

STAFFORD CLIFF | GILLES DE CHABANEIX

A photograph of a modern interior space, likely a living room, featuring a large window that offers a panoramic view of a dense urban landscape, possibly San Francisco. The room is furnished with a dark, curved sofa, a low, dark coffee table, and a floor lamp with a white shade. The text 'THE WAY WE LIVE IN THE CITY' is prominently displayed in large, bold, black and white letters across the center of the image.

# THE WAY WE LIVE IN THE CITY

Thames & Hudson



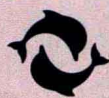
S T A F F O R D C L I F F

THE WAY WE LIVE  
*in the city*



WITH COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS BY

G I L L E S D E C H A B A N E I X



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*in the city*

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A close-up photograph of a vibrant red wooden door. The door features a central brass handle with a rectangular glass insert. Above the handle is a small, rectangular brass plaque with text. The upper portion of the door is filled with a decorative window, framed by intricate red wrought-iron scrollwork. The background behind the scrollwork is a dark, textured material, possibly stained glass or a patterned fabric. The door itself has a visible wood grain and a slightly weathered appearance.

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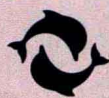
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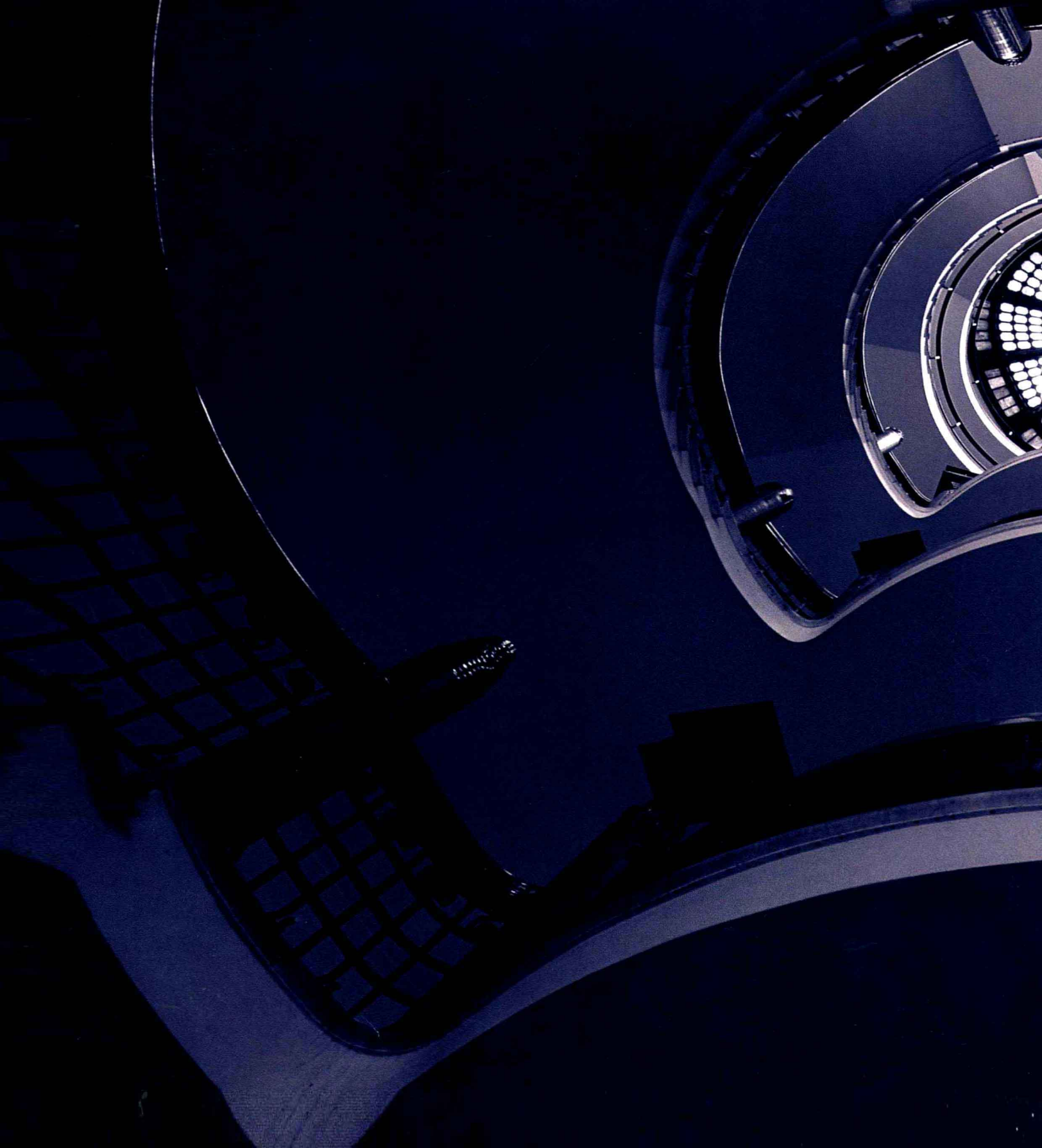
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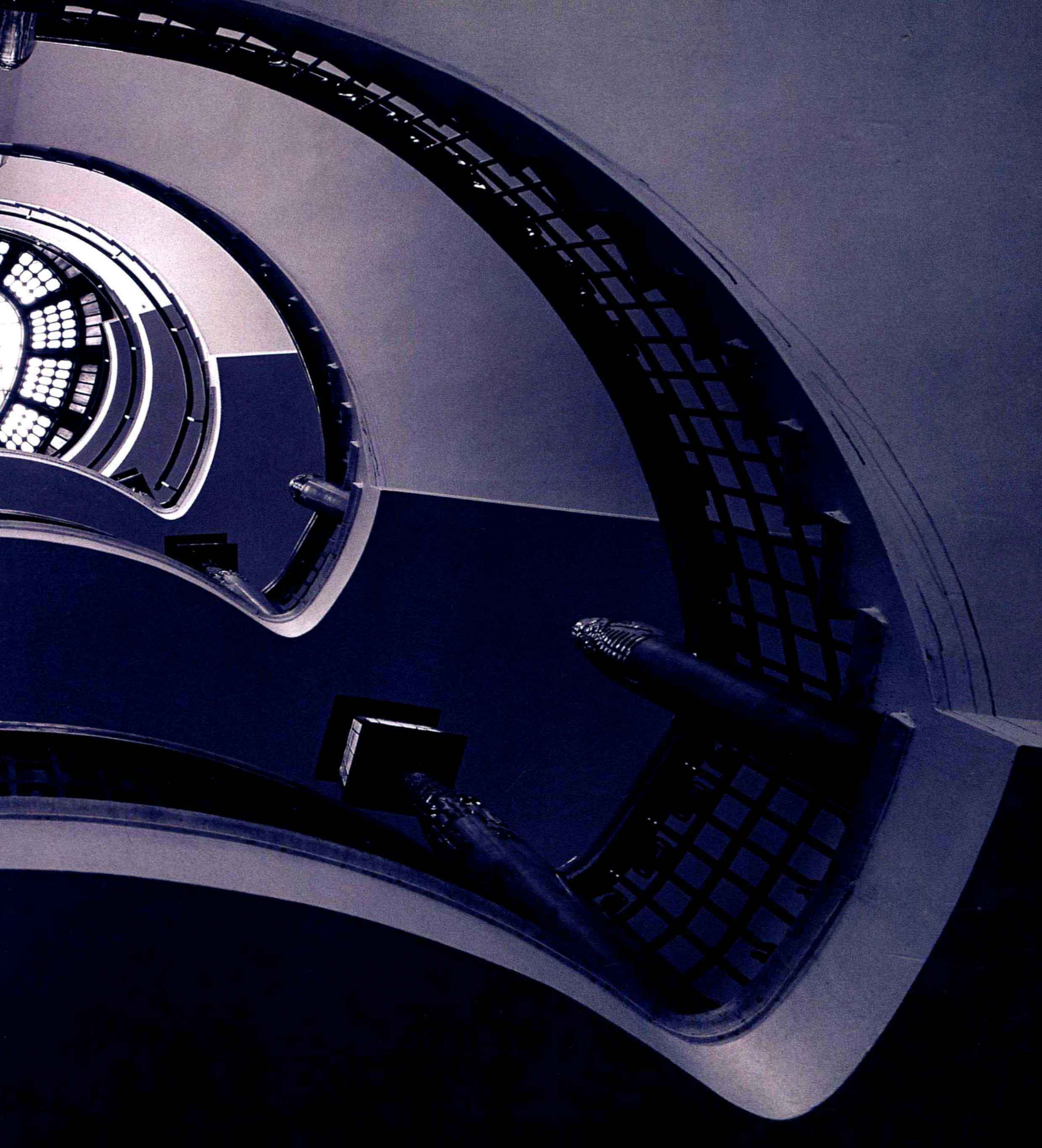
G I L L E S   D E   C H A B A N E I X



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A townhouse door (*p.1*) and  
apartment stairwells (*pp.2-7*)  
symbolize two aspects of  
inner-city dwelling.



