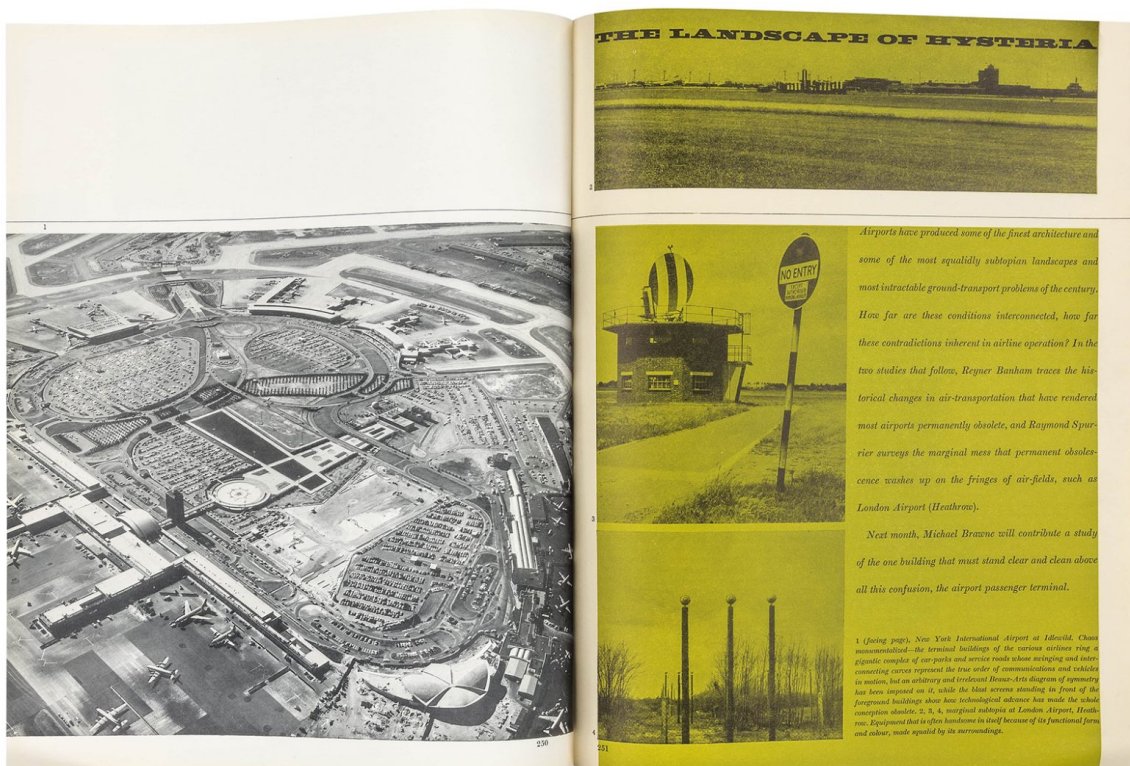


# The landscape of hysteria

1 OCTOBER 1962 BY REYNER BANHAM AND RAYMOND SPURRIER ARCHIVE



Reyner Banham traces the historical changes in air-transportation that have rendered most airports permanently obsolete

*Originally published in AR October 1962, this piece was republished online in April 2023. Its language reflects the values and usage of the time in which it first appeared*

Airports have produced some of the finest architecture and some of

the most squalidly subtopian landscapes and most intractable ground-transport problems of the century. How far are these conditions interconnected, how far these contradictions inherent in airline operation? In the two studies that follow, Reyner Banham traces the historical changes in air-transportation that have rendered most airports permanently obsolete, and Raymond Spurrier surveys the marginal mess that permanent obsolescence washes up on the fringes of air-fields, such as London Airport (Heathrow). Next month, Michael Brawne will contribute a study of the one building that must stand clear and clean above all this confusion, the airport passenger terminal.

## **The Obsolescent Airport by Reyner Banham**

Air transportation began as an army-surplus operation and in ways both subtle and obvious has remained one ever since. With a few happy exceptions, airliners have been converted bombers, unsuccessful bombers, prototypes of bombers, or by-products of bomber-development programmes. While the aircraft have dragged along in the wake of military development, airports have dragged along behind the aircraft, never up to date, never completed, always inadequate, always sprawling slummily into their surroundings in a manner that reveals, only too clearly, the standards of hostilities-only expediency carried over into peace-time operations.

