

# A Gentle Manifesto, Again

In 1966, Robert Venturi changed the world of architecture with a single sentence: “I like complexity and contradiction in architecture.” Since the publication of that book, the subsequent discursive drift has clearly emphasized the “complexity and contradiction” part. The revolution in architecture for the “non-straightforward architecture” that followed was, and continues to be, the architecture of the exception, the odd, the non-orthogonal, the non-standard, the peculiar, the controversial, numerous broad-reaching philosophical concepts of complexity and complexity theory, and the many, many endless territories of contradiction.

I like the “I like” part.

“I like” says an awful lot. It’s affirmative. It says that this is my opinion, and if you don’t like it, too bad, because it’s my book, and I do. Like is not love – it’s not driven by emotions, but rather taste, and thought, and to a certain degree, expertise. “I like” is both harmlessly selfish and self-consciously driven by peer pressure. “I like” suggests a community of possible agreement, usually among a subculture of people who generally agree. I like escargot, I like block heels, and I like the sunken conversation pit in Saarinen’s Miller House.

“I like” is probably the gentle part of the gentle manifesto. “I like” tends to avoid strident rhetoric. “I like” is not committed to the revolution. But, “I like” isn’t worthless, not so subjective – it’s a conversation starter. And as such, “I like” assumes that the conversant and the respondent share

some, well, like knowledge. “I like Beethoven” is probably lost on my 10-year-old, but in a room full of museum-going, post-punk, architecture aesthetes, I’m likely to get a response, an engaged ear, or best of all, polite contention otherwise, defended point by point and symphony by symphony.

Facebook has likes – sometimes they misalign with the message, yes – but for that medium, the like is a temporary, fleeting appreciation. Like is not written in stone. Like is now.

So, just like an Instagram or Twitter takeover, I’ll be taking over the AAU Architecture School blog this Fall semester.

Look for my posts on Thursdays and Fridays – I’ll tell you what I like: what is happening here at AAU and what to go see in the SF Bay Area, architecturally-speaking; and what is being discussed in contemporary discourse in our field. I might rattle some cages, or stir some pots, but hopefully, my likes might spark some conversation. Please post comments, or, if you’re really motivated, shoot me an email at [djones37@i.art.edu](mailto:djones37@i.art.edu)

Talk soon,

Dora Epstein Jones