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# INTRODUCTION

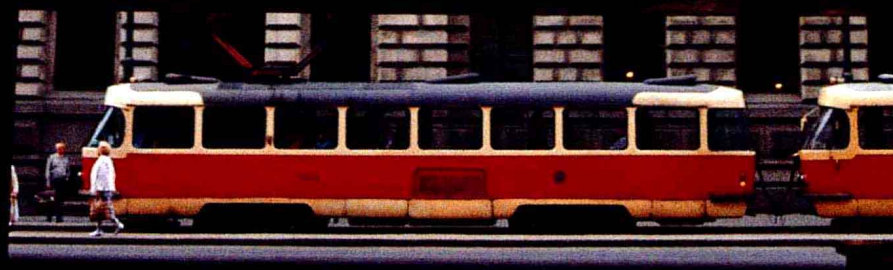
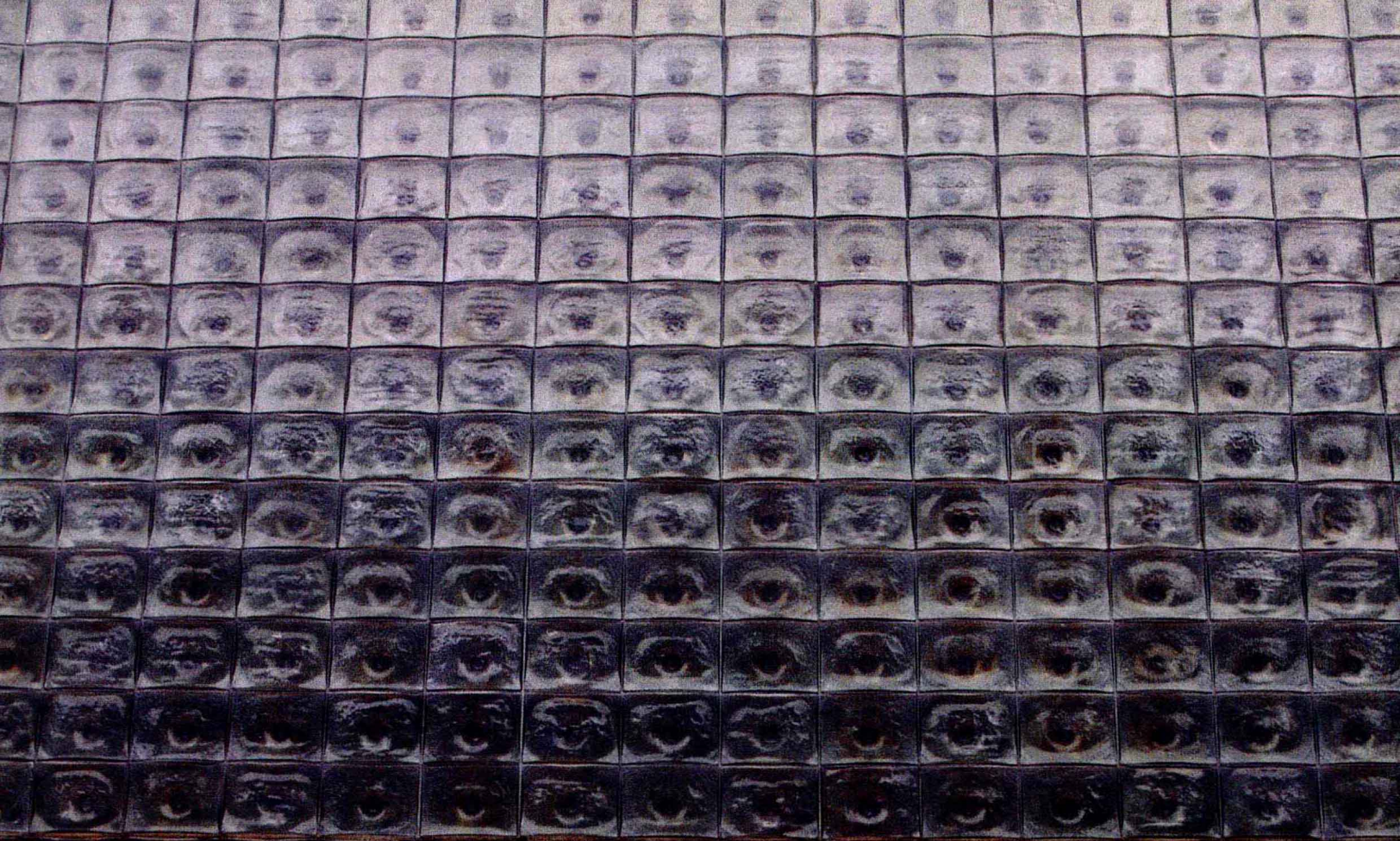
A vignette of city transport  
(*opposite*); the tram, or street-car,  
here in Prague, is unique to large  
urban communities.