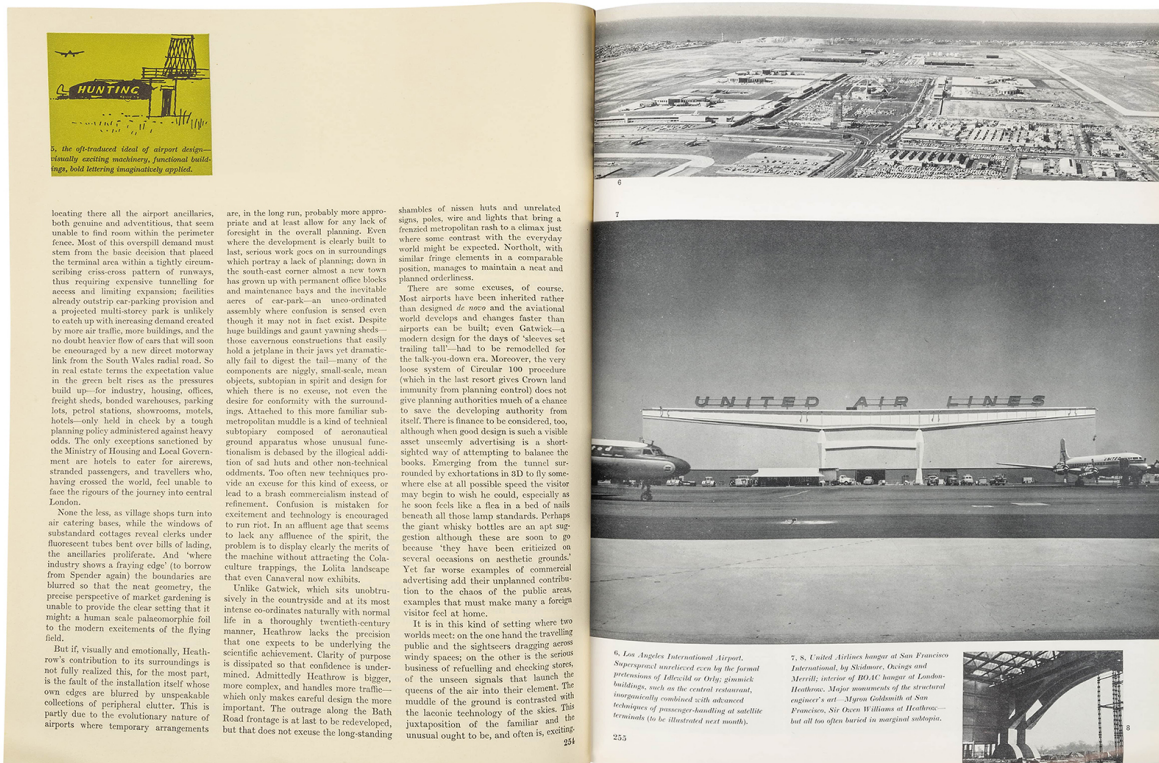
This historical development is as much responsible for the present functional and aesthetic inadequacies of airports today as are more immediate causes, such as inadequate finances or incompetent planning, and the history is worth the telling, if only because it has moulded the minds and prejudices of the traffic-managers and others operating, and commissioning, airports today. In the early, almost pastoral phase, aircraft were light and slow-moving on the ground. They had to take off and land into the eye of the wind, but they were

capable of rolling comfortably over well-kept and well compacted grass-land. They needed an omnidirectional airfield, and it was economically possible to provide them with one. The rule-of-thumb logic of immediate expediency dictated that the two permanent structures on the airfield – the hangar and the petrol pump – be located at the edge of the field; the yacht-basin' approach. The hangar, of course, was full of noise, bad language, pools of oil, smells and dangerous equipment, and separate buildings had to be created for passengers and office staff. Then the sky began to get a little crowded at rush-hours, and it became necessary to provide a control-tower tall enough, and well-windowed enough, to permit continuous supervision of the hemisphere of sky as well as the pool of grass. But the buildings remained together in a companionable cluster, and this yacht-basin approach monumentalised itself in the 'thirties, at Croydon, le Bourget, Tempelhof.

But, like all monuments in a technological culture, they were by definition dead, superseded before they were designed. Around 1934, air transport crossed the threshold into the first of a succession of bright new eras. A new generation of airliners – the Boeing 247D, the Lockheed Delta and the Douglas DC2 – all close cousins and direct descendants of bomber projects, introduced in very short order new concepts of speed, comfort and reliability, and established what have proven to be the reliable norms of airline operation: even air-hostesses are a product of the 247D epoch. But the greatest product of this brief silver age, in which airliners were allowed to develop according to the logic and logistics of airline operation, was the Lockheed Constellation, which remains to this day, in the minds of airline people of all sorts and persuasions, a kind of absolute Platonic ideal of an airliner.

Barely two decades separate the 247D from the last models of the Constellation, but they were decades in which, war or no war, Constellation standards were imposed on every airline in the world, traffic increased by geometrical progression, aircraft were stretched to become heavier, bigger, faster, and there was drastically less air

between them. The omnidirectional grass yacht-basin was utterly inadequate to all but the earliest of these fast, heavy monoplanes. But, because they were fast they could afford to be tolerant of wind direction, even if their weight made them intolerant of grass surfaces, and landing and take-off operations were soon concentrated on a few narrow concrete strips.



