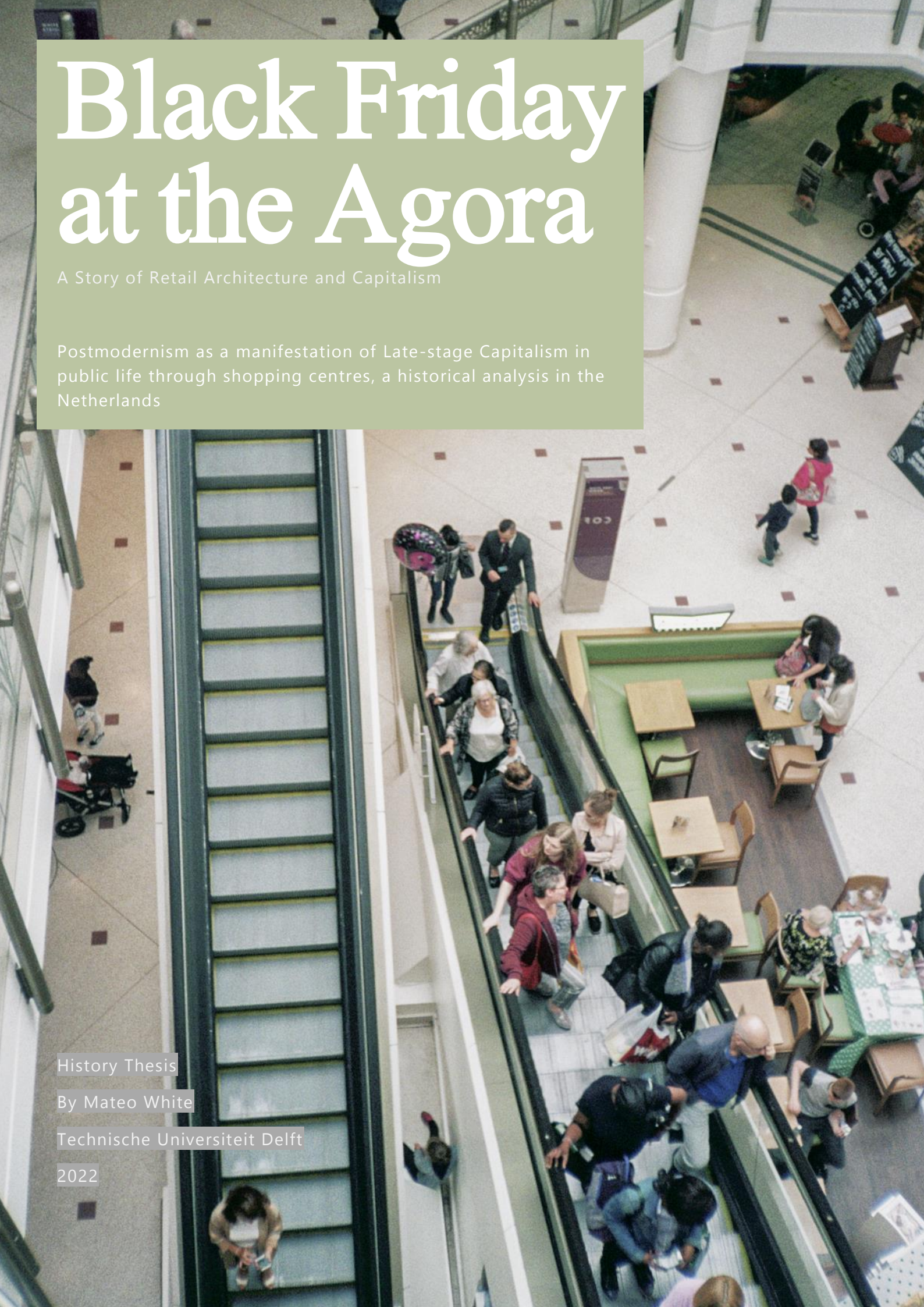
Black Friday at the Agora

A Story of Retail Architecture and Capitalism

Postmodernism as a manifestation of Late-stage Capitalism in public life through shopping centres, a historical analysis in the Netherlands



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Abstract

This essay contextualises and analyses the development of shopping centres in the 20th century by their connection to postmodernism and capitalism, through Frederic Jameson's theories on the advent of the architectural style and cultural movement, positioning the act of shopping as a cultural production of the economic system. Using Jameson's tools for the interpretation of postmodern creations, a connection can be established between the architectural designs of shopping centres and the cultural productions of capitalism, identifying traits of depthlessness, pastiche, subject fragmentation, liminal space, mechanised circulation, and the waning of affect in case studies of shopping malls in The Netherlands.

The case studies include the 'Passage' in The Hague (1885 to compare neoclassical and contemporary juxtapositions, the 'Lijnbaan' in Rotterdam (1953) as an example of Modernist space, the 'Heuvel' in Eindhoven (1992) as an example of postmodern planning, and 'Westfield Mall of the Netherlands' in The Hague (2017) as example of sustainability themed mega malls. These examples provide a timeline for the evolution of shopping malls in the 20th century, but more importantly as physical illustrations for the relationship between architectural theories on shopping and the cultural production of Postmodern space.

Key words: Shopping, Rem Koolhaas, Frederic Jameson, Postmodernism, Capitalism

Preface

The premise of this essay is that shopping centres have developed, since their inception, a fundamental role as simulated public spaces in cities and suburbs. Often built in the heart of city centres, publicly accessible and often with vast circulation space, they can be considered the de facto agoras of the 21st century. It is this importance that warrants a deeper analysis of the design, production, and significance of shopping centres in Europe, allowing for a clear relationship to be identified between act of commodity consumption within the framework of late capitalism, and the architectural implications this socio-economic system has on the field of architecture.

This essay is divided into three parts in order to sufficiently study and provide context for the connection between these two fields, as well as to elaborate on the literary sources used as a theoretical framework for the case study analysis. Part 1 concerns the shopping centre as a cultural production of late nineteenth and twentieth century capitalism, whilst Part 2 and 3 elaborate on this through four chronologically ordered case studies that provide a timeline and a real-world example for the notions described in Part 1. Alongside the literary research, each case study is explored through photography by the author, documenting the use of the shopping centres by their visitors, as well as their place in the urban context.

Introduction

In the 2002 book *Harvard Design Guide to Shopping* edited by Rem Koolhaas, the authors present a world where retail space faces an unprecedented boom, bolstered by technologies such as air conditioning and the escalator, and organised by military generals[1], giant multinationals now construct the shopping centre as the terminal space for public activity. Even in terms of financial power, in 2002 Wal-Mart's sales were larger than the gross domestic product of three quarters of the world's economies[2]. Indeed, in Europe, retail space had been increasing, a trend which would continue until 2008, with the construction of nearly nine million square metres of shopping centre in that year alone. Fifteen years after the release of the book, retail spaces continue to grow, reaching a total shopping centre floorspace of 166.5 million square metres at the end of 2017[3].

The *Harvard Design Guide to Shopping* however also highlights the increasing threat of vacancy that a boom in construction faces, describing shopping as an activity under threat by online retailers, economic downturns, and unregulated growth. Today, fewer shopping centres are being built in Western Europe and the United States, with some countries facing a slowdown in construction and even a downturn, as in Germany or Denmark[4]. Vacancy has reached such high levels in the United States that a new term was coined to describe the widespread phenomenon – 'dead malls'[5].

This essay will mainly focus on shopping in The Netherlands, a country with one of the highest ratios of shopping centre area per capita (375 sqm per 1000 inhabitants)[6], and the country in the EU with the second highest time spent on shopping and services (30 minutes per day)[7].

Adapting to change

It can be said that after a boom from the turn of the millennium to the economic crisis 2008, shopping centres are facing change, at odds with many of the crossroads predicted by economists twenty years ago. These can even

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[1] Joseph Rosenbloom, "Army Lessons That Apply to Small Business," Inc.com (Inc., July 12, 2011), https://www.inc.com/articles/201107/army-lessons-that-apply-to-small-business.html.

[2] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001).

[3] "European Shopping Centres: The Development Story," *European Shopping Centres: The Development Story*, 2018.

[4] Ibid

[5] Deadmalls.com, an archive of stories and photographs of abandoned shopping centres in the United States.

[6] "European Shopping Centres: The Development Story," *European Shopping Centres: The Development Story*, 2018

[7] Eurostat (Luxembourg, 2018).

be considered global challenges: market deregulation, increasing digitalisation, and climate change all broad issues faced around the world.

Shopping centres have therefore adapted since 2008, after learning from the original shopping centre architect Victor Gruen to include city centres in consideration during the design process[8,9], Keynesian politics of using private consumption as a driving force in society and national economics, along with the value of nostalgia and an image of sustainability, they have become the true architectural embodiment of contemporary capitalism in modern life. This process began in the years after World War two, as Victoria de Grazia describes the period in which the 'European vision of the social citizen became entangled with the America notion of the sovereign consumer'[10], using a new and 'classless' society as a model for reconstruction. Some writers argue that such a society, one built around consumption, uses 'enlightenment as mass deception'[11,12], where the popularisation of shopping was a consequence of the consolidation of the reign of the capitalist market, a tool to pacify and dupe the masses.

An Introduction to Frederic Jameson

Such claims can be compared to literary critic Frederic Jameson's work on the relationship between cultural productions and economic forces.

The characteristics of shopping centres described previously can be considered as bringing shopping centres closer and closer to the style of Postmodernism, described by Jameson in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). The book uses a series of works of arts and architecture to differentiate the style from previous works and establishing Postmodern space and form as original. He links this new style as a result of a form of capital accumulation, itself a result of a novel stage of capitalism, with different forms of business organisation, internationalisation of businesses, media interrelationship, automation, and military domination[13]. Jameson uses terms to describe the new style's form of production and experience, establishing it as the cultural dominant at the time, more prevalent, and following 'High Modernism', creating an outline on how

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[8] Stefan Al, "All under One Roof: How Malls and Cities Are Becoming Indistinguishable," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, March 16, 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/mar/16/malls-cities-become-one-and-same.

[9] Janina Gosseye and Tom Avermaete, *Shopping Towns Europe: Commercial Collectivity and the Architecture of the Shopping Centre, 1945-197* (LONDON: BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC, 2017).

[10] Ibid, 9. From 'Irresistible Empire' by de Grazia, 337.

[11] Ibid, 12

[12] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno formulated the notion of mass consumption as 'mass deception' as early as 1944 in their book *Dialektik der Aufklarung* (The Dialectic of Enlightenment) (From *Shopping Towns Europe*)

[13] Dino Franco Felluga, Introduction to Fredric Jameson, module on late capitalism, 2002, https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/marxism/modules/jamesonlatecapitalism.html.

contemporary society's socio-economic structure now directly influences its cultural forms.

To summarise, Jameson describes Postmodern productions as having five major characteristics that define and differentiate them from previous styles, and truly link them to the socio-economic structure. The first of these is a degree of *depthlessness*, or a lack of interpretations or meaning to a creation, a new kind of superficiality. The second is a so-called *waning of affect*, where the subject of a piece of art or design loses its active ability to create a sense of continuity between past and present, thus breaking away from a coherent timeline or story, instead being experienced as 'piles of fragments'. Emotion becomes a caricature of itself based on the expectations of the observer. One of the main elements to recognise Postmodernism is *Pastiche*, a direct result of the waning of affect and depthlessness, after which a creator, artist, or designer is left with no choice but to appeal to the past rather than seek originality, creating 'empty parodies' with no meaning or purpose, connected to a sense of historicism, cannibalising past styles.

This essay will use the terms and research established by Jameson in analysing artworks as cultural production as a tool to establish the direct relationship between capitalism and architecture in the form of shopping centres. The goal is to highlight them as cultural dominants in the field of retail, as well as to outline their recent and past evolution and trend towards the style of Postmodernism, building on Jameson's research and work in the field. The end result will be an outline on how twenty-first century shopping centres are a relevant example of contemporary Postmodern spaces, containing several of the characteristics described by Jameson.

Many of the descriptions and observations relating shopping centres and capitalist form production will be taken from *Harvard Design Guide to Shopping*, using the above terms originally described in Jameson's work to draw a parallel between the two pieces of research. This is also supported by a series of detailed analyses of real-world case studies around the Netherlands that contain comparisons and examinations of architectural and construction details that differentiate the retail spaces into different eras of capitalist production. Each represents an era, or chapter of history with different economic conditions that shape their design and use, both at the time of construction and during recent years. Many are pioneers in the style or execution, or simply the most prominent of that era. They are important as comparing them allows for a finer and more direct understanding of the points presented in part one, as well as with an understanding of the historical context of such buildings.

Figure 1 A Map of the Netherlands showing the locations of the 4 case studies (The Hague, Rotterdam, Eindhoven)


EMPIRE
SHOPPING CENTER

Part 1: Shopping Centres as Capitalist Cultural Production

Before pointing to specific examples, it is important to establish a theoretical framework to be able to understand and analyse the shift in the act of shopping through the decades. Despite its socialist origins[14] shopping can be considered one of the quintessential participatory acts of consumer capitalism, the fruit of marketing, product design, and economic forces. If commodities are the currency of capitalism, then shopping centres become the purest space in which it operates, a space where market forces manifest themselves in the built form. A parallel can be drawn between the ubiquitous nature of neoliberal policy and the evolution of shopping centres as forms of public space under late capitalism. Therefore, their place as the terminal architectural and cultural production of late capitalism can be established, and their links to postmodern design can be contextualised as a product of hegemonic socio-economic dynamics.

[14] Sam Wetherell, "The Shopping Mall's Socialist Pre-History," Jacobin, August 4, 2014, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/04/the-last-shopping-mall.

The *Harvard Design School guide to Shopping* already establishes shopping as a product of modern life, itself based on the 'unfettered growth and acceptance of the market economy as the dominant global standard', calling the act the *'medium by which the market has solidified its grips on our spaces, buildings, cities, activities, and lives'*[15]. The fundamental basis of the relationship between architecture and the market economy is the commodification of buildings. It can therefore be said that, just like the title of Jameson's book suggests, if the postmodern style is a product of late capitalism, it must at its core facilitate the consumption of the built environment as a commodity. This is highlighted by Zizek in *Architectural Parallax: Spandrels and other phenomena of class struggle* (2011) where he points out that one of the new spirits of 'cultural capitalism', is the act of '*buy[ing] commodities neither on account of their utility nor as status-symbols; [instead] buy[ing] them to get the experience provided by them, we consume them in order to make our life pleasurable and meaningful*'[16] Zizek then compares this to the forced multifunctionality of many contemporary buildings, infused with a 'sense of place' and a need for 'experience'. Jameson takes this point further, suggesting that postmodern consumers do not in fact want to consume buildings themselves, but instead its image, its marketing, the experience associated with them[17].

