

When Worlds Collide: The Art & Science of Architecture

How Seemingly Different Paths Come Together to Form a New Ideal

“Architecture follows different emotions. A created space gives aesthetic, functional, and emotional values ...and also helps to create a more comfortable life cycle.” – Sanjay Josshi

The debate over whether architecture can be considered an art or science has raged for years — filled with conflicting viewpoints on whether the two seemingly different paths can ever truly come together to form a new ideal. To better understand the foundations of such discussion, however, it may be important to first study architecture itself — from its meager beginnings to the varied profession it is today.

An (Abridged) History of Architecture

Architecture has existed in some form for as long as history has been recorded. It encompasses the planning, designing and construction of structures and dwelling places.

In the 19th Century, Louis Sullivan made a name for himself by designing skyscrapers. His famous quote “form follows function” is revered by many as a driving force in the advancement of architecture at the time.

In the following century, the idea of ‘architectural sustainability’ was introduced. Followers of this concept believed that structures should be built with environmental considerations in mind.

Architecture as Both an Art and a Science

Many scholars believe that art and science exist separately from each other, without any interaction or crossover between the two. They contend that science concerns exact measurement, while art deals with emotion. A good architect, however, should be focused on both aspects.

The famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright believed in what he called “organic architecture,” where he would design based on not only function, but also the ‘feelings’ he got from certain structural materials and environments.

[The Sainsbury Laboratory](#) in Norwich (U.K.) was awarded the [RIBA Stirling prize for architecture](#) in 2012. The honor was based on the idea that a space dedicated to mostly scientific occupation could also be aesthetically-pleasing, and feature modern architectural elements. Architectural experts also commented on the ‘small details,’ such as the use of LED lighting in a garden outside the laboratory, and stainless steel sculpture of flora and fauna peppered along the exterior of the building.

The Debate Rages On

While there may never be a definite agreement on the debate of whether architecture is a science or art, most people can agree that there has been — through the years — cross-over potential between the two.

For instance, architectural designs may feature shapes that are based on fractals. Modern structural design often features elements of the natural sciences — including insects and plants.

Some experts suggest the two elements depend on each other to advance — that architecture as a science concerns adherence to the laws of nature, while its artistic aspect is achieved in a way that is pleasing to the human senses. ■