5. The oft-quoted ideal of airport design—chaotically exciting machinery, functional built legs, bold lettering inappropriately applied.

locating there all the airport ancillaries, both genuine and adventitious, that seem unable to find room within the perimeter fence. Most of this overspill demand must stem from the basic decision that placed the terminal area within a tightly criss-crossing criss-cross pattern of runways, thus requiring expensive tunnelling for access and limiting expansion; facilities already outstrip car-parking provision and a proposed multi-storey park is unlikely to catch up with increasing demand created by more air traffic, more buildings, and the no doubt heavier flow of cars that will soon be encouraged by a new direct motorway link from the South Wales rail tunnel. So in real estate terms the expectation value in the green belt rises as the pressures build up—for industry, housing, offices, freight sheds, bonded warehouses, parking lots, petrol stations, showrooms, motels, hotels—only held in check by a tough planning policy administered against heavy odds. The only exceptions sanctioned by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government are hotels to cater for aircrew, stranded passengers, and travellers who, having crossed the world, feel unable to face the rigours of the journey into central London.

None the less, as village shops turn into air catering bases, while the windows of substantial outages reveal clerks under fluorescent tubes bent over hills of lading, the ancillaries proliferate. And where industry shores a fraying edge (to borrow from Spender again) the boundaries are blurred so that the neat geometry, the precise perspective of market gardening is unable to provide the clear setting that it might: a human scale palaeogeography, full to the modern extentions of the flying field.

But if visually and emotionally, Heathrow's contribution to its surroundings is not fully realized this, for the most part, is the fault of the installation itself whose own edges are blurred by unspeakable collections of peripheral clutter. This is partly due to the evolutionary nature of airports where temporary arrangements

are, in the long run, probably more appropriate and at least allow for any lack of foresight in the overall planning. Even where the development is clearly built to last, serious work goes on in surroundings which portray a lack of planning down in the south-east corner almost a new town has grown up with permanent office blocks and maintenance bays and the inevitable acres of car-park—an unco-ordinated assembly where confusion is sensed even though it may not in fact exist. Despite huge buildings and giant yawning sheds—those cavernous constructions that easily hold a jetplane in their jaws yet dramatically fail to digest the tall-many of the components are niggly, small-scale, mean objects, suboptimal in spirit and design for which there is no excuse, not even the desire for conformity with the surroundings. Attached to this more familiar sub-metropolitan middle is a kind of technical suboptimal composed of aeronautical ground apparatus whose unusual functionalism is debased by the illogical addition of sad huts and other non-technical ornaments. Too often new techniques provide an excuse for this kind of excess, or lead to a brash commercialism instead of refinement. Confusion is mistaken for excitement and technology is encouraged to run riot. In an affluent age that seems to lack any allusion of the spirit, the problem is to display clearly the merits of the machine without attracting the Colaculture trappings the Lolita handbag that even Canaveral now exhibits.

Frank Gatwick, which sits unobtrusively in the countryside and at its most intense co-ordinates naturally with normal life in a thoroughly twentieth-century manner. Heathrow lacks the precision that one expects to be underlying the scientific achievement. Clarity of purpose is distorted so that confidence is undermined. Admittedly Heathrow is bigger, more complex, and handles more traffic—which only makes careful design the more important. The outrage along the Bath Road frontage is at last to be redeveloped, but that does not excuse the long-standing

shambles of misen huts and unrelated signs, poles, wire and lights that bring a frenzied metropolitan rash to a climax just where some contrast with the everyday world might be expected. Northolt, with similar fringe elements in a comparable position, manages to maintain a neat and planned orderliness.

There are some excuses, of course. Most airports have been inherited rather than designed *de novo* and the aviation world develops and changes faster than airports can be built; even Gatwick—a modern design for the days of 'bleeves set trailing tall'—had to be remodelled for the talky-down era. Moreover, the very loose system of Circular 100 procedure (which in the last resort gives Crown land immunity from planning control) does not give planning authorities much of a chance to save the developing authority from itself. There is finance to be considered, too, although when good design is such a viable asset unscrupulous advertising is a short-sighted way of attempting to balance the books. Emerging from the tunnel surrounded by exhaustions in 3D to fly somewhere else at all possible speed the visitor may begin to wish he could, especially as he soon feels like a flea in a bed of nails beneath all those lamp standards. Perhaps the giant whisky bottles are an apt suggestion although these are soon to go because 'they have been criticized on several occasions on aesthetic grounds'. Yet for worse examples of commercial advertising add their unplanned contribution to the chaos of the public areas examples that must make many a foreign visitor feel at home.

It is in this kind of setting where two worlds meet: on the one hand the travelling public and the sightseers dragging across windy spaces; on the other is the serious business of refuelling and checking stores of the modern signals that launch the queens of the air into their element. The middle of the ground is contracted with the laconic technology of the skies. This juxtaposition of the familiar and the unusual ought to be, and often is, exciting



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6. Los Angeles International Airport. Superfluous overbuilt even by the formal pretensions of Edward or Otto, grandiose buildings, such as the central restaurant, temporarily combined with advanced techniques of passenger-handling at multiple

7. 8. United Airlines hangar at San Francisco International, by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill; interior of BOAC hangar at London Heathrow. Major monuments of the structural engineer's art—Sir Owen Williams at San Francisco, Sir Owen Williams at Heathrow—but all too often buried in marginal suboptimal



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A spread showing Los Angeles International Airport and the United Airlines Hangar at San Francisco International by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill

Abruptly, the marginal location of the buildings forcibly concentrated into a few narrow funnels, broad segments of the sky were no longer needed by the aircraft, and large buildings could be tolerated in many locations – even the very centre of the field – where they could not have been considered before. Like a demented amoeba, the airport turned itself inside out and the original compact cluster of buildings

disintegrated. This disintegration is most clearly seen at St. Louis, with Yamasaki's elegant three-domed terminal building on one side of the field, and a slummy Wild-West street of sheds and hangars on the other. But such a clean split is unusual; normal result has been amorphous disintegration, blurred boundaries.