Another parallel between market dynamics and the mechanisms of shopping is established by Sze Tsung Leong in the *Harvard Design School guide to Shopping-*

> *'Shopping acts upon two fundamental premises: the market is a limited condition with distinct borderlines, in which consumption is restricted rather than pervasive. At the same time, shopping arises from a need to consume surplus, creating an equivalence between market and festival, which underlies both the jubilation of shopping and the flexibility of its representation. That shopping can embody the seeming contradiction of both limit and excess defines its capacity' Page 198*

This can be compared to the artificial scarcity created in the luxury goods market, where the supply of products such as diamonds is limited in order to drive up the price based on the traditional supply and demands dynamics. This however is only achieved through a monopoly of the market[18], a feature

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[15] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). P128.

[16] Slavoj Zizek, "Architectural Parallax Spandrels and Other Phenomena of Class Struggle," How to Read Lacan , 2011, https://www.lacan.com/essays/?page_id=218.

[17] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). 99.

[18] Trevor Nace, "De Beers Gives in and Begins Selling Lab Made Diamonds," Forbes (Forbes Magazine, May 30, 2018), https://www.forbes.com/sites/trevornace/2018/05/30/de-beers-gives-in-and-begins-selling-lab-made-diamonds/?sh=1eb0da4e4636.

common in late capitalism, and similar to the monopoly on retail desired and implied in large shopping centres. It is in this realm that the economics and organisation of shopping centres operate, where prices, circulation, and retailers are finely controlled in an invisible way. Sze Tsung Leong summarises this further in his essay, saying '*Shopping must mediate between the logic of limit and the logic of excess and come to occupy the irreducible space between*'[19].

The way these underlying economic conditions express themselves can often be found in the postmodern style, thus the name of Jameson's book. Whilst there are several ways to identify this style, Jameson's own research will be used in defining the way in which contemporary shopping centres can be considered postmodern. The following terms are some of the tools used by Jameson in characterising the Postmodern cultural style and will serve to understand the case studies in part 2 and 3.

Depthlessness

The first characteristic of a postmodern work is depthlessness, where works provide no further interpretation, understanding, or purpose other than representation. This can manifest itself through literal flatness (blank facades, flat skyscrapers full of reflecting windows) and qualitative superficiality. One example of literal flatness is the escalator, which suppresses the distinction between individual levels, denying the relevance of both compartments and floors[20]. The vertical depth of a space and the differentiation between floor, ceiling, and void is completely nullified as the entire building is presented as a series of flat planes onto which shops are placed.

The escalator can also however invite new interpretations, such as Jameson's own description of the *Bonaventure Hotel* in Los Angeles, which he describes as an example of Postmodern hyperspace. Here, the mechanisation of circulation is viewed as depraving the act of moving through a building of any meaning,

'[…] the narrative stroll has been underscored, symbolised, refined, and replaced by a transportation machine which becomes the allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own'[21]

As well as depraving such movement of all historical or social connections to the surroundings or the past-

'[…] this is a dialectical intensification of the auto referentiality of all modern culture, which tends to turn upon itself and designate its own cultural production as content'[22]

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[19] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). 200.

[20] Ibid, 337

[21] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). 42.

[22] Ibid

Other authors also point out the importance of the escalator, Tom Wilkinson for example posits that escalators render shoppers themselves as commodities on offer, criss-crossing the central voids of shopping centres, disguising the consumer's labour in the service of the phantasmagoria via mechanisation.

Zizek also points out postmodern depthlessness in capitalist marketing itself, often producing material for shopping centres and tailoring an image to suit a target demographic. When describing this marketing material, Zizek says: *'the antagonistic tension between different standpoints is flattened into indifferent plurality of standpoints. "Contradiction" thus loses its subversive edge.'* Such tensions often exist in shopping centres, such as the projected image of sustainability or environmentalism alongside encouragements for unfettered consumerism, or the repeated image and promotion of healthy lifestyles side by side with fast food chains. Through late capitalism, Zizek says *'Sometimes, the thing itself can serve as its own mask – the most efficient way to obfuscate social antagonisms is to openly display them.'*[23]

Waning of affect

Alongside depthlessness, the postmodern age brings along with it a waning of affect – when a subject devoid of all depth is countered by self-expression in the emotional extreme, heightening intensity to compensate for the depthless, in search for originality and true connection, touching both anxiety and euphoria. This is manifested in architectural form through shopping centres with simulated urban spaces, often with fake facades and articial plants, described in the essay '*Replacescape – Mechanised nature*' by Louise Wyman in the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*. Trees are mummified and mechanised in order to create new landscapes in shopping centres, forming imaginary jungles and beach scenes in air-conditioned spaces, distracting from the formless box that houses them. Perhaps as a symptom of their inescapable growth in city centres, shopping centres also attempt to create simulated and conflict free urban spaces, in the end balancing an innate underwhelming hollowness with an oversaturation of the senses[24]. This same association is found in Wyman's essay, when she quotes Susan Buck-Morss in that artificial landscapes have the goal of overwhelming an organism's senses and thus providing stimuli[25]. This is also seen in brands as companies, as in late capitalism's saturated markets, brands depend increasingly on symbolic added value[26], relying on emotional

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[23] Slavoj Zizek, "Architectural Parallax Spandrels and Other Phenomena of Class Struggle," How to Read Lacan , 2011, https://www.lacan.com/essays/?page_id=218.

[24] *Rem Koolhaas - The Impact of Shopping on the Urban Condition*, *YouTube* (AA School of Architecture, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZpX7IzxFg0&t=2022s&ab_channel=AASchoolofArchitecture.

[25] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). 626.

[26] Ibid, 166

and intense marketing to construct an image and experience associated with the commodities they sell.

Pastiche

These same elements integrate in them a notion of pastiche, described by Jameson as being Postmodernism's replacement for parody and self-reflexivity. Postmodern architecture *'cannibalizes all the architectural styles of the past and combines them in overstimulating ensembles'*[27]. This historicism can be noticed on a number of levels and is used as part of a shopping centre's marketing, whether it be for brands or as a form of stage-setting for the building's circulation spaces. Whilst these types of buildings present themselves as a homogenous whole, often owned by a single company, and offering a similar shopping experience around the globe, Jameson argues that such a relaxation with regards to style and historic continuity results in elements *'float[ing] a certain distance from each other in a miraculous stasis or suspension'*[28] despite attempts to provide continuity or depth to the space through artificial means in the face of the mechanisation of circulation and the crises faced by modern day shopping centres. On a brand level, pastiche is often part of establishing the symbolic added value, whether it be through constructing an imaginary brand history tied to past events or simply using imagery and objects of a certain epoch to evoke emotion based on nostalgia. In his book *Consumed Nostalgia* (2017) Gary Cross argues that increased commercialisation and mass media marketing are commodifying nostalgia, shaping memories based on goods consumption rather than lived experience[29]. This type of marketing can be found physically manifested in postmodern shopping centres, often using real objects such as plane engines, old photographs, light fixtures, or musical instruments as decoration to strengthen and create a stronger association with the marketing established outside the shopping space. In the circulation space, pastiche is used on a more architectural level, conceiving fake facades, floor tiling, music, circulation, and landscapes in order to shape the consumer's curiosity. This is described by Wyman as the terminal manifestation of the 'sublime'- the 18th century description of *'large landscapes in the wild – chasm or a mountain, or a storm or sky so powerful or so beautiful it evoked the gods'.* These spaces stimulate the senses beyond the purely visual, affected the subconscious, provoking the imagination, and arousing desires[30].

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[27] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). 19.

[28] Ibid, 99

[29] "Consumed Nostalgia," Columbia University Press, February 22, 2017, http://cup.columbia.edu/book/consumed-nostalgia/9780231167581.

[30] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). 626.

Late Capitalist Apotheosis

The final section of this first part concerns the evolution of shopping centres as the apotheosis of late capitalism, where the economic system manifests itself beyond simple market dynamics and brand marketing, truly into the realm of psychology and ideology[31]. This is about control over the consumer, their desires, movement, and ultimately their purchase decisions. Although the previously listed characteristics of Postmodern architecture may contribute to this, this section aims to elaborate on the elements that go beyond architectural design, and beyond Jameson's framework. The first of these is the psychology of retail spaces, their orchestration to lure the consumer and seduce them to spend money. Many techniques are used, based on extensive research conducted around music, visual stimulation, smells, routing, and product display that exist to maximise spending by the consumer. This is done by controlling their decisions as they are surrounded by sometimes thousands of products, highlighting some, hiding others, and grouping complementary commodities. This is beyond simple shop window design, as it operates in the consumer's unconscious, an implicit version of marketing. This is summarised by Tom Wilkinson in his article about shops for the *Architectural Review*[32]:

> *This purity could only be staged by enclosure: by the development, in other words, of the shop. Retail space depends – as sacred space – on the exclusion of the profane. In this instance, the fatal contaminant is any trace of the commodity's origin in labour, so the shop must present its wares as parentless children, virginal and pure. Retail space fosters this phantasmagoria by marshalling all the senses; only sacred space is equally replete with sights, sounds, smells and textures. And the transparent facade – the shop window – is the paradoxically lucid veil for these mysteries*

A second manifestation of late capitalism in the monopoly of certain shopping chains, such as Wal-Mart, whose scale is beyond those allowed in classical capitalism, eradicating competition, and establishing invisible but monumental supply chains to stock warehouse-sized retail locations. These giant companies' growth could only be allowed by neoliberal policy, through privatisation, tax cuts, and labour laws[33]. This is highlighted by Jameson in his book *Valences of the Dialectic,* where he describes the power such a monopolistic company has on the lower classes, being the sole provider of many commodities and thus of retail and architectural experience. Jameson

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[31] Ideology in the Marxist sense, regarding control of the production of ideas and consciousness under Capitalism

[32] Tom Wilkinson, "Typology: Shop," Architectural Review, May 14, 2021, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/typology/typology-shop.

[33] Terry Hathaway, "Neoliberalism as Corporate Power," *Competition & Change* 24, no. 3-4 (August 2020): pp. 315-337, https://doi.org/10.1177/1024529420910382.

posits Wal-Mart's potential as a 'Utopia', as the supply chains and huge reach could be flipped upside down to provide many isolated and disadvantaged people with affordable groceries, clothing, and employment[34]. The scale of the supply chains needed by such companies requires such complex logistics, that firms like sears were found hiring Gulf War heads of logistics to manage their network, as pointed out by Rem Koolhaas[3536]. This monopoly also has considerable consequences on the urbanism and retail landscape as many cities, with a homogenous architecture around the country it operates with. This immense operation had humble roots, born from the experimentation between property investors, architects, and the state in the nineteenth century, who would elevate the marketplace to new levels and create a public activity that would change cities forever.

[34] Fredric Jameson, "Wal-Mart as Utopia," in *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2010).

[35] *Rem Koolhaas - The Impact of Shopping on the Urban Condition*, *YouTube* (AA School of Architecture, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZpX7IzxFg0&t=2022s&ab_channel=AASchoolofArchitecture.

[36] Joseph Rosenbloom, "Army Lessons That Apply to Small Business," Inc.com (Inc., July 12, 2011), https://www.inc.com/articles/201107/army-lessons-that-apply-to-small-business.html.

Part 2: Shopping before Late-Stage Capitalism

The end of the nineteenth century saw people 'sucked into the vortex of industrial capital'[37], presented with new shop typologies and streetscapes, they were the ideal place to spend the accrued wealth of industrial giants and bourgeois families in a new and exciting way. The novelty of combining the typology of the shop with the prestigious connotations of classical and baroque architecture was thrilling, as well as provided a space for women to begin gaining independence in public life[38]. The case studies in this part establish shopping as a tool operating within the public sphere, being at once spaces for shopping but also agora functions with streets and squares in their design. They reflect an ideal of progress in their use of material and organization and strive to act as civic structures to revive or change parts of city centres for the better. Despite profit being one of their main goals, the design and architecture often takes a precedent to the efficiency or psychological shopping tools of the spaces. They exist in earlier forms of capitalism in which public institutions maintain a degree of significance and power, thus their designs reflect a sense of morality or public good that is combined with the novel act of shopping to anchor themselves within the historic mesh of Dutch city life.

[37] Tom Wilkinson, "Typology: Shop," Architectural Review, May 14, 2021, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/typology/typology-shop.

[38] Rolf de Booij, *De Haagse Passage : Geschiedenis Van Een Nieuw Winkelfenomeen* ('s-Hertogenbosch: Wolfaert, 2011).

Passage (The Hague – 1885)

The first case study concerns the 'Passage' in the Dutch city of The Hague. Completed in 1885, it is a richly decorated example of a European 'Stadtgalerie', a type of large-scale arcade shopping space often built in the centre of cities, and at the time a new way of experiencing retail. Designed by Herman Weestra Jr, JC van Wijk, and Henri Rieck, it brought with it innovations such as fixed product prices, large shop windows, and the act of shopping as a public activity. One of the first examples of large private real-estate redevelopment, the use of architecture to turn a profit has since expanded and shaped cities around the world. It still exists today, after some renovation work, it is one of the main attractions in the city's centre, with bright natural light, carefully controlled shop fronts, and detailed ornament.

History

The abolition of the guild system of the Netherlands at the end of the eighteenth century meant loosened regulation on the sale of different products, as shopkeepers began selling different products together in markets. As the nineteenth century arrived, modernization and urban growth saw city centres transformed as the new upper and middle classes looked for improved living conditions in medieval-era historic centres inhabited by the lower classes. Zizek calls this this era the first, 'entrepreneurial' epoch of capitalism, lasting until the Great Depression of the thirties, or the 'imperial' stage according to Jameson, with colonial powers still directly and publicly benefitting from imperialism, and class divisions being explicit and well defined.

