Brace yourself: what do Cicero and Cato, Albert Speer and Paul Ludwig Troost, William Morris and John Ruskin, Quinlan Terry and Rod Hackney, Adam Smith and Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Hobbes and Edmund Burke, Burberry's and Laura Ashley, Camillo Sitte and Hendrik Petrus Berlage (with apologies to any we may have missed), all have to do with Luxemburger/Briton Leon Krier? It is personal - they all crop up somewhere in the chain of associations we have with the work of Krier the architect and anti-revolutionary visionary. In some cases you might think they really do have a direct influence on Krier's words and thinking, and that he would not exist at all without their historic work. But then you realise that this view of Krier isn't fair, and that the associations continue where Krier himself leaves off. His project touches on themes to which the Western world has become ultra-sensitive and whose diabolical colouring makes them strictly taboo. The question is thus whether Krier can be blamed for the fact that we tremble for the implications of his approach, while he himself restricts his role as prophet of doom to the area of architectural discourse and is primarily concerned with the design. He opts for art where a less creative spirit might have chosen a risky political course. Therefore Krier can not be dismissed with the usual liberal rightmindedness that is the common reflex reaction to conservatism. On the contrary, it is Krier's artistic skill that forces us to listen to his proposals, makes his work unignorable and tricks us into letting ourselves be seduced by what places him head and shoulders above the modern politician: quality. That is to say, his penetrating eye, his critical spirit, his biting words, his graphic skill, his organisational strength and his talent for mobilising his sympathisers into a Party with a Cause.

One of those sympathisers is the crown prince of what was once the world's mightiest royal house. Now both the nation and the Windsor dynasty are showing signs of decay. But Krier no doubt eagerly agrees with the uncompromising words that HRH Prince Charles addressed to the architectural profession, whom he accused of succumbing to the arbitrary aesthetics of the profit motive. And although it now appears that the sharper edges of the debate that occupied UK architects in the late eighties have been dulled, and that the fieriest of opponents have sunk back in exhaustion, Britain remains the theatre of the endless, titanic struggle between the nostalgics and the rest – the punks of progress, the Modernist marauders.

British die-hards traditionally refuse to reconcile themselves to the purportedly inevitable. For example, conservatives of all colours blench at the idea of a united Europe and even the supposedly pre-European government keeps its foot close to the brakes. Similarly, there are countless British architects who will simply refuse to have anything to do with the modernisation of town and country. This recalcitrance even goes so far as to produce an inversion of the usual conception of what is inevitable. It may now be 1993, but the Modernists still feel they have to justify their adherence to Modernism. The traditionalists have history on their side and are all too pleased to shift the burden of proof on to the other side. It is the reciprocal sense of superiority, for the *Anciens* on grounds of the rule book, for the *Modernes* on grounds of empiricism, that

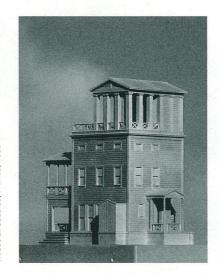
Leon Krie

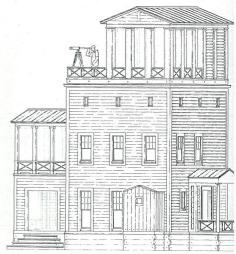
gives the discussion such an emotional charge for those involved, while it leaves outsiders wondering what it is all about.

The World According to Leon Krier

It is not difficult to sum up Leon Krier's views on the decline of our civilisation, for they are more strident than original. As we know, trenchant messages on the urgency of change tend to be worded in the familiar terminology of doom and gloom. The apocalypse is just not very subtle, so it is not up to Krier to bustle about inventing a new language. The old language is good enough, and for the following reasons.