And while landslide operations have penetrated into electrical and electronic equipment (itself the by product of war) of the airport has leap-frogged far beyond that imaginary line which is now the airport-boundary, and radar and approach control equipment stalks out into the surrounding countryside marking the lines of the runways with subtopian wirescape and things on poles. This total breakdown of the relationship between airport and environment is epitomised by Heathrow (London) which gives the point of departure for Raymond Spurrier's article which begins on the right.

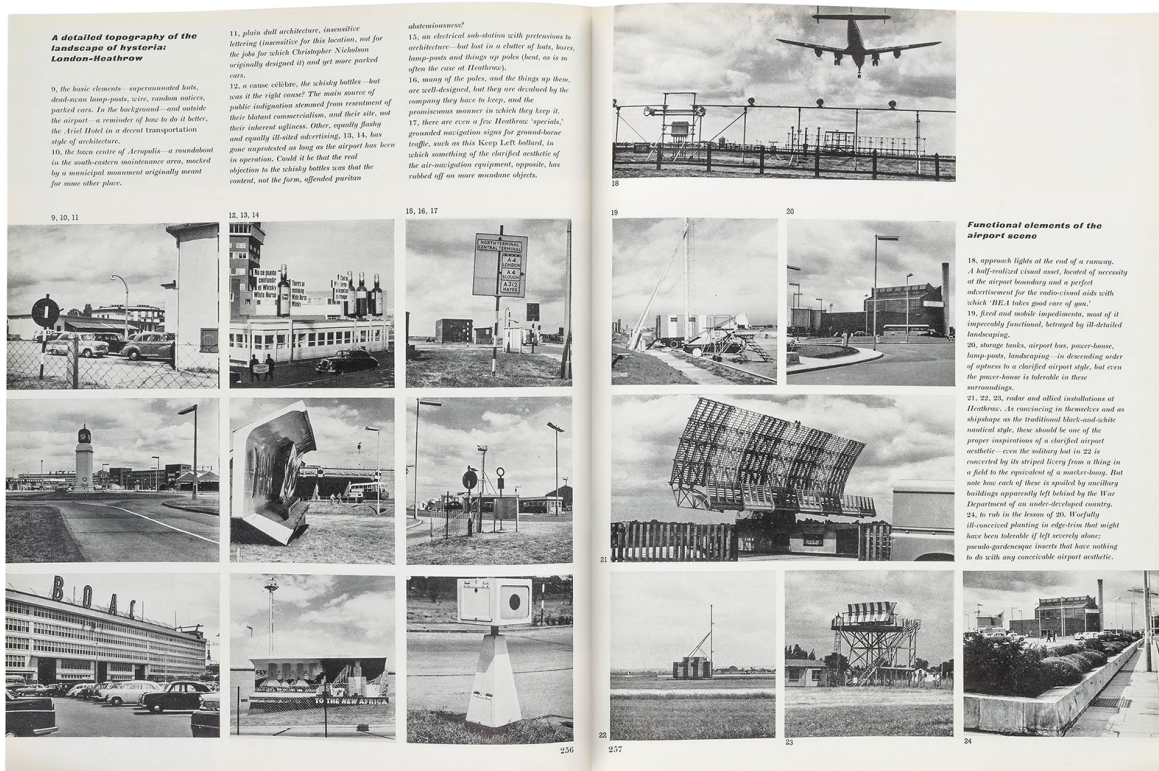
The grandeurs and miseries of this moment of grotesque fulfilment, in which an airport explodes into a regional planning problem, have been monumentalized in London Airport, Orly, Leonardo da Vinci and, par excellence, at Idlewild with its pointless Marienbad Allée in the middle of a spaghetti of roadways and a fairground of competing terminal buildings. Monumentalized . . . it has happened again. Idlewild is the first airport fit for Constellations, and it is already being used by Comets, 707's, DC8's and practically every other jet in service. Already the airside faces of its buildings are being crusted over with giant louvres to deflect the jet-blasts-the first harbingers of a transportation revolution that may prove as drastic as that of the 'thirties.

In consequence, the status of practically every building on the airfield is being questioned. With the jets growing so big, it begins to look better sense to take shelter to the aircraft when they need servicing, rather than try to cram them into hangars. Whatever finally happens with super-buses or mobile lounges, there are very strong opinions in favour of shrinking the passenger-buildings to a minimum, so that the one-building type that belongs unmistakably to airline operation may



be doomed even before architects have learned how to design it. Certainly, the emphasis lies increasingly on the continuity of the process of transportation, rather than the monumental halting places along the way.

