

# Lean Alternative: the plastic use of concrete in the architecture of Paolo Soleri in the United States of America

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## Abstract<sup>1</sup>

The concept of Arcology (an organic merger between architecture and ecology) was devised by the Italian architect Paolo Soleri in the 1950s and reflects a new way of planning, building and living the city, moving it away from the culture of exasperated consumerism. Architecture and ecology should be seen as a whole in this new entity, as in the case of the Arcosanti “Urban Laboratory”, which is a tool intended to test and introduce a human habitat alternative to the urban sprawl phenomenon, particularly in an area – the southwestern United States – that was a symbol of disorganized and uncontrolled urban expansion. Since 1954, when Soleri took up residence in Arizona, he started experimenting with different construction methods. Among the ones he most commonly used we find *Earthcasting*, which consists of using concrete in a plastic and chromatic manner, through the direct “gestural” intervention of the architect.

This paper aims to elaborate on the technique used by the Italian architect Paolo Soleri, which characterised his way/art of building for more than sixty years. This research work was developed thanks to an on-site experience of three months in Arcosanti, which allowed us to carry out important fieldwork, study bibliographical

sources and interview the architect himself.

**Keywords:** Paolo Soleri, Arcology, 20th-century, earthcasting, U.S.A.

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