If our world is going to blazes, we have only ourselves to blame. If a significant part of that world is made by the architects amongst us, then a significant share of that blame goes to them. If we are not happy with that state of affairs (and who is?) then it is high time we sought redress against the architects. In this, Krier takes the lead himself and he is not averse to including the structure of the capitalist system in his crusade targets





(or at least wherever this system promotes profit over beauty). Krier constantly denounces the cupidity that has so horribly disfigured the modern city in general and London in particular. Private interests overshadow public ones. 'The catastrophic state of great parts of our environment is a direct expression of how far urban politics are now dominated by factional interests to the disadvantage of the common good.'★ Krier distinguishes here between capital and the public interest. After nearly three centuries of industrialisation and the architectural contribution to it, architecture has at last understood that its own decline is a consequence of ★ Krier, Leon, 'God Save the Prince', being all too ready to equate the public interest to

the private one. This equation, originating in Benthamist utilitarianism which also proffers the idea that 'every supply creates its own demand', can no longer be upheld in a

Urban legislation is clearly incapable of building decent cities and communities and instead is responsible for large scale urban ecological destruction.

eon Krier

Modern barbarism can only be defeated by bringing urban civilization into the suburb, i.e. by building true urban centres in the suburban desert. Not expanding the cities but expanding the public realm by redeveloping the suburbs is, I believe, the main goal of civilisation.

Urbanism will emerge from the revolution, not the revolution from urbanism.

Henri Lefebvre

reconstruction of cities such as Berlin and Washington DC are urbanistic and utopian (in the sense that they are unlikely to be realised). They are also traditional and idealistic in the straightforward manner that Post-Modernism is not. The way of life implied is paternalistic and monistic, but the plans would entail not the totalitarianism that his critics aver when they compare him with Albert Speer but an integrated culture led by a determined and sensitive elite.

The motivations of Krier's schemes for the

Charles Jencks



world that is visibly suffering both morally and ecologically from too much passing the buck (both in space and in time). The end of the nineteenth century was marked by a complete reorientation towards the *laissez faire* politics of high capitalism, together with the founding measures of the later welfare state. Now a similar shift is noticeable in the reaction against Thatcherism and Reaganomics. While Milton Friedman sounds the retreat, Leon Krier is one of the voices in the wilderness that people are suddenly listening to again. His words often turn to the time-honoured English stereotype of the man in the street, the possessor of a common sense directed towards the common good. It is redolent of the harmonious society as 'state of nature' of Shelley; but we encounter it even as long ago as the fourteenth century, in Wyclif.

Capitalism With a Human Face

If anyone supports Leon Krier's cause in word and writing, then it seems to be his Modernist colleague and formal antithesis Richard Rogers. In 1992, Rogers wrote A New London, together with Mark Fisher. This book gives a convincing sketch of the city's decline, caused by an unacceptable growth of traffic, impoverishment of the urban environment and the widespread malaise of government. London is descending into chaos. 'Trafalgar Square was once the heart of an empire, Piccadilly Circus the centre of the universe. Today they are just two more jammed roundabouts in a shabby city playing a less and less culturally central role. (...) We must seek policies that will reduce urban traffic, energy consumption and pollutants and will produce a London with ecological balance and self-sustaining communities.'*

This quotation seems to represent Krier's views rather well, too. He is also good at eleventh-hour rhetoric. He, too, hammers away at the need for a rapid turnabout in town planning and in the current commercial way of thinking. 'Domine dirige nos is the city's pious motto. It is hard to escape the impression that it should more correctly say

Pecunia nos dominat.'★ But however much similarity there is in Krier's and Rogers' published views on urban decay, their proposed solutions differ radical-

- ★ Rogers, R., London: 'A call for action', in Fisher, M. and Rogers, R., A New London, London 1992, pp. xiv-xix.
- ★ Krier, Leon, 'God Save the Prince', AMA 38 (1988), p.19.

ly. Rogers pleads the case of opportunity, of creating the preconditions for urban improvement. But Krier takes a definite stand for values, and wishes to revive nothing

less than *civitas*, the sense of community and middle-class morality. The city is important to Rogers because it provides a public space, and hence a context for the kind of public life that is becoming strongly undermined in this age of telecommunications. 'The paradigm of public space is the city square or piazza: without it the city scarcely exists. City squares are special because their public function almost eclipses any other use they might have – people come to them principally to talk, demonstrate, celebrate, all essential public activities.' ★ As far as Rogers' own work is concerned, this usually means an architecture that gives the maximum amount of (neutral) space to this buzz of conversting, London, London 1992, p. xv. ing, demonstrating and celebrating. What there is to discuss or celebrate falls, in his view, outside his sphere of competence.