But will anyone let it happen? Even in the teeth of ruthless accountancy it may still be good public relations, and therefore good business, to make some concessions to the spirit that built the Euston arch, to have some structure (even underground) where the traveller may look round and sense the excitement of being poised at the beginning of the fantastic ad-venture of being in New York faster than the sun can pace him, or in Sydney in twenty-four hours. The perennial drag of airport design behind airline operation may here have found its most massive and ultimately irreducible ball and chain—the unreformed human desire to create places for things to happen in.



A detailed topography of the landscape of hysteria: London-Heathrow

# Towards a clarified aesthetic by Raymond Spurrier

The phrase landscape of hysteria was used by Stephen Spender in a poem on 'The Landscape near an Aerodrome' whereas, to be fair, this piece is more particularly about the landscape – if that is the right word – of an aerodrome, which is an altogether different affair, though unfortunately not nearly as different as it ought to be. For the landscape of hysteria, alias subtopia, is all about us now and aerodromes are outstanding examples of the subtopian spirit of 'things in fields,' a spirit that has gathered considerable momentum since the time when the things a hangar, a windsock, and a Gypsy Moth-were (as Paul Nash would have described them) events in the landscape. But those leisurely, 1930ish days of the poem are past, those near romantic days when casually at intervals . . . the air liner with shut-off engines/Glides over suburbs and the sleeves set trailing tall/To point the wind.' Nowadays a round-the-clock frenzy of aviational complexity generates tougher repercussions on the surroundings. Scale alone now makes a major airport an unlikely element to absorb into any normal landscape – in this country at any rate. Certainly Heathrow\* for example, occupying nearly four-and-three-quarter square miles of land on the outer fringes of Middlesex, is an uncomfortable neighbour for the small-scale suburbia lapping at the perimeter. And there is more to it than jet-scale buildings and the insidious odour of kerosene when, every few minutes, an outward bound plane climbs heavily off the two-mile runways, piercing the eardrums and allegedly cracking the plaster of domestic ceilings. For one thing the airport cannot keep itself to itself; it generates demands that constantly threaten the neighbouring green belt: a richly cultivated, highly productive area of some of the best market garden land in the country. This land is also flat, well drained, served by good road communications with better to come, and therefore eminently suitable for building. Developers eye it covetously in the hope of

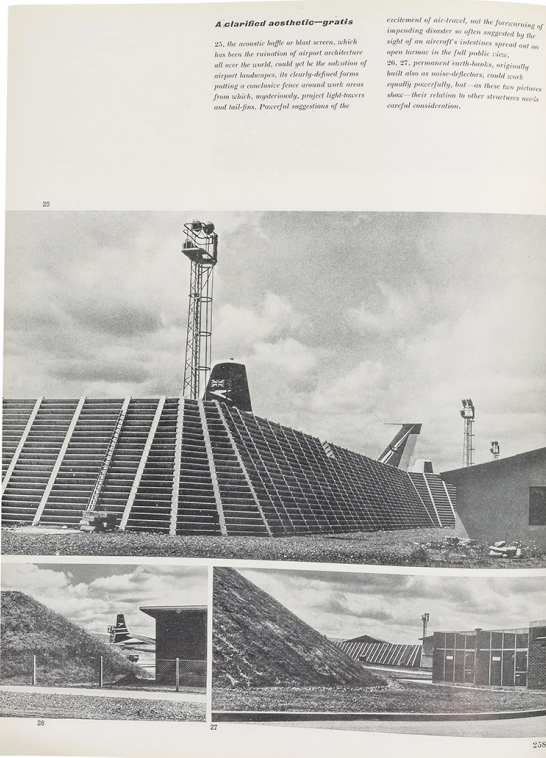
locating there all the airport ancillaries, both genuine and adventitious, that seem unable to find room within the perimeter fence. Most of this overspill demand must stem from the basic decision that placed the terminal area within a tightly circumscribing criss-cross pattern of runways, thus requiring expensive tunnelling for access and limiting expansion; facilities already outstrip car-parking provision and a projected multi-storey park is unlikely to catch up with increasing demand created by more air traffic, more buildings, and the no doubt heavier flow of cars that will soon be encouraged by a new direct motorway link from the South Wales radial road. So in real estate terms the expectation value in the green belt rises as the pressures build up for industry, housing, offices, freight sheds, bonded warehouses, parking lots, petrol stations, showrooms, motels, hotels-only held in check by a tough planning policy administered against heavy odds. The only exceptions sanctioned by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government are hotels to cater for aircrews, stranded passengers, and travellers who, having crossed the world, feel unable to face the rigours of the journey into central London.

