

# Palm Springs: Imagineering California in Hong Kong

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## Introduction

In investigating Palm Springs, a Hong Kong gated community near Yuen Long, this paper explores the process of myth-making, the codification of symbolic landscapes by developers; the representation of socio-spatial order through the discourse of advertising, and the incorporation of meaning in the construction of their social identities by the residents themselves.

New, exclusive enclaves such as Palm Springs are underwritten by an explicit marketing text, a strategy of 'place advertisement' which is accentuated by the compelling products of postmodern architectural 'imagineering' that defines a commodity laden with mythical content. Images and texts are inseparable from the commodity system in which residential developments such as Palm Springs exist. In Palm Springs, both the direct advertising message and the motifs of landscape form are received and retransmitted as cultural signals by those who live there. A dreamscape is conjured up by the means of space compression – one can experience California, the epicentre of global image and fantasy, without leaving home. Palm Springs becomes the base camp for an adventure of the imagination, an imagination that often feeds on films and TV programmes.

Representational techniques rely on certain visual codes to construct the subjects' experience. My argument is that the way residents of Palm Springs perceive and organise perceptions of their living environment presupposes familiarity with a cinematic culture that extends across a larger landscape of technologies, media influences, and social relationships. The developers of Palm Springs made a conscious attempt to translate this cinematic imagery into 3-D form. California, a place that enjoys an almost mythical status among Hong Kong residents, is presented as the site of a wholesome life, upward social mobility, unfettered consumerism and traditional family values. The appeal of Palm Springs relies

on cultural codes that are by and large produced elsewhere, imported into Hong Kong, and here naturalised. Prospective, individual buyers were interpellated as East-meets-West pastiche subjects, they responded to an ideology that mixed Orientalist clichés, supposedly anchoring the experience to a familiar locale, and Hollywood narratives of the American Dream.

A gated, themed compound like Palm Springs can be understood as a type of 'cultural interface' to follow Lev Manovich's use of the term. He argues that interfaces are cultural objects that we can understand because they are built on the language and metaphors of cultural objects we are already familiar with (Manovich 2001).

Like a theme park, Palm Springs is more than a simple location. It is a shrine to its message and to succeed must be bounded – isolated from the ordinary landscape – unlike most places, which blend indistinctly into other places.

Unlike American gated communities, where security is regarded as a major concern by those who choose to live in one, in Hong Kong the fence and the gate serve to separate the inside from the outside, rather than keep the 'undesirables' out. Gates heighten the sense of spatial distinction. By establishing the simulation of an ideal, separated environment within, they protect its economic and symbolic value.

Living behind gates, protected by armed security guards, is seen as a prestige element, what separates the merely well-off from the truly rich. Palm Springs ushers in the new (cosmetic) style of 'real imitation life', the Californian lifestyle, which can be imported, like any other commodity.

### **Saturday night and Sunday morning at Palm Springs**

The Chans have invited me to their barbecue party. From a bus stop located in front of the Star Ferry Terminal in Central, I catch the shuttle bus that will take me to their home at Palm Springs, in the New Territories. The journey lasts for approximately 45 minutes, during which we pass Kwai Chung freight container station, several car demolition sites, industrial estates, illegal dumping sites, and an endless row of girlie bars. When we finally arrive at the gate of Palm Springs two men in uniform ask the passengers to produce a proof of identity. As I do not carry any identification document, I am requested to wait inside the guard post, while they inform the Chans of my arrival. When Mr. Chan finally comes to my help, he greets me by saying 'Welcome to Palm Springs. Did you really think you

could travel to California without a passport?’ He then drives me through a maze of identical avenues and streets, all named after Californian towns, we turn into Santa Monica Avenue, Sacramento and Napa Avenue. After covering most of California in less than five minutes, we finally reach Orchid Path, off Monterey Avenue, where the Chans live. Eva is waiting for us in front of their white and pink, three-storey house. Saturday night barbecue is a collective ritual, smoke fills the air as hundreds of Palm Springs residents grill pork ribs, kingprawns and cuttlefish in their back garden.