It is laudable that Leon Krier sees his task as more than just creating preconditions, and wishes to offer a concrete, *civitas*-fostering alternative. According to Krier, the community is served by the maintenance of certain civilised values, and architecture must not hide behind its facilitating function but must have some kind of message that manifests those values. If architecture is to be representative, then let it represent what is good. Why should it have to represent the crisis of the eternal values by being no better than a platform for debate of these values? It should support these values wholeheartedly and be a monument as well as a platform. It should bear witness to the community spirit in all respects – urban, architectonic and in details – like the architecture of the ancient Greeks. And if it proves impossible to do this for the entire urban programme, save your energy for the main image-defining locations. The aim should be to show that, in the words of sympathiser Prince Charles, 'capitalism can have a human face'.

Rogers wonders whether there is likely to be anything human behind that face too, and hopes that those responsible for urban disorder, the low profiteers, will be called to task. But Krier is not satisfied with this materialistic approach; he ascribes a selfregenerating power to culture in general and architecture in particular. 'The Prince of Wales is right to object to the Paternoster Redevelopment Brief and doubly right for blaming the architects who out of ignorance or timidity have done nothing to object to a brief which is positively ignoble. Listening to them on the BBC they told us that it is neither developers nor politicians nor indeed architects who shape our cities, that instead irresistible market forces, pressures and processes are at work here and that to resist them would be as futile as objecting to rain and sun. The Prince's message is instead one of freedom; he affirms that we shape our cities, and that we are free to choose what cities we build and how we build and use them.'★ And if we are free and responsible for our actions, we shall have to accept a positive principle to guide us. That * Krier Leon 'God Save the Prince' clearly applies to influential architects too. 'If you fill AMA 38 (1988), p. 19. a position of authority and you are supposed to teach architecture, you'd better be certain of what you are teaching. Otherwise there is no place for you as a teacher. Otherwise, you have a faculty of doubts, not of architec-

The Prince of Wales is right to object to the Paternoster Redevelopment Brief and doubly right for blaming the architects who out of ignorance or timidity have done nothing to object to a brief which is positively ignoble. Listening to them on BBC they told us that it is neither developers nor politicians nor indeed architects who shape our cities, that instead irresistible market forces, pressures and processes are at work here and that to resist them would be as futile as objecting to rain and sun. The prince's message is instead one of freedom; he affirms that we shape our cities, and that we are free to choose what cities we build and how we build and use them.

What place, if any, do the opinions of the general public have within the legal labyrinth of the planning system? (...) There must be something wrong with a system which involves public opinion at so late a stage that the only course left open to the public is to obstruct the development through whatever means the planning system allows.

HRH Prince Charles

Local resistances against overdevelopments are in most cases appeased by throwing in small amounts of low income housing, a crèche, the restoration of this or that historic remnant, etcetera. There thus exists a de facto collusion between town halls and developers to work against better knowledge not in the interest of the common good.

ture.'★ In other words, now that the cultural con-

tract no longer applies even-handedly to everyone,

Leon Krier

People like Leon Krier want to rehabilitate the supposed reconciliatory aspects of architecture by means of a false consciousness. But if architecture is still playing its role, which is actually in doubt, then you should leave the question open, you should leave architecture to its own development, leave her alone. You never can guarantee that architecture returns to the situation of innocence, in which man is back in the centre. This is a futile, sentimental dream of someone who should know better. In European history his ideas correspond to repressive and authoritarian societies.

★ Peter Eisenman versus Leon Krier, 'My ideology is better than yours',

Architectural Design 58 (1989), p. 17.

Daniel Libeskind

we need 'the rules'. Prince Charles has already partly written them out himself: don't rape the landscape; a building must express itself; man is the measure of all things; sing with the choir and not against it; resurrect the principle of enclosure; use local materials; give us the details; architects and artists should be betrothed at an early stage in any major public project; don't make rude signs in public places; let the people who will have to live with what you build help guide your hand.

