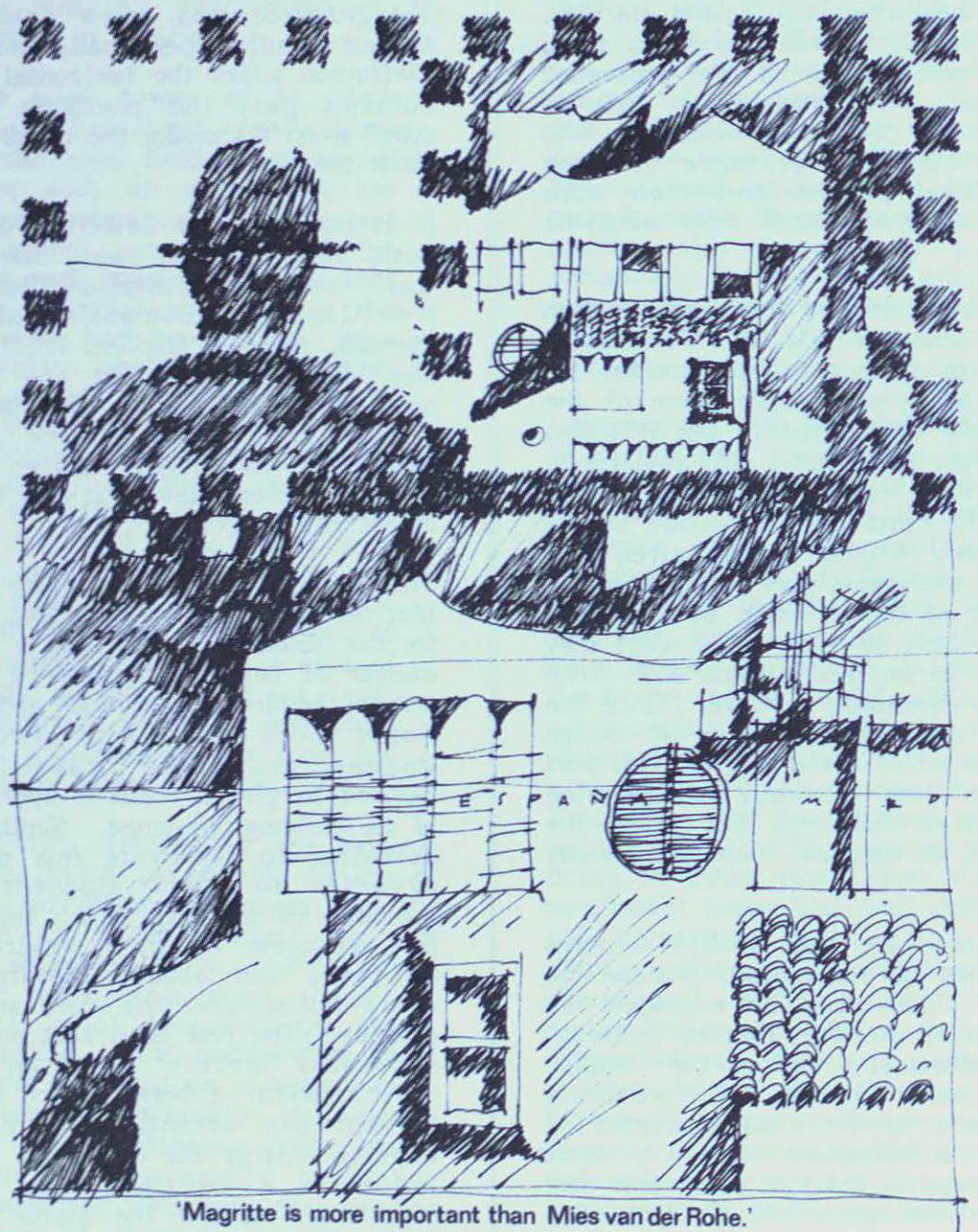


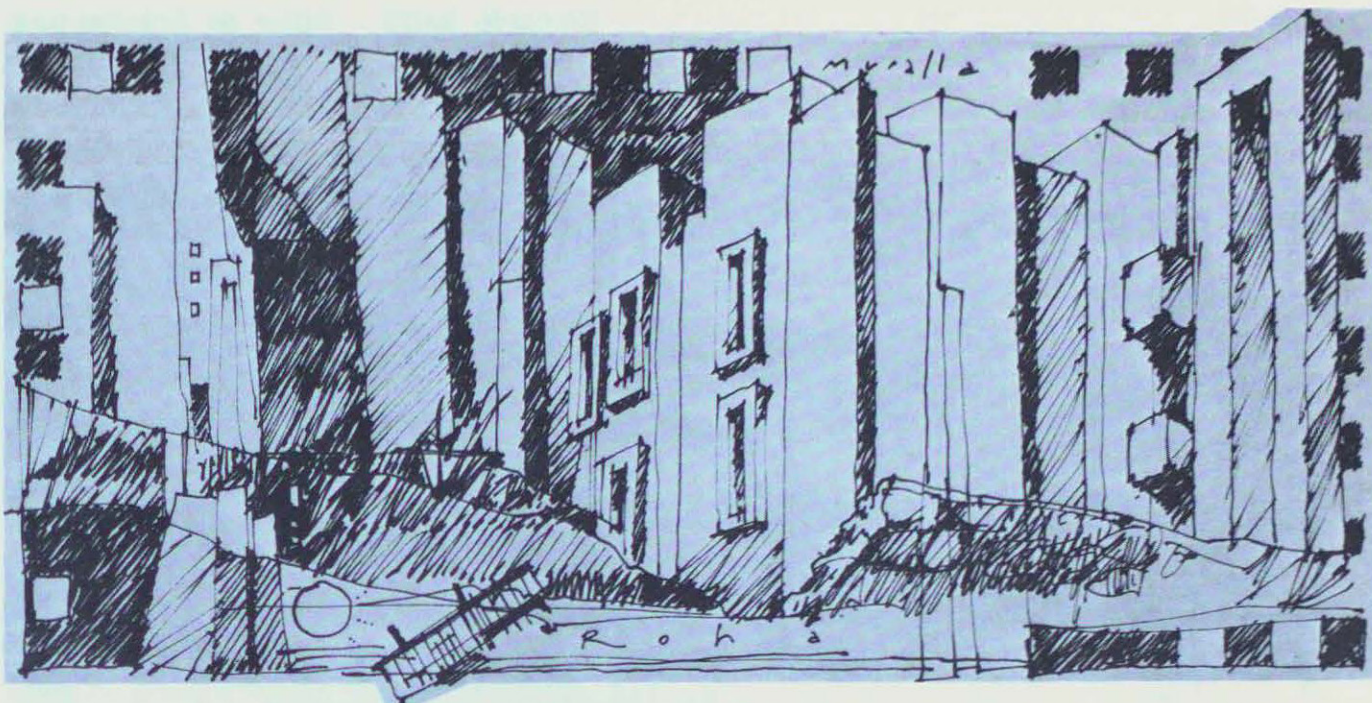
RICCARDO BOFILL y el TALLER de ARQUITECTURA

by William Mark Pimlott.



Fantasy as a generator of Architecture is a notion which is purely romantic to most of us. Gaudi, Finsterlin and Mendelsohn were architects whose dreams, whose passionate outbursts, were translated into images of Architecture. We think of

Gaudi as the only one who could pull off the feat of **building** these architectural fantasies. He still holds our astonishment at his achievements. More often than not, the fantasy we create, so filled with emotive energy in conception, is



degenerated in its physical realization by the "meddling" of pragmatism, engineering and the "real world".

In Barcelona, Spain, Riccardo Bofill and the Taller de Arquitectura (Architecture Studio) fantasize, elaborate and build. Their design technique, which begins with huge drawings of the architects'/ artists' imaginative outpourings, sees contribution by mathematicians, engineers, writers and sociologists: all important members of the Taller. As developers of their own projects (more often so in their earlier work than now), they **build**. Their buildings, imbued with jittery energy, are indeed fantastic, **screaming** for attention. The feeling given by looking at them is very much like that felt by looking at Edward Munch's painting, "**The Scream**". The buildings are rivetting; their colours are always intense; their settings glorious; their aura surreal.