Before the customary mah-jong game, Mr. Chan invites me to climb to the flat roof top, from where he says I could enjoy a ‘spectacular view’. The roof is partly occupied by a small prefab shed, where their Filipino maid sleeps, with neither light nor air conditioning, a condition shared by thousands of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong. What Mr. Chan intends to show me is the view that stretches across the Chinese border, which is only a few miles away from Palm Springs. We gaze upon the edge of what has become the largest industrial concentration in the world, the Pearl River Delta. The sky is incredibly bright, but the moon plays little part in it. Here the night is turned into day by the neon signs of Shenzhen, whose skyscrapers rival those of Hong Kong. When I decide to leave it is past midnight, already too late to catch the last shuttle bus. Luckily the Chans invite me to spend the night in their daughter’s room.

Sunday morning at Palm Springs reserves some surprises. My suggestion to go for *yǎm cha* (Cantonese expression for *dim sum*) is received with stupor. My hosts hastily explain that there are no *dim sum* restaurants in Palm Springs, and that those outside are not worth the effort. We have breakfast in the garden: cereals, croissants and French baguettes served with butter and jam. It is my first continental breakfast since I moved to Hong Kong, and I am not particularly pleased to trade shrimp dumplings with frozen baguettes. But one would be wrong to assume that the Chans are going out of their way to make me feel at home. The Chans’ neighbours, who are not entertaining a Western guest, are having the same type of breakfast in the adjacent garden. Only an elderly man, (the grandfather?) is served a bowl of *congee* and what looks like chicken liver. I suppose the American lifestyle failed to capture the imagination of the elderly.

Later, we watch Mr. Chan play tennis and stroll through the theme park, where Disney comic strip characters are surrounded by mock Greek columns and neo-classical pavilions. Everybody seems to be wearing Ralph Lauren polo necks,

Khaki shorts and immaculate white trainers. Smart casual, as they call it here. The settlement is surveilled by armed Gurkhas, recruited among the thousands laid off by the British Army in 1997. By a strange irony, some of their present employers are likely to be the same 'illegal immigrants', now wealthy homeowners, they once tried to prevent from entering the colony. On leaving Palm Springs I have to check out at the guard post.

An hour later I am walking in Wanchai, where the contrast couldn't be more striking: I jostle in the crowd, among the wavering fumes of diesel and cooking oil, a haptic geography wherein there is continuous touching of others, weaving between and amongst bodies, and brushing against different textures. Electric city, whose 'smellscapes' and 'soundscapes' are as exciting, rich and varied as its skyline. Coping with the city, its sultry heat, the jumbled mix of pungent aromas – a veritable 'olfactory geography' – and the combination of noises generated by numerous human activities, my body comes to life, is roused by the resistance which it experiences. A gigantic billboard displays pictures of a busy street market, a Chinese junk, two rickshaws, and Pei's Bank of China, the caption reads 'The city owes its liveliness to the movements of life that unfold in the streets. Hong Kong. City of Life'. This is the (fast disappearing) city promoted by the Tourist Board, an orientalist cliché. Roland Barthes once observed that it is the peculiar mixture of bells, rickshaws, and opium dens that constitute 'China' for a European (see Barthes 1984: 117–174). Myths die hard, especially when they are reappropriated for marketing purposes. The Chans have traded this orientalist cliché for the 'American Dream', yet another cliché.

### Unpacking the myth

The Chans moved to Palm Springs in 1991, when major construction works were still under way. They said they felt almost like pioneers. According to the pictures they showed me, the development looked a far cry from the computer simulated images that had captured their imagination six months earlier. Construction rubble still surrounded their house, a three-bedroom semi-detached, the newly planted palm trees looked unhealthy and unpromising, and Orchid Path had not yet been paved. They had moved with their teenage daughter and a Filipino domestic helper from their small flat in North Point to what was still regarded by most Hong Kong people as a borderland. The surroundings were neither picturesque nor healthy, as local farmers had already realised that they

could make a better living by renting their plots to car demolishers or by turning them into dumping sites or container parks. Besides, moving to a place that was just a stone's throw away from the People's Republic, surrounded by barracks and (then) British soldiers, could not possibly be regarded as a sound decision. Yet the Chans, which a sociologist would describe as 'upwardly mobile middle class', had been lured to this new development near Yuen Long.

With their help and the auxiliary of a few glossy brochures that spell out the narrative and present Palm Springs 'model homes' – a mirror which reflects and reproduces a suburban dream world – I will try to understand and hopefully explain the reasons that lie behind their choice to move to Palm Springs.

The hinging of class identity to house type, tenure and location is particularly pronounced in immigrant cultures with high social mobility. In an immigrant society that lacks a visible and established class or caste structure, other markers are introduced to establish and maintain social order and to communicate its meanings.