Constructed between 1882 and 1885, the goal of such a project, aside from profit, was said to be to give the city 'grandeur', as well as a practical pedestrian passage for residents, away from the dangerous and busy streets

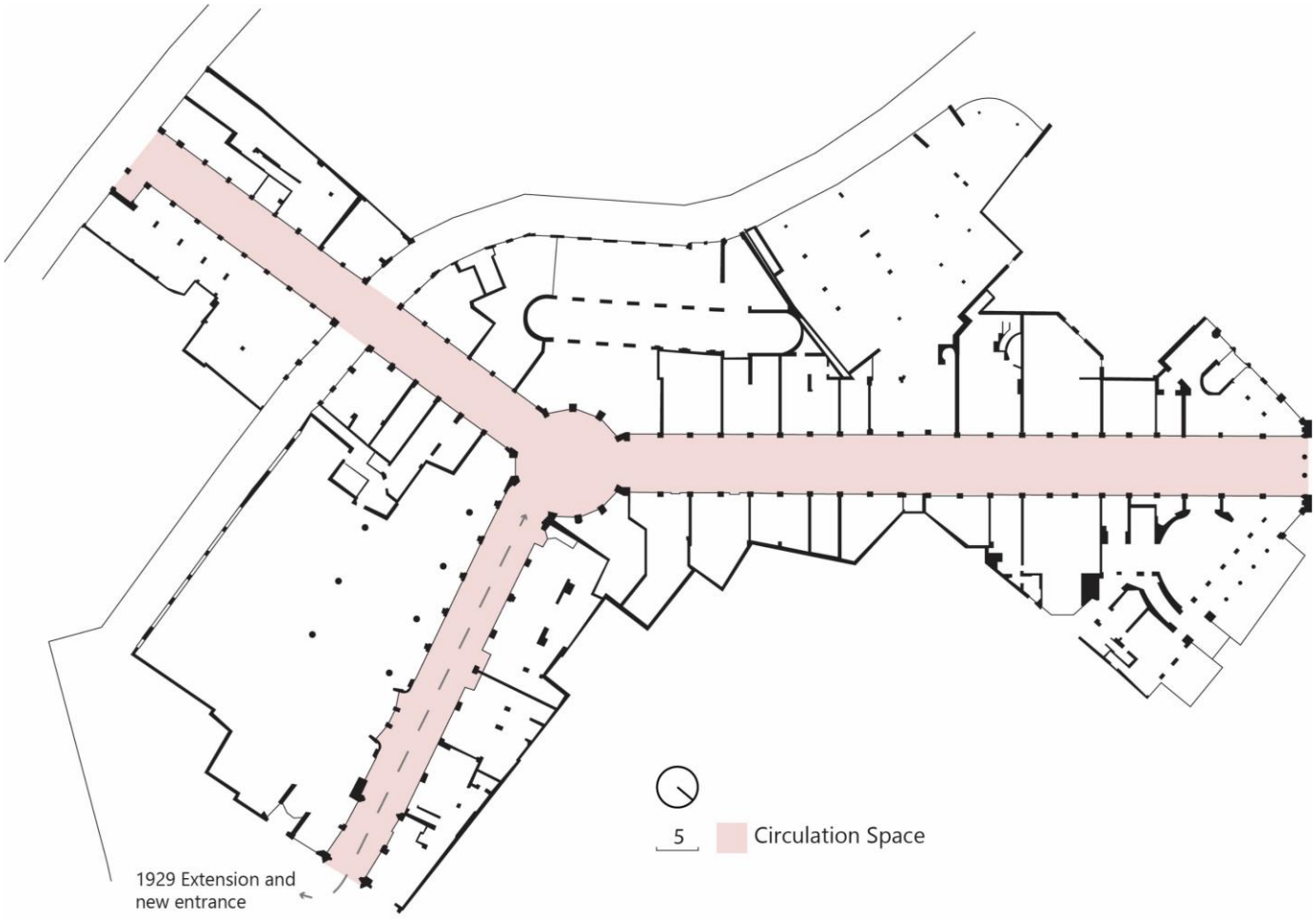

Figure 2 Floorplan of the Passage with the circulation space highlighted.

There are three entrances, the third of which (connecting the bottom of the image to the central space) was built in 1929. The column grid matches the directionality of the spaces, and the shapes of the shops are adjusted to the plot dimensions

occupied by carriages and later cars surrounding the city centre. Inspired by a similar project in Rotterdam, and more generally by the first arcades in Paris and Milan, it was funded by private investors and contracted by a Belgian bank, the 'Caisse Hypothecaire de Bruxelles'. The contractor worked closely with the municipality and planning board to purchase the land around the planned passage, at the time a quiet residential area with cramped and unhygienic living conditions, and then demolish 39 buildings to make space.

When it opened, it failed to attract shop owners due to the new typology and limited shop size. The main attraction for the pedestrians were the cafés, the visual appeal of the arcade, as well as the practice use as a pedestrian passage. Over time, the shops were leased, and the space became an important part of The Hague. The third arm was built in 1929 in an expressionist style, adding more connections from the famous Binnenhof.

Faced with increased competition after the Second World War, the *Passage*'s shops dropped in value, and it found itself housing tourist souvenirs and less prestigious retailers. This changed in 2011, after the owners imposed strict aesthetic rules for shops, as well as selectively chose upper market retailers to occupy the space once used by nineteenth century nobility. After a renovation, the Passage still exists today, after celebrating its one hundred-and twenty-five-year anniversary in 2010.

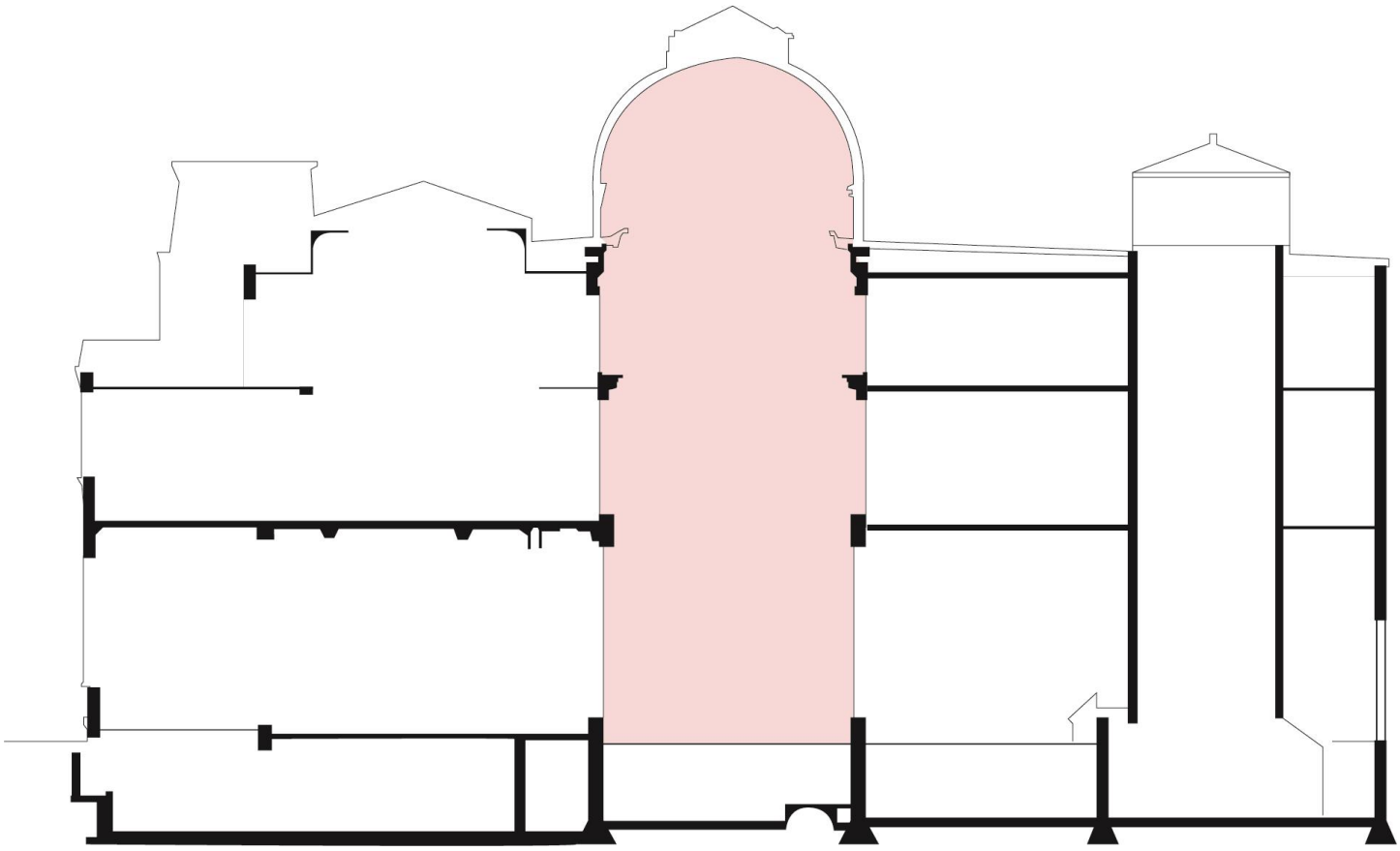

Figure 3 – A section of the Passage showing the height of the circulation space, along with the steel and glass skylight, an attempt at using modern technologies to accentuate classical principles

Shopping and Architecture

The Passage proved itself successful for a number of reasons, paving the road for new forms of 'shopping' around the country. Thanks to its useful function in connecting busy roads in the city through a shorter and safer route, foot traffic was guaranteed in the neo-renaissance arcade, lit by skylights made of steel and glass (an innovation at the time), away from rain or snow. It was striking by its size, a testament to its construction costs, standing tall around the modest buildings that surrounded it[39]. This wealth could also be seen in the details, with ornaments depicting agriculture and industry, as well as Greek goddesses, portraying the building as the product of technological and economic innovation, the logical conclusion to the industrial revolution, where its mass-produced products are consumed in a temple-like space. These renaissance references are continuous in the architecture, as the neoclassical style is used to explicitly elevate the building to a status of upper class, thus bringing the act of mass consumption 'upwards' by association. This was not a simple market with a roof.

Indeed, the building's end goal is clearly to attract people into the shops, where innovations such as the fixed prices of goods allowed for a new type of retail to be experienced by both the upper and middle classes. Thus, the architecture facilitated its use as a space of leisure and social activity, where

[39] Rolf de Booij, *De Haagse Passage : Geschiedenis Van Een Nieuw Winkelfenomeen* ('s-Hertogenbosch: Wolfaert, 2011). 19.

one can slow down as they are sheltered from the busy open streets of the centre. Whilst the decorative elements between the façade and the interior are continuous, the functions around the exterior serve to attract a crowd, such as restaurants and cafes, a theatre, as well as a hotel. This is an early use of using multi-function architecture to attract customers for retail, a trend which would spread as almost every public building would feature retail in the twentieth century, as described in the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*.

These private functions invite the *flâneur*, a product of nineteenth century industrial life, a passerby who simply wanders the streets detached from society, observing public life around them. Walter Benjamin recounts many walks through the covered arcades in Paris through phantasmagoria- a series of optical illusions to create a whole - he associated phantasmagoria with commodity culture and its experience of material and intellectual products. In this way, Benjamin expanded upon Marx's statement on the phantasmagorical powers of the commodity. The social effect of phantasmagoria must ultimately be one of economic consumption[40]. This was partly possible through the use of large shop windows, allowing the passerby to be tempted to consume both by watching other consumers inside[41], as well as by staging the retail stock in an appealing, or even limited way so as to give the illusion or rarity. This is still somewhat limited by the architecture, as every shop window conforms to the regular rhythm of the pilasters and fixed dimensions of the shop fronts.

Figure 4 – An ATM built into the ornamented façade – a reminder of the purpose of the building as one strolls by

It can therefore be said that the Passage in the Hague represents the first steps of private capital involving itself in public city life, using architecture and the images associated with it to turn a profit. Whilst it was constrained but also defined by connections to physical and historical elements, it is possible at this point to imagine the typology expanding its horizons beyond bourgeois temples of small-scale high-end retail. Whilst the focus for the consumer remains on the architecture rather than the shopping experience, the importance of brand and consumer marketing brought by the innovations such as fixed prices and large shop windows show how a collaboration between design and retail could sponsor the radical alteration of the built environment to receive and induce consumer activity. The role of the state as a regulator, along with practical public function, mean the Passage can also be considered a social production rather than a capitalist one.

It is important to remember the use of ornamentation, phantasmagoria, and traditional architectural and urban for future case studies, as arcades such as the Passage served as a basis for early postmodern urbanism.

[40] Ibid, 44

[41] Ibid, 46

Figure 5 The third wing of the passage in 2022, with designer fashion shop windows and stained-glass details

Figure 6 – The central space under the cupola resembles a public street, but with a degree of exclusivity. The inclusion of cafes alongside the shop fronts was also new at the time

Figure 7 – The back façade of the Passage had to follow the meandering medieval streets of the Achterom

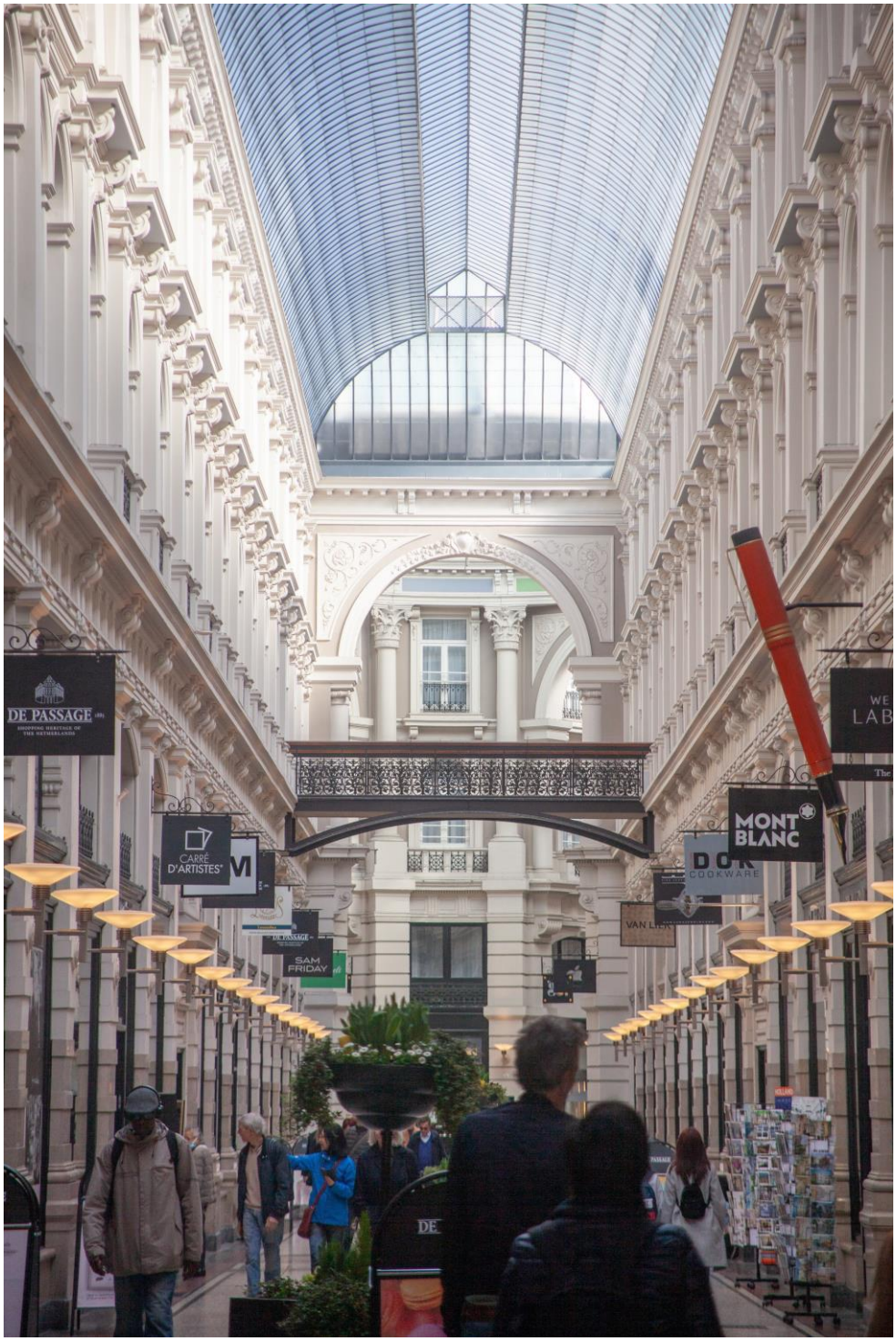

Figure 8 - The shop signs clearly follow a rigorous design requirement, with muted colours and minimal logos. The architecture is the main attraction here, as the recently restored pilasters are lit by warm lamps

Lijnbaan (Rotterdam - 1953)

History

Like many projects in Rotterdam, the story of the Lijnbaan begins during the Second World War. After the city was bombed[42], post-war urban planners saw the destruction as an opportunity for a tabula rasa approach to design a new city, addressing the problems they saw in many of the old streets and neighborhoods. The person to head this new plan was Cornelis van Traa, who submitted the basic plan for the reconstruction of Rotterdam in 1946, helped by architects Van den Broek and Bakema who designed a new shopping space for the centre of the city, a coherent and dense mixed-use development with tall residential towers, public courtyards, and a pedestrian shopping street[43]. The reconstruction was branded as a post-war triumph, using the Lijnbaan as a key example after its completion in 1953. A huge shift from the slums and overcrowded streets of prewar city centres, the designers aimed for generous spaces and democratic values in a Modernist movement that would spread throughout Europe.

