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## Accessorizing Your City

We knew Culver City was a hot spot in the gentrification-preservation-pretification inferno blazing through L.A. neighborhoods, but decorator utility boxes?

In a word, yes. After debuting its redeveloped Town Plaza in May 2003, site of the refurbished Culver Hotel and Pacific Theaters, the city's aesthetic brain trust got busy on metal units housing electric, telephone and traffic signal equipment in the plaza area. "They are an eyesore," says Christine Byers, the city's public art and historic preservation coordinator. Not anymore. Since October, several of said eyesores have been doubling as art pieces.

The city chose Joshua Callaghan, an MFA student at UCLA, to "integrate the boxes into the surrounding landscape" with vinyl bearing digital images of the immediate environment. "It's good for five to seven years," Byers says. "We're looking at this as a long-term temporary installation." The artist, commissioned to cover nine boxes for under \$10,000, was inspired by the photorealistic effect of *trompe l'oeil* painting. Sticklers might note that a utility box is a utility box is a utility box, but for the city the designer camouflage is a hit, blending with the landscape until you get up close. "I love watching people do the double-take," Byers says.—MICHAEL T. JARVIS