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Recent Writing About Art

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Arcosanti: *One Man's Oeuvre*

Arcosanti is a city designed by a single man, Paolo Soleri. His vision is one of ecological harmony and strengthened community. The Arcosanti project has been under construction since 1970 and is still projected at being less than 1% complete. If construction is ever completed, it will house up to 5000 residents. Its population currently wobbles somewhere around 100, depending on the constant flux of temporary residents. Some feel that it is a city living in the past– a relic of hippie idealism. Soleri and his diehard fans see it as a city of the future– the current construction being merely a blue print for the elaborate plans that await funding. For those who reside there, it is also a city of the present.

At this moment, Arcosanti exists largely as an educational facility. Long-term residents are responsible for the upkeep of the site and the hosting of numerous workshops that educate visitors on Soleri's theories and monetarily support the project. According to the official Arcosanti website, the jobs of the residents can be summed up in the following list: planning, construction, teaching, computer aided drafting, maintenance, cooking, carpentry, metal work, ceramics, gardening and

communications. They produce the world-famous Soleri Bells, as well as hosting 50,000 tourists each year in a Gallery, Bakery, and Café.¹

The city-focused nature of these jobs reveals how conscious Arcosanti's residents are of their role in the community. James Rawlinson, a temporary resident of Arcosanti, said of his experience, "I spent six months thinking about existence on this earth in a way very few people have a chance to do. Out in the real world we don't really know we're in a process of existence, the daily tasks make that impossible for most to achieve."² At Arcosanti, the residents are there to learn about how to create and support an ecologically responsible city while living in one. Every aspect of their lives revolves around this concept. Soleri's life work has been to illustrate the importance of this sort of conscious city living to the sustainability of cities in general.

Arcosanti is the manifestation of a huge body of theory that Soleri has developed under the name "Arcology", a combination of architecture and ecology. It is a theory of city planning that emphasizes efficiency in space and material. The efficiency is meant for environmental purposes as well as social benefits. Soleri is very conscious of the role that architecture can play in literally shaping community. He envisions a miniaturized city that forces its inhabitants into close interactions. He often cites suburban sprawl as a plan that is exactly opposite to his theory because of the wasteful consumption and isolation that it causes.

In Lefebvre's terms³, Soleri's *city* plan is one that seeks to deliberately generate an *urban* that functions as efficiently as possible. He places a high priority on the health of the social reality that is formed by relations. The physical architecture of his designs is meant to be the ideal framework in which relations can occur as smoothly as possible. The miniaturized nature of each aspect of the city brings a physical intimacy between members of the community. Soleri asserts that this is the aspect of his design that will bring about a positive change in the resident's lifestyles. He wants to present a structure that will force willing families to physically reintegrate their behavior into the behavior of society.

The ecology reference in "Arcology" is very significant to Soleri's theories. He looks to natural organisms as inspiration for the structure of his city plans. The goal of his designs is to mimic the order that exists within an organism or an ecosystem. The fact that he is so loyal to natural structures and functions is interesting, given that by designing an entire city, he effectively removes the possibility of organic growth within that city. The city of his dreams is so deliberately designed for convenient and efficient living that there would never be any reason for its inhabitants to change it. He wants to reference the static design of an organism without the addition of its temporal nature.

What would it mean for a city to be built completely and perfectly before its residents got there? Would they benefit from the close

attention to detail that the architect had given? Or would they resent the absence of personal history and the denial of future self-expression? Lefebvre calls the city an oeuvre, but he stipulates that "There is no oeuvre without a regulated succession of acts and actions, of decisions and conducts, messages and codes. If Arcosanti is ever finished, it will exist not as an oeuvre of the residents but rather of one man- Soleri.

Imagine that a man invented a new language that was more efficient than any other language, and a group of people decided to adopt it. It would take a lot of adjusting for them to be able to use it comfortably. When they finally could communicate with the intended efficiency, they would only be able to express things through the framework that this man had given them. The infinite history of communal modifications that was imbedded in their original language had provided an expansive structure of expression and interpretation. This new language would be confining in comparison. It seems absurd to think that one man could invent a system as adequate for a population as one created over generations by the population itself.

