Interfacing Architecture and Landscape

by

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HT00-4046W

Submitted to the Department of Architecture
on December 14, 2001 in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

Abstract

Architecture has its roots in the making of shelter and refuge from the uncertainties of nature; in the process it has also become an instrument of alienation, creating the binary oppositions of inside and outside, manmade/ order and wilderness/chaos. Modern architecture with its sealed envelope and hermetic systems further exacerbates this by necessitating the clear division between inside and outside.

The modernist inheritance popularized the perception of landscape as undifferentiated greenery, visual background to the architecture’s built object vis-à-vis Corbusier’s machine in a garden (in fact a machine for framing views and producing landscapes, the treatment of landscape is purely visual and two dimensional, very much like an English landscape painting).

The deficiency inherent in the physical and conceptual dichotomy between architecture and landscape is that the structure of human perception is not composed of a series of discrete experiences, rather a continuous and overlapping one. This alludes to the fact that the relationship between architecture and landscape should not be one of mutual exclusivity and separation but an intimate one that comes together to form the totality of the designed environment.
The dissertation seeks to investigate the relationship between contemporary architecture and landscape by looking critically at progressive projects that lie at the threshold between these two domains and observing the reciprocity and exchange between them (e.g. how architecture and landscape act and react to each other). By examining the mechanics that animate these exchanges we may begin to understand the complex relationship between architecture and landscape, and how, through their interfacing, a gestalt more profound than the sum of their individual parts can be effected.

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01. A term imported into modern art criticism from psychology. Gestalt psychology, founded by Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Kohler, holds that the parts are determined by the whole, and that all experience is related to certain integrated structures in which 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts.' They used examples, such as melodies, which are more than the individual notes that constitute it. The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology, © Arthur S. Reber 1995