The city, especially the inner city – that intense concentration of humanity and construction – has enjoyed something of a renaissance during the last twenty years. Rather than fleeing to the leafy suburbs or even country towns and villages, style-conscious people have been gradually resettling the city centre. Former warehouses, light industrial premises and workshops are being transformed by designers, architects and perceptive home-owners into lofts and apartments of all shapes and sizes, packed with clever design and decoration solutions, and frequently state-of-the-art technology. Even in Paris and New York, cities which have always had vibrant downtown communities and cultures, buildings that once housed factories, markets and offices are now available as the new material for domestic conversion, while the original businesses move to out-of-town locations.

Such developments, strongly reflected in the pages which follow, are especially noticeable in the nineteenth-century cities of Europe and North America, where the most concentrated urban areas have been given new vitality, where new types of living space can become ingenious expressions of personality and individual taste. And along with this sense of revival comes the renewal of activity in public places, an intensification of street-life: in street cafés, in bars, restaurants, shops and galleries. It is this new sense of vibrancy in the city which is the focus of this book.

This is also a book about differences, about how the architecture and topographies of various cities have an effect upon the habits of their inhabitants and on the







definition of their homes. These differences make for the charm, energy and attraction of places as diverse as London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Istanbul, Sydney and Tokyo.

Let us imagine, for instance, a visit to a young couple living in a *fin-de-siècle* apartment building in the rue Jacob in the 6th *arrondissement* of Paris. First, you'll need the code to punch into the panel beside the fortress-like wooden front doors which give on to the street. Once inside, you will almost certainly be confronted by a courtyard, a secluded area remote from the noise and bustle of the street only a few feet away. Then you will face a number of other choices – several doorways or perhaps well-worn stone steps – or a rattling old lift with doors you open and close yourself, and for the entrance to which you will almost certainly need another set of code numbers. Once upstairs, there will be a bell or a door-knocker to be negotiated before you finally make your entrance into the apartment – and another world. If the owners are a young couple, designers maybe – or in marketing or the fashion business – you may very well discover a space in sharp contrast to the gloomy atmosphere of the old building. The apartment will be bright, sun-filled and shockingly modern in its furnishings – even if the moulded ceilings, panelled walls and traditional fireplaces of the rooms have been retained. There might even be a tiny balcony with a view of the famous Paris rooftops, of the Seine, or other iconic landmarks of the city.

Visiting somebody in a house in Tokyo or Kyoto, on the other hand, couldn't be more different. For a start, you will need them to write down their address and telephone number in Japanese, so that you can show it to your taxi-driver who,



Sometimes one has a sense that the high-rises of Manhattan – here seen prior to the attacks of 9/11 (*overleaf*) – and the Hong Kong waterfront (*pp.14–15*) have become strangely divorced from the land on which they stand, the latter compressed out of existence by the overwhelming weight of the masonry above.

once he is close to the house, will call the occupants to obtain more precise directions. House numbers do not begin at one end of a street and continue to the other, but proceed erratically, following the order in which the houses were built.

Other cities, other ways: thoroughfares in Los Angeles, for instance, may extend for as much as twenty miles, so cross-street referencing is essential, as indeed it is for New York and a number of other North American cities. London, meanwhile, presents a very different vision of the city, being essentially a network of joined-up villages, retaining many of their original characteristics in an odd mixture of shops and pubs, townhouses and flats. Visiting somebody here will almost certainly entail negotiating the London Underground system, or hailing a reliable black cab.

It is such urban diversity that forms a considerable part of the photographic work of Gilles de Chabaneix: cities viewed as complete entities, evidenced in his dramatic ‘overview’ pictures, as well as cities in close-up: the pattern and texture of everyday things – streets and squares, markets, bars, cafés and people. The latter, the inhabitants who create the special atmosphere of cities, figure prominently in the pages which follow, represented in the individual rooms which demonstrate their creativity, glimpsed at bar counters, on restaurant terraces, bargaining in flea markets, or simply hanging out on the street. In all respects, then, this book is about the experience of being ‘urbane’ – a celebration of city life.











