



Marisa García Vergara, Julio Garnica, Marta García Carbonero, Antonio Pizza

Editorial

The present issue, number 15 of *Histories of Postwar Architecture (HPA)*, examines the international trajectory of Ricardo Bofill (1939–2022) and the Taller de Arquitectura, a multidisciplinary team founded in 1963. Over more than six decades, the Taller developed a prolific, multifaceted and at times controversial body of work. Following Bofill's death in 2022, the Taller remains active, maintaining—if not accelerating—the pace of production that characterised its work under Bofill's direction. From the 1980s onwards, the practice increasingly engaged with projects across the globe.

Bofill's extensive architectural output and his prominent, sometimes polarising role have made him a central figure in the ongoing scholarly reassessment of Postmodern Architecture—a field that is still relevant more than half a century after its emergence. In this context, a 2024 Call for Papers invited analyses of the Taller's international works, their reception and their influence on contemporary architects, to contribute a critical, updated perspective on Bofill's global practice.



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Fig. Editorial page:

Interior view of the Bofill
Taller de Arquitectura Ar-
chive, Barcelona. MGv.

This Call for Papers is part of the research project *RETRANSLATES (Reflections, from Europe, on architecture in Spain: urban projects, public facilities, design and interventions in heritage [1976–2006])*,¹ which investigates the international reach of Spanish architecture across global territories, focusing on the processes of circulation, reinterpretation and reception of architectural works in diverse cultural and geographical contexts. Bofill and the Taller de Arquitectura are among the project's most significant case studies, illuminating transnational trajectories in contemporary architecture.

Bofill began his career in Barcelona in the early 1960s, producing buildings that combined local architectural traditions with ambitious urban utopian ideas. Dissatisfied with the limitations imposed by architecture and Spain's political and social reality, he founded the Taller de Arquitectura in 1963. This diverse team of architects, engineers, sociologists, artists and filmmakers sought to analyse contemporary urban challenges and design alternative architectural solutions.

Rooted in the legacy of Antoni Gaudí, the political engagement of the GATCPAC and the professional ethics of José Antonio Coderch, Bofill's early works—including Compositor Bach Street (Barcelona, 1962–1963), Barrio Gaudí (Reus, 1964–1970), tourist complexes in Calpe (1965–1970), Castillo Kafka (Sant Pere de Ribes, 1966–1970) and Walden 7 (Sant Just Desvern, 1970–1975)—attracted international attention and coverage in leading European architectural publications.

Critics and historians such as Bruno Zevi, Reyner Banham and Geoffrey Broadbent engaged with the Taller's theoretical project *La Ciudad en el Espacio* (City in Space), which proved too innovative for late-Francoist Spain. Following setbacks with projects such as Moratalaz in Madrid (1972–1974), Bofill turned to France, where the Taller's international trajectory truly began. During what are known as the 'French Years', the team proposed works like *La Petite Cathédrale* (Cergy-Pontoise, 1971), *La Citadelle Fort de Saint-Cyr* (1973) and *Les Halles* (1975), many of which remained unbuilt, despite Bofill's close connections with French political authorities. From 1980 onwards, the Taller completed major urban residential projects in France's *villes nouvelles*, including *Ville Nouvelle Le Lac* (Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, 1972–1987), *Les Espaces d'Abraxas* (Marne-la-Vallée, 1979–1982), *Le Crescent Vert* (Cergy-Pontoise, 1981–1985) and *Antigone* (Montpellier, 1979–1996). These projects blended classicism and technology, monumentality and prefabrication, and have become embedded in contemporary cultural and visual imagination.

From then on, the Taller expanded its work to new geographical locations, typologies and scales through various projects. Experiences on the African continent began with Algerian agricultural villages, such as *Village Houari*

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Boumédienne (Abadla, Algeria, 1978-1980), and extended over decades to other countries in the region, including Morocco, where the large Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique complex remains under construction (Benguerir, 2016-2022).

The Taller's international reputation arguably reached a turning point in the early 1990s with the construction of two iconic buildings in Chicago: the West Wacker Drive office skyscraper (1988–1990) and the Dearborn Center (2003). These buildings, built in the heart of the nineteenth-century American school of skyscrapers, but amid heated debates on postmodern architecture, solidified the Taller's standing on the global stage. Since then, the Taller's global reach has expanded to include projects in Asia, such as the Shiseido Ginza building in Tokyo (completed in 2001).

