

The Origin of the Internationalisation of the RBTA: La Manzanera, 1963-1978, in the Mass Media

Barrio Gaudi, Kafka's Castle, The Castillo-Plexusm, Xanadu, The Red Wall, Walden 7

/Abstract

This article delves into the origins of the internationalisation of the first works of Ricardo Bofill's Taller de Arquitectura (RBTA), tracing a genealogy that goes through five pieces built in Spain in the decade 1965-1975 that had great repercussions in the professional mass media abroad: the Gaudi Quarter (Reus), Kafka Castle (Sant Pere de Ribes), La Manzanera with Xanadu and the Red Wall (Calpe) and Walden 7 (Sant Just Desvern). All of them, with a greater or lesser profusion of pages (first with black and white photographs and, after, in colour), were reproduced in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (Paris), *Architectural Design* (London), *Architectural Forum* (New York), *Architectural Review* (London), *Architecture and Urbanism* (Tokyo), *Abitare* (Milan), *Baumeister* (Munich), *Global Architecture* (Tokyo), *Progressive Architecture* (Stanford) and *Zodiac* (Milan), among others.

In addition, the text traces, in particular, the media fortune of the different tourist properties of the La Manzanera complex in Calpe: the Castillo-Plexus (1963-1966), Xanadu (1966-1968), the Red Wall (1968-1973-1975) and the Viaduct (1975). In this journey, the magazines' eagerness to supply iconic images to the detriment of plans to a public eager for novelties is evident, but this strategy served for the RBTA to disseminate its own poetics and signs of identity through architectures that were striking in their material and chromatic formality. The text stops when RBTA is developing the Les Halles competition in Paris in 1973-1975, reflecting on the evolution of the compositional systems from the modular combination to the hierarchy of the *Beaux Arts* systems, entering into a new historicism that the magazines once again sanctioned.

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Introduction: Ricardo Bofill, the Taller de Arquitectura and La Manzanera

‘We are against the utopia of a ‘scientific’ architecture, we are against the imposition of a rational and schematic order of the territory, against those obvious and simplistic modern cities, those thousands of houses all identical, aligned, repeated, stupid; against those anonymous cities, without form or style, that nobody has dreamt of or wished for. The architect’s job is to turn dreams into real things. This seems incomprehensible to those who have a rationalist conception of art and history, to those who, in an attempt to rationalise apparent chaos, turn the product into real chaos. The Taller de Arquitectura has been prepared to invent possible cities, full of dreams, realisable and imperfect’. Ricardo Bofill, 1968¹.

Ricardo Bofill Levi (1939-2022), son of the architect and builder Ricardo Bofill Benessat and the Venetian Maria Levi, was born in Barcelona in 1939, where he studied, although he graduated from the Geneva School of Architecture in 1962. In 1963, he founded the ‘Taller de Arquitectura’ (RBTA), a team made up of architects, engineers, sociologists and writers, including the English architect Peter Hodgkinson (from 1966) and the French architect Jean-Pierre Carniaux (from 1976), who helped the international expansion of the Atelier’s production. According to the magazine *L’Architecture d’Aujourd d’Hui* in 1975², the Taller was made up of Bofill himself, followed by his sister, Anna Bofill, an architect and mathematician, Salvador Clotas (writer), the aforementioned Peter Hodgkinson, Manolo N. Yanowsky and Ramón Collado, all three architects, and José A. Goytisolo, poet and philosopher. Some of the workshop’s first works in Spain were under his father’s signature, such as the partial plan for La Manzanera (1962), a rustic plot of land facing the sea in the vicinity of the Ifach Penon in Calpe, Alicante, owned by Natalia Pérez Ortenbach, a member of a saga of landowners - the Feliu-Ortenbachs - with a long history and historical presence in this region, albeit resident in Barcelona³. The following buildings were developed on this land facing the Mediterranean during the period under study: the Castillo-Plexus (1963-1966), Xanadu (1966-1968), the Red Wall (1968-1973-1975) and the Viaduct (1975); the latter would never be built.

In general, the texts that accompanied these works when they were published in foreign magazines tended to be rather brief and, in some cases, did not even seem to describe or explain the works, but were intended to arouse the interest of readers, who were much more attentive to the

1 Ricardo Bofill, cited in: “Vicino ad Alicante, una casa-paese: la Muralla Roja”, *Abitare*, no. 161, (1978): 4.
2 “Le Taller de Arquitectura de Barcelone”, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd d’Hui*, no. 182 (1975): 57-98.
3 Antoni Banuyls i Pérez, “Arquitectura per al turisme: la utopia urbana de Bofill i el taller d’arquitectura a la Manzanera (1962-1985)”, *La Rella*, no. 19-20 (2003): 122-143.

graphic gestures, forms and images, decidedly new and fresh on the national scene, we might say unprejudiced and somewhat provocative, materialised with an abundant mass of traditional consistency that rebelled against the technological excesses of architecture that saturated the international magazines. These works by Bofill and his Taller seemed to propose an architecture closer to the earth than levitating in the sky: graver and heavier than sharp and light. Inevitably, these early works of the RBTA were non-conformist in the face of the established status quo, assumed and supported by the Academy itself, quite faithful to the axioms of the already crisis-ridden modern movement in this same decade of the 1960s.

The Taller quickly gained notoriety in Spanish magazines. Five works built between 1964 and 1968 were published in *Arquitectura*, Madrid: the residential building in Compositor Bach Street (1964), a second in Nicaragua Street (1966) which had won the FAD prize and a third in Sant Gregori Square, all in Barcelona, to which were added the Xanadu tourist residential building in the La Manzanera complex and the Laboratorios building in Granollers; These last three buildings were reproduced in the same issue in 1968⁴. Something similar happened in the magazine *Cuadernos de Arquitectura*⁵, of Barcelona, which reproduced some of these works in the same years and where it is interesting to note that, in 1966, the group of terraced houses the Castillo (which years later would be called ‘Plexus’) was published as the first of the tourist buildings of La Manzanera to have media repercussions, a work that, surprising for its material finishes of sienna and brown plaster (shades of grey in the magazine) and its strange silhouettes with curved tile roofs, would nevertheless have little fortune outside Spanish borders, beyond being mentioned in articles reviewing the trajectory of the Taller de Arquitectura in its first decade of work, as will be detailed later on.

