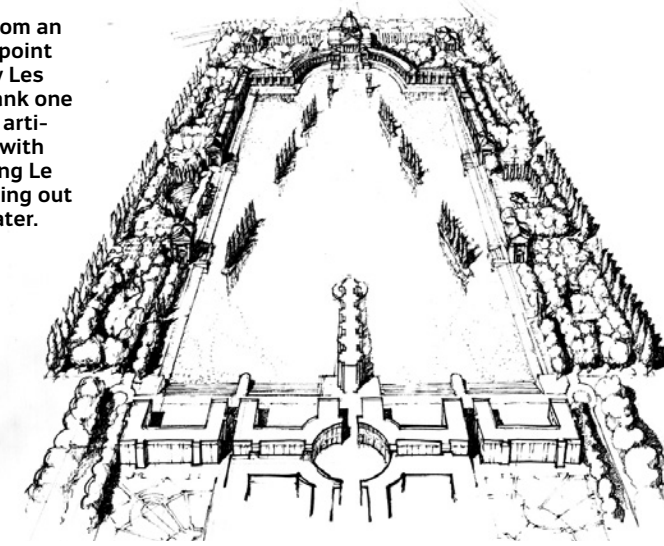


LES ARCADES & LES TEMPLES DU LAC

In a scheme that architectural critics have dubbed a “Versailles for the masses,” Bofill draws on classical themes to create low-cost housing in France.

A sketch from an aerial viewpoint shows how Les Arcades flank one edge of an artificial lake, with the imposing Le Viaduc jutting out into the water.



Some 25 kilometers (16 miles) west of Paris—and not all that far from the Palace of Versailles, as it happens—Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines is one of five towns created in the mid-1960s in a bid to curb the expansion of France’s major cities. In the 1970s, a time of harsh economic decline, Paris faced an unprecedented housing crisis, and the government enlisted the services of the Ricardo Bofill Taller de Arquitectura to quickly and cheaply create a substantial number of low-cost homes at Saint-Quentin. The timing could not have been better for the architect. Somewhat disillusioned by the mixed reception of his firm’s utopian “city spaces” of the 1960s and feeling the effects of the recession himself, Bofill was looking for new ways to reinvigorate his practice. He still believed it was possible to create successful communal living spaces for the masses, but he was seeking an