Figure 9 The area around the Lijnbaan before the bombing

(Rijksdienst voor archeologie, cultuurlandscap en monumenten 2008)

After two decades of success, the crowds quieted down as large chains solely intent on turnover moved in to replace the modest upscale boutiques that once occupied the lots, driving down prices of both the commodities sold and the value of the area. Crime rates increased in the 1980s, as the Lijnbaan also faced competition and its design was viewed as outdated. Many plans

[42] INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOMBING

[43] The first example of a purpose-built pedestrian shopping street in Europe, inspiring cities around the continent to do the same in the 1950s.

Figure 10 Floorplan of the Lijnbaan with the circulation space highlighted. The linearity of the street and modularity of the shop sizes can be seen, alongside the slender blocks that house the apartments, around green courtyards

were submitted for its renewal or destruction, until it received National Heritage status in 2010, protecting it from any major modifications. Today, many of the large chains remain, but small-scale projects to bring back the original facades and boutiques gain traction.

Shopping and Architecture

In his essay, Zizek establishes three successive spirits of capitalism[44], the second of which, set after the great depression of the thirties and lasting until the seventies,

> *''takes' its ideal not the entrepreneur but the salaried director of the large firm (it is easy to note the close parallel with the well-known notion of the passage from individualist-protestant-ethic capitalism to the corporate-managerial capitalism of the "organization man")'*

In other words, post-war capitalism strived for a democratic appeal, thanks to a belief in its constructive powers and a trust in a regulated and accessible free market to help Europe recover after a second world war. Trade was not a ruthless competition but a collaborative undertaking part of a broader goal to rebuild thanks to social mobility. This also establises a clear split with the nineteenth century bourgeois elite viewed as undemocratic and imperialist.

[44] Quoting Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*

This can be seen in the architecture of the Lijnbaan, its goal to imbue the masses with dignified shopping thanks to a universalist urban concept follows the CIAM[45] discourse on democratic and egalitarian values in architecture. The architects themselves uses what they called a 'Heart of the City' model, with careful integration of the project in the fabric of the greater urban plan, both through functions and layout, creating an 'urban megastructure', buildings nurturing a growing society. This style of modernism resists commodification according to Jameson[46], perhaps by design thanks to the values instilled within it. The deconstruction of the closed volumes around public inner courts was both practical and innovative, serving the shops but also providing green space to the housing blocks. The shopping street is redefined as a civic space, free from the realities of historic constrains, wide and easily accessible to all. The ornamentation is replaced by public furniture with benches and flowerbeds, and the shops are designed in consultation with the shop owners to establish a modular system of standard shop types to accommodate the different retail sectors. When visiting, Victor Gruen[47] noted the Lijnbaan's human scale , the retail spaces only two stories high with slight glass and steel facades on a concrete frame. The shops show innovations thanks to ideas brought by Bakema from the United States- namely the glazed shop windows, light and air-conditioning technology, new interior logistics and display techniques. Overall, despite its goal as a social space, the Lijnbaan as originally a great commercial success.

Figure 12

(Top) Cars parked in front of the residential towers near the Lijnbaan

(Bottom)The Lijnbaan in 1953, with the Stadhuis in the background

(Rijksdienst voor archeologie, cultuurlandscap en monumenten 2008)

To conclude, the Lijnbaan may be considered the connection between shopping and urbanism in its purest, most utilitarian form for the time, free from the constraints of historical urban context, free from corporate and economic interests, and stripped of class divide and ornamental association. This is useful as it can be compared with future postmodern case studies as they tackle the social functions or ornamentation. In the Lijnbaan, shopping exists almost purely as a social construction, accepted as a key part of the city, with implied democratic values. It has departed from an ornamented ensemble, as commodities themselves become the focus of the retail experience and the architecture takes a step back[48].

This however can easily be abused in late-stage capitalism, as large shopping chains eventually took over as the global markets consolidated into a few key multinational monopolizing corporations during 1980s neoliberalism. An early version of the Lijnbaan is an example of how the act of shopping itself, just like the early marketplace, is not incompatible with a healthy urban centre, however economic forces and competition can shift this, and the

[45] Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne

[46] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). 100.

[47] Victor Gruen is an Austrian architect, credited with inventing the Shopping Mall in the United States, not long after the construction of the Lijnbaan

[48] In the visual sense, as the sleek likes and simple circulation do not overload the senses.

close relationship between architecture and the hegemonic powers can twist democratic projects in capitalist ambitions, stripping them away from core social ideals. These types of spaces fail under late capitalism if they do not maintain at least the impression of an upper-class target audiences, and maintaining the shopping space as a civic monument, providing the 'experience' and novelty associated with notable architecture, often sought after in postmodern design. This is also compensated by excessive marketing, itself not a new concept but under late capitalism it is turned into they key aspect of the shopping experience, as the small boutiques of the street got transformed into loud and brightly lit clothes shops. The Lijnbaan's decline after the advent of neoliberalism shows a need for a new type of architecture which collaborates with the economic system's needs, compensating with the shortcomings and prioritises profits, and marketing.

Figure 13 – The Lijnbaan during construction. The difference in scale between the planned roads and the pre-existing city structure can clearly be seen.

(Rijksdienst voor archeologie, cultuurlandscap en monumenten 2008)

Figure 14 -Pedestrians cross the Aert van Nesstraat, with the new and imposing buildings from the later expansion of Rotterdam visible in the background.

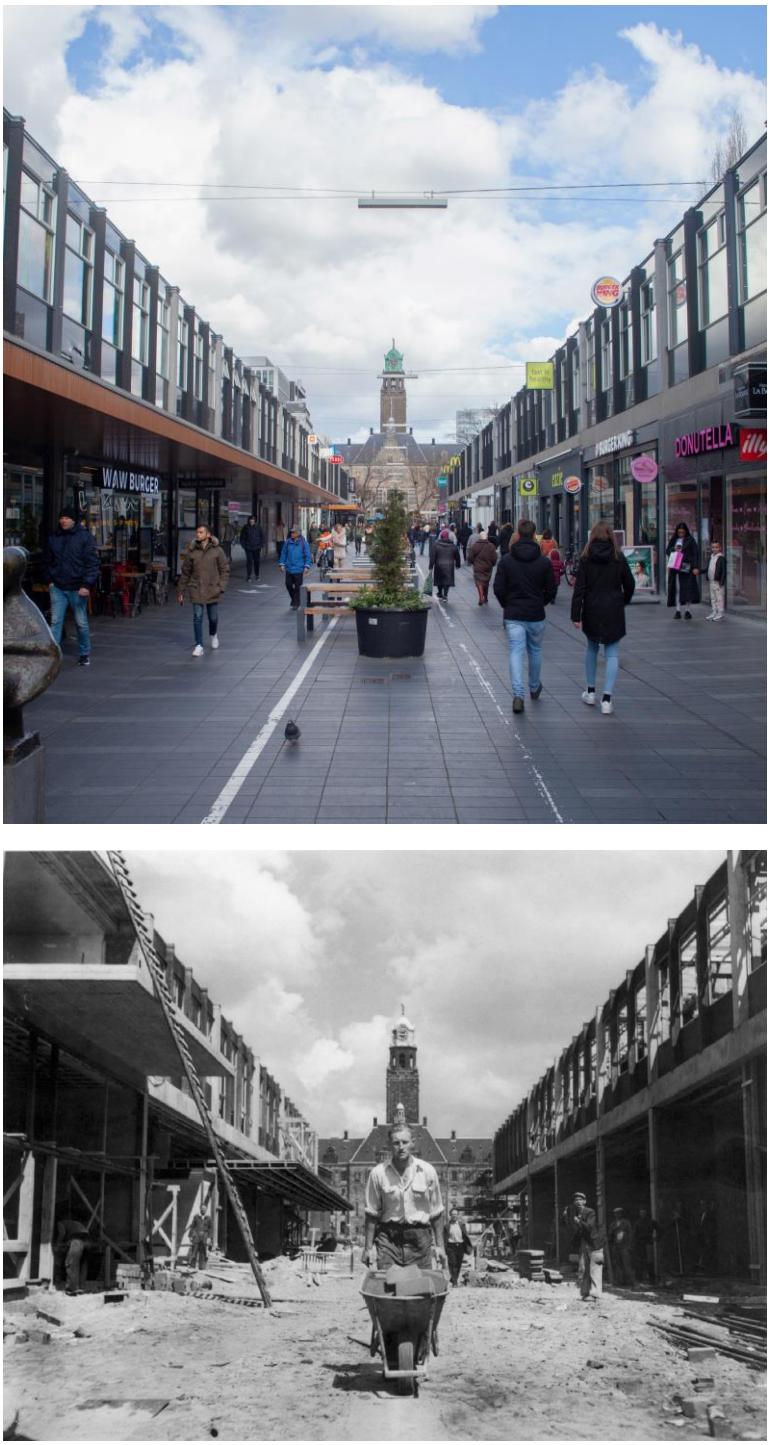

Figure 15 – The Lijnbaan today (top) versus during construction (bottom), with the Stadhuis still visible in the background. An effort has been made in recent years to preserve and restore the appearance of the Lijnbaan after its classification as a national monument

(Rijksdienst voor archeologie, cultuurlandscap en monumenten 2008)

Figure 17 – A Burger King restaurant on the Lijnbaan, one of many commercial chains present on the street. The apartment blocks built at the same time are visible in the background

Figure 18 – The facades of the first floors show some signs of wear, with shops making adaptations over time. The concrete structure is clearly visible, along with steel beams and columns on the ground floor.


GASTRO
STARBUCKS COFFEE

Part 3: Shopping during Late-Stage Capitalism

Whilst the exact beginning points of the new spirit of Capitalism – Late Capitalism – are still contested, it can be said that it was well underway during the 1980s, after the economic and cultural sides of capitalism 'crystallized' into postmodernism in the 1970s[49], and the neoliberal market-oriented reform policies a decade later. These would heavily impact the field of urbanism and architecture, as they operate in a new economic realm and for new, often private interests. It is in this time that the shopping the world knows today would be born. *'From the ruins of the bourgeois regime of consumption, [Shopping centres display] the jerry-built foundations of mass consumer society'*[50]

[49] Jameson attributes this to the 'great shock of the crises' (the oil crisis, the end of the international gold standard, the end of the wave of national liberation

[50] Janina Gosseye and Tom Avermaete, *Shopping Towns Europe: Commercial Collectivity and the Architecture of the Shopping Centre, 1945-197* (LONDON: BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC, 2017). Quoting de Grazia

De Heuvel Galerie (Eindhoven - 1992)

History

The story of the Heuvel starts side by side with the beginning of neoliberalism, as Philips, the electronics company founded in Eindhoven, which had built much of the city both before and after the Second World War, fired half of the 47,000 employees it had in the city. Eindhoven quickly fell into disrepair, as poverty increased, the city became increasingly privatized, and the many cultural events once organized by Philips no longer took place. To remedy this problem, the city authorities looked to shopping as the activity to bring money and life back to the city, with a plan to construct a covered shopping centre in 1987 over the crumbling town core, at that point only featuring a handful of disjointed shopping streets. Such a job was given to German architect and developer Walter Brune, based on the success of one of his earlier projects in Cologne, which also attempted to bring life back to the city centre through the construction of an arcade gallery.

Brune was also able to also rework the surrounding historic public spaces with new street furniture and paving, bringing the project to a larger scale as the architect attempted to fix many of the city's problems in a single construction site. The final design took up a large footprint, with arcades and tall domed spaces, and included retail space, office space, restaurants, apartments, public promenades, an underground garage, and a concert hall for the Noord-Brabant Philharmonic orchestra[51].

[51] Holger Pump-Uhlmann, *From Department Store to Stadtgalerie: Buildings for Retail Trade by Walter Brune* (Berlin: Jovis, 2011).