From Spanish Magazines to the Pages of International Magazines until 1976

Probably the first RBTA works to be reproduced abroad were the housing building in Compositor Bach Street (1964) in Barcelona, the El Sargazo tourist flats (1962) in Castelldefels and the preliminary project for the Gaudi social housing district (1964-1968) in Reus, all three of which were included in a monograph devoted to Spanish architecture in the Italian magazine *Zodiac*⁶. Also, in 1968, the FAD prize property was included in an issue of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd d’Hui*, Paris, entitled “Tendences”⁷,

4 “La Manzanera, Calpe (Alicante), 1966”, *Arquitectura*, no. 112 (1968): 30-34.
5 “La Manzanera, Calpe: Bofill, arquitecto”, *Cuadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 65 (1966): 38-40.
6 These three buildings are reproduced in: “España”, *Zodiac*, no. 15 (1965): 44-49.
7 “Tendences: Espagne 68: Epigones et Novateurs”, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd d’Hui*, no. 139 (1968): 93-108.



1

partly a monographic issue devoted to Spanish architecture at the time (under the heading 'Espagne 68: Epigones et Novateurs'), a magazine that would be key to the international projection of the Taller, given the leadership of this French magazine in the professional world, where the Granollers Laboratories also appeared. Kafka's Castle (1966-1968, Sant Pere de Ribes), perhaps because of its modular combinations and its appearance of abstract sculpture, close to Moshe Safdie's macles of prefabricated volumes in Habitat 67 in Montreal, was visually attractive enough to be published in other magazines such as *Architectural Forum* in New York⁸ [Fig. 1], *Baumeister* in Munich in 1969, *Architectural Design* in London in 1970 and in *Global Architecture* in 1973⁹.

It is possible that the monograph dedicated to Spain in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in 1970, entitled 'Espagne: Madrid-Barcelone'¹⁰, which included a selection of works by masters such as Fisac, Fernández Alba, Sáenz de Oiza, Cano Lasso and Coderch and some younger architects such as MBM (Martorell, Bohigas and Mackay) and Lluís Domènech, among many others, by including Ricardo Bofill's Taller de Arquitectura, placed this team on the same level as that of the notable Spanish architects linked to a certain degree to the two main Schools of Architecture in the title of this issue, although in 1970 there were already three more Schools of Architecture in Spain: Seville (1960), Valencia (1966) and Valladolid (1968). However, RBTA used the pages of the magazine to theorise on 'Vers la ville dans l'espace'¹¹ by including images of modular housing types and zooms of models of residential blocks that came to life in the photographs of the Gaudi Quarter in Reus¹² [Fig. 2].

Two years earlier, Bofill and his collaborators had published in 1968 the

8 "Kafka's Castle", *Architectural Forum*, no. 4 (1969): 35-41.

9 "Taller de Arquitectura: La Manzanera, Calpe, Spain (1966, 1972) and El Castell, Sitges, Spain (1967)", *Global Architecture*, no. 19 (1973).

10 "España: Madrid Barcelona", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 149 (1970): XI-XCIV, 1-106.

11 Salvador Clotas, "Vers la Villa dans l'Espace", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 149 (1970): 32-36.

12 "España: Madrid Barcelona", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 149 (1970): 37-41.

Fig. 1

Kafka's Castle (1965-1969), Sant Pere de Ribes, double-page spread in AF (1969: 36-37) and detail of the Spanish Castle party hall in Seattle (<https://pnwbands.com/spanishcastle.html>).



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book *Hacia una formalización de la ciudad en el espacio*¹³ and, on this occasion - rather than advertising their works already in use - they chose to give a lesson on their experiments in modular residential architecture, which they illustrated with snapshots of the aforementioned Gaudi Quarter, many in detail, in full colour, where the gravity of the facings - the predominance of the wall- and the contrast of lights, shadows, textures and vivid, intense colours - a whole festival of reds, warm colours, mauves, violets, creams, greens, greys and blues- are evident: thirteen full-colour photographs occupy four pages against a single, tiny floor plan. No other work by Spanish architects in this issue occupies so many pages or is reproduced in colour: it is clear that the editors of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* were sufficiently seduced by RBTA's work to give it this feature, which would set off a chain reaction in other international magazines with an even wider technical readership.

13 José Agustín, Ricardo Bofill, Joan Ponç, Deidi von Schaerwen and Oriol Durán, *Hacia una formalización de la ciudad en el espacio* (Barcelona: Blume, 1968).

Fig. 2

Gaudi Quarter (1964-1972), Reus, in the pages of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (AA, 1970: 38) and *Architecture+Urbanism* (AU, 1976: 37).

Fig. 3

Covers of *Architectural Forum* (1971) with Ricardo and Anna Bofill; of *Architectural Design* (1975) and *Architecture+Urbanism* (1976) devoted to Walden 7 (1970-1975), Sant Just Desvern.

The Gaudi Quarter would appear the following year, in 1971, in the pages of *Architectural Design* in London¹⁴ and *Architectural Forum* in New York¹⁵, in both cases with a certain amount of black and white photography, without plans, but with some outlines of the general floor plan and some colour images; the issue of *Architectural Forum* devotes its cover to a detail of a work in Walden 7 where, in two of its superimposed loophole windows, the heads of Ricardo Bofill (above) and his sister Anna Bofill appear [Fig. 3]. The Gaudi neighbourhood would also be published, in an extensive report covering the works of this period of RBTA, in *Architecture and Urbanism* in Tokyo¹⁶ [Fig. 2] where Walden 7 also appeared. Walden 7, the first real ‘mini-city in space’ of the TA, would be published, among other magazines, in *Architectural Design* in 1975¹⁷ [Fig. 3], where it would feature on the cover, and in *Architecture+Urbanism*¹⁸ [Fig. 3]; in addition, like the Gaudi Quarter, Walden 7 would be published in the pages of *Pogressive Architecture* in Standorf in 1975¹⁹. José Agustin Goytisolo, poet and philosopher, member of the RBTA, would say of Walden 7 that ‘Just like in a cave or magic castle/ Everything was going to change in that place...’ thanks to a massive block of 446 social housing units on 16 floors. In the 1960s and early 1970s, it seems that the TA only conceived its large residential, social or tourist complexes as castles or as fortresses of ever larger dimensions: small cities within cities; An expression coined by M. Tafuri and F. Dal Co in 1980 for the skyscrapers of the Chicago School at the end of the 19th century²⁰.

