

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate release

June 1985

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION SERIES

LAUNCHED BY THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

RICARDO BOFILL AND LEON KRIER: ARCHITECTURE, URBANISM, AND HISTORY

opens at The Museum of Modern Art on Thursday, June 27, 1985. Organized by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design, it is the first in a series of five exhibitions that will examine current developments in the field of architecture. The exhibition is part of the Gerald D. Hines Interests Architecture Program at The Museum of Modern Art.

Although Ricardo Bofill and Leon Krier work in distinctly different styles, they are philosophically related in that both have rejected modernism. They are equally accomplished, highly imaginative architects who emphasize the significance of western architectural traditions. They are brought together in this exhibition because they offer a coherent and powerful challenge to modern architecture. As the title of the exhibition suggests, Bofill and Krier agree that architectural traditions are of essential value to urban renewal efforts.

The original work of each architect is presented in a separate gallery in the exhibition. Bofill has created a "poly-functional" classical tower for New York City in which apartments, hotel rooms, and offices can be mixed or separated. Krier has designed a project of startling originality titled The Completion of Washington, D.C.: A Bicentennial Masterplan for the Federal City.

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Bofill was born in 1939 in Barcelona, Spain, where he continues to be based. In 1962 he founded the Taller de Arquitectura, devoted to the preservation and revival of urban centers. In his own words, "The Taller de Arquitectura is a multi-disciplinary group involved in proposals and solutions for physical design problems within a broad spectrum of environmental issues." The Taller interprets physical form "...within its wider political-cultural context. The failure of the 'modern movement' to evoke or include this wider context is evident. The continued degradation of the landscape under the principles of the 'modern movement' demonstrates that 'functionalism' is a necessary but insufficient response to the problem."

Bofill uses modern construction techniques, particularly in precast concrete. He rejects vernacular forms, old or new, to reinstate the kind of classical grandeur once associated with the Court and the Church. His humane, large-scale public housing has succeeded dramatically where modernism has often failed. In the exhibition, four of his projects are presented primarily through large-scale color photographs, illustrating how he has addressed-- and solved--problems of large-scale public housing.

The projects are: "Les Arcades du Lac; Le Viaduc," in St. Quentin en Yvelines, near Paris (1971-1983, 389 apartments); "Les Espaces d'Abraxas: Le Palacio, Le Theatre, L'Arc," in Marne-la-Vallée, near Paris (1978-1982, 441 apartments); "Antigone; La Place du Nombre d'Or," in Montpellier, France (1978-1984, 288 apartments); and "Les Echelles du Baroque," in the XIV Arrondissement, Paris (1979-1985, 272 apartments). By integrating characteristics of French neoclassical architecture into his designs, Bofill has produced structures that are as gracious in style as they are grand in scale.

Krier, unlike Bofill, designs but does not build. He was born in Luxembourg in 1946, and has lived in London since 1974. He describes his projects as "reflections on the specific structure of the European city... a meditation on the true and constant elements of architecture and building and their necessary and precise relationships within the urban and social fabric." The exhibition presents a review of his ideas from 1970 to 1985, culminating in the splendid project for Washington, D.C., which embodies all of his principles.

Krier has repudiated modern technology in favor of an architecture that is small in scale and craft intensive. In the exhibition catalog he wrote, "Only half a century ago modernist movements arrogantly claimed to have in their grasp the final solution for all environmental and artistic problems....Today it is tragically evident that without traditional landscapes, cities, and values, our planet would be little less than a global nightmare." In his designs he addresses what he sees as "a great craving for traditional architecture and beauty." Several of his projects have a close affinity to the art of painters and sculptors whose qualities he admires and seeks to integrate into his work.

Krier conceives projects that are highly personal in style, and that suggest the kind of society that would be necessary to bring them into being. Utopia, Colin Rowe has suggested, is the best frame of reference for understanding Krier's work, in that it is "desirable but unattainable." According to Arthur Drexler, "Krier has created images that are among the most compelling alternatives yet seen to modern and postmodern architecture. His buildings range from what seems like a timeless vernacular to what seems like a rediscovered Roman classicism." All of his work, Krier says, expresses his commitment to the "colossal and almost inhuman" task of "global ecological reconstruction."

The Museum of Modern Art is publishing an exhibition catalog including text by Arthur Drexler, Ricardo Bofill, and Leon Krier, as well as black-and-white and 18 color illustrations. A softbound edition will be available in the Museum store for \$5.00.

On June 27 a symposium will be held in conjunction with the exhibition. Participants include Ricardo Bofill, Leon Krier, Robert Stern, and Colin Rowe, with Arthur Drexler as moderator. The symposium begins at 8:00 p.m. in Titus Theater I at the Museum. For further information about the symposium call (212) 708-9781.

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