the workmanship and what they afford in terms of human activities. Of particular importance are paving patterns, the nature of illumination, the design of street furnishings and the nature of the signage. What is fashionable can be important for it gives both designers and users of the environment a sense of being up-to-date. What is regarded as fashionable does, however, change. Sometimes a richness in patterning is held in high esteem but simpler patterns seem to be the ones that endure (e.g. Piazza San Marco, Venice; see Figure 5.2).

The manner in which the public realm is illuminated – naturally and/or artificially, day or night – contributes substantially to its ambient qualities. The concern is not only for safety but also for aesthetics. The perceived quality of spaces between buildings – streets, alleys, squares and nooks and crannies – is very much dependent on how the architecture and landscape architecture are organized and illuminated. The way façades of buildings are illuminated can enrich the experience of being in places. There are many examples of finely detailed environments but many more that are carelessly designed and deteriorating rapidly. Detailing the environment is a fine art.

Commentary: Are these Landscape Architectural Products Urban Design?

The quality of urban spaces depends on how they are enclosed as much as on their own attributes. Impressive though individual buildings and a city's skyline may be when seen as a panorama, it is the quality of the city's open spaces – the public realm – that defines their nature and their image in people's eyes. The open spaces