Perhaps we have anticipated too much by announcing the reproduction of the first works in colour and we should go back a few years to give a new impetus to this story. The origins were in black and white and, in turn, Bofill was always good at writing, preaching, advertising and denouncing. In fact, his first text on architecture in foreign media took place in the aforementioned monograph of *Zodiac* in 1965, writing an extensive text entitled ‘On the current situation of architecture in Spain’ (Bofill, 1965: 34-43) which, after the background in Gatepac (the group of avant-garde architects of the 1930s in Spain), described a somewhat chaotic situation, both politically and urbanistically, in the mid-1960s, noting ‘the beginning of a miracle’ in economic terms and drawing attention to the phenomenon of mass tourism that was colonising the Mediterranean coastline: ‘Architecture on the coasts (...) is perhaps the least dignified architecture, the most sold and lacking in any principle (...), where the only thing that matters is to give sun, sand and folklore to the English civil servant, the

14 “Barrio Gaudi. Taller de Arquitectura”, *Architectural Design*, v. XLI, no. 8 (1971): 482-484.

15 “Barrio Gaudi”, *Architectural Forum*, v. 134, no. 4 (1971): 22-27.

16 “Ricardo Bofill”, *Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 12(1976): 34-38.

17 “Bofill Taller de Arquitectura”, *Architectural Design*, v. XLV, no. 7 (1975): 402-417.

18 “Ricardo Bofill”, *Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 12(1976): 34-38.

19 Geoffrey Broadbendt, “The road to Xanadu and beyond”, *Progressive Architecture*, no. 9 (1975): 68-83.

20 Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Arquitectura Contemporánea 1* (Barcelona: Aguilar, 1989), 62.

German (...) worker or the Italian merchant. (...) Our beautiful coasts will be converted, from the formal point of view, into a strange city where vulgarity and hollow decoration will prevail²¹.

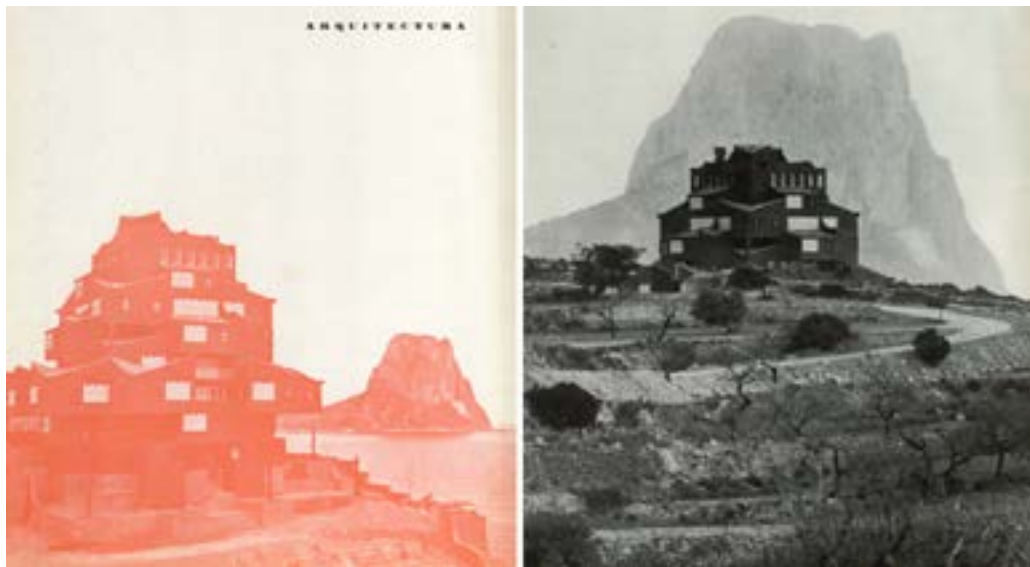
This reflection is necessary to understand the Taller’s architectural explorations (of modular grouping in space, with ascending metabolism) with his projects in La Manzanera from 1963 onwards, in particular in the two apartment complexes: Xanadu (1966-1968) and the Red Wall (1968-1973-1975); Both buildings would be responsible, to a large extent, for RBTA’s international projection. The proper names of both properties did not anticipate the future, but referred to a hypothetical timeless oriental past: Xanadu was the summer capital of the Mongol empire between the 13th and 14th centuries that attacked the Great Wall of China (and is a proper name widely used in the Anglo-Saxon world to evoke a place of luxury and mystery or exuberance) and the Red Wall refers to the ‘red forts’ (more specifically the Red Fort in Delhi), characteristic of another empire: the Mughal empire based in India during the 16th and 17th centuries. In both cases: fortresses and forts, castles after all. Oriental architecture was always a source of knowledge and inspiration for Gaudi, whom Ricardo Bofill admired.

Xanadu, 1966-1968: a Green Rock in Black and White

‘In 1962 we began the study of a typical tourist development on the coast of Alicante facing the Rock of Ifach (...). We were asked to build slowly (...). It would be useless to recount the motivations and the methodology of the project. Perhaps we could sum them up in the attempt to create an island, in a certain paradisiacal way, which corresponds to a somewhat idyllic and bucolic vision of the world. The very special characteristics of the landscape, built by man, based on stone walls to contain the terraces, its natural amphitheatre shape, which causes considerable isolation from the monstrous surroundings, as well as an express desire for formal creation, were the factors that determined the project to transform that splendid natural landscape into a landscape expressly built for holidays (...). This development project, as well as the constructions begun (...), continue to aim to create a particular climate, with a certain mystical-materialistic tone, capable of provoking a certain psychic relaxation within the limitations inherent to architecture. [And as for Xanadu]: The tower-apartments are part of a greater methodological concern, which acquire a visualisation that in our own language we call post-cubism’²².

21 Ricardo Bofill Levi, “Sobre la situación actual de la arquitectura en España”, *Zodiac*, no. 15 (1965): 43.

22 Ricardo Bofill Levi, “La Manzanera, Calpe (Alicante) 1966”, *Arquitectura*, no. 112 (1968): 30-34.



In this foundational text, first partially published in Spain in 1966 in Barcelona²³ and two years after in Madrid²⁴, the year Sigfried Giedion died, and not reproduced abroad, perhaps the most extensive, explanatory and coherent text published by the TA on Xanadu (a building with 15 flats) [Fig. 4], the principles of his architecture in those years are set out: expresses a formal will capable of generating an emotive atmosphere of psychic distension through a project methodology of post-cubist exploration in space, a principle he finishes off with: 'I believe that works cannot be considered closed and complete, especially when they aim at a certain amount of research'²⁵. In the case of the pages of *Arquitectura* de Madrid, this text is accompanied by others chosen for the occasion: the poem-story 'En el Xanadú' by Goytisolo, which contains several references to heroes and villains - Montezuma, Cabrera, Lenin and Tiresias - as well as sieges of fortresses and cities - Messina, Morella - where he states that: 'Don't think it was all a delirium, a marijuana cigarette is little explanation for so much certainty'²⁶, where the hippy, rebellious and psychedelic attitude of the members of the Taller comes to the fore.