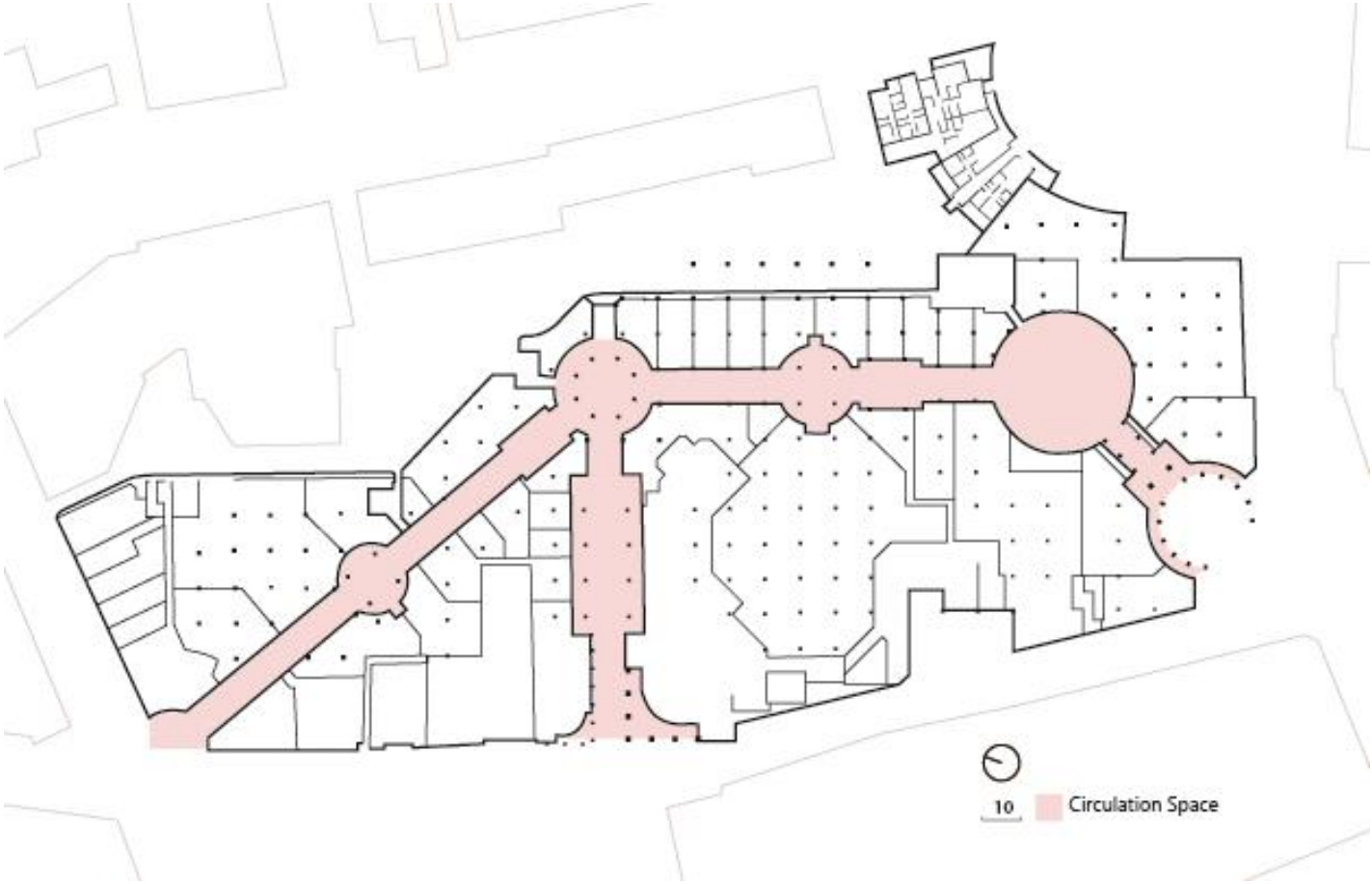

Figure 19 A floorplan of the Heuvel Galerie with the circulation shopping space highlighted in red. The routing features a series of glass domes, a reference to ninetheenth century arcades

After its construction, the Heuvel Galerie supplied Eindhoven with a surge in retail supply, accomplishing its goal of bringing visitors back to the city centre. Whilst it did have success as the new city centre, it was short lived as Eindhoven eventually turned into a technology-oriented city and new investment arrived to build competing shopping centres, and businesses came back to the traditional streets too. Despite renovations in lighting and sustainability, the Heuvel is still under threat of demolition or a drastic remodeling as visitor numbers continue to decline and many of the shops remain vacant.

Shopping and Architecture

The architecture of the *Heuvel Galerie* shows a vague connection with the existing streets, as Walter Brune attempted to mesh together the function of shopping with the historical residential streets that had since been demolished. These new streets provide little to no useful connections compared to the existing road network, as paths across the block are shorter when traveling around the perimeter than the through the winding streets of the *Heuvel*. In contrast to the diagonal of the *Passage*, the postmodern circulation of the *Heuvel* implicitly favors disorientation and the slowing down of pedestrian flows as the fine balance between practicality and entertainment that allowed for flânerie is broken.

Figure 20 The traditional single-level arcade is now doubled into two levels thanks to the escalator

Inside, the spaces are complex and repeating, using a glass domed intersection multiple times along the main path, as spaces became taller and then shorter, wider and narrower from one alley and hall to the next. The use of escalators is also new here, as the city of Eindhoven received its first large-scale shopping project, the mechanized stairs multiply the already confusing

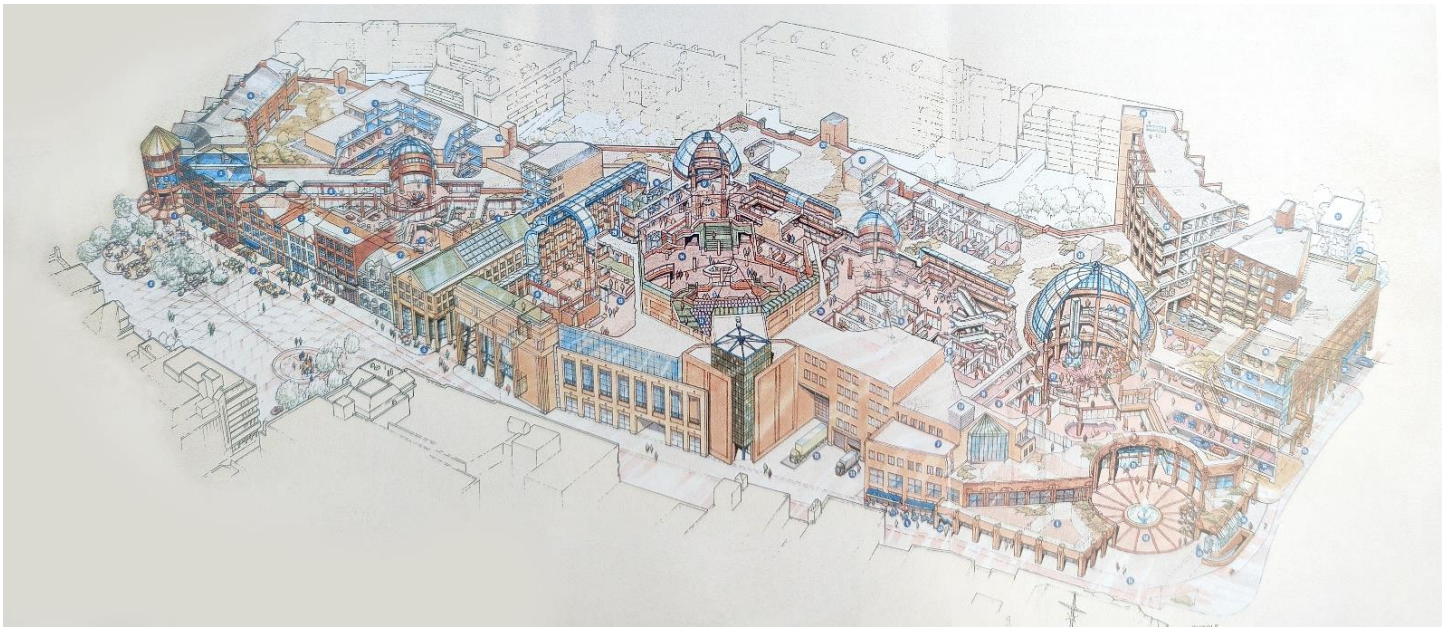

Figure 21 The Heuvel Galerie attempted to bring back all the basic functions of a traditional city centre under one roof , the architect even called it 'open heart surgery' for Eindhoven. Source: (Pump-Uhlmann 2011)

spaces into two and even three layers, with glass balustrades making the different floors visible and the floating walkways accessible.

Jameson argues that the conflict between Neoclassicism and Modernism is broken in the Postmodern, and that any distinction between street and sidewalk, or inside and outside (Famously experimented with in the *Lijnbaan*) is abolished, as the streets become aisles in a department store[52]. In the *Heuvel*, the project of the shopping centre extends to the public spaces to cement postmodernism as an all-encompassing architectural and urban style, and the connection between the streets are virtually meaningless. Inside, the spaces compress and decompress, the corridors become streets which become at once terraces which transition through escalators into aisles of a clothes shop. Surfaces are never continuous, as the lingering residue of traditional urbanity visibly conflicts with the large-scale and hermetic demands of late capitalist retail. As opposed to the *Passage* and the *Lijnbaan*, here shopping is interiorised, with greater control over the consumer and the artificiality of the space the occupy. Streets are undefined, as they are specifically programmed to be at once spaces for circulation, lingering, sitting, shopping, and queuing. Together with the vague use of historical construction and ornament, this places the architecture of the *Heuvel Galerie*, with its postmodern New Urbanist style in an architectural 'uncanny valley[53]', as the form of traditional streets, facades, and shops is recognized, but a deep flaw or void is present that may put the user in an uneasy position as they explore the new shopping space.

Figure 22 The shopping centre even integrates public square elements such as fountains and benches, all within the universe of shopping

This type of architecture can be considered a reaction to the impacts of the modernist style, which had become increasing hermetic, closed, and hostile

[52] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991). 97.

[53] The unease felt by people when presented with a human face, figure, or form which is recognised as that of a human, but with a fundamental but unconscious flaw which places the figure 'uncanny' valley between fully artificial and fully human.

to the traditional streetscapes of many European cities. It was then thought that the vocabulary and repertoire of purely functional architecture was not suitable for solving the problems of the department store[54]. Buildings such as the *Heuvel Galerie* attempt to balance or juggle monumentality and vernacular architecture, fusing together the efficiency and economic viability of modernist structures with a nostalgia and need to reflect collective memory in the city. The result however can be considered *Pastiche*, an empty parody, or an empty utopia, built from the ground up in a dilapidated city centre in an attempt to brush over a difficult part of history. With its glass domes and diagonal streets, the Walter Brune attempts to apply neoclassical principles onto an industrial scale. In the same way, traditional Dutch roof gables are replicated with a forced and artificial degree of diversity to conceal the scale of the shopping spaces and its impact on the city and showing no clear boundary between 'real' historic buildings and space built for consumption.

Figure 23 A chandelier hangs over the domed circulation space

This pastiche is also present at the detail level, as the brick column heads become ornamented with steel connections and reinforcements, an industrial reference alongside the geometric brick imagery on the ochre facades, the juxtaposition perhaps a nod to Eindhoven's recent industrial past. These styles exist alongside the new ceilings, part of a recent renovation project, with lighting by Studio Fractal that follow a 'minimalist aesthetic'. The use of artificial lighting along with abundant natural light shows the complexity of the Heuvel, containing both tall, naturally lit streets which branch off into short and narrow artificially lit corridors, both containing shops, but neither able to exist on its own in the new style.

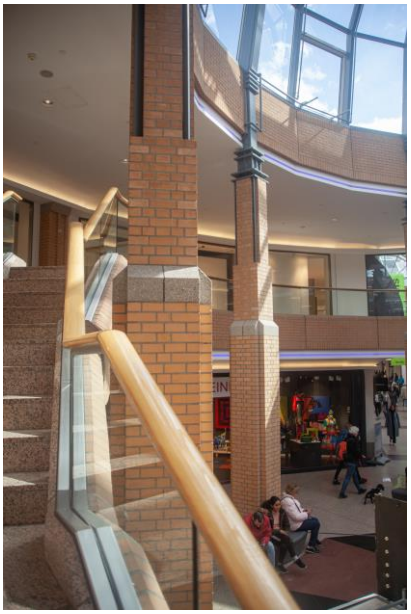

Figure 24 The interior shows a plurality of materials used in differenty styles, from industrial steel columns to traditional brick columns, grand marble floors and modest wooden handrails

Shopping

Similarly to the *Passage* and *Lijnbaan*, the *Heuvel Galerie* presents an honest attempt at creating real public space and amenities under the roof of a shopping centre, but with a stronger emphasis on the act of shopping, and with a completely new surface to disguise the strong economic motives. The architect himself was a real estate developer who participated in many of his own designs, an example of the breakdown of the relationship between the public and private sector in urban planning. This attempt at construction shopping to revive an area is called an 'artificial symptom of a healthy city' by Rem Koolhaas[55], as the diversity of functions built into the *Heuvel Galerie* can simulate a city centre, without any of the actual activities or foundations that would be needed for one, such as public accessibility.

Just like in the *Passage*, the shops have to conform to the building with it yellow bricks, low ceilings, and modular shop sizes. This is a result of Walter

[54] Holger Pump-Uhlmann, *From Department Store to Stadtgalerie: Buildings for Retail Trade by Walter Brune* (Berlin: Jovis, 2011).

[55] *Rem Koolhaas - The Impact of Shopping on the Urban Condition*, *YouTube* (AA School of Architecture, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZpX7IzxFg0&t=2022s&ab_channel=AASchoolofArchitecture. 31:22.

Figure 25 Brick ornament design on The Heuvel's facade

Figure 26 The long façade is diguised as multiple houses with individual roofs

Figure 27 The upper floors are a mix of stock rooms and apartments

Brune's beliefs – retail spaces should complement a city centre and should never be self-sufficient. The architecture comes before the efficiency of marketing or floorspace rentability. Along with the social functions, the *Heuvel Galerie* therefore finds appeal in its sense of collectivity, the notion that late-stage capitalism is attempting to adapt to public city life and become open to all through urban renewal.

On the other hand, the use of traditional imagery based on its association with bourgeois times may also be an attempt to symbolically elevate the consumer 'beyond' the middle class, the aesthetic objectification and pastiche of the nineteenth century arcades. Kenneth Frampton says:

> *'Just as Koolhaas promotes his own brand with a blizzard of statistics, photos of the "real" world, and a weary sense of globalism's inescapable surfeit and waste as the only legitimate field of architectural action, the New Urbanists—with their own megalomaniac formulas of uniformity—create slightly "different" Vegas of "traditional" architecture based on its association with the imagined reality of bygone happiness. Their tunes may differ, but both are lyricists for the ideological master narrative that validates and celebrates the imperial machine.'* [56]

In Conclusion, it can be said that the *Heuvel Galerie* represents a nostalgia for the industrial capitalist utopia, one which encouraged entrepreneurship whilst also embracing tradition, given Eindhoven's foundations. It aestheticizes a future that the city never got, designing an arcade whose interior attempts to reconcile the bourgeois arcade with the sloping roof gables of the traditional Dutch city, as Eindhoven itself was never rich nor old. It attempts to combine the historicist classical style of the arcade with he radical social and urban shift associated with the modernist project, and despite having a democratic core, fails to combine this with the privatization of much of its space. With the same scale and transformative powers of the Lijnbaan, it operates within the confines of late capitalism, relying on Pastiche for its luxury, imaginary streets as its circulation – a possible *waning of affect*- with artificial ornament, complex routing, multiple escalators, and maximized floorspace for low-ceiling dark shops. In the end, it relies on tradition to bring back a changing city and a changing industry. It serves a lesson for future twenty-first century Postmodernist architects – architecture cannot entirely rely on democratic nostalgia, and the design of pastiche has to operate on a different scale and different form in order to function seamlessly.

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[56] Kenneth Frampton, "The Work of Architecture in the Age of Commodification," Harvard Design Magazine, 2005, http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/23/the-work-of-architecture-in-the-age-of-commodification.