In Palm Springs, both the direct advertising message and the motifs of landscape form are received and retransmitted as cultural signals by those who live there.

One brochure claims:

We bring to Hong Kong the look, feel and beauty of southern California. You can hear gentle laughter as you walk along the streets and sense the warmth of your neighborhood as it welcomes you with open arms. Palm Springs has been designed with quality of life in mind. That's why the atmosphere here will enchant you. There are palm-lined streets and picturesque scenery. You'll also marvel at the dancing fountains, colourful flowers, nostalgic lampposts and street sculptures. All of it created to give you a sense of well being and happiness.

A dreamscape is conjured up by the means of space compression – one can experience California without leaving home, and Palm Springs becomes the base camp for an adventure of the imagination. Names such as Palm Springs ensconce the memory of alternative geographies, making the lived experience of the urban increasingly vicarious, screened through simulacra, those exact copies for which the original has been lost. In fact, California itself has come to resemble 'a gigantic agglomeration of theme parks, a lifespace comprised of Disneyworlds. It is a realm divided into showcases of global village cultures and mimetic American landscapes, filled with whimsy and pastiche', as Edward Soja observed (Soja 1996: 191).

The reference to ‘nostalgic lampposts and street sculptures’, ubiquitous in shopping malls, again, reinscribes the urban in a purely aesthetic form. The picture placed at the bottom of this text shows a red phone box, and looks rather idiosyncratic even in this context. The British icon could suggest that Palm Springs residents are British passport holders – much coveted in those days and a prestige symbol in certain social circles – or simply compress the colonial past into a decorative element, infused with nostalgia.

Further on the brochure recites:

Unlike communities anywhere else in Hong Kong, Palm Springs presents a total concept in living. This includes community activities and celebrations that bring everyone together to share happy moments and events. We have brought back the real meaning of neighbourhood ... Feel the burdens of the day melt away as you go from your work mood to play time. Enjoy yourself in the refreshing and relaxing atmosphere of the Clubhouse, your heart and soul are reborn. It is all a clear reflection of the true easygoing Californian lifestyle.

The language used is both lyrical and evocative. It aims to elicit an emotional engagement. Ways of living are objectified as ‘lifestyle’. The Californian lifestyle is made the subject of a myth. Palm Springs is not presented as ‘merely a place to live’ – that is to reside – but also the stage upon which one may practice the ‘art of living’, whilst following the proposed script: ‘Loosen your necktie, toss aside the suit and the Rolex, and see just how wonderful life is.’ The gated community is described as a world apart, a place where one can ‘get away from it all’, a holiday resort where one can retreat to every day. The holiday is therefore not a break with home-life, but becomes an integral part of it. Palm Springs is presented as a sophisticated club, where one can enjoy a ‘total way of life’. As the rigidities of established social distinction become increasingly hard to sustain in eras of rapid social and physical mobility, new forms of distinction are continually being elaborated. The Rolex is no longer an exclusive status symbol when one is a slave of time!

In Hong Kong, where leisure activities are seen as ways of accumulating or losing distinction, being a member of a golf or tennis club immediately bespeaks one’s socioeconomic status.

What emerges from the description is a constructed landscape of collective aspirations, which have been fuelled and mediated through the complex prism of modern media, such as Hollywood movies and TV series. New social constituen-

cies articulate their identity with new cultural insignia, and even features of the landscape become means for fixing social position.

This type of advertising discourse articulates the experience with which the dweller is asked to identify. It evokes the ideal rather than the lived. Another brochure is organised as a photo album; 'a collection of the most exciting, memorable moments' of the 'happiness and harmony' supposedly enjoyed by Palm Springs residents. Its declared aim is to offer 'an unforgettable picture of the real California lifestyle'. Buying a house in Palm Springs would enable anyone to become a welcome member of what is portrayed as a happy extended family, and escape the anonymity and isolation that supposedly characterise urban life. The idea of the 'community-as-extended family' could be particularly appealing to many Hong Kong citizens who look at the traditional Chinese extended family with a sense of nostalgia: due to migration, diaspora and family planning, large families have become a thing of the past.

The album then features pictures of parents playing with their children in the swimming pool, engaging in healthy activities both in the clubhouse and in the park, taekwondo classes, handicraft and drawing classes in which children portray their dream home. Needless to say that the drawings that are reproduced in the album invariably feature a swimming pool surrounded by palm trees: your children's dream home is the place where they are already living!