The text was illustrated with two photographs of El Castillo (first name), Plexus (name years later), the floors of the standard flats and eleven snapshots of Xanadu, all in black and white; Two of them would become iconic: a first one where the profile of Xanadu was placed in front of the rock (insinuating their volumetric similarities, saving the scale) and a second one taken from the sea, where, on the horizon and at both ends, the solidity of Xanadu perched on the cliff was contrasted with the mass of the Ifach Penon in the middle of the Mediterranean. Vázquez Moltabán, Catalan writer, reaffirmed this analogy in 1972: 'Xanadu (...) in its structure seems

Fig. 4
Xanadu in La Manzanera (1966-1968), Calpe, with the Ifach Penon in the background: separated on the cover in red tones on the cover of the *Arquitectura* (AM, 1968) and on an inside page the two silhouettes superimposed: Xanadu and Ifach Penon (to be repeated in: AA, 1968).

23 Ricardo Bofill Levi, "La Manzanera, Calpe (Alicante)", *Cuadernos de Arquitectura*, no. 65 (1966): 38-49.
24 Ricardo Bofill Levi, "La Manzanera", *Arquitectura*, no. 112 (1968): 30-34.
25 Ricardo Bofill Levi, "La Manzanera", *Arquitectura*, no. 112 (1968): 33.
26 José Agustín Goytisolo, "En el Xanadú", *Arquitectura*, no. 112 (1968): 32.



to prolong indefinitely the project of chameleonic architecture, given its silhouette evocative of the Ifach Penon that serves as a backdrop'²⁷.

This was in April 1968, the year in which Xanadu would travel around the world, printed in the pages of the most prestigious architectural magazines. In June Xanadu was reproduced in *Bausmeister*, Munich, and a month later, in July, it was published in the pages of *Architectural Design*, London, where Carlos Flores²⁸ was a correspondent. Here the authorship of this 'fantastic work' (described as 'A tower of 17 flats for all the people of the world without distinction of race, religion or colour') is attributed to Ricardo Bofill, Peter Hodgkinson, Xavier Baguel and Mando Janowsky, members of the TA²⁹. The three pages devoted to Xanadu reproduce some of the texts that appeared in *Arquitectura* de Madrid, which would be repeated in various publications (in this case by Hendrix, Banham, Thomas, Orwell and Clotas), as well as the two iconic images, of rock on rock and rock in front of rock, similar to those that appeared in that magazine (now due to the photographer Deidi von Schaewen), as well as the section of the building and the housing modules, without it being understood what relationship they bear to each other: the documentation provided in plans was not sufficient to explain the planned and constructed building, and its scale made it difficult to understand. In September, the magazine *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, Paris, devoted another two pages similar to those of *Architectural Design*, without texts and several snapshots, heading the article with the iconic photo of Xanadu from the sea and the Ifach Penon at the ends of the panorama³⁰ [Fig. 5].

Three months earlier, in June, in 1968, *Architectural Forum*³¹, New York, devoted six pages in black and white to an extensive report on Xanadu. After the very brief presentation of the building, 'Sometimes pictures alone speak for themselves', the brief texts that follow on this occasion, in English, supplied by the Taller to the editorial staff, belong to a selection

27 Manuel Vázquez Moltabán, "La Muraille Rouge. Atelier Bofill, Barcelone", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 162 (1972): 41.
28 Carlos Flores López (born 1928) was the first architect to study Modernist Spanish Architecture since 1925; his most famous work, *Contemporary Spanish Architecture* [Arquitectura española contemporánea], was published in 1961.
29 "Xanadu", *Architectural Design*, no. 7 (1968): 327-329.
30 "Tendances: Espagne 68: Epigones et Novateurs", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 139 (1968): 98-99.
31 "Xanadu", *Architectural Forum*, no. 5 (1968): 52-57.

Fig. 5
Xanadu in La Manzanera (1966-1968), Calpe, left, and the Ifach Rock, right, in the pages of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (AA, 1968: 98)du Lac' appears.



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of authors (which had already been reproduced in *Arquitectura* from Madrid, not in *Cuadernos de Arquitectura* from Barcelona), including *The Style* by Banham, *The Fashion* by McLuhan, *The History* by Hugh Thomas, *The Surprise* by George Orwell on the Sagrada Familia, *The Shane* by Salvador Clotas (member of the Taller), *The Playful* by Emmerick, *Bon Mot* by Venturi (*Less is bore*) and *The Trip* by Jimmy Hendrix with the lyrics of the song *Spanish Castle Magic*, which was the name of the dance hall in the singer and musician's hometown during his adolescence, south of Seattle, a 1930s building that resembled a crenellated castle to which homage was paid and which disappeared in 1968 [Fig. 1]. Among the images were four photographs (an iconic one of Xanadu and the Ifach Penon), the standard floor plans of the flats, the vertical section of the building and a compositional scheme of the grouping by floor of the living quarters. The magazine included a text by Salvador Clotas (a member of the Taller) in which he referred to certain human behaviours: "The attempt to reiterate the closeness between the artist and the schizophrenic is based on the profound conviction that a madhouse can encompass more reality than a city, assuming one accepts that a madhouse is a place for the sane"³², insisting on the need to create architectural environments that catered to moods and not only to strict functional requirements.

Although Xanadu would be published in other magazines as *Architectural Review* in 1973 [Fig. 6], we end the media tour (after Madrid, Munich, London, Paris and New York) in the 1973 monographic issue of *Global Architecture (GA)*³³, Tokyo - perhaps the most relevant architecture pub-

32 Salvador Clotas, "The Shane", *Architectural Forum*, no. 5 (1968): 57.

33 "Taller de Arquitectura: La Manzanera...", *Global Architecture*, no. 19 (1973).

Fig. 6

Xanadu in La Manzanera, Calpe, with the Ifach Penon in the background in *Architectural Review* (AR, 1973: 293) and with the Mediterranean behind in *Global Architecture* (GA, 1973).

lishing house of the 70s and 80s, with large format photographs with great resolution by Yukio Futagawa - dedicated to the 'Taller de Arquitectura' with the display of La Manzanera (1966, 1972), and the Kafka's Castell (1967). In this case, plans and images of Xanadu and the Red Wall were reproduced, not only in black and white, but also in colour, including the iconic image of the two rocks at the ends of the bay of Calpe and another frontal image highlighting the stepped profile of Xanadu and its dark green cubes, a black and white report and the section with a certain level of detail. The front cover was occupied by a single photograph of the green Xanadu with the blue Mediterranean in the background [Fig. 6]. The text of the TA dedicated to Xanadu succinctly stated: 'A green rock composed of pure cubes, structurally arranged in space with a displaced symmetry'³⁴. The fact that GA magazine dedicated an issue to three RBTA works was Ricardo Bofill's entry into the star-system of architecture that had just been born, another sign of the globalization that the mass media were building.

