

form of various developer-driven formats for suburban building that themselves became prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. The extensive emergence of greenfield “town house” developments (often as a means of realizing the appreciated value of inner-ring suburban land), the transformation of shopping centers to “street”-based malls, the proliferation of “autonomous” gated communities, the rehabilitation of exclusionary zoning to restore traditional styles of segregation, and the uninterrupted semiotic refinement of the appliquéd historicity of virtually all the architecture involved, had, by the 1960s, already become ubiquitous. And behind it all loomed the synthesizing figure of America’s preeminent twentieth-century utopia: Disneyland. The theme park is the critical and synthetic pivot on which both the ideological and formal character of urban design continues to turn.

Disneyland—fascinating not just to a broad public but also to a gamut of professional observers including Reyner Banham, Charles Moore, Louis Marin (who memorably described it in a 1990 book as a “degenerate” utopia), and even Kevin Lynch—is urban design’s archetype, sharing its successes and failures and grounded in a common methodology of paring experience to its outline. Disneyland favors pedestrianism and “public” transport. It is physically delimited. It is designed to the last detail. It is segmented into “neighborhoods” of evocative historical character. It is scrupulously maintained. Its pleasures are all G-rated. It is safe. Grounded in the sanctification of an imaginary idea of the historic American town, each park enrolls its visitors in its animating fantasy with an initiating stroll down a Hollywoodized “Main Street” that acculturates its diversity of guests to a globally uniform architectural inflection of good city form.

But what is most relevant about Disneyland—like all simulacra—is the power of its displacement. Disneyland is a concentration camp for pleasure, the project of an ideologue of great power and imagination, the entertainment industry’s version of Robert Moses. Disneyland is not a city, but it selectively extracts many of the media of urbanity to create a citylike construct that radically circumscribes choice, that heavily polices behavior, that commercializes every aspect of participation, that understands subjectivity entirely in terms of consumption and spectatorship, and that sees architecture and space as a territory of fixed and inflexible meanings. Like shopping malls or New Urbanist town centers, Disneyland provides evanescent moments of street-style sociability within a larger system entirely dependent on cars. And, of course, no one lives in Disneyland, and