Categorical Imperative

Since the rules in the rule book have no absolute authority, they need further justification. Krier has repeatedly taken the trouble to define a moral basis for his approach. Immanuel Kant has proved useful here. Introducing his Atlantis project (1987), Krier formulated a 'Kantian' categorical imperative for architects, and this makes his principles clear: •'Build in such a way that you and your loved ones can find pleasure at any time in using your buildings, looking at them, living, working, holidaying and growing old in them.' •'Build in such a way that the concept of your design is valid as a principle of both architecture and urbanism.'

Before we consider the question of possible grounds for that validity, it would be a good idea to let the implications of this imperative sink in. Leon Krier's work is not a solution to a problem that has been raised, but an exemplar, or at least a suggested solution for the whole gamut of problems facing the city of today. Bearing in mind his reversal of the burden of proof, we must now listen while Krier unblushingly asks us 'Why not rather build like this?' The 'this' is a square-headed positing, against all Post-Modernist odds, of a visionary Utopia, a world organised and built through the wilful implementation of a set of chosen moral and stylistic values which the architect/demiurge conceives of as enduring certainties.

If we look closely at the blueprints for Washington DC, Atlantis (Canary Islands) and Poundbury (Dorset, England), we invariably see a blend of classic republicanism, eighteenth century pastoralism and contemporary neo-historicism. If virtue is in such peril, it seems, the answer is an explicit display of the historical vocabulary of virtue. Thus we see in outline the highlights of forty centuries of architectural history; we find names redolent of greatness; we see urban axes stretching beyond the eye's reach; and, in

bird's eye view, we survey islands of spotless civic probity. Surely nothing could disturb this virtuous rectitude. If we must create sanctuaries of intransigence, then they must of course exclude all the contradictions of everyday life. Krier's cities fall into the purest città ideale tradition, which has accompanied Western architecture ever since the Renaissance. How can we classify his projects — as a plea, a vision, a Utopia, an alternative, a salvation? To Krier, they are totally feasible plans, no more and no less.

The plans are architecturally spectacular in the sense that their cultural programmes are taken to such extremes. In the case of private dwellings, a traditional (vernacular) typology and materials are adopted. For the public buildings the idiom of (monumental) Classicism, presumably the best thing for expressing universal values, is found suitable. In the project for Seaside, Florida, we see how Krier's historic preference results in mixed functions and a compact, almost medieval street plan which restricts motorised traffic. Everything seems to be aimed at demobilising Modernism. The dichotomy of modesty and monumentality is analogous to the eighteenth century bourgeois concept of private and public life, in which the family-man at home becomes a citizen of the Republic when out of doors.

Spatium Virtutis

Although there is more than one intention behind Leon Krier's approach, we can understand his work as a plea for the resurrection of Classicism, as an expression of civil uprightness, as a *spatium virtutis*. In Krier's urban planning work, this space is thus named Atrium, Propylaea, Acropolis or Agora. His rhetoric is also strongly reminiscent of Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Roman statesman who used his legendary eloquence to defend the classical moral ideal which in his times (as always) was being increasingly perverted by self-interest, cynicism and stupidity. To Cicero and all his subsequent incarnations, every newfangled idea is treasonable and should be opposed with might and main. But there is invariably a hidden agenda behind the sermon. Someone who *systematically* denounces the state of affairs as shocking, corrupt and doomed is aiming to enlarge his own role. That is why Cicero branded his opponent Catilina as the most evil monster of all time. The *o tempora o mores* can also be heard dying on Krier's



The responsibility lies primarily with the authorities who write the regulations and set the criteria. Designers and developers will only act responsibly when legislation requires and expects them to do so.

Office developments bring in the highest rents and rates revenues, often allying developers and authorities in common pursuit of profit.

I see no reason, then, why wealth should not finance beauty that is in harmony with tradition, today as in the past.