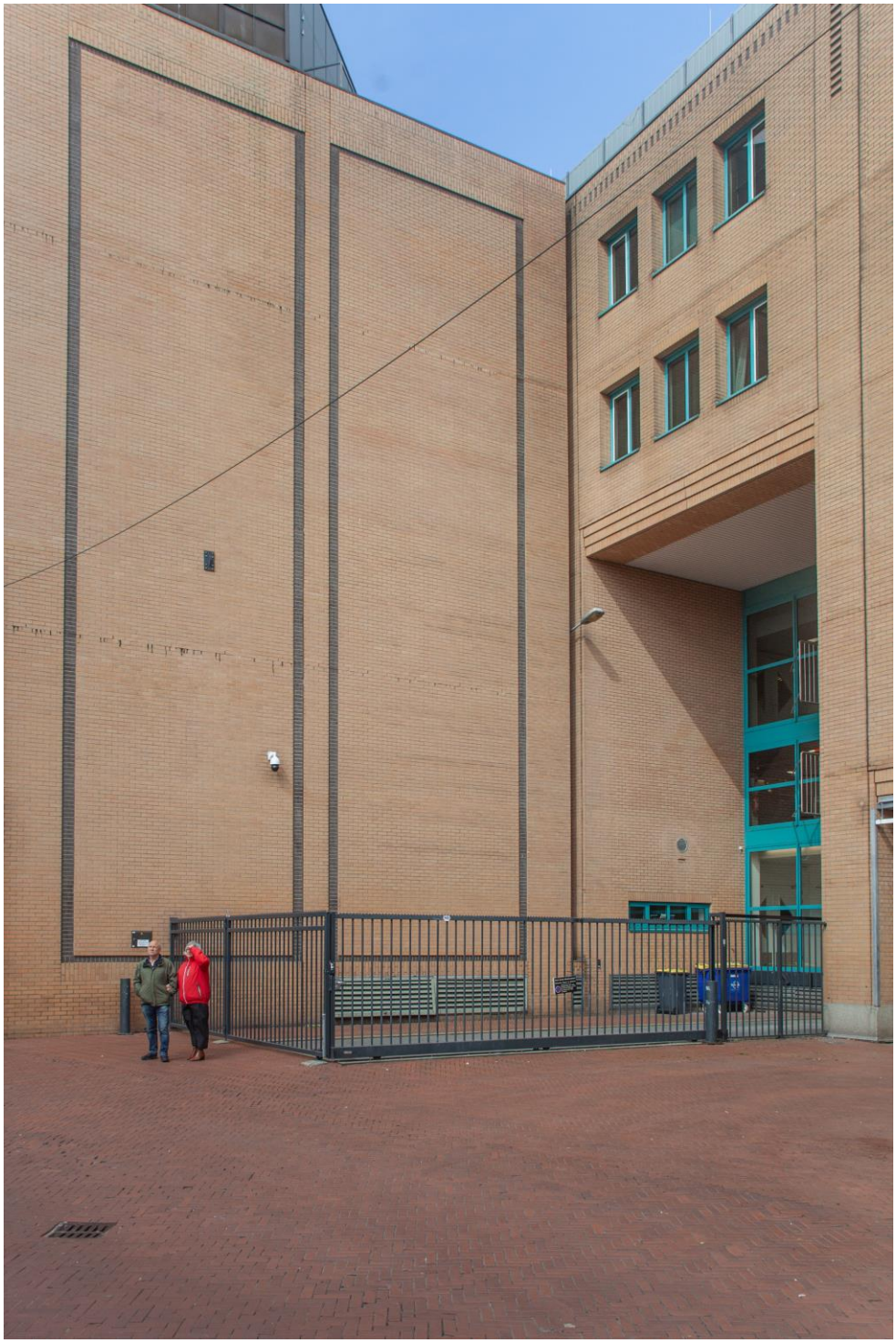

Figure 28 The large loading bay is a giveaway to the Heuvel Galerie's scale, a contradiction between the organic, traditional presentation of the building, and its vast programme

Figure 29 Escalators add complexity to the inner streets of the Heuvel Galerie

Figure 30 The façade of the Auditorium displays an interpretation of the traditional opera ornaments, with masks lining its cornice

Figure 31 Attention is payed to every corner, every lightwell, every window

Westfield Mall of the Netherlands (The Hague - 2017)

History

With humble beginnings in the sixties with the construction of a single shopping centre, the Australian Westfield Corporation would go on to be a retail giant. Designing, constructing, managing and leasing over forty shopping centres around the world, it could be considered a specialist in generating retail profit, developing branches of its company technology and design, marketing, and finance, evolving through the capitalist sphere to operate not within the retail world but the corporate one.

Following a takeover by one of the largest real estate companies in Europe for €22.3 Billion[57], Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield set their eyes on the Leidsenhage shopping centre in the suburbs of The Hague, an open-air retail space built in 1971, and in steady decline since the 2008 economic crash[58]. Proposing a complete renovation, the international conglomerate imagined the Netherlands' largest shopping centre in its place in the image of the company's own economic ambitions, preserving only the park-like surroundings and some of the parking structures. Despite opposition from many locals in the quiet area, the design by MVSA architects was accepted and construction was underway.

Completed in 2021 and going €160 Million[59] over the €630 Million budget the *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands* features over 280 shops and restaurants, extensive parking, supermarkets, a cinema, and childcare facilities in a 116,000 square meter complex of weaving streets and curving sky lights. Aiming to attract visitors from around the country, it invests heavily in flashy features and 'lifestyle' events to draw shoppers away from online shopping thanks to unique 'experiences' provided by the real shops.

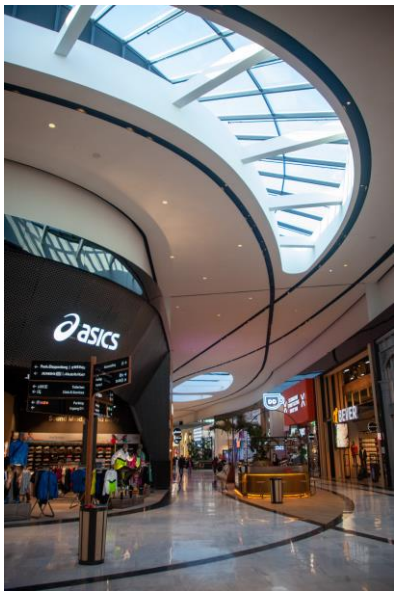

Figure 32 Circulation space in Westfield. The scale of the branding and shop fronts is unlike any of the previous projects, as the tall ceilings and abundant daylight are fully taken advantage of to create an immersive marketing experience

Shopping & Architecture

The *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands* can be considered as the culmination of the lessons learned about the 'shopping experience', with the exclusivity of the *Passage*, the clean-slate approach of the *Lijnbaan*, and the multifunctionality of the *Heuvel Galerie*, all simulated under one roof, as a product of investment ambitions and speculative urbanism. In that sense, it does not need to integrate within the urban fabric like the *Passage* or provide the democratic message of the *Lijnbaan*. or even exploit the nostalgic architecture of the *Passage*. It exists on its own, with the sole justification of its existence being shopping. This does however imply several contradictions and complexities, as the architectural style of postmodernism adapts and refines itself to the twenty-first century.

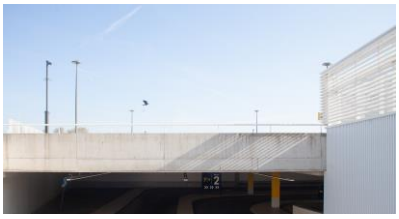

Figure 34 The exterior contrasts greatly with the interior, with the roof-top parking exposing the monolithic concrete structure and industrial scale of the Westfield Mall of the Netherlands

[57] Ian Verrender and Elysse Morgan, "Lowys Sell Westfield for $32 Billion," ABC News (ABC News, December 12, 2017), https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-12/westfield-lowy-family-sells-empire-for-32-billion/9250776.

[58] Maaike Kraaijeveld, "Zorgen over Supergroei Van Leidsenhage," AD, November 2014, https://www.ad.nl/den-haag/zorgen-over-supergroei-van-leidsenhage~aeae2b54/

[59] "The Netherlands Biggest Shopping Mall Opens (Some of) Its Doors," Dutch News, March 2021, https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2021/03/the-netherlands-biggest-shopping-mall-opens-some-of-its-doors/.

Figure 36 A floorplan of the Westfield Mall of the Netherlands showing the circulation spaces. The linear parts that remain from the Leidsenhage shopping centre are visible, in contrast with the curving and looping parts of the new part.

It can be said that the *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands* finds a way to resolve the discrepancy between the limits of form of the shopping space and the excess enabled by the program of limitless commodity retail mentioned in the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*. Perhaps pushed by the pressure of online retail, the Westfield Mall is built as a space for shopping first and foremost, unlike any of the other examples in this essay. The activity is turned into a lifestyle, every city centre activity under one roof. Each space is thus engineered into synesthetic environments[60] tailor made to the demands of brands, through which the consumer flows from one space to the next.

Containing these spaces is a box, sealed off from the exterior, and self-sufficient. The façade is free from all historical queues, embracing the near-excessive scale of the box itself to display large, prefabricated elements and billboard-sized signs with the name 'Westfield' glowing red in the night, a depthless signal of function in the landscape of parking lots. The prefabricated elements can display the same motion of flowing, curving, and apparent complexity as the act of flânerie itself, different shapes on every façade. There is no nostalgia for the past or desire for universal accessibility, instead replaced by a desire for futuristic imagery, expensive materials, and

[60] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). 168.

the impression of exclusivity through the unique shape of every prefabricated plaster panel. There is no search for pattern, repetition, symmetry, or efficiency in the perfect box, itself already a resolved and functional housing for the purpose of containing shops. Its rigid shape is desperately hidden both through curving panels and the repeating vertical slats hung over the rigid and bare black flat facades. These also serve to distract from the HVAC[61] utilities on the roof that glisten in the sun, only visible because of the open and empty landscape around the shopping centre. The façade serves as the final wave of marketing, consumed by the passerby, and without which the architecture – shopping – would lose all exterior appeal, similarly to the contemporary reliance on media marketing for brand image.

Ornament

Compared to the *Lijnbaan* and the *Heuvel Galerie*, where industrial innovations are symbolically used to portray progress, such as the use of concrete in the *Lijnbaan* or the image of steel columns in the *Heuvel Galerie*, functional architecture is purposefully hidden in Westfield. The ceilings are suspended to hide the HVAC ducts, prefabrication of the façade is used to craft a tailor-made shape, the load-bearing elements are hidden. Instead, the *impression* of high-tech is favored, with dramatic curved skylights, exotic materials, and bright multi-colored lights used both inside and outside. The relationship between form and function, already starting to fissure in the *Heuvel Galerie*, is fully severed, and the departure from High-Modernism fully committed. This is described in the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, where Sze Tsung Leong says that the expansion by mechanical enhancement has reached its limit, and shopping has to find new ways to survive[62]. This is especially true for Westfield, as the scale of the spaces, both in terms of mechanical services and circulation, far exceeds those of pervious case studies from only 30 years prior. Thus, new appeals are found, such as the desire for exclusivity and wealth, as the website itself claims that the customer is *'treated like royalty everywhere'*[63]. This is achieved through ornaments, with gold-coloured light fittings and wall plating found around the centre, wavy ceiling ornamentation, as well as escalators and ramps instead of stairs. On another level, Westfield attempts to better the online shopping through a number of free services provided to customers, such as refrigerated lockers, spacious bathrooms, child day-care, cloakroom and parcel services, shoe shiners, and phone chargers[63], truly presenting itself as a utopian world were class-barriers are temporarily and superficially broken down for the sake of shopping, but also as a product of competition, Westfield themselves saying *'No webshop or shopping street can match the world of Westfield'.*

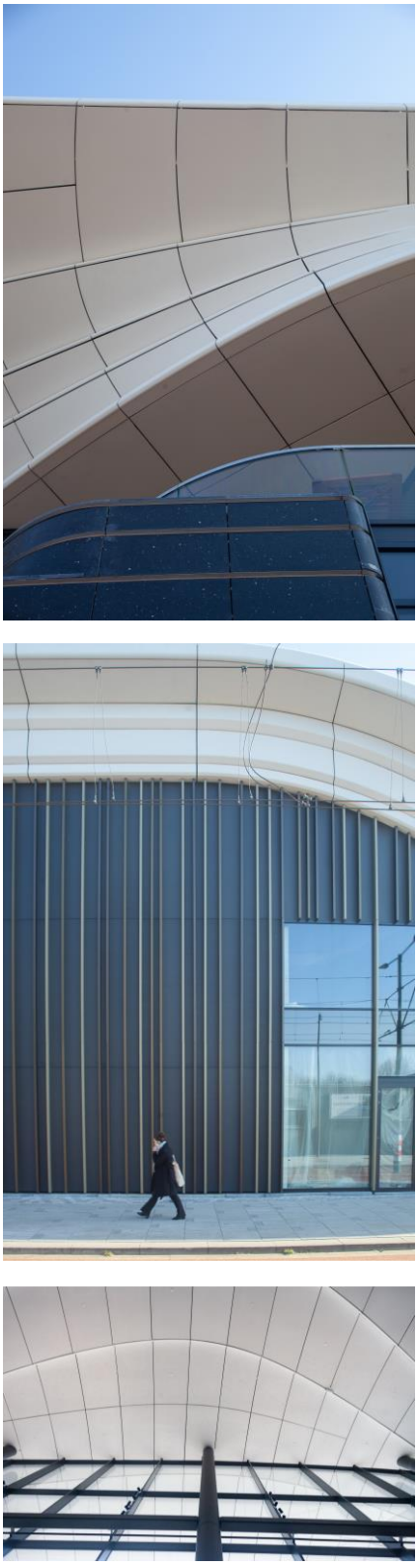

Figure 38 The prefabricated panels of the Westfield Mall of the Netherlands facade (top) The vertical slats on the black facade panels (middle) A curtain wall connecting with the prefabricated ceiling panels (Bottom)

[61] Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning

[62] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). 133.

[63] https://nl.westfield.com/mallofthenetherlands/centre

Figure 39 The façade of the Westfield Mall of the Netherlands is visible from a distance, across a vast car park. It is clear that the building does not intend on integrating itself within its environment.

Pastiche can also be easily identified within the architecture of Westfield, however it is used in a different manner to the historicist nostalgia in the *Heuvel Galerie*, which plays on a collective need for historic roots and traditional city centres. Westfield's pastiche is much more fragmented, reserved to brands who crudely use historic imagery to allude to cultures or eras as a form of marketing. Stereotypes are presented to the consumer, a concentrated generalisation in an attempt to attract attention in an environment of flashing lights and large signs. Examples include Asian motorbike food stalls placed in the middle of circulation space and used as advertisement, or the famous Belgian 'Manneken Pis' statue used as branding for a chip shop. The historicism is no longer part of a collective memory, but in an ode to global capitalism, it is broken down and exploited in the name of brand marketing, decentralised, and fragmented in a unified neutral space. In a similar way, plants are used throughout the circulation spaces, perhaps as an attempt at greenwashing[64], or simply as a way of counterbalancing the large surfaces of marble and glass around the shopping centre.