'Working in Progress': La Manzanera as a Piece in a Chain of Experimentation

In case there were any doubts about this triumphant entry into the architectural firmament, three years later, in 1976, the Japanese magazine *Architecture and Urbanism* published an issue where RBTA's trajectory occupied a third of the pages³⁵ (AU, 1976: 23-46), through which the three Barcelona buildings of the 1960s and the experiments of Barrio Gaud, Kafka's Castle, La Manzanera (Xanadu and the Red Wall: 'la Muralla Roja') and Walden 7 paraded (in black and white and in colour). In it the works are analyzed highlighting the play of volumes, textures (brick and tiles) and colours (intense, vivid and in large surfaces), among other formalisms that made this architecture recognizable according to Shingo Yoshida³⁶. In addition, Ricardo Bofill's statements were included in which he stated that architects should return to the earth and explore the meaning of architecture, because the new architecture should be emotional, since the role of the architect in those years was to turn dreams into reality³⁷.

Xanadu would be published again in these years, although not in a monographic way, but in articles that reviewed the brilliant career of Ricardo Bofill's TA, as in 'The Taller of Bofill', by Geoffrey Broadbendt, in the pages of *Architectural Review* in 1973³⁸. The text focuses on the works of La Manzanera (the Castillo-Plexus, Xanadu and Red Wall) in which Xanadu (Fig. 6) was described as: 'a seven-storey cluster of apartments (...), which

34 "Taller de Arquitectura: La Manzanera...", *Global Architecture*, no. 19 (1973).

35 "Ricardo Bofill", *Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 12 (1976): 23-88.

36 Shingo Yoshida, "Bofill's Color Space", *Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 12 (1976): 39.

37 Yoshida, "Bofill's Color Space", 35.

38 Geoffrey Broadbendt, "The Taller of Bofill", *Architectural Review*, no. 291 (1973): 289-297.

has been more widely published than most of Taller's work. (...)The overall massing in this case was derivate, by analogy, from the Ifach Penon, a Gibraltar-like rock at the far end as Calpe Bay, and within this silhouette the square apartment units are suspended or cantilevered from a concrete forme, around a central core, in a further development of the principles worked out for each of the clusters of Kafka's Castle. (Although Xanadu was built first, Kafka's Castle was projected a year earlier)³⁹. Apart from the formal analogy, so often repeated in all the magazines, it is interesting to note that Xanadu was not an isolated case, but part of a chain of compositional experiments in space that would continue, among others, with the Red Wall, which was about to be completed at that time.

The same author, Director of Architecture at Portsmouth Polytechnic (UK), would revise and extend this text (in which he narrated the trajectory of the Workshop in the 1960s until the mid-1970s) in a new article in 1975: 'The road to Xanadu and beyond' in *Progressive Architecture* magazine⁴⁰, Stanford, where he stated that La Manzanera was a pop fantasy village intended for summer holidays for a commune of artists, poets, architects and other professionals, insisting on that rebellious and somewhat ecstatic point of non-conformist bourgeoisie, both of the Workshop and of the users of its works. And, with regard to Xanadu, he recalled that it was too 'cubic', so local vernacular details were added, such as the sloping tiled roofs, the Gaudi-style curves and the painting 'in that brownish-green to which the local landscape burns at the height of summer'⁴¹. What the professor did not mention was that the roof tiles in Xanadu do not cover inclined planes, but hyperbolic paraboloids of reinforced concrete that are visible inside the flats (which have between two and three levels, depending on the type) and that the cubic volumes were held in the air in a virtuoso exercise of static equilibrium thanks to the 5m flights of the metal beams on the ground floor ceiling, that is to say, that underneath the appearance of the striking appearance of the building, there is the fact that the building has been built with a high level of concrete and that it has been built with a high level of concrete and that it has been built with a high level of concrete: that under the appearance of a striking abstract sculpture with finishes apparently inspired by traditional architecture, there was hidden a structural and spatial experiment that was overshadowed by the silhouette, the mass, the colour and the location of the work; An experiment that included the development of the flats on different levels.

However, this text (to which we shall return) includes comments on the compositional guidelines of the city in space⁴² and lasted until 1975, when

39 Broadbendt, "The Taller of Bofill", 295.

40 Geoffrey Broadbendt, "The road to Xanadu and beyond", *Progressive Architecture*, no. 9 (1975): 68-83.

41 Broadbendt, "The road to Xanadu and beyond", 74.

42 José Agustín Goytisolo, ed., *Hacia una formalización de la ciudad en el espacio: Bofill, arquitecto taller de arquitectura* (Barcelona: Blume, 1968).

some projects appeared in which compositions changed their laws: from apparent randomness to the axuality and the hierarchy of symmetries evolved, where a certain monumentality stood out. Regardless of this theoretical analysis by the professor, it was evident that most of the magazines exploited the iconic condition of the surfaces of Xanadu synthesised in the photographs (that which entered through the eyes) and did not go deeper, an issue encouraged by the Taller itself when it sent materials on La Manzanera: photographic reports were displayed, while the plans were scarce, small in size and with little information. As is sometimes common in the mass media, the impact of the image was more important than the intellectual and material structure that supported it.

The Red Wall ('la Muralla Roja'): a Systematically Modulated 'Fortress'

After the Castillo-Plexus (1963-1966) and Xanadu (1966-1968) it was the turn of 'la Muralla Roja' or the Red Wall (1968-1973-1975), and, following in the wake of the media success already achieved, the Red Wall - by now almost always reproduced in colour even before the works were completed - would have even greater repercussions. The first time the Red Wall was published in Europe -something that did not happen either in *Arquitectura* from Madrid or in *Cuadernos de Arquitectura* from Barcelona - was in mid-1972 in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*⁴³, when it was still under construction. With a good 'clinical eye', the magazine devotes four colour pages to 'La Muraille Rouge' [Fig. 7], including a somewhat surrealist image of a naked man in profile lying on a staircase pretending to be climbing it [Fig. 7], something impossible which inevitably evokes certain paintings by M.C. Escher (1898-1972), and an outline of the complex, two floors of a Greek cross module of four dwellings with considerable detail [Fig. 8] and photographs of the building under construction with parts in concrete. The only colours in the colour range are burgundy, on the edge of the sea, as the blues and mauves had not yet been applied to the interior of the courtyards and roofs.