None the less, as village shops turn into air catering bases, while the windows of substandard cottages reveal clerks under fluorescent tubes bent over bills of lading, the ancillaries proliferate. And 'where industry shows a fraying edge' (to borrow from Spender again) the boundaries are blurred so that the neat geometry, the precise perspective of market gardening is unable to provide the clear setting that it might: a human scale palaeomorphic foil to the modern excitements of the flying field. But if, visually and emotionally, Heathrow's contribution to its surroundings is not fully realized this, for the most part, is the fault of the installation itself whose own edges are blurred by unspeakable collections of peripheral clutter. This is partly due to the evolutionary nature of airports where temporary arrangements are, in the long run, probably more appropriate and at least allow for any lack of foresight in the overall planning. Even where the development is clearly built to last, serious work goes on in surroundings which portray a lack of planning; down in the south-east corner almost a new town has grown up with permanent office blocks and maintenance bays and the inevitable acres of car-park-an unco-



ordinated assembly where confusion is sensed even though it may not in fact exist. Despite huge buildings and gaunt yawning sheds – those cavernous constructions that easily hold a jetplane in their jaws yet dramatically fail to digest the tail – many of the components are niggly, small-scale, mean objects, subtopian in spirit and design for which there is no excuse, not even the desire for conformity with the surroundings. Attached to this more familiar sub-metropolitan muddle is a kind of technical subtopiary composed. composed of aeronautical ground apparatus whose unusual functionalism is debased by the illogical addition of sad huts and other non-technical oddments. Too often new techniques provide an excuse for this kind of excess, or lead to a brash commercialism instead of refinement. Confusion is mistaken for excitement and technology is encouraged to run riot. In an affluent age that seems to lack any affluence of the spirit, the problem is to display clearly the merits of the machine without attracting the Cola-culture trappings, the Lolita landscape that even Canaveral now exhibits.

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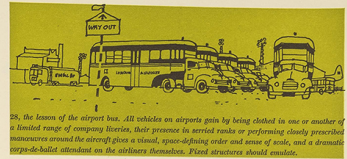
But it lacks focus. In the theatrical sense, it needs producing. It needs the master-hand of a designer who can do for sheds and car-parks and baffle-screens, lighting-towers and signs and signals, what the landscape architect can do for landform and plant material. It needs someone who can study the ecology of objects and create from their disposition an artificial landscape in keeping with its function.

Whatever development occurs outside the airport is essentially the work of separate individuals. But inside, where landform control ought to prevail, the confusion we call utopia reaches a crescendo in the very place where comprehensive design is not only necessary but possible. For example: a determined designer could invent mobile screen walls, based perhaps on the acoustic baffle already in use for aircraft, and use it as a car-park camouflage and vehicle channelizer with built-in lighting, slot-in direction signs and commercial advertising panels too. Thus in one gesture variable layouts could be catered for in an idiom that would match the shifting nature and at the same time combine a number of untidy elements into architectural unity, creating spaces out of space, townscapes out of necessity.

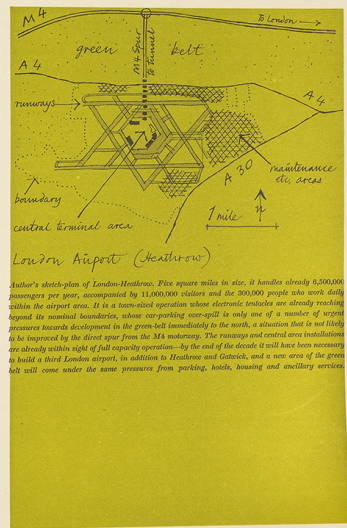
Each new method of transportation has thrown out its own aesthetic forces with the newer inventions relegating responsibility for the environment to old-fashioned limbo. Airports, however, provide an opportunity to show what can be done with our inventiveness, to demonstrate how the flying machine can succeed where the motor car has so often failed. Since you can't monkey about with the shapes of aircraft and navigational aids for any other than functional reasons, Detroit styling is *de trop*. The flying habit is, therefore, perhaps the last opportunity we shall get to rescue the environment not only from mechanical devices, but with them.

By far the most promising objects, and they surely stand about ready for emulation, are the standard pieces of airfield furniture—equipment that results from the cool, mathematical logic of science

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26, the lesson of the airport bus. All vehicles on airports gain by being clothed in one or another of a limited range of company livery, their presence in serial ranks or performing clearly prescribed manoeuvres around the aircraft gives a visual, space-defining order and sense of scale, and a dramatic corps-de-ballet attendant on the airplanes themselves. Fixed structures should emulate.



This spread features the author's sketch plan of London-Heathrow, as well as a sketch titled 'the lesson of the airport bus'

There are some excuses, of course. Most airports have been inherited rather than designed de novo and the aviation world develops and changes faster than airports can be built; even Gatwick – a modern design for the days of 'sleeves set trailing tall' – had to be remodelled for the talk-you-down era. Moreover, the very loose system of Circular 100 procedure (which in the last resort gives Crown land immunity from planning control) does not give planning authorities much of a chance to save the developing authority from itself. There is finance to be considered, too, although when good design is such a visible asset unseemly advertising is a short-sighted way of attempting to balance the books. Emerging from the tunnel surrounded by exhortations in 3D to fly somewhere else at all possible speed the visitor may begin to wish he could, especially as he soon feels like a flea in a bed of nails beneath all those lamp standards. Perhaps the giant whisky bottles are an apt suggestion although these are soon to go because they have been criticised on several occasions

on aesthetic grounds.' Yet far worse examples of commercial advertising add their unplanned contribution to the chaos of the public areas, examples that must make many a foreign visitor feel at home. It is in this kind of setting where two worlds meet: on the one hand the travelling public and the sightseers dragging across windy spaces; on the other is the serious business of refuelling and checking stores, of the unseen signals that launch the queens of the air into their element. The middle of the ground is contrasted with the laconic technology of the skies. This Road frontage is at last to be redeveloped, juxtaposition of the familiar and the unusual ought to be, and often is, exciting.