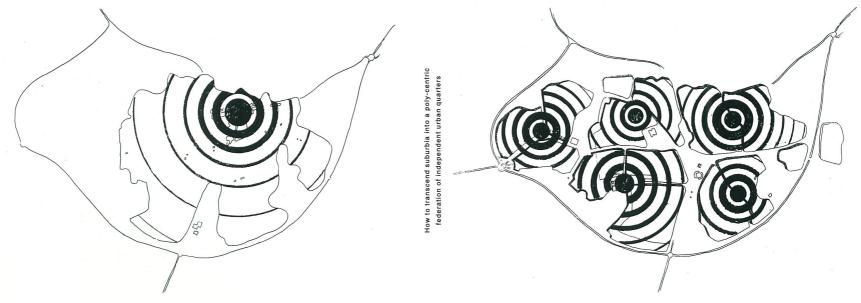
HRH Prince Charles

The traditional and modernity are not contradictory notions. One can be a modern man of tradition. There is no contradiction.

on Krier

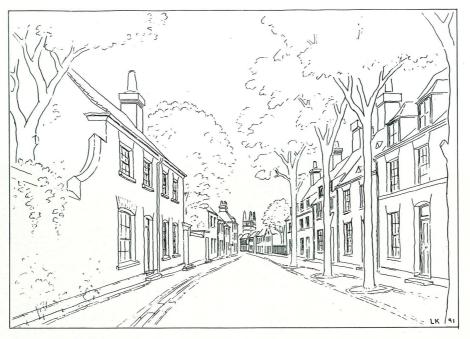


Masterplan for Poundbury, Dorchester, 1989



Present, monocentric Dorchester

Future, poly-centric Dorchester



Street leading to market square



lips. A homo novus among the English aristocracy, his manner is more British than the British. He stresses the earnestness of the situation. Just as Cicero, he preaches a major ethical reawakening with a return to honor and virtus, i.e. simplicity, diligence and above all incorruptibility. In the eyes of such a conservative there is no need to reform all of society at once: that would only release unpredictable forces. What is needed is to cut away the rotten parts – which happen to bear names like Eisenman, Rogers etcetera. The goal is to restore what there has never actually been: an orderly, stable and harmonious world headed by enlightened philosopher-kings – or at least enlightened aristocrats. In other words, a Pax Krieriana. And the tragic aspect is that everything points to such a peace no longer being needed.

Classicism: Style as Historical Compensation

Krier's Classicism is naturally the most obvious way of representing his Classical ideals. His Atlantis is the Aristotelian *polis* of mature, happy citizens. We ought to take the possibility seriously: if there really still is a durable, self-contained ideal to which a like-minded group could conceivably rally, then surely this classical ideal is the one that might expect to attract the most adherents. On the other hand, it is Krier's unequivocal premise of an ethical politics that makes it impossible to accept his attitude as being a purely aesthetic programme. All Krier's references to harmonious cities, a good relation between human scale and monumentality and so on, can not be taken as suggestions for design principles without any thought of their moral connotations. Clearly this kind of morality has had time enough to prove itself during the course of history. But it has singularly failed to do so...

What is more, are there really any mature citizens out there, in a time such as this in which personal identity has to be fought so hard for, or has even been dismissed as completely obsolete? It is points like these that move us to find Krier's vision wanting, however much sympathy his incorruptibility deserves. Cicero ultimately overplayed his hand and was murdered. The values that Krier so emphatically supports have not been completely without effect on civilization, so he is unlikely to share the same fate. But the tragedy is that, in the long run, the exaggeration needed to delineate the problem of our times prevents the future sketch from achieving much in the way of realism.