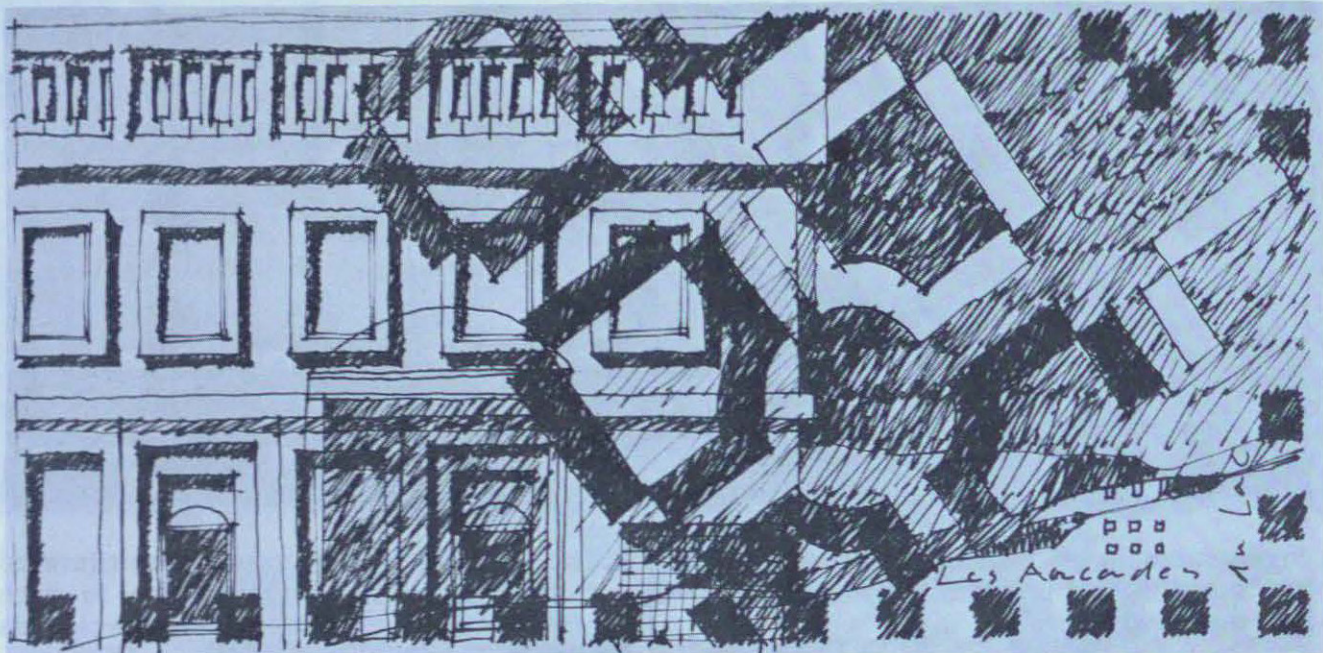
The early works of the office, particularly, unsettle us like a rambunctious child. In Calpe, Spain, on a bluff overlooking the Mediterranean, sit two works, the group called "La Manzanera". The first, **Xanadu** (1966) is described by Bofill:

"...A green rock composed of pure cubes and fragmented cubes, structurally arranged in space with a displaced symmetry."¹

The cluster of apartments, cantilevered from a core, seem to hang on to each other, fearing a fall down the precipitous slope. The building is a mountain village, and articulated by indigenous details, a Spanish village. The second building of La Manzanera, **La Muralla Roha**, (1972) is atop the bluff, its dramatic vertical expression **extending** the cliff, taking its stony physiognomy right up to the deep blue Mediterranean sky. The building is a brilliant red, its tones varying in each recess and projection of the fortress-like walls. Bofill says that these buildings, as architecture, are an addition to, an adaptation of the landscape.² The "new" landscape that these buildings contribute to is a fantastic one.

A landscape or cityscape is created within the protective enclosure of the building as well. The enclosure is surreal and unlike any enclosure we have experienced, yet, in the complexity of forms and their groupings, the spontaneity of organization of the village or barrio is referred to. Bofill thinks of these variations of forms as those which occur in nature.

If the human spirit and imagination are part of "nature", then indeed these buildings are wonderfully and ebulliently "organic". The order comes from within, from the "non-visible ... in that which underlies and regulates the varieties of



elements and structures."³

In their most recent work, the order which was before non-visible, has become ever-visible, expressed in the classical rhythms associated with the facades of grand French phalansteries of the 19th century.⁴ As contradictory as this order and regularity may seem to be to the Taller's early dogmas, the new work (in this case, **Les Arcades du Lac**, St. Quentin-en-Yvelines, France, 1974-80) is loyal to the firm's "Architecture of Fantasy". The dream is that of an ordered city - made up of block, street, network, square.⁵ It is a dream of ideal proportion, of grandeur, of sequential-space urbanity. The scheme consists of four super-blocks and four half super-blocks, forming "city" space set amidst the "taut" French lawns and man-formed lakes that Vincent Scully has spoken of. The main axis of the plan is terminated by a line of "aqueduct" buildings, hovering above and pushed into a huge rectangular lake. Executed in concrete and tile-brick, the buildings are weighty, the syncopated rhythms of the facades pounding heavily and forcefully. We are indelibly impressed by this vision of a city.

"Architecture no longer exists; only impersonal cities, without description and without style which nobody has ever dreamt of or desired. Against these clear and facile modern towns we launch out monuments which single out space, destroying it and inventing it."⁶

The Taller are creators of fantastic monuments in which we may live or die. In their "spontaneity" and order, their buildings are organic, borne of the human soul; realities borne of romantic vision. □

References

1. R. Bofill, GA (Global Architecture) International Special Issue No. 18 on the Taller, p.6
2. Bofill, p.7
3. Bofill, p.5
4. Charles Jencks, "Post-Modern Classicism - the New Synthesis", Architectural Design, June/July 1980, p.53
5. Jencks, p.53
6. Bofill, p.2