

Las vegas



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Not concerned about building another hotel in the entertainment-oriented of Las Vegas, Steve Wynn's demolition of the Dunes repeats the message of the undesirable old and the fascinating new. This constantly updated society is an icon of the American experience that demonstrates how the spaces and practices of the metropolis shape our modern experiences and culture.

By insisting everything must be new all the time, "Relatively recent hotels that form part and parcel of the show business mythology are pulled down without a second thought and replaced by others that are bigger, more luxurious and better attuned to the mood of the times" (Warde, 2000). The received message pushes visitors to participate in costly events, gamble more and spend more to be seen in popular locations. Simmel (1950) suggests this rapidly changing climate creates an atmosphere in which man must "react with his head instead of his heart" to survive the constant shifts. That the culture has bought into this concept is evidenced in the speed with which life-changing decisions are made. "On average, there is a wedding every five minutes and a divorce every 45" (Warde, 2000).

Another message received is that of self-servitude. In Las Vegas, dolphins swim in the desert at the Mirage and oceans of water sink a ship at Treasure Island. "Natural conditions dictate a fastidiously conservative water ethic ... But Las Vegas disdains to live within its means" (Davis, 1995). This lack of consideration extends to the use of motorized vehicles in the area. The rampant use of motorized vehicles decimates the environment in and around the city, reducing limited natural resources through simultaneous consumption and pollution.

Las Vegas promises a fun atmosphere, but is not the Paradise it claims to be. "The Las Vegas city limits encompass barely one-third of the metropolitan

population. The major regional assets are all located in an unincorporated township aptly named 'Paradise,' while poverty, unemployment, and homelessness are disproportionately concentrated within the boundaries of Las Vegas and North Las Vegas" (Davis, 1994). Brothels are at least semi-legal in 13 of the 17 counties within the state (Warde, 2000) and the city has some of the highest suicide and alcoholism rates in the country. These qualities attract others who identify with violence, organized crime and the "sins of the flesh" as these revolve around money. "[Money economy and the dominance of the intellect] share a matter-of-fact attitude in dealing with men and with things; ... a formal justice is often coupled with an inconsiderate hardness. The intellectually sophisticated person is indifferent to all genuine individuality, because relationships and reactions result from it which cannot be exhausted with logical operations" (Simmel, 1950).

Las Vegas offers a wide selection of replicas, allowing visitors to visit Paris, New York, Monte Carlo or Venice in an afternoon. Time travel is possible as King Arthur's Camelot, ancient Egypt, 1950s Hollywood and Caesar's Roman forum are within hailing distance. These spaces of idealization of the false serve to isolate the individual in favor of the masses.

Las Vegas is an example of how the spaces and places of the metropolis serve to shape the culture, de-emphasizing the subjective nature of the individual. "Each person behaves as though he is a stranger to the destiny of all the others ... As for transactions with other citizens, he may mix among them, but he see them not; ... he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there is no longer a sense of society" (Tocqueville, 1845).