Since the mid nineteenth century, Classicism has mainly been the style of the socially frustrated. The old aristocracy and a disgruntled middle-class were the social groupings that were so keen to compensate their loss of historical meaning, their displacement from the social centre, with an appeal to the eternal classical values. It was also the style, in an almost purely formal sense, of the parvenus, for whom it was the primary, recognisable means of expressing their newly acquired status. Therefore we should think extra carefully about the cultural meaning of Krier's rappel à l'ordre. His admiration for the work of Albert Speer, one of the last great Classicists to receive state assignments, explains a great deal. Part of the fascist iconography was shaped by the compensatory urge of a social class on its way down, the lower middle-class. Not only Speer, but Paul Ludwig Troost and Leni Riefenstahl supplied the ephemeral images of the supposedly solid world that was to last a thousand years. These images were very strong, but they owed their strength largely to the manipulation of propaganda media such as film and photography. Fascism was thus marked, in the words of Hal Foster, by 'both an extraordinary investment in the real and * Foster, Hal, Recodings, Seattle 1985, p. 80. an extraordinary manipulation of its loss'.★ Krier is faced with the same contradiction in his work. On the one hand, he hopes his oeuvre will reinstate the Classical system of values of the Republic. On the other, this doughty aspiration indicates just how obsolete that value system is. On top of that, this programme's own historical antiquity guarantees that it will fail. It can go no further than pure image, pure façade. Hence it inevitably also retains an air of propaganda. Krier's urban planning ideas all imply recreating exactly the unsullied universe of the medieval class society – and that milieu no longer exists.

After Virtue

We must admit that few architects speak the truth as Leon Krier does. What a pity that his truth always has to be such a universal truth. He admits to no nuances. Particulars are foreign to him. Krier regards as relevant that which is timeless - and this in an age that has made relevance such a time-dependent attribute. His arguments are not qualitatively incorrect, but they are demonstrably ineffective. His architecture, which serves as the necessary illustration to his arguments, thus fails in its advocacy of cultural renewal. He draws a categorical distinction between truth and falsehood, and then he poses a categorical imperative as his idea of that truth. Thus one can only be for or against him. But that distinction is inadequate for these times. We now live in the age of After Virtue, to use Alasdair MacIntyre's words, in which the clarity of classical language is seriously muddied by an ossified terminology of values. This situation is not, alas, just a trivial oversight that can be stuccoed away behind a historicist façade, but a reality we have to face up to. Defiant gestures are not enough; we shall have to dirty our hands. The atmosphere Krier conjures up in his architectural drawings, with their antiquated motorcars in the street and biplanes in the air, leads one to suspect that he would have preferred to stop the clock some time before the Futurists. But the Futurists are a fact, and at this very moment their heritage is shaking the author's attic with its limitless decibels

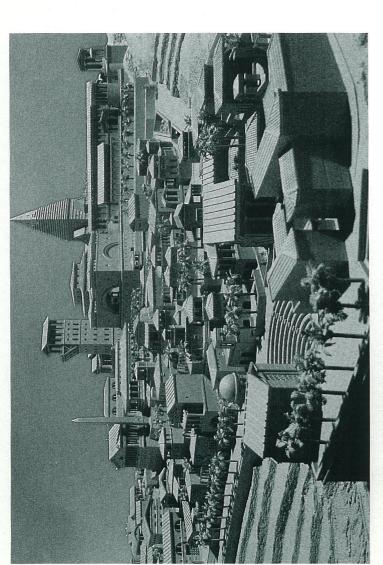
In traditional cultures, fundamental aesthetic and ethical principles are considered to be of universal value and this is where the controversy lies; namely in the question of a universal value transcending time and space, climates and civilisation. In traditional cultures, industrial rationale and methods are subordinate to larger themes, to larger concerns. In Modernist cultures, by contrast, invention, innovation and discovery are ends in themselves