But it lacks focus. In the theatrical sense, it needs producing. It needs the master-hand of a designer who can do for sheds and car-parks and baffle-screens, lighting-towers and signs and signals, what the landscape architect can do for landform and plant material. It needs someone who can study the ecology of objects and create from their disposition an artificial landscape in keeping with its function. Whatever development occurs outside the airport is essentially the work of separate individuals. But inside, where landlord control ought to prevail, the confusion we call subtopia reaches a crescendo in the very place where comprehensive design is not only necessary but possible. For example: a determined designer could invent mobile screen walls, based perhaps boundary on the acoustic baffle already in use for aircraft, and use it as a car-park camouflage and vehicle channellizer with built-in lighting, slot-in direction signs and commercial advertising panels too. Thus in one gesture variable layouts could be catered for in an idiom that would match the shifting airport nature and at the same time combine a number of untidy elements into architectural unity, creating spaces out of space, townscape out of necessity. Each new method of transportation has thrown out its own aesthetic forces with the newer inventions relegating responsibility for the environment to old-fashioned limbo. Airports, however, provide an opportunity to show what can be done with our inventiveness, to demonstrate how the flying machine can succeed where the motor car has so dismally failed. Since you can't monkey about with the shapes of aircraft and navigational aids for any

other than functional reasons, Detroit styling is de trop. The flying habit is, therefore, perhaps the last opportunity we shall get to rescue the environment not only from mechanical devices, but with them.

By far the most promising objects, and they surely stand about ready for emulation, are the standard pieces of airfield furniture-equipment that results from the cool mathematical logic of science where no suburban precedents are allowed to confuse the design issue. Any superimposed visual treatment is of the functional kind found on railway signals and nautical apparatus; it makes no concessions to any extraneous aesthetic attitudes so an apt decoration results that is aesthetically robust – a visual impact that should be a stimulus to environment. And perhaps would be, cleared of clutter and so displayed to advantage; placed, as it were, on exhibition. A big airport is not unlike a giant exhibition. In the case of Heathrow, in addition to the 6 million passengers who at present use it annually for its basic purpose and the 10 million people who are there to see them off, another million come particularly in the summer months just to look, attracted by the comings and goings, the general air of excitement and bustle, and of course the aeroplanes. Moreover, some 30,000 people at present work at Heathrow, many doing highly skilled and responsible jobs. There are cogent reasons why all three groups of people would benefit from a clarified airport aesthetic. This applies also to the passer-by on the outside, the people who live and work round about and, not least, to the airport management who must make the place pay.





20, the author's suggestion for exploiting aesthetic buffers as the prime element of order and definition in the airport scene, by incorporating lights, signs and advertising within their shaping forms.

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An airport is a complicated and confusing affair and whereas intellect may channel the confusion into a workable system, careful visual design could bring apparent simplicity to a restless scene without detracting from the very desirable air of bustle and expectancy; it might even heighten them.

Individual buildings can of course be given to a good architect; many of them have been. Most purely functional structures are interesting objects in themselves and architects are perhaps best kept away from them. But there is more to it than this. Despite some fine buildings and novel objects, Heathrow is still a hopeless jungle that is neither in keeping nor sufficiently itself to provide a landscape feature in its own right. The requirement now, as in so many other instances, is for some planning

and a co-ordinating eye to distinguish permanent from temporary and to weld all the fragments into a coherent whole; to design it from within and without on the basis of a comprehensive visual policy, creating a style for the job in the key set by the already available aeronautical style.

And simply because it is hopeless to try to absorb such a disruptive complex into an existing landscape, particularly a flat one, there is a clear case for creating a fresh, self-contained environment—a special twentieth-century jet age landscape which could be as exhilarating as the idea of jet travel itself and a scene in its own right. With this to be looking at there would be no curbing reason why the man on the ground could not share vicariously in the achievements of the age.

The competition of such a special purpose landscape would be a challenge to designers and a challenge to those in charge of airports to dig out the designers who could do the job, and to commission them. They will then be in a strong position to create not only something in tune with its purpose, something that will work and look efficient, too, but a prestige landscape to greet the foreign visitor.

## STRAITJACKET or

# east GIRDLE

Technique by courtesy of Thomas Reed-Bates Ltd.

A reply by the Architects' Department of the LCC to Kenneth Browne's article 'Straitjacket; the LCC Daylighting Code v. The London Street' (published in the AR, May 1962).

Few would disagree with Kenneth Browne's thesis that the loss of our heritage of London streets through the application of a too-rigid daylighting code would be a matter of great concern, and the REVIEW has performed a valuable service in drawing attention to these dangers.

Nevertheless, it would be quite wrong to assume that no standards of daylighting or any control are necessary. In the second half of the twentieth century we demand standards far higher than were acceptable in earlier days. For however picturesque our city it is often at the expense of satisfactory living conditions, particularly where children are concerned.

