

success of the Square has, however, been its demonstration that decaying areas on the edge of central cities can be renovated with financial success provided the behaviour of the market is understood. Ghirardelli Square became a precedent that many other designs throughout the world have followed. Both major renovations there were carried out as total collaborative designs. Are renovation/redesign products such as Ghirardelli Square urban design projects? The square's rehabilitation was not a product of public policy-making. It could have been given the public interest concern of the Roths. It, however, was not!

Today (2004), the complex is finding it difficult to compete with the Cannery and with discount stores that offer similar goods at lower prices. Will it be changed yet again?

Major references

- Attoe, Wayne and Donn Logan (1989). *American Urban Architecture: Catalyst in the Design of Cities*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, xiii-iv.
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Urban Objects

The placing of elements in the urban scene has an important impact on cities. They include a wide variety of types. Objects of sculpture (monuments, art works and curiosity objects), clock towers, fountains, and street furniture all add lustre to the cityscape (see Figure 6.17). They can make focal points, terminals to vistas, instantly recognizable places for people to meet, and generally provide an additional amenity to the environment. They can also add unnecessary clutter. As many urban open spaces are boring because they are poorly related to their surroundings, there is a tendency for designers to want to fill them up with something. They become over-designed. The deck at La Défense (see Chapter 8) was improved considerably when sculpture was added to it, but well-designed open spaces (in terms of size and what surrounds them) have no need for much in the way of added elements.

Banners and signs form an important part of cities and the way they are handled often says much about the culture of which they are a part. Architects have generally desired to neaten the environment but the chaotic nature of objects and appurtenances that crowd many lively streets makes one pause to think about the way to move ahead. Recently, large screens, used for advertising, but also for entertainment have begun to appear in public squares. Buildings are now being developed with 'smart skins' that are able to portray images. In some places (e.g. Singapore) great attention is paid to the illumination of buildings that adds much liveliness to the night-time urban environment. The introduction of such items into the city is seen as urban design by some observers. It changes cities.