The article is accompanied by a poetic text by Vázquez Moltabán:

'Fifty red flats are currently being built in front of the sea (...). From the heights, nightmares stain the sea with the colours of postcards (...). We must not transcend the freedom to stain the landscape red (...). The Mongols run towards the Great Wall, waiting for the invasion (...), and they will never understand why it does not come. The invasion is us'⁴⁴.

43 "La Muraille Rouge", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 162 (1972): 41-44.

44 Manuel Vázquez Moltabán, "La Muraille Rouge. Atelier Bofill, Barcelone", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 162 (1972): 41.



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Fig. 7
The Red Wall at La Manzanera (1968-1973-1975), Calpe, and man lying down simulating climbing an interior staircase in the pages of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (AA, 1972: 41, 44).

Fig. 8
The Red Wall at La Manzanera (1968-1973-1975), Calpe, two-storey four-apartment Greek cross in the pages of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (AA, 1972: 42-43).

Fig. 9
The Red Wall at La Manzanera (1968-1973-1975), Calpe, as the cover of *Progressive Architecture* (PA, 1975) and double-page spread in *Global Architecture* (GA, 1973).

And a poem by J. Goytisolo who said that:

'It was a labyrinth, a/ painting full of colours/ red, like blood,/ red, like fear/ that makes the feet tremble/...' ⁴⁵.

Texts that hardly explain the building, composed of a single 4m module on the ground floor that generates a cross-shaped habitable cell of up to 80m², which shows a diagonal symmetry that is not appreciable either in reality or in the photographs, because it seems to contradict the double symmetry of the basic Greek cross cell and because the floors reproduce the module of four houses with the same orthogonality of the pages instead of rotating them at 45 degrees.

Half a year later, the 1973 monograph (reissued in 1981) of *Global Architecture* ⁴⁶ devoted to three works by the aforementioned TA, which displays in large format the snapshots taken by Yukio Futagawa, includes a double-page photograph of Xanadu and the Red Wall looming over the top of the cliff from the seashore, an image that reinforced the idea of the archetype of impregnable fortresses that concealed and protected the privacy of the domestic spaces contained behind their walls [Fig. 9]; Two photographs of these homes show that some of the furnishings in the rooms were made on site. The telegraphic text provided by the TA defined the Red Wall as 'An intricate village of enclosed and tortuous spaces that emerges to confront the landscape, a challenge to the sea' ⁴⁷ without false mimicry.

The residential complexes of Barrio Gaudí, Castillo de Kafka, Walden 7, Xanadú and Muralla Roja were links in a chain of projects that seemed to undermine the principles of modern architecture by rejecting structural sincerity and denying the transparency of function in favour of the opaque, dense, surprising and emotive object, capable of influencing the mood of its users. At the same time, as we have already mentioned, *Architectural Review* in 1973 devoted an extensive article to the trajectory of the RBTA, written by G. Broadbendt, a professor of Architectural Theory specialising in Semiotics, referring to the modular methodology and the geometric games of permutation of these base modules. He also linked the Red Wall to the architecture of M. Safdie and Archigram, drawing similarities with 'the Chinese wall' and pointing out that the 'battlements at cliff level (...) turn out to be windbreaks enclosing a labyrinth of private enclosures for sunbathing, conversation and other forms of relaxation' ⁴⁸.

In the pages of the July issue of *Architectural Design* in 1975 - the cover of which is devoted to Walden 7 [Fig. 3], where a brush gives colour to the exterior volume - RBTA team member Peter Hodgkinson writes an extensive article that reviews the TA's history to date, providing technical

45 José Agustín Goytisolo, "Untitled", *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 162 (1972): 44.

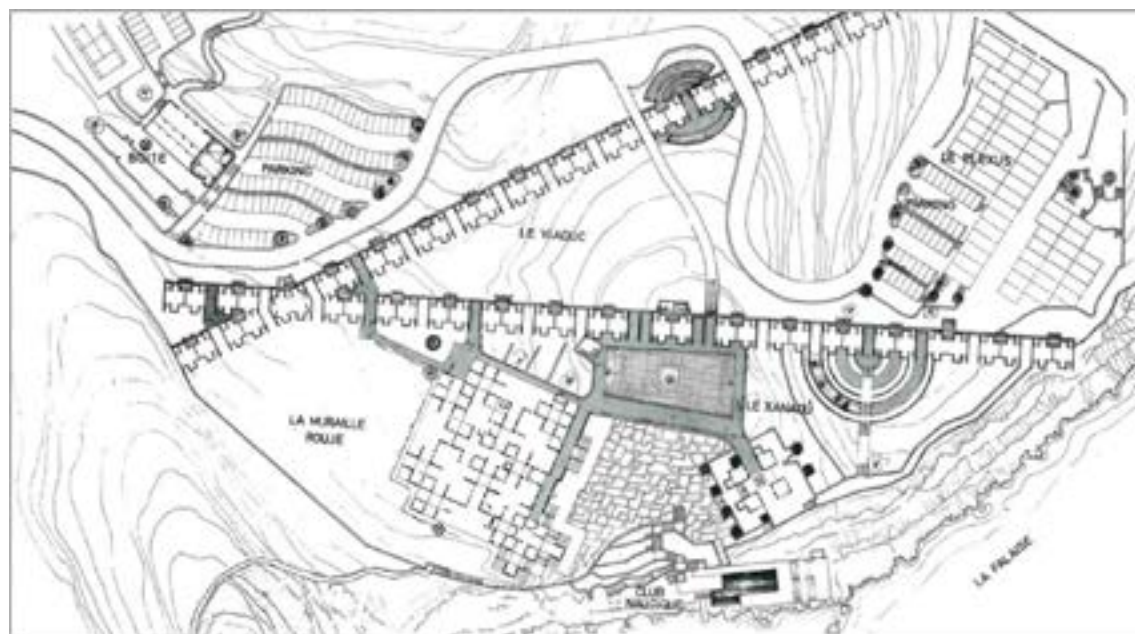
46 "Taller de Arquitectura: La Manzanera", *Global Architecture*, no. 19 (1973).

47 "Taller de Arquitectura: La Manzanera", *Global Architecture*, no. 19 (1973).