Circulation

Just like many of the previous examples, the *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands* aims to replicate and then improve the layout of a traditional shopping street. This is done in Westfield partially by achieving the lightness

[64] The practice of using the image of sustainability as a form of marketing, rather than performing concrete actions against climate change

Figure 42 An interior perspective of the Westfield Mall of the Netherlands showing the weaving lines on the marble floor and dropped ceiling

Figure 41 Information systems become necessery at scales this large, with an interactive touch screento find shops on a digital map. Advertisalso be seen in the circulation space, whether on the floor or suspended on the ceiling, it is clear that the purpose of such a building is retail rather than leisure

and space outdoor shopping centres thanks to tall ceilings and large skylights, and the controlled and dense environment of interior shopping centres thanks to unique shop facades and decided space for HVAC services. However, due to the standalone and isolated nature of the shopping centre, the streets cannot have a practical function such as in the *Passage* or *Lijnbaan*, and therefore serve only as a space to connect the shopper from one retail space to the next. Therefore, the streets are no longer lines connecting point A to point B, but instead a square grid around 5 blocks of shops. Directionality and simple direct movement is avoided at all costs, as curving and testing lines appear on the floor and ceilings, seemingly to confuse the shopper as to the direction they are going in, a way of slowing them down in the sealed world of the shopping centre (A sign of a good

Figure 43 The motorbike food stall being used as an advertising platform

shopping centre according to the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*[65]). This is an example of depthlessness as the depth of roaming streets on a journey is replaced by a surface (the line), there is no longer a destination or a purpose other than shopping. Depth in experience is replaced by fragmentation in shopping, the phantasmagoria of arcade roaming, the joy of flânerie, is replaced by phantasmagoria of consumerism. The flânerie is simulated in the virtual city grid, as streets weave around corners and into open squared flooded by daylight, an attempt to mark the excess of the artificial streets by simulated diversity in streetscape.

The twisting nature of the streets is compounded by the small scale of the exits and the somewhat symmetrical and repeating layout, as the space's marketing and focus on relaxation increasingly seem like an attempt at hypnotizing or deceiving the consumer into remaining in the shopping centre.

Shopping

A by-product of market globalization and multinational conglomeration, modern shopping centres suffer from the issue of offering the same shops, services, and architecture regardless of location or scale. This is exacerbated when such spaces are built from scratch such as in The Hague, offering no other incentive to visit the space other than for the experience of shopping.

> *''The Westfield mall is virtually indistinguishable from Dubai duty-free' he says, point out that the same generic multinational shops are now to be found not just in malls, but on the streets of cities. the effect is compromising and imperial – a real estate formula' - Michael Sorkin in The Guardian*[66]

Thus must attempt to differentiate themselves not only from each other, but from every other private space found in cities.

> *Retail experts say they expect the centre to be a big draw, despite coronavirus. 'Shopping is becoming more of a day out,' Paul Moers told RTL. 'If you just want to buy something, you do it online. But shopping is a combination of buying things and eating out.' (Dutch News 2021)*

This has an undeniable impact on the shopping experience, as Westfield brands itself as a 'lifestyle experience', a 'unique experience', 'quirky'[63]. These also serve to distract from the postmodern hyperspace of continuous planes, designed to make money and to convince the user to buy. Shop fronts are

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[65] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). 175.

[66] Stefan Al, "All under One Roof: How Malls and Cities Are Becoming Indistinguishable," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, March 16, 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/mar/16/malls-cities-become-one-and-same.

transformed into entire facades, entrances several meters high, with neon brand logos glowing next to the ones of the neighbouring shop. Product installations become the threshold between circulation space and the shop space, sometimes even blurring as brands occupy the central spaces with temporary installations for new products and marketing material. Shops themselves have to balance the homogeneity and consistency of their global branding with the need to provide attractiveness and an experience to their flagship shops in Westfield, presenting each shop as a standalone universe and unique space, perhaps nostalgia to the days before late capitalism. The fragmentation of micro-consumer universes is so intense that maps are consistently needed throughout the circulation space so as to guide the shopper amongst the hundreds of unique shops. As Sze Tsung Leong says, *'information now represents the means by which shopping can continue its expansion'*[67]. This is true for Westfield, as global internet access and the rise of targeted marketing represents both its greatest competition and means by which to expand furthest. Thanks to social media marketing, the space to exists both as a physical location and as an idea, images and experiences displayed and shared throughout platforms such as Instagram. Thanks to the user tracking systems on these platforms, marketing can be streamlined and targeted thanks to statistics, as the Instagram and Facebook 'channels' reach 62,000 'impressions' with an engagement rate of 15.7%[68]. The digital world is also manifested in the physical realm as large-scale digital screens by 'Ocean Outdoor Netherlands' are frequently used throughout the spaces as 'media channels' for brands, sometimes offering interactive and moving panels in certain areas to contribute to the 'total experience' of the Westfield Mall of the Netherlands[69].

'Suburban Malls were intended to be multifunctional, but more emphasis as placed on perfecting the consumer machine' - (Pump-Uhlmann 2011)

Thus, shopping centres such as Westfield must manage the demands of company shareholders, the marketing of hundreds of international brands, and strict psychological tools and guidelines. The result is an almost authoritarian control over the shops it leases its spaces to, as they face rents doubling after the Westfield renovations, and requirements to report revenues and pay for events[70], pushing away smaller retailers and perpetuating the system of late capitalism, no longer collaborating with civic and social structures such as in previous case studies, also described in the

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[67] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). 135

[68] "Social Engagement Success," Westfield Mall of the Netherlands - The Briefing, n.d., https://thebriefingmallofthenetherlands.com/en/features/social-engagement-success.

[69] Ibid

[70] Annemieke Ruggenberg, "The Mall Bestaat Één Jaar: 'Vloek En Een Zegen Voor De Gemeente'," Omroep West, March 2022, https://www.omroepwest.nl/nieuws/4544952/the-mall-bestaat-een-jaar-vloek-en-een-zegen-voor-de-gemeente.

Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping[71] as the world market is the ultimate horizon for capitalism[72].

[71] Chuihua Judy Chung et al., *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping / Harvard Design School Project on the City* (Köln: Taschen, 2001). 134.

[72] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, n.d.). xix.

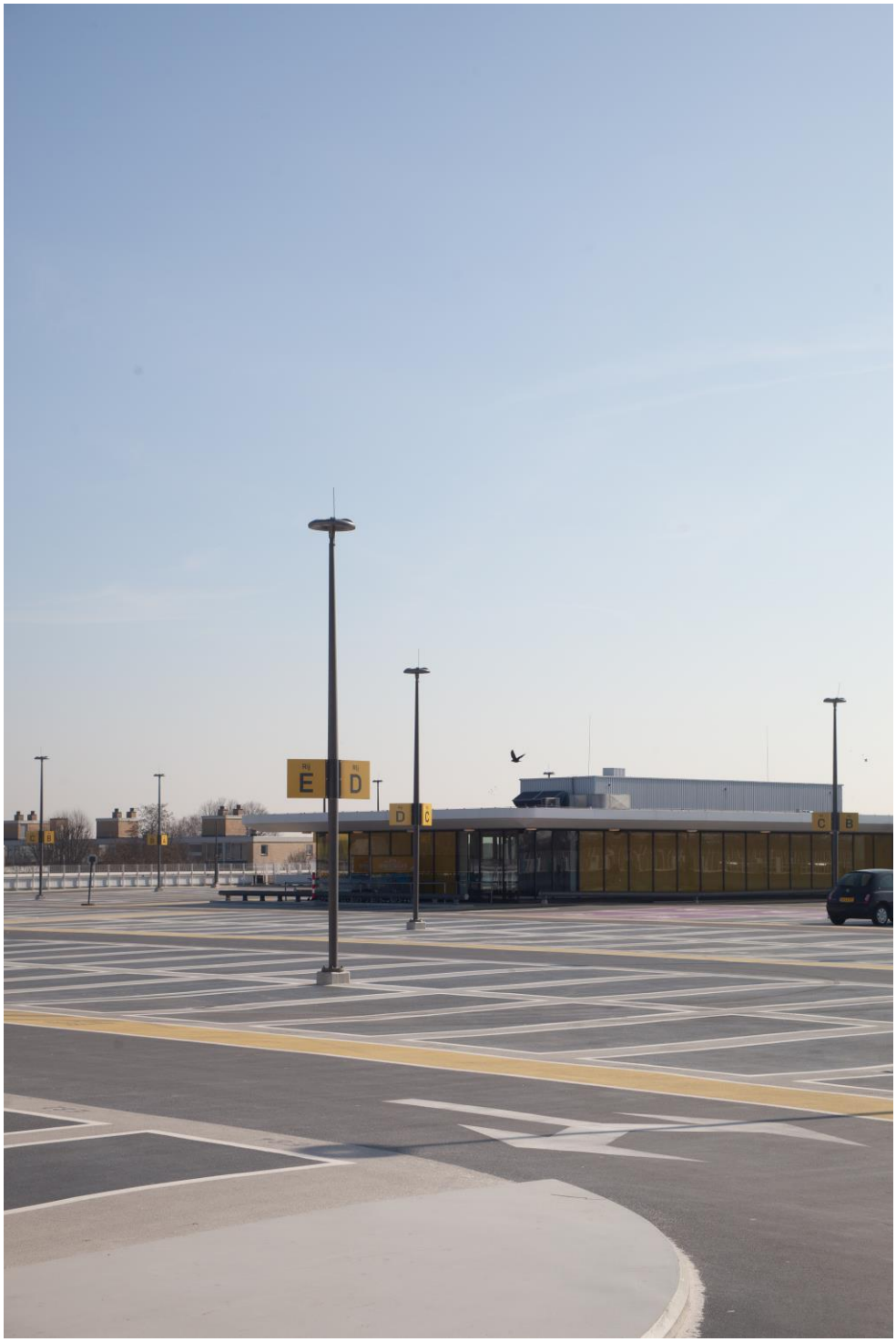


Figure 44 The scale empty parking lot on the roof is a testament to the demand expected from such a building on a busy day, but also highlights the size of the building's footprint

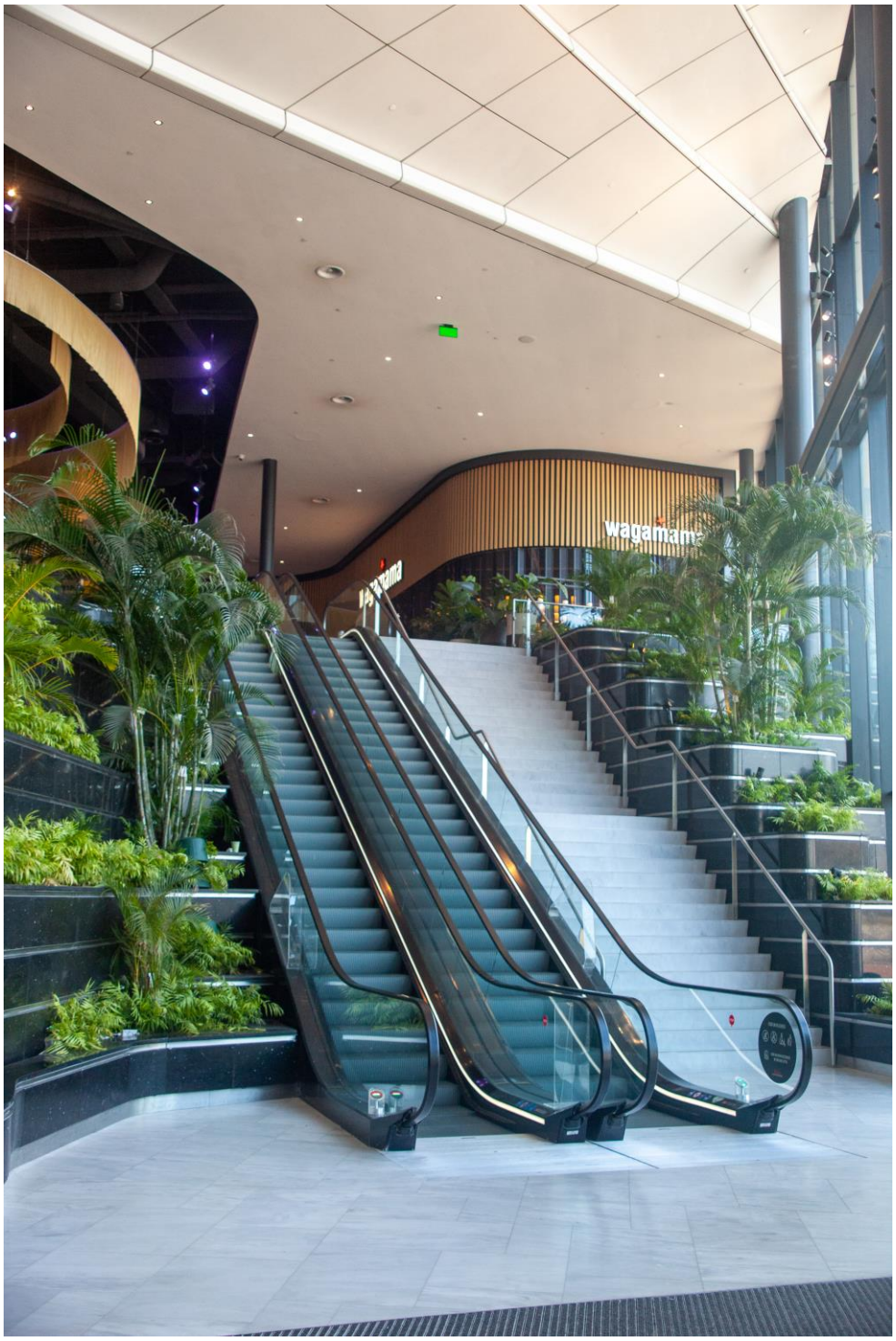


Figure 45 Some plants are placed at one of the entrances, along the path of the ecalator to the first floor containing the restaurants