The contributions published in this issue of HPA reflect the breadth of the Taller's global practice. They are written by authors with diverse backgrounds and interests, whose variety contributes to the creation of a multifaceted itinerary—a kind of diachronic cartography that effectively delineates the Taller's extensive international reach.

Thus, the "Articles" section examines the growing interest in the Taller's French Years, particularly in relation to urban planning, political management and power dynamics. Special attention is given to early projects that, although unbuilt, largely mark the start of Bofill's international career. Raquel Álvarez Arce, María Soledad Bustamante and Mercedes Sanz Rojo focus on the Le Petite Cathédrale project (1971) for the Ville Nouvelle of Cergy-Pontoise. They view this project as the final example of the team's modular work, which was initiated with La Ciudad en el Espacio and realised in Walden 7, before the Taller increasingly emphasised form and image. Anne Kockelkorn analyses the turbulent 1974 competition for the redevelopment of Paris's Les Halles, which was described as a contemporary royal palace. This was set against the backdrop of near-monarchical power struggles at the heart of Giscard d'Estaing's liberal urban renewal policies. Much of the Taller's subsequent international work was conceived during this period.

In Italy, Federico Camerin analyses the Waterfront Revitalisation Project in Salerno (2007–2009), highlighting how imported models of success constrained the architectural response to local urban, social and environmental conditions. He questions the political legitimacy imposed by public authorities in smaller cities, which sought to replicate successful models—such as crescent and sail-shaped buildings—from major capitals. Giovanni Bellucci examines the 1990s Södermalm project in Stockholm, where the Taller adapted the crescent to Nordic conditions, tempering the neoclassical excesses that were developed contemporaneously in France.

Outside of Europe, Laura Sánchez-Carrasco, Brett Tippey and Íñigo Cobeta-Gutiérrez study Bofill's pursuit of a "high-rise classicism" in the United States. There, Bofill fostered an intense intellectual engagement through his buildings,

writings and presentations in museums and galleries over the course of three decades.

The section also addresses the international reception of the Taller's work in the mass media. Pablo Arza and Teresa Larumbe examine the critical reception of Bofill's architecture in the specialised press from the 1970s to the mid-1980s. During this period, his work was traditionally framed within postmodernism, positioning him as a precursor of the architectural star system that emerged in the 1990s and early twenty-first century. David Mesa considers how Bofill's work was received in divided Germany, where the Taller's monumental classicism and prefabrication were interpreted differently on either side of the Berlin Wall at a time when the Cold War was coming to an end.

Bartomeu Martorell examines the relationship between Henri Lefebvre, Mario Gaviria and Bofill in a Spain that seemed more turbulent from an external perspective. He highlights how Lefebvre's interest in *La Ciudad en el Espacio* broadened the Taller's sociological and cultural horizons.

The "Invited Papers" section features contributions by authors intimately familiar with Bofill's work. Andrés Medina traces the internationalisation of the Taller's first five built projects in Spain: Barrio Gaudí, Castillo de Kafka, La Manzanera with Xanadú and Muralla Roja, and Walden 7. Dominique Serrell examines Bofill's French career based on her experience as former director of the Taller in Paris. Iñaki Bergera analyses the visual dimension of the Taller's work through an unpublished 2025 conversation with photographer Gregori Civera.

Finally, the "Sources" section, curated by Marisa García Vergara and Julio Garnica, presents a selection of the Taller's key international projects, detailing chronology, location, collaborators, clients, bibliographic references and, for the first time in many cases, key project materials. The essays are accompanied by excerpts from original project typescripts, carefully selected to enhance the interpretation of each project and to provide direct insight into the conceptual and narrative framework of the Taller's works.

Works include the Sanctuary of Meritxell (Andorra), French projects such as Les Arcades du Lac, Les Echelles du Baroque, Les Espaces d'Abraxas, Le Crescent Vert and Antigone, as well as Houari Boumédiène Agricultural Village (Algeria), 77 West Wacker Drive, Shiseido Ginza, the Dearborn Center and the Université Mohammed VI Polytechnique. This exhaustive documentation was developed in collaboration with the Bofill Taller de Arquitectura, which has long maintained a rigorous professional archive. The archivist Alexandra Garzón and the photographer Gregori Civera should be especially thanked for their valuable contributions.