48 Geoffrey Broadbendt, "The Taller of Bofill", *Architectural Review*, no. 291 (1973): 295.



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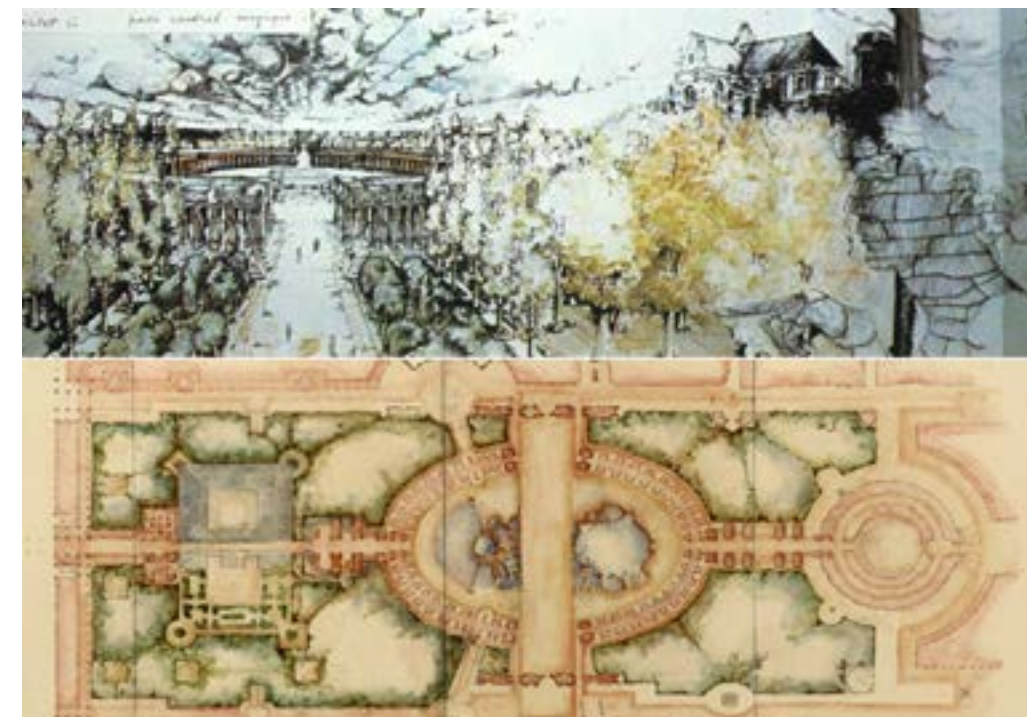
data, as well as reporting that both the construction of individual villas (which were already underway) and a new project, Roman I (later The Viaduct), for which no drawings are provided, are also planned for La Manzanera. This member, in a detailed text on the trajectory of the TA, analysed, among others, the Red Wall (which now had 52 flats) describing its compositional system of Greek crosses of 5 squares with a base module of 4x4m in plan; The combination of four modules generated interior courtyards that expanded their surfaces as they were raised towards the sky by the simultaneous reduction of each dwelling in cross. In addition, the architect pointed out the importance of colour and the criteria for its application: red on the outside, and pink, purple, mauve and blue in the transition from the light of the exterior to the penumbra of the interior⁴⁹.

In the same year, in the pages of *Progressive Architecture* - the cover of which is now devoted to the Red Wall perched on the hill photographed foreshortened from below [Fig. 9] - Professor Broadbent published a new

Fig. 10
'Sphere of Gold' in the Citedelle of Abraxas as the cover of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and rotated perspective of La Manzanera with the new Viaduct project (AA, 1975: 69)

Fig. 11
La Manzanera Urbanization in 1975 with Plexus (1963-1966), Xanadu (1966-1968), Red Wall (1969-1973-1975) and Viaduct (1975) in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (AA, 1975: 68)

49 Peter Hodgkinson, "Bofill Taller de Arquitectura", *Architectural Design*, v. XLV, no. 7 (1975): 402-417.



12

and even longer essay on RBTA's production entitled: 'The road to Xanadu and beyond'⁵⁰. A long text that we have already referred to when talking about Xanadu and which reviews RBTA's trajectory, including Plexus (which is definitively renamed as such), Xanadu and the Red Wall, even a conic of the next building projected for La Manzanera, which he called 'Roman I' (and which that same year would receive its definitive name, in the pages of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, of 'El Viaducto' [Fig. 10, 11], never built), is even published correctly, emphasising even more the compositional question of the spatial experiments and insisting less on the formal aspects of the results, until reaching the winning proposal of the competition for Les Halles in Paris in 1973, which would raise Ricardo Bofill as *l'enfant terrible* of contemporary architecture with a proposal with classicist roots that caused some critics to wonder whether Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) had returned to the French capital for the project of a large square between oval and elliptical [Fig. 12].

The Red Wall, which had received considerable media coverage⁵¹ (both in Europe and in the United States and Japan), was to be reproduced in 1978 in the pages of the Milan magazine *Abitare*⁵², where, along with a detailed description of the complex, the visually appealing formal allegories still resonate: 'Not camouflaged, but rather embedded in the landscape, the Wall rises like a sculpture, like a fortress whose perimeter walls are so thick that they contain the entire flats. It is, in short, an inhabited

50 Broadbent, "The road to Xanadu and beyond", 68-73.

51 The Red Wall ("La Muralla Roja") was published in 1972 in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, in 1973 in *Architectural Review*, also in *Global Architecture*, in 1974 once again in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, in 1975 in *Progressive Architecture* (PA), in the same year, for the third time, in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, also in *Architectural Design*, and, finally, in 1976 in *Architecture+Urbanism*.

52 "Vicino ad Alicante, una casa-paese: la Muralla Roja", *Abitare*, no. 161, (1978): 2-9.

Fig. 12
First planning proposal, in 1973, for the Les Halles competition and its perspective with Ricardo Bofill, on the right, contemplating it, in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (AA, 1974: 112).

wall, bright red on the outside, inside, on the other hand, all shaded in its labyrinthine evolutions, from pink through blue to purple. Pleasant shadows, courtyards, gardens, are enclosed in the heart of the fortress⁵³. At the same time, he echoes the words of the TA which point out that this building is part of the Mediterranean urban tradition of creating ambivalent public spaces, present in ancient civilisations (Crete, Greece, Sicily, Rome), but also in Arab countries and in the Spanish Levant. This last reference is the one that Warren A. James would affirm a decade later that, in this work, the Red Wall, the TA 'set out with this building to break with the post-Renaissance segregation of public and private spaces by wielding a reinterpretation of the Mediterranean tradition of the casbah'⁵⁴, although this comparison, lyrical and poetic, is no more than a casual proximity between the Red Wall and the casbahs, but this is not the generating principle of the complex which obeys other spatial experiments.