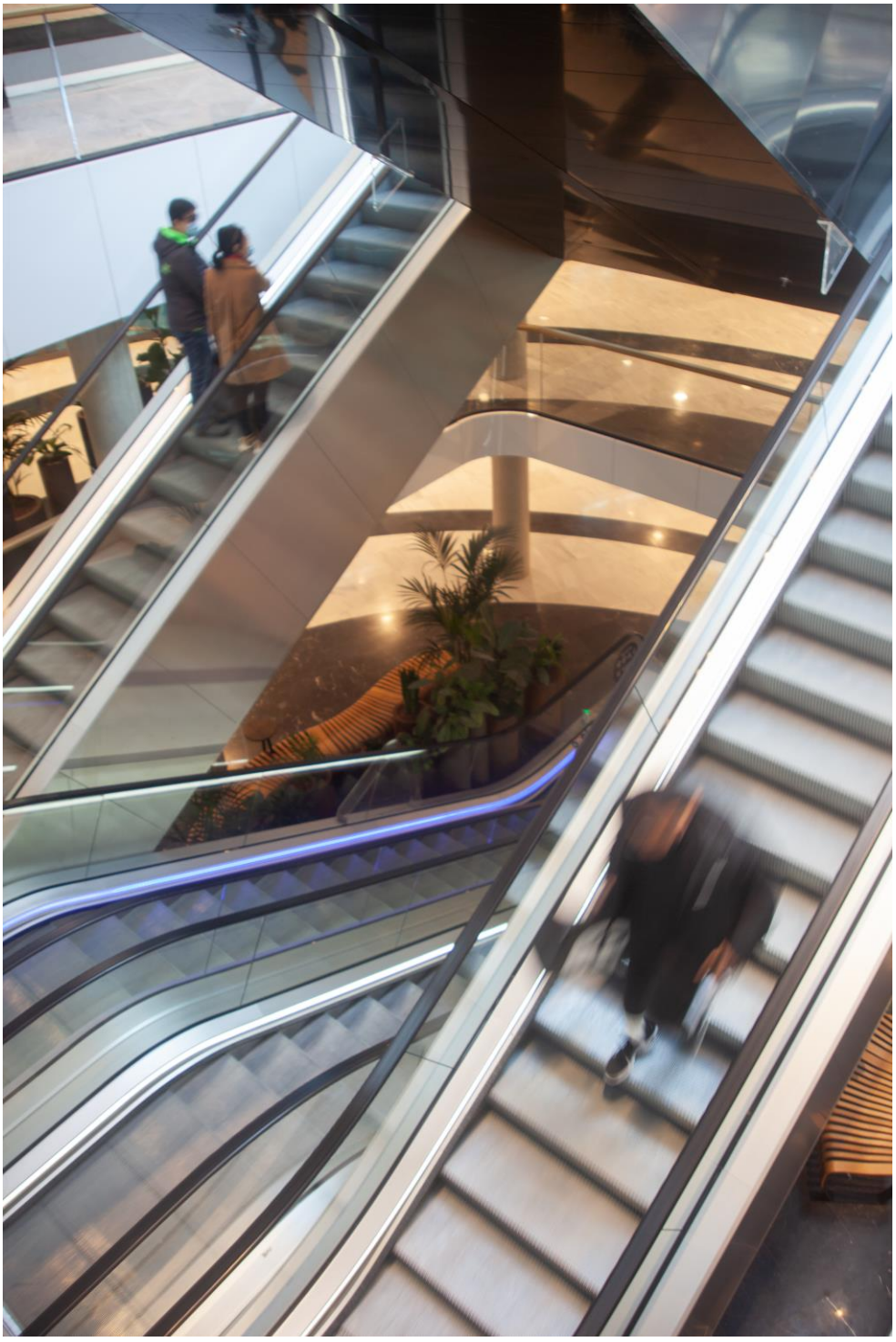


Figure 46 Escalators weave between each other to provide access to the two basement levels containing car parks, a useful tool to ssupress the scale of the construction

Figure 47 Floor textures vary between space for sitting walking, and shopping. In the background, a shop attempts to recreate a traditional Dutch/Belgian snack shop using traditional materials and imagery to create the impression of an authentic and small-scale shop

Conclusion

Figure 48 An interior perspective of the Passage's extension by Bernard Tschumi

In conclusion, it is clear that the design of shopping centres can be considered a result of the overlapping interests of architecture and economics. This confirms Jameson's theories about Postmodernism being the cultural logic of late Capitalism and demonstrates the collaboration between architects and real estate interests. The story of this essay shows how nineteenth century real estate pioneers backed by foreign banks became part of the growth of a new typology that would birth some of the biggest companies in the world. Architects are also responsible for this, using tools such as ornament, façade, circulation, lighting, rhythm, and material to encourage the act of shopping. Many of predictions made by the *Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping* stand correct 30 years later, however further research may be relevant regarding the role of pastiche or nostalgia as well as sustainability in the twenty-first century, especially given the climate crises and numerous global financial crises faced since 2008.

Shopping centres have grown and adapted over the past 135 years, and despite a slowdown in new construction, the existing retail stock continues to renovate and expand to meet contemporary demands. Such an example is the *Passage* in the Hague, which has seen a second progression after the one from 1929, with the construction of an extension in 2014 designed by Bernard Tschumi, showing all the characteristics of early twenty-first century design elements seen in the *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands*. With a continuation in function, the surfaces are updated to feature abstract and flowing shapes, with the same abundant daylight as the 1885 building but flat planes as facades, devoid of the complex and metaphoric ornament of the neoclassical style, instead plants are used as a façade (See figure 42), hanging above shop fronts. It also reflects Postmodernism's challenge to reconcile globalisation and local imagery, attempting to create a building that is *'incontrovertibly Dutch, but also had an international flavor'*[73] The design reflects the use of digital tools, with large blocky volumes punctuated by irregularly shaped windows and digital print patterns. The marketing remains, as the name of the Passage is kept, and the dichotomy between old a new is clearly visible, the extension and existing building separated only by a street. The same multifunctional program of shops, restaurants and a hotel also exist in the extension, as the proven formula lives on.

It remains to be seen if the place of shopping centres is compatible with democratic and egalitarian values, as many people do truly rely on such spaces to act as public squares or markets from which they buy groceries and affordable clothes. There lies the paradox of the scale of many large multi-national companies, who provide affordable products for many who

[73] "De Passage ," Bernard Tschumi architects, 2014, http://www.tschumi.com/projects/65/.

cannot afford alternatives, yet their existence requires a monopoly and market inequality that may also produce poverty. This essay does not explore the debate about whether or not shopping centres deserve to be considered public spaces, instead considering that position as implicit given the widespread nature of the typology. The aim was a neutral analysis of capitalism's characteristics to provide a deeper understanding of the driving forces of architecture and real estate developments.

Regarding the architecture of Postmodernism itself, this essay highlights a distinction between early Postmodernism in the form of the *Heuvel Galerie*, and late(r) Postmodernism in the form of the *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands*. Whilst the main argument is that they are both inevitable products of capitalist cultural production, they differ vastly in their approach and impact. It is here that an important point regarding the role of architects both within the field and public political, civic discourse can be made. Whilst it is true that shifting socio-political conditions in the end of the twentieth century warranted a new style, a new approach to thought and design, away from the realism and rigidity that stemmed from rapid industrialisation, the approach to this shift is what is most telling about the underlying principles of the two buildings. The *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands* does not contribute to the timeline of human history, its scale alongside its isolation a testament of strictly economic motives, with no self-reflection. The imagery is abstracted, beyond that of Modernism, nonsensical and constantly shifting, it is truly the representation of depthlessness Jameson so often spoke about in Postmodernism, rather than its early forms such as the *Heuvel Galerie.* In Eindhoven, the building seems to be a desperate attempt at extracting meaning in a devastated site. Its approach is almost opposite, tugging at the boundaries of historicism in an attempt to resolve conflicts and meet expectations of the Dutch population, who were used to traditional squares and stepped roof gables in every other major city. In this way, the *Heuvel Galerie* is perhaps the best form of Dutch Agora for the twenty-first century, putting at odds the country's past and future[74,75], stripping down the imagery to a series of details (Steel columns, stepped gables, brick ornament) without losing the greater picture. Walter Brune operated within the boundaries of capitalism and succeeded in creating a space for a dying city to begin its revival despite the dated style of New Urbanism and the criticism it receives today. It has at its core positive values such as democracy and collective memory, an attempt to recreate the European arcade in an accessible and regional way. Even in terms of sustainability, it boasts a higher sustainability score than the much more

[74] The Netherlands was one of the main countries to experiment with and develop the Postmodern architectural style after the Second World War

[75] Betsky, Aaron. "Plain Weirdness: The Architecture of Neutelings Riedijk." Archis, April 23, 2014. https://archis.org/volume/plain-weirdness-the-architecture-of-neutelings-riedijk/.

recent *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands*[76] (63.8% vs 85.0%). It may be criticised in terms of style, but it can be said that the substance was a strong foundation, allowing for new debates on Architecture into the twenty-first century, as world-famous Dutch architectural firm MVRDV and CBRE global investors put forward proposals to remodel the entire building as the city of Eindhoven grows. They plan to 'break open' the 'outdated' building to make space for 'shopping, culture, and recreation'[77]. The streets are kept but are opened to the elements as the roof parks are added around a 'glass mountain'. It remains to be seen if the project is executed and how this changes the city's centre.

Figure 49 A diagram showing MVRDV's intentions in Eindhoven's city centre with The Heuvel[69]

[76] "Winkelcentrum HEUVEL - Passages En Algemene Delen," BREEAM-NL, accessed April 13, 2022, https://www.breeam.nl/projecten/winkelcentrum-heuvel-passages-en-algemene-delen-4851.

[77] https://www.mvrdv.nl/projects/463/de-heuvel

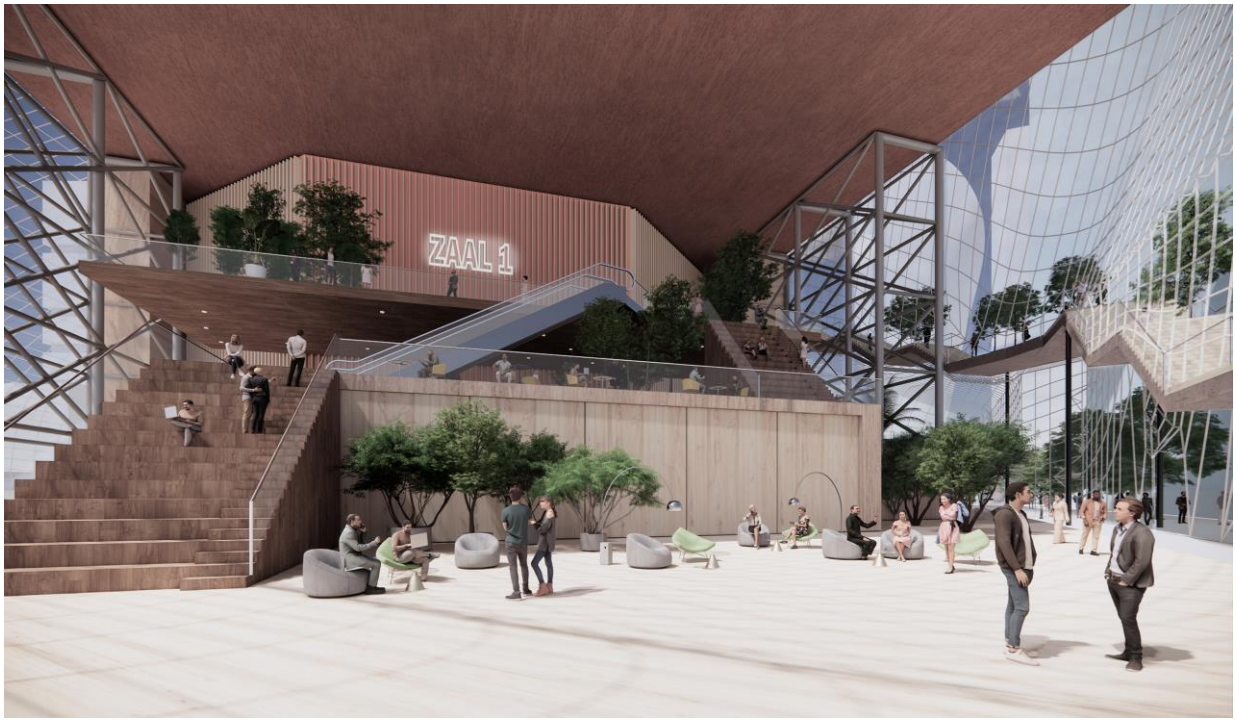


Figure 50 Perspective Renders of The Heuvel by MVRDV[69]

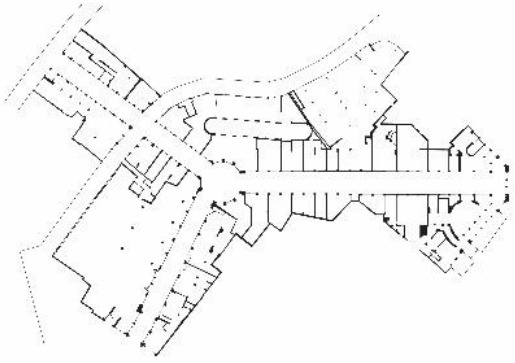
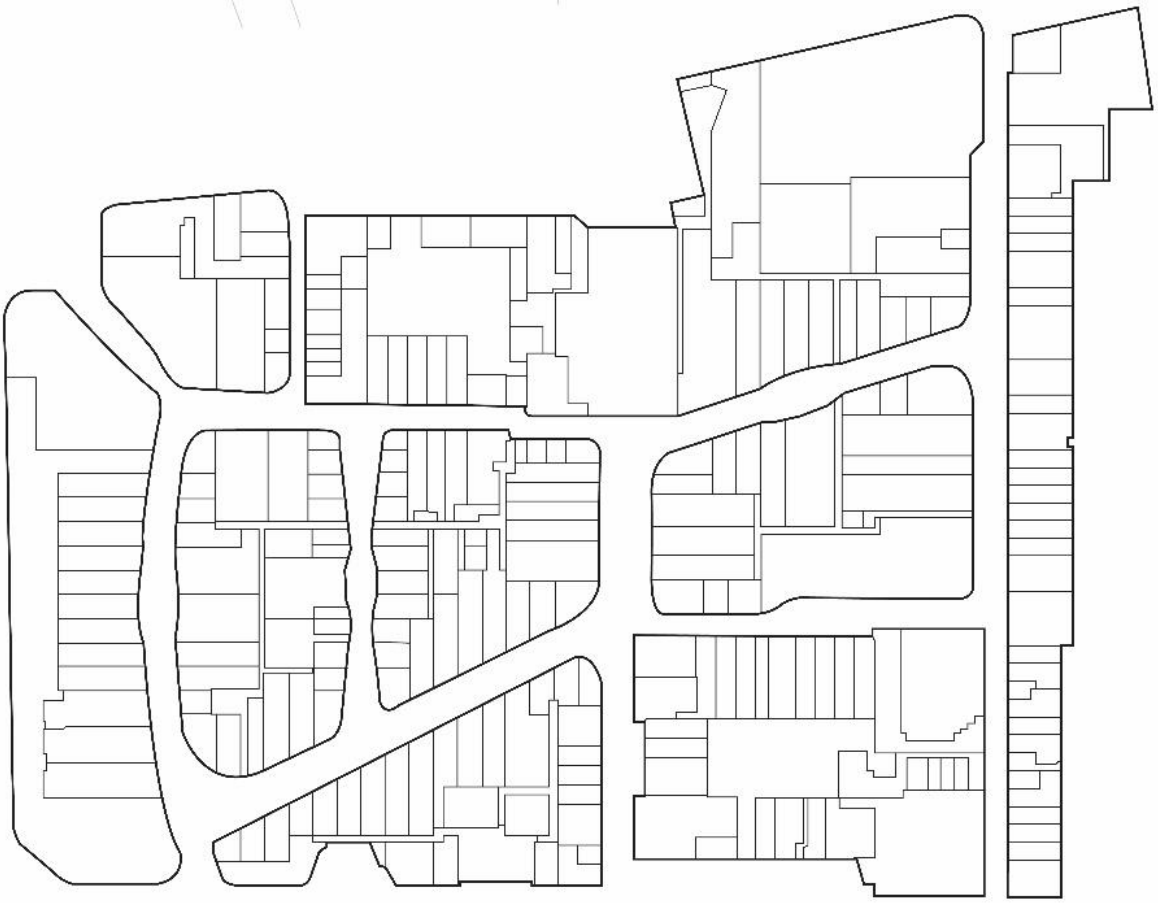


Figure 51 A size comparison between the four case studies – First page: The Passage (top), The Lijnbaan (bottom). Second Page: The Heuvel Galerie (Top), Westfield Mall of the Netherlands (bottom)



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