were constructed in the rest of Europe. In part this is due to a surge of immigration, in part to a frenzy of speculation, but most of the privately financed houses and apartment blocks are conventional in design and poorly constructed. Public housing is much more adventurous, and Mayne's vision, which was fleshed out by Díaz-Utrillo and Morphosis project architect Pavel Genis, is a brilliant reworking of the Mediterranean vernacular in the tradition of La Corbusier and Team Ten.

The architects stacked the two-bedroom apartments in a thin-section seven-storey slab that runs along the north side of the site. The street facade has small openings, and the windows open up to south-facing terraces at each level. A four-storey block defines the south boundary, and these two bars of small units bracket a village-like complex of three- and four-bedroom duplexes, with a podium of parking below. A broad screen shaded by aluminium mesh canopies that will support a variety of flowering plants, bisects the complex from north to south, connecting to a network of narrow passages. Public plazas alternate with inner patios. "We tried to create an infrastructure for social interchange, with neighbours meeting casually and converging from one space to another," says Mayne.

To keep construction costs down, the architects played variations on a simple, three-dimensional module, and employed the standard building system of a concrete structural frame and successfully brick infill. Mesh-covered Styrofoam panels sprayed with cement are supported on steel poles to define the plane. The mature trees that Morphosis had wanted to plant were eliminated as an economy, and the plantings here yet to soften the canopies, giving the project a sharp-edged Constructivist look. The units are compact (60 to 100sqm) but attractively finished, with hardwood floors, terrazzo stairs and built-in cabinets. Chimney-like towers serve as ventilation shafts, pulling in cool breezes and evacuating hot air, and natural ventilation from the open spaces keeps the units cool on all but the hottest days. Solar panels contribute to the heating, and abundant natural light also reduces energy costs. Michael Hylke