

Continuous Architecture.

I find the term "Continuous Architecture" full of challenge and I find it even more interesting that it should be brought up as a serious topic, now in 1993. Why now?

My own formal training was not in architecture but in art and sculpture. When I was a student, action painting was in. It glorified the physicality of paint and the act of painting. So when Anne and I started our home in 1959 it was not unusual to want to be part of the process of building...to feel the cement, to lift the adobe blocks and watch the walls grow. It was still a time when the general culture and the world of Architecture - in capital letters - were deeply into a view of life as: parts of a big machine. This called for understanding your part in the scheme of things, staying within your walls, and barely, if ever, even peeking over the walls. The intellectual, educated world had not yet noticed that to modern astronomers the universe could not be explained any longer as a machine. Astronomers began to use the term...mind. This new vision is still affecting how we perceive life and architecture.

To me, the basis of this question, what Continuous Architecture means, is about the fundamental changes in our evolving myth of who we are and how we fit into the universe. The European-centered belief that life can be understood and controlled by understanding the parts, can no longer be justified. We need to look at the inter-relationships of all the facets of the building process..as a whole!

I have a friend who for many years taught biology at Cambridge University. He told me that so many of the breakthroughs in science have come when disciplines cross and boundaries are no longer held sacred.

For me then, Continuous Architecture is the opposite of an architecture based on a theory or idea, where you can only understand the architecture by learning the theory of, for instance, deconstructivism or post modernism. Continuous Architecture is much more like the growing process of a tree's life, beginning with the earth the seeds and where they came from and their memory, the part that the wind, light and storms played in the development of the tree. The process continues through its interaction with everything around it. In the case of the building, it is also the people who experience it...what they contribute, what they feel or understand and what they take away. If the builder sees the building as part of a continuous web that begins with our ancestors searching for their own shelter, identity, and myth, and continues into the realization of new form, space, and light not yet dreamed of, he or she can give the building a richness and vitality that helps carry us into a world we are again connected to.

The idea of applying the approach of Continuous Architecture to larger more complex projects is possible where computers are fully utilized to help with such things as intricate design, space, construction, materials, engineering, time projection, etc. This should enable the architect to make changes during the building process. The computer could indicate the many necessary adjustments and give advance warning of unforeseen problems ahead of time.

Architecture must take measure of all that it is to be human, and our buildings must learn to express all that we contain in a world that is whole.