Here is a real conflict. It is a challenge to every progressively minded architect to seek—for this day and age demands Unity AND Daylight!

### HISTORY

The Great Fire of London in 1666 following closely upon the Great Plague of 1665, convinced the City Fathers of the necessity of controlling the height and spacing of buildings for the well-being of the citizens. This early Building Act controlled the height of houses according to the width of the streets.

Prior to 1947 control was based on a system of 'maximum' limits with relaxations only in relation to the return faces on smaller streets and where it was desirable to maintain street continuity. No regard was paid to the use of side light and, combined with a maximum height restriction, this prevented the use of high blocks essential to the conception of 'cities of towers' then advocated by forward-looking architects.

The present Daylighting Code, which is intended to give control with the maximum flexibility, was introduced in 1947 largely to meet the strong objections of architects that the earlier system was too rigid and permitted nothing but 'corridor streets'—then a dirty word in the architect's vocabulary. Now the pendulum swings back again.

### THE AIM OF THE CODE

The primary purpose of the Daylighting Code is to safeguard the light of neighbouring buildings, present and future, though it is

also concerned with the lighting of the new buildings.

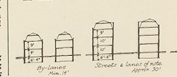
During the war and the immediate post-war period, great interest centred on the problems of redevelopment and there was a general desire for better living conditions. Considerable study was carried out by the Building Research Station, and great advances were made in methods of calculating and measuring daylight, and in assessing the desirable levels of daylighting for different visual tasks. This enabled the town planning aspects of daylighting to be placed on a more scientific basis.

The principal work setting out these findings was the Post War Building Study No. 16—'The lighting of buildings'. The standards recommended are: a 5 per cent sky factor penetrating 7 ft. in balconies; a 1 per cent sky factor penetrating 9 ft. in living rooms; a 0.5 per cent sky factor penetrating 10 ft. in bedrooms. This forms the basis of the Council's present Code.

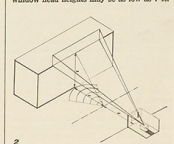
The amount of light at any given point in a room is the sum of light received directly from the area of sky directly visible through the windows, light received by reflection from external surfaces and light received by reflection from the internal surfaces.

Though the luminance of the sky may be considered as reasonably constant, and reflective values vary considerably and can be changed from time to time. For town planning purposes, therefore, only the direct sky component—or 'sky factor'—is taken as a standard, for it has the added advantage that it can be arrived at by the application of simple geometric rules.

For a full description of methods of calculation reference must be made to any standard text-book—but the best known methods are the Building Research Station Daylight Protractor and Waldram diagrams. As these methods are somewhat laborious,

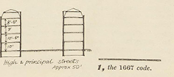


the Ministry of Town and Country Planning introduced in 1947, through the medium of their handbook 'The Redevelopment of Central Areas' a series of permissible height indicators, initially for non-residential areas and followed soon after by a residential series. These indicators convert the segments of sky necessary to give the required standard into a form which can be applied to a layout plan and the permissible height of any building read off from a height scale, 2. This is based on an assumed 'average' window width and height reducing normal design. Under present-day London building bye-laws window head heights may be as low as 7 ft.



The Permissible Height Indicators are a good and quick method of analysing the daylighting aspects of new development, but it is not to be denied that where buildings differ from the 'average' that forms the basis of the Code—say by high windows—a more detailed analysis by one of the previously described methods would allow 'tighter' planning.

If architects are prepared to satisfy the Council, by use of these methods, that their scheme comports with the intentions of the



The final spread in the 1962 piece features an illustration of lights, signs and advertising within an airport scene

An airport is a complicated and confusing affair and whereas intellect may channel the confusion into a workable system, careful visual design could bring apparent simplicity to a restless scene without detracting from the very desirable air of bustle and expectancy; it might even heighten them. Individual buildings can of course be given to a good architect; many of them have been. Most purely functional structures are interesting objects in themselves and architects are perhaps best kept away from them. But there is more to it than this. Despite some fine buildings and novel objects, Heathrow is still a hopeless jungle that is neither in keeping nor sufficiently itself to provide a landscape feature in its own right. The requirement now, as in so many other instances, is for some planning and a co-ordinating eye to distinguish permanent from temporary and to weld all the fragments into a coherent whole, to design it from within and without on the basis of a comprehensive visual policy, creating a style for the job in the key set by the already available aeronautical style. And simply because it is hopeless to try to absorb such a disruptive



complex into an existing landscape, particularly a flat one, there is a clear case for creating a fresh, self-contained environment—a special twentieth-century jet age landscape which could be as exhilarating as the idea of jet travel itself and a scenic element in its own right. With this to be looking at there would be no earthly reason why the man on the ground could not share vicariously in the achievements of the age. The compilation of such a special purpose landscape would be a challenge to designers and a challenge to those in charge of airports to dig out the designers who could do the job, and to commission them. They will then be in a strong position to create not only something in tune with its purpose, something that will work and look efficient, too, but a prestige landscape to greet the foreign visitor.