The issue of children living and growing up in gated communities has not been fully researched, yet I believe it is worth addressing. The gated community produces new and stronger forms of ideological control and social engineering. This is a particular issue for children who have not chosen such totalising controls and have a right to grow up in a public community. Through the eradication of difference the enclave might breed intolerance and homogeneity among its children. While it is now clear that fear proves itself and gated enclaves stimulate paranoia among residents regardless of their age I suspect, together with Kim Dovey, that they might 'produce and reproduce a generation stunted in their abilities to deal with a diverse and problematic world' (Dovey 1999: 153).

A section of the same brochure, organised as a photo album, is devoted to traditional Chinese celebrations, such as the Mid-Autumn Festival, during which Palm Springs hosts a variety show and singing performances. Under the full moon, parents and their children carry lanterns and stroll along the enclave's avenues. The next page presents pictures of a Halloween party, a caption reads,

'Every child looks cute and creative in his special costume'. A juxtaposition that seems to suggest that Palm Springs residents respect and uphold their Chinese traditions, but are nonetheless open to Western influences.

To convey the message that Palm Springs is a healthy and green environment, many pictures show community members involved in tree planting, natural food products sales and recycling activities. The photo album is sprinkled with words like 'village', 'communityte', and 'cosy' to suggest friendliness and a manageable scale that is allegedly missing outside: 'Under the radiance of sunshine, swaying palms and lush greenery friends call out and greet you warmly. We have created a truly harmonious neighborhood.'

The promotional material presents the image of an island to which one can return every day, an escape from the city and its deteriorating environment where one can encounter an exclusive world of pleasure among peers.

Both isolation and distance from the city are presented as offering the possibility of a better lifestyle. The latter is expressed, for example, in the use of phrases inspired by ecological discourses. Since gated communities are constructed by the same calculus that produces advertising and shopping malls, that of 'pure imageability'; litter, dirt, a rapidly deteriorating environment, traffic, noise, and social inequality must all be erased in what is presented as a holiday resort.

Structurally and semiotically the enclave has similarities to the theme park and shopping mall. Both are walled compounds which establish their meaning in the opposition between inside and outside. Both establish a simulation of an ideal environment within. Both enforce totalising codes of behaviour in order to construct such ideal imagery and to protect it as economic and symbolic value.

Despite the 45 minutes drive to reach the city centre, Palm Springs is advertised as 'close to the city'. One of the brochure deals with the issue of transport in the usual evocative tone: 'Driving enthusiasts will love to take the car out for a spin. With the wind in your hair and the sun in your face, the trip to work will seem all too short.' What the brochure fails to mention is that residents have no choice but to rely on private transport, as the shuttle bus service provided by the community can hardly cater for all their needs (buses run every 45 minutes, and stop at 10 pm). Palm Springs is not served by public buses or trains. Despite all the emphasis put on environmental issues, Palm Springs can hardly be considered an environmentally-friendly development, as it requires private car ownership. In Hong Kong air pollution levels are alarming and a constant matter of concern for



local authorities who try very hard to discourage individual car ownership.

The brochures I have examined devote little space to the issue of security, only on the very last page do they mention the presence of a '24-hours surveillance service provided by trained, professional personnel' and display some very small pictures of a Gurkha guard either standing next to his Alsatian dog, or driving an American four-wheels-drive. I believe that this is a carefully devised textual strategy rather than a casual arrangement, as an excessive stress on security would probably create a sense of anxiety in the reader, and eventually impair the success of a marketing campaign based on the enchantment of prospective buyers.

### **The pre-occupation stage**

Sun Hung Kai Properties promoted Palm Springs (a 286,740 sq-m development, whose 374 units are arranged as terraced and semi-detached three-storey-houses) the way most developers do in Hong Kong, by advertising on TV, newspapers, popular magazines, and on large billboards placed in central Hong Kong. The Chans then went to look at the models, computer simulations and videos that were being shown in an upmarket shopping mall. There they were treated to a variety show hosted by a well-known TV personality, who repeatedly hinted at the fact that some Canto Pop stars were planning to move to Palm Springs 'as it had been rumoured'. They then enjoyed some complimentary refreshments and took part in a draw for a holiday in the 'real' California. According to them, it was an 'exciting experience, a bit like being in a TV show'. From the beginning they were made to feel part of a dreamworld, they were welcomed with large smiles, shook hands with celebrities and were dazed by the glitz and glitter.