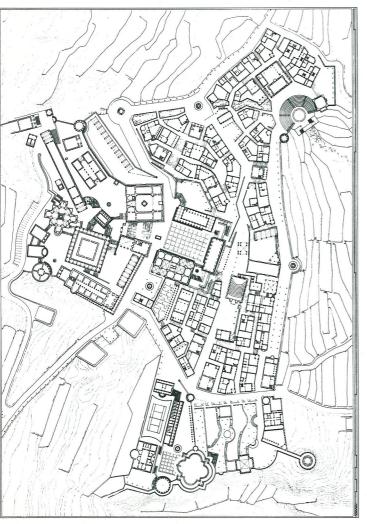
eon Krier

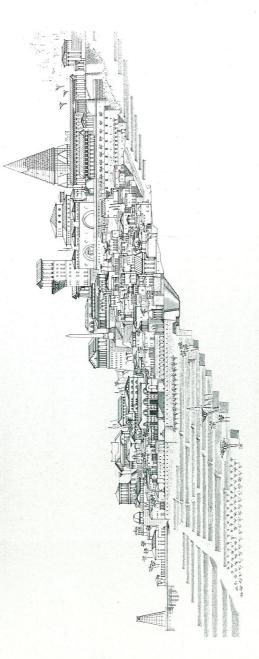
Leon Krier is perhaps the most extreme contextualist at work today: basically, his paradigm is the urban fabric of nineteenth century Paris - the street, the square, the quarter. Such contextualism derives from a reactive reading of Modernism: its ruptures were posed against historicism, not history, in order to transform the past in the present, not to foreclose it. But the disruptions of the modern age are real enough, and the rhetorical urgency of contextualism owes much to the 'catastrophe' of Modern architecture. To put it simply, this Post-Modern Style of History may in fact signal the disintegration of style and the collapse of history.

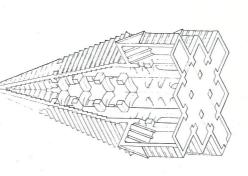
I think it is terribly dangerous to submit oneself to the inexorable forces of history.