Soleri's theories touch on this issue deeply, but from a very positive perspective. He proposes that the expressive freedom of city citizens is exactly what has led to the environmental nightmare that we now face. Soleri is well aware that his planned structure will restrict the participation of citizens in the production of their spaces. He leaves us with a difficult choice- will we destroy our environment or will we

sacrifice a bit of freedom by converting our cultural history and expression to fit within the structure provided by Soleri?

Fig. 1. Aerial view of Arcosanti



Fig. 2. Model of future completed Arcosanti



Endnotes

¹ Arcosanti website. www.Arcosanti.org. (accessed 2/25/08)

² Wilson, Marie. *Arcosanti Archetype: The Rebirth of Cities by Renaissance Thinker Paolo Soleri*. (Fountain Hills, AR: Freedom Eds.: 1999)

³ Henri Lefebvre, "The Specificity of the City" in *Visual Culture: Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. eds. Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra, (London: Taylor and Francis Inc., 2006.)

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On a recent afternoon in June, T Magazine assembled two curators and three artists — David Breslin, the director of the collection at the Whitney Museum of American Art; the American conceptual artist Martha Rosler; Kelly Taxter, a curator of contemporary art at the Jewish Museum; the Thai conceptual artist Rirkrit Tiravanija; and the American artist Torey Thornton — at the New York Times building. Naturally, when re-evaluating the canon of the last five decades, there were notable omissions. The group failed to name many artists who most certainly had an impact on how we view art today: Bigger names of recent Museum of Modern Art retrospectives, internationally acclaimed artists and high earners on the secondary market were largely excluded. She has written three college composition textbooks: WRITING ABOUT THEATRE AND DRAMA, THE ART OF WRITING ABOUT ART, and THINKING AND WRITING IN THE HUMANITIES. Nancy Noonan has taught college art history and humanities for 15 years. She speaks about the strategies of art and artists to corporations and organizations through her company, Artful Solutions. Nancy also is the co-author of the book, HOW TO BE A SUPER ACHIEVER: 12 STRATEGIES FOR UNLEASHING YOUR SUCCESS. Product details. Arcosanti Archives - A ceramic silt casting experience - a guided Nature Hike in the Agua Fria River riparian area. All of this for only \$990 and we're also including private lodging, plus 3 meals per day served up the Arcosanti Cafe! Spring sessions: April 28-May 2 + May 26-May30 Register here: <https://shop.arcosanti.org/pr&l/copy-of-5-day-experience-week>. Help imagine new ways to create nature trails and interactive art installations at Arcosanti. Make a difference for thousands of future explorers by donating now at <https://www.azgives.org/arcosanti>. If you do choose to give today, you'll be entered into a drawing to win an Arizona Cottonwoods Bronze Windbell! This was one man's dream of the future, Paolo's dream. Arcosanti is an experimental urban design project created by Italian architect Paolo Soleri (1919 — 2013). Daylight view of the curves at the Vaults, Arcosanti, AZ. Arcosanti is a different kind of desert oasis with architecture, ecology, art, and music, creating a futuristic city by design. As an artist and photojournalist, this visit to Arcosanti and the concert of "Different Skies" performance all created by Paolo Soleri, was still as mesmerizing as the first time I experienced it. It was as though nothing had stopped the dream of this man who created it all. This trip was particularly significant as I had the opportunity to meet Paolo Soleri and discuss his work and life in the Arizona desert just north of Phoenix. Action, Adventure, Fantasy, Harem, Manhua, Martial Arts. Type. Manhua. Chapter 27 07.06.2021. Chapter 26 06.06.2021. Chapter 25 27.05.2021. Chapter 2 27.05.2021. Chapter 1 27.05.2021. Chapter 0 27.05.2021. The Former Structural Researcher's Story of Otherworldly Adventure. 03.07.2021. Only a Stepmother, But My Daughter is Just So Cute! 28.07.2021.