### **The return of the walled city**

In Hong Kong social inequality is obvious and the process of spatial segregation is not new. When British colonisers moved to Hong Kong, they chose to live on the Peak, distancing themselves from the Chinese population, and from the diseases that plagued the lower, less salubrious areas. Their imposing residences were patrolled, and access to Peak Road was granted only to coolies and Chinese notables. Walled villages were a common feature of pre-colonial Hong Kong, and to a minor extent of colonial Hong Kong, too. Some of these villages can still be seen in the New Territories, now converted into museums and tourist attrac-

tions. Walls both reflect and maintain hierarchical human relationships, divide the sacred from the profane, the civilised from the barbaric (e.g., the Great Wall), safety from danger. But whereas the residents of those villages belonged to a clan and shared common ancestors, the residents of the new gated communities share only the dream of living in a safe and socially homogeneous environment.

In Hong Kong socioeconomic differentiation, either imagined or real, is likely to be represented through spatial categories and images. But the model that once informed the strategies and the imaginations of social groups is changing. Traditionally, the closer one moved to the top and the centre, the greater one's social power; power and prestige diminished as one moved toward the peripheries. This obsession with the 'centre' led to a very high concentration of tall residential buildings in what is improperly described as the 'business district'. This vertical, and stratified arrangement of space, where top floors are the most prestigious and desirable, is now challenged by the proliferation of upmarket gated communities in the periphery.

Developers can maximise profit by acquiring unattractive lots, whose market price is comparatively low, and then building luxury homes and first class facilities, similar to those found in more prestigious areas. It is only by virtue of their isolation from their dreary surroundings and the security systems that enable it, that these enclaves become suitable for the middle and upper class. These communities can be situated almost anywhere, independent of the surroundings. In fact most of them have been placed in the periphery and have as their neighbours squatters settlements, impoverished rural surroundings, dumping sites, and landfills: hardly a desirable environment. Moreover, the planning regime which instituted zoning regulations for medium density low-rise buildings in the New Territories required developers to think of a way of maximising profit other than building 30-storey-high tower blocks. Developing elite communities provided the solution.

Gates not only protect leisure amenities such as golf courses, swimming pools, and tennis courts, but also economic and social status as they provide points of coherence around which the residents can organise social experience into meaningful patterns. Property developers are able to construct new landscapes of power, dreamscapes for visual consumption, using designer-reconstructions of spatially remote objects and life-styles: the Spanish villa, the Roman column, the clubhouse, etc. The use of American or European elements in order to sell all

types of commodities is a very common practice in China, they are codified as something conferring high status.

Gated communities, fashioned after their American counterparts have become a standardised product, like cars or television sets, offered in a finite range of models. The same developer, Sun Hung Kai Properties, has developed an almost identical enclave just a mile away from Palm Springs, and called it Royal Palms. Sun Hung Kai is also involved in similar projects across the Chinese border and in the Philippines.

The advertising material I have examined shows a conscious appropriation of the idea of community by the developer. The concept of community has been commodified, marketed whole-cloth and in standardised units, like any other consumer product. However, these are not communities in the sociological sense, because rather than constructing rich networks of relationships, residents tend to isolate themselves in their homes.

Developers of gated communities go to great length to ensure that the purity of the community-as-commodity they have packaged will not be tampered with by home buyers. This is the purpose of the detailed regulations and restrictions that they impose. Home owners cannot buy property in the development without becoming a member of the residents' association or without agreeing to abide by its rules. The covenants and restrictions enforced by residents' associations may dictate hours and frequency of visitors, colour or paint on a house, style and colour of the front door, size and number of pets, parking rules...

In Palm Springs 'no owner shall make alteration to the structure, installation or fixtures of his/her unit, nor alter the façade or external appearance. No owner shall erect or affix any signs, advertisements, shades or other protections or structures whatsoever extending outside his/her unit. No owner shall keep any dog, cat, live poultry, birds or other animals in his/her unit if the same has been the cause of complaint by another owner. No owner shall affix or install his own private aerial outside his/her unit. Facilities can only be used by residents and by no more than one of their bona fide visitors.'