Leon Krie







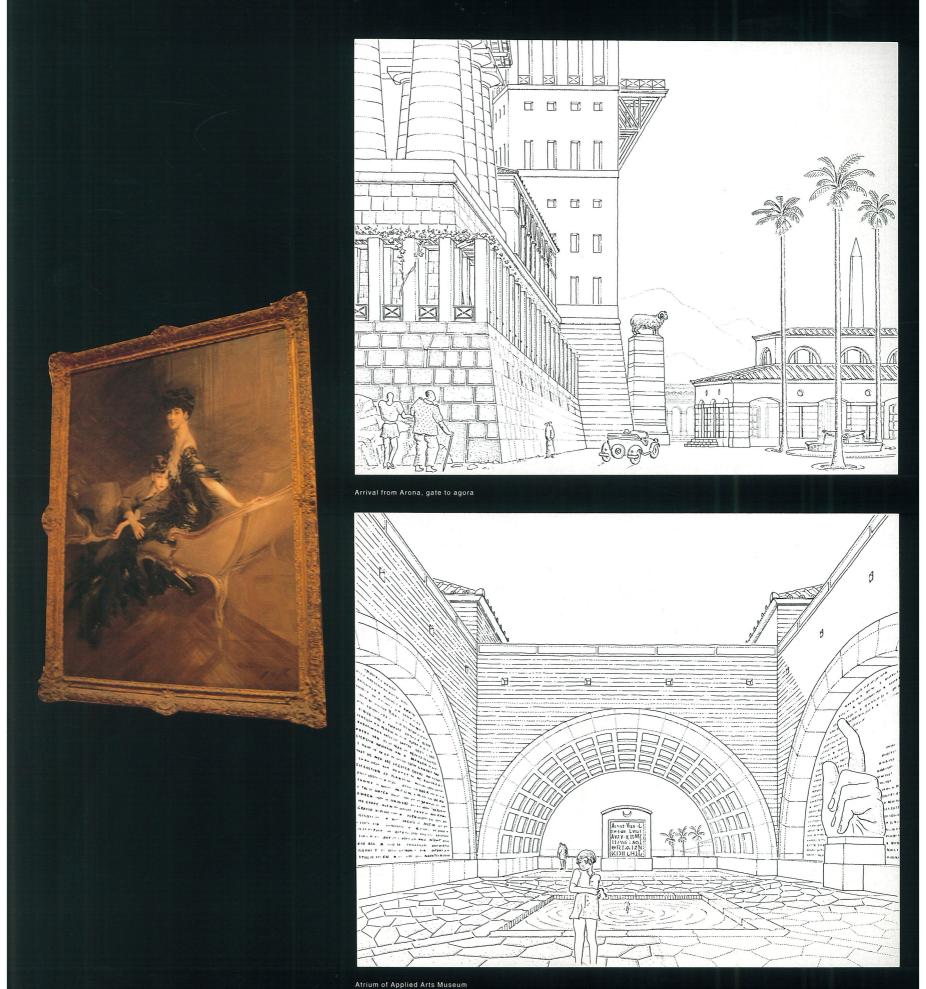


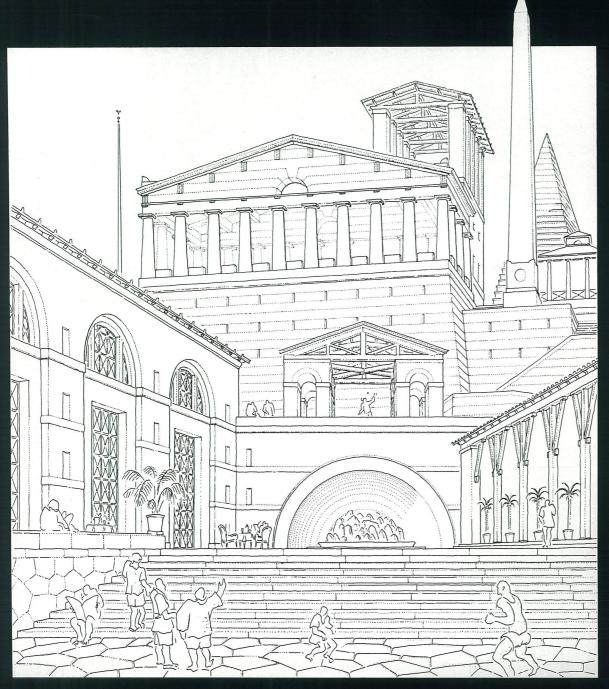
The site for Atlantis is a terraced southeastery slope. In plan, as well as in silhouette, the city describes a roughly pyramidal figure whose base is the 350 metres long Corniche Promenade, 595 metres above sea level, and apex the church at 635 metres. In the centre of this triangle, lying at the foot of the Acropolis, is the Agora which is bounded on one side by the small mountain road between Arona and San Miguel. In Atlantis, the programme is split up into more than a hundred buildings both large and small, each of which can be simplified to its typologically irreducible core: church, baths, art museum, library, theatre, restaurant, workshop, house etc. These building types represent the hierarchic components of the city. With the exception of the Great Tower, all the buildings are only one or two storeys tall, although their heights vary considerably according to their use and significance. Whilst there are very few internal passages and staircases, there are some 31 external streets, alleyways and stairways, and nineteen squares. The streets are lined with plain-fronted houses, garden walls and pergolas, whereas on the squares communal buildings of a monumental character are located which both quality and dominate the lines of sight within the city. The houses are on the narrowest alleys, but they all have a garden terrace with a view of the countryside. The great number and extent of alleys, streets and paths (4.5

kilometres over the five hectare site) permits the richest variety on the minimum space. The 42-metre high Great Tower and the four-towered Atrium Carrée form the propylaeata of the upper city, framing the stairs which lead from the Agora up the church. In the seventeen metres climb, the width of the stairs tapers in a forced perspective from 25 metres to two metres. The Agora sits like a bastion on an overhang 681 metres above sea level. The 24-columned stoa (open market hall) stands between the square and the open countryside. 45 houses and eleven studios, each with a garden terrace, comprise the real fabric of the city to the left and right of the main axis. The houses are of five basic types: linear, L-shaped, L plus tower, tower, polygon. The form and fabric of the city were largely determined by the topographic configuration of the site. The cavea of the theatre, the terraces of the hanging gardens and the large pod/a of the Agora and the Acropolis all accentuate the natural topography. Respect for these features, combined with a complete freedom of grid, makes the form of the city naturally fluid. The methods used here are the same as those proven in the creation of great cities of the past.

Location Tenerife, Spain Assistants R. Day, J. Maciag Client H. J. Müller Design 1987 Completion unbuilt project

Leon Krier







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