But the panorama for the TA had changed radically since 1973, when it had won the Les Halles competition in Paris with a proposal that was as strangely classicist as it was monumental. But this monumentality was not something accidental and fortuitous, but the result of the evolution of various proposals by the Workshop since 1970 in which the Red Wall contained some seeds because, unlike Xanadu (which is still an architecture floating in the air and, therefore, with modern roots), the load-bearing skeleton and the enveloping enclosure were the same compact and homogeneously impenetrable skin that emerged from the rock of the land itself, affirming a clear vocation for verticality, for obeying the laws of nature, not defying them, a character much more characteristic of classical gravity than of modern weightlessness.

From *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'Hui* in 1975 to the Exhibition at MoMA in 1985

In the November-December 1975 issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'Hui*, half of its pages are devoted to RBTA⁵⁵. It is a careful selection of works and projects, illustrated with ample graphic documentation (and photographs by Serena Bofill and Deidi von Schaewen), which outlines the trajectory of the TA from its beginnings until this year, when Ricardo Bofill has already embraced the *Beaux Arts* composition systems, as a revelation team after winning the competition to remodel the land hitherto occupied by the nineteenth-century central market of Les Halles in Paris. The cover of the magazine corresponds to a conical of the 'Golden Sphere' (a large constructed 'ball' [Fig. 10], reminiscent of

the architectures of C.N.Ledoux and E.L. Boullé, from 18th century, and set within a giant-scale portico of some five storeys) belonging to the unbuilt project of the Abraxas Citadel (1973). The list of works and projects, over 40 pages, includes the first residential buildings in Barcelona (synthetically), the Gaudi Quarter in Reus (1964-1972), the City in Space in Moratalaz (1970-1972), the Red Wall and Viaduct in La Manzanera (1969-1975), Walden 7 (1970-1975) and the Cement Factory (1971-1975) in Barcellona, and among the projects not executed: the Small Cathedral in the Ville Nouvelle de Cergy (1971), the Abraxas Citadel (1973), the Forum Blanc in La Defense (1973), the Meritxel Bridge and Sanctuary (1974) and the Park of the Marca Hispánica (1974-1975), a new repertoire of fortress. It is an eclectic formal repertoire that draws on his own experiments as well as on a large group of historical and classicist references of diverse origins.

The selection is well thought out and the plans reproduced in the pages (sketches, perspectives, plans, sections) make quite clearly explicit the evolution from the systems of combining modules according to mathematical principles established a priori, giving rise, apparently, to random volumetries, to the transformation of the guiding axes into hierarchical ones and the bodies into vertical masses, announcing a serious, almost ancient monumentality, which only needed to adopt the neoclassical forms adhered to its surfaces. It is significant that the Red Wall (Muralla Roja) stands out more from the La Manzanera complex than Xanadu (which appears in a photograph as a figurehead behind the Wall) and that a new building is added to La Manzanera in the form of two blocks intersecting in an X shape; These two blocks face the sea, one of which points towards the Ifach Penon, and define the double prism of flats called 'El Viaducto' (that which Professor Broadbendt had called 'Roman I' that same year in 1975), both of great length and implacable implantation in the natural amphitheatre of the grounds of Calpe, propitious in its verticality to house a simplified classicist language, which is included in the new floor plan of the residential complex [Fig. 11] and a definitive environmental perspective of La Manzanera [Fig. 10], although, by mistake, this conic is upside down.

Obviously, things had changed for RBTA: it was no longer a question of the internationalisation of his works in Spain, but his works were already international, a position that no other Spanish architect had achieved to date. In fact, although RBTA won the competition for Les Halles, he drew up three projects (1973-1978) [Fig. 12] to specify the solution that would be diluted in its execution, but which certify the definitive linguistic turn of his architecture towards a prefabricated and didactic classicism, both in semantics and *Beaux Arts* syntax in plans and elevations, and in his new urban principles that squares and streets should be the elements that configure residential

53 "Vicino ad Alicante", 2.
54 Warren A. James, ed., *Ricardo Bofill Taller de Arquitectura. Edificios y Proyectos, 1969-1985* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1988: 37).
55 "Le Taller de Arquitectura de Barcelone", 57-98.

neighbourhoods. A second, even more prolific phase of TA’s work then began, the epicentre of which would be in France and which would last beyond the year 2000. Bofill’s new book of 1981: *The Spaces of Abraxas: the Palace, the Theatre, the Arch*⁵⁶ gives an account of this new industrially produced iconographic repertoire that would colonise the urban extensions of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (the Arcades, the Viaduct, the Palaces), Marne-la-Vallée (the Palace, the Theatre and the Arch) or Cergy-Pontoise (the Columns) on the outskirts of Paris and also in Montpellier, in what has been called ‘the Versailles for the people’.

Ricardo Bofill and the TA may be remembered, among others, for this new kaleidoscopic imaginary in terms of social housing, although its origins lie in the city-in-space experiments of the 1960s and 1970s. This movement would be confirmed in the mass media when RBTA was selected for the 1980 Venice Biennale ‘Novissima Strada’, curated by Paolo Portoghesi, sharing the bill with Frank Gehry, Arata Isozaki, Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, Christian de Portzamparc, Léon Krier and (the young) Rem Koolhaas. A Biennial where, in the words of Jürgen Habermas, those selected sacrificed the tradition of modernity in order to make room for a new historicism. In 1983, *Global Architecture*⁵⁷ dedicated a monograph to the first ‘Versailles’ residential complex of the new phase of the RBTA: *Les Espaces d’Abraxas*. The MoMA in New York consecrated this postmodern movement in 1985 with the exhibition Architecture, Urbanism and History curated by R. Bofill and L. Krier⁵⁸. And in this new stage that was opening up for architecture, once again, the professional mass media (with a decisive power of influence), and until the emergence of the internet in the new millennium, would dictate the old, but reinterpreted, canons to be followed. From the 1980s onwards, the dissemination of RBTA’s work would not only take place through the pages of international journals, but the first monographs on his professional career began to be published, which took stock of the decades of work, success and media repercussions.

56 Ricardo Bofill Levi and and Annabelle d’Huart, ed., *Los espacios de Abraxas: El Palacio, El Teatro, El Arco* (Venezia: Electa, 1981).
57 “Ricardo Bofill/Taller de Arquitectura: Les Espaces d’Abraxas”, *Global Architecture*, 1983.
58 Ricardo Bofill and Leon Krier, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1985.

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