Not only developers but also residents themselves are interested in preserving property values. A resident boasted:

I expect in the next five years the value to appreciate substantially because of the number of people who want to live in a safe and healthy environment. Buying a house in Palm Springs is a very good investment indeed.

## The Californian lifestyle

The 'texture' of Palm Springs is accessible by means of a variety of 'texts', presented in advertising, expressed in interviews and made concrete in the landscape itself.

The Chans and their neighbours, the Lims, have upon several occasions mentioned the Californian lifestyle as their main reason for moving to Palm Springs. Security was perceived as part and parcel of what they had bought and was not regarded as an important issue.

Living behind gates is seen as a prestige element. As Mike Davies has observed, 'The trend of living in a walled-off community has assumed the frenzied dimension of a residential arms race as ordinary suburbanites demand the kind of social insulation once enjoyed only by the rich.' (Davies 1990: 246.)

If Americans flock to gated enclaves because they are terrified by crime and worried about property values, Hong Kong residents seem more interested in the promise of a socially homogeneous, friendly, and fashionable neighbourhood – where you might have a chance to run into a celebrity – and experiencing the lifestyle others can only dream of when they see it on television.

My informants claim that security was not their primary concern when they moved to Palm Springs, and actually thought that the cost of maintaining 24-hour surveillance was too high and unjustified, since the New Territories were already heavily militarised due to their vicinity to the Chinese border. Nevertheless they feel that 'times have changed', and that 'Hong Kong has become a far less safe place than it used to be'. In spite of the fact that the crime rate has not substantially increased, they perceive a potential danger outside their protected environment. As Mike Davis has argued, 'Fear proves itself: the social perception of threat becomes a function of the security mobilisation itself, not crime rates.' (Davis 1990: 224.)

It should also be noticed that the media contribute to magnifying potential dangers, as they beat a daily drum of hysteria about violent crime, illegal immigrants, drug abuse, litter and health hazards. Living behind walls, in an encapsulated environment, becomes a powerful symbol for being protected, buttressed, and coddled. Whilst, being on the 'outside' evokes exposure, isolation, and vulnerability.

Palm Springs ushers in the new (cosmetic) style of 'real imitation life', the Californian lifestyle, which can be imported, like any other commodity. After all in Hong Kong it is no longer possible to distinguish what is local and what is not. The transnational is the local. Hong Kong constitutes one of the world's

most heterogeneous cultural environments. Therefore, if people, in particular the middle and upper classes are fully conversant in transnational idioms, which include language, music, sports, clothing, satellite television, cybercommunications, global travel, and cuisine, nothing can stop them from choosing what is perceived as a fashionable lifestyle.

As the Hong Kong based anthropologist, Gordon Mathews, observed: 'The Hongkongese had to invent their identity, neither Chinese nor British, they had no choice but going lifestyle shopping in the global cultural supermarket.' (Mathews 2000: 172.)

In Hong Kong the term 'lifestyle' is widely used to describe one's way of life, and often associated to adjectives such as 'European', 'American', 'modern', 'glamorous', and even 'alternative'. David Chaney argues that 'Lifestyles are features of the modern world ..., [of] modernity. ... those who live in modern societies ... use [the] notion of lifestyle to describe their own and others' actions. Lifestyles are patterns of action that differentiate people.' (Chaney 1996: 4.)

In Palm Springs three bourgeois ideological values intersect: a happy celebration of private property values; the ascendant sign-value of leisure time activity as the prime morality of post-liberal society; and the principle of exclusivity.

## Conclusions

Palm Springs achieves coherence by drawing on a widely shared myth, California. Heterogeneous elements conflate, one can walk past mock Greek columns and a giant Mickey Mouse, signs written in art deco fonts, palm trees, a neo-classical pavilion, British phone boxes and Chinese lanterns. To foster melding with the myth, the themed development typically controls behaviour within its borders. Activities must be encouraged, directed, or restrained lest the order be lost. Like a theme park, Palm Springs is liminoid, it lies at the threshold between the chaotic, often conflicting forces of the everyday and the orderly world tapped in the myth. Since the myth enshrined is supposed to be beyond the influence of history, the landscape appears frozen in some vague period, 1950s and 1960s America as nostalgically recreated in TV serials such as *Happy Days*, and movies like *American Graffiti*.

To preserve this spatialised, materialised myth, a clear boundary is necessary. Palm Springs must be gated, not only removed in time, but also in space, from everyday life.

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