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# Mall Mania: Visualizing the Historical Development of the American Shopping Mall 1960-1990

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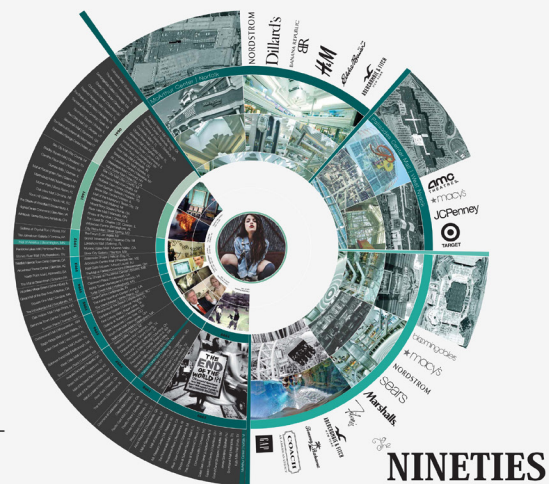
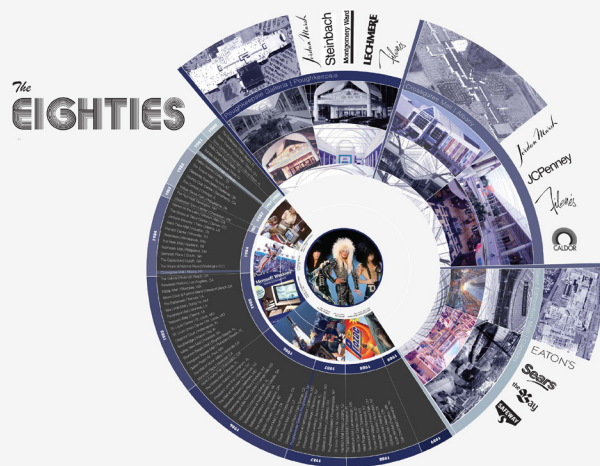
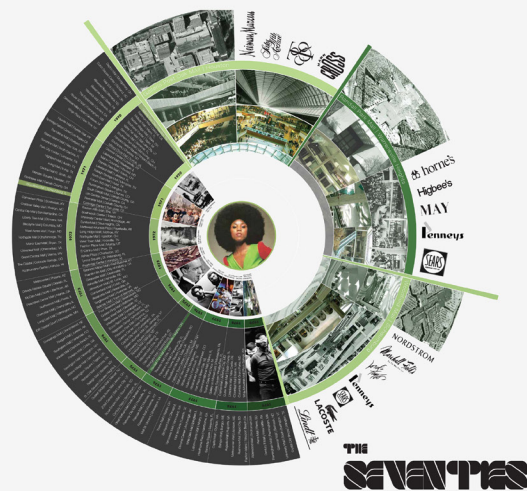
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After World War II, cities in the United States began to fracture and disperse along social, economic, and demographic lines. Fueled by mass media and television culture, mainstream American consumer patterns incrementally transferred in successive rings beyond the center core to populate suburbia. The suburbs witnessed the emergence of entirely new forms of ‘private-commercial’ space shaped by urban retail fragments inserted into an unstructured landscape. Conventionally urban commercial and social experiences were displaced to the suburbs and subsequently became internalized—communal life was reconfigured into privatized and controllable interior worlds. For a generation of Americans raised in the post-war suburbs, expectations of civic space were incubated in the encapsulated worlds of shopping malls, and thus, orphaned from any tangible connection to downtown. Since that time, the United States has continuously exported its suburban ideals to the rest of the world, while American suburbia has simultaneously become increasingly globalized.

The rapidly changing socio-economic conditions of American suburbia have shifted the role of shopping malls as increasingly participatory infrastructures. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre proposes in a critical shift in spatial perspective by identifying the multi-faceted processes of production that underscore multiplicity of authorship in the built environment. Lefebvre asserts that cities, buildings, and interiors are ultimately

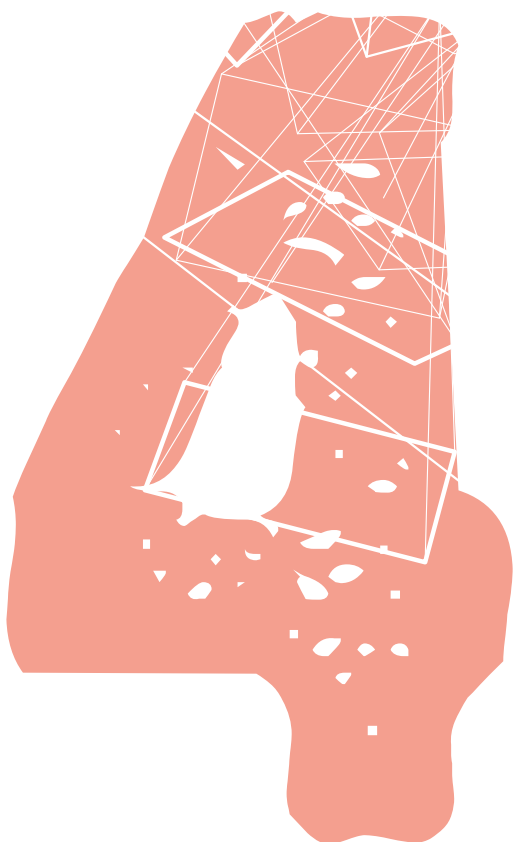
products of social practices. As a Marxist theorist who was highly critical of the economic structuralism that dominated the academic discourse in his time, he argues that the everyday manipulation of space is fundamental to the growth of society, and thus, to shaping the city. An embrace of such theory implies distrust of the heroic, formal, and fashionable, as well as suspicion of architecture that acts as an agent of commodification. In this regard, suburbia has been and will continue to be primarily shaped by everyday ‘non-architectures’.

This research visualization forms part of a design-research-based undergraduate studio engaging adaptive reuse of obsolete infrastructures. It visually conveys shopping mall construction in the United States over a four-decade period which contributed to a semester-long investigation of mall culture. Working through design research, students were mobilized to rethink futures of “dead and dying” malls throughout mid-continental North America.



# MALLMANIA

### VISUALIZING THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN SHOPPING MALL 1960-2000



**HISTORY/THEORY**