

behavior can be governed by changes in the environment, which, if controlled correctly and collectively, can shape a utopia. Skinner's novel looks back to a short memoir written by Henry David Thoreau in 1854, recalling the two years, two months, and two days he spent living as a hermit in a cabin on Walden Pond in Massachusetts. Thoreau's *Walden* was a study

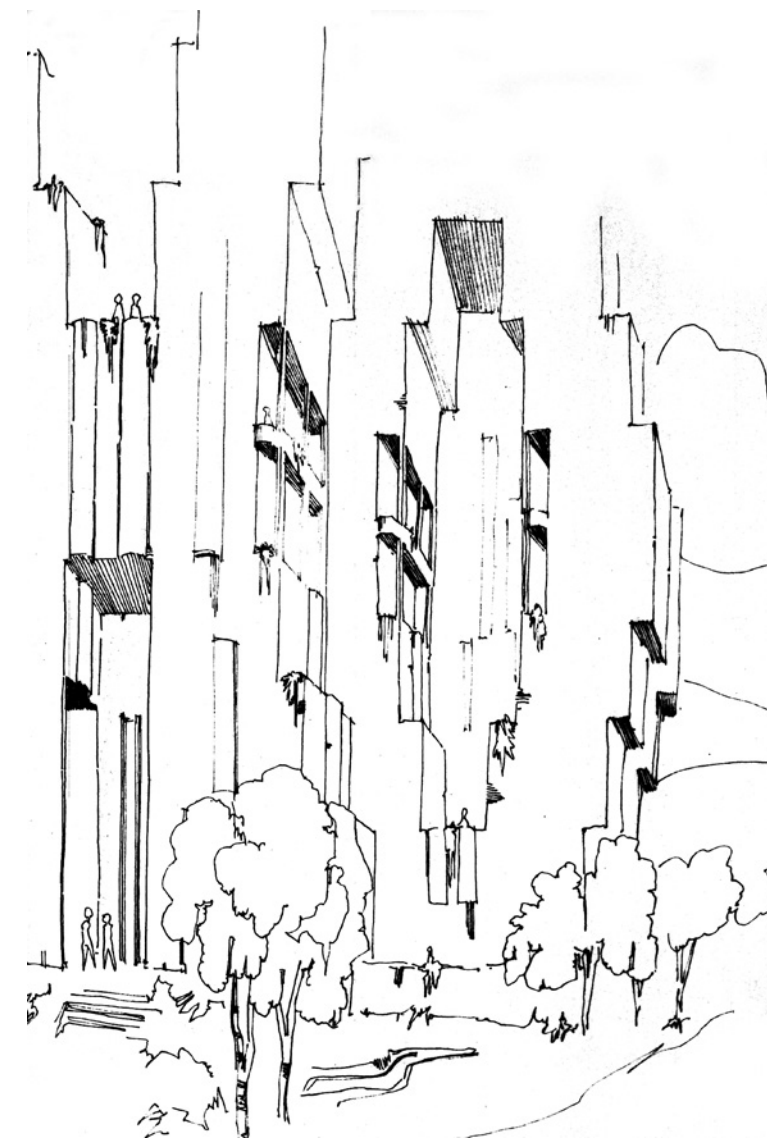
**"I REMEMBER THE WALDEN AS A LARGE CASTLE, THE SENSATION OF EMPTINESS, DESERT-LIKE, AND OF BEAUTY," RECALLS ARCHITECT AND POET JOAN MARGARIT. "IN THE EVENING, WHEN THE SUN SET OVER TOWARDS MONTSERRAT, THE 400 EMPTY HOMES WERE A DANTE-ESQUE SPECTACLE."**

of self-reliance—an introspective discovery of a peaceful life in nature, away from consumer-driven and materialistic culture.

The events described in *Walden* took place in rural North America, and the pull of life away from the city—with all the challenges and moments of introspection that this life involves—was implicit in Bofill's experience of creating Walden 7 too. Not in the woods, but in the desert. "The desert is where you find the



A dramatic entrance to the inner sanctum of the estate, bordered by cypress trees.



An original sketch gives an idea of how Walden 7 was envisaged: a grid of apartment cells rising up, off-center, out of the Catalan landscape.

most powerful relationship with space, that is, where you experience the most powerful spatial sensations," the architect reflected years after completion. "The desert is the place where one exists in relationship to oneself. There is a process of introspection in which you are made to confront your own personality. People who arrive in the desert sometimes crumble in their own identity and are left with nothing, and sometimes they build themselves up strong."

Walden 7 was a place where a diaspora of like-minded people were brought together to think about new ways of living. The future had been designed, and the idea of the city was totally reconstructed using concepts that foreshadowed the activities of the Taller throughout the next two decades. It also provided a beacon for all those who had had a hand in dreaming up the idea of the City in Space in the desert. Many moved in right away. "I remember the Walden as a large castle—the sensation of emptiness, desert-like, and of beauty," recalls Margarit. "In the evening, when the sun set over towards Montserrat, the 400 empty homes were a Dante-esque spectacle."

This city in space was intended to create a new model for living. Bofill today concedes it has its limitations and that imitations of it have been a disaster. It is not repeatable, he says. However, from the vantage point of La Fàbrica, the studio home located next door in Sant Just Desvern, it retains its power. "It is now very pretty, it looks wonderful from the terrace of my house," says Bofill. "The other day the moon was reflected on the Walden. I have known people to cry from up there."