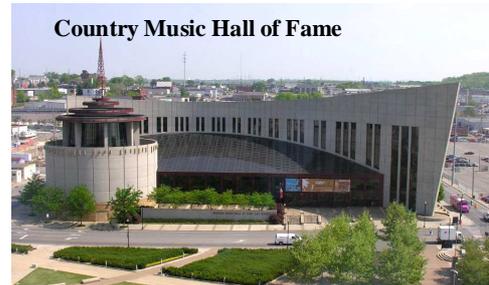


*Architecture: The Effect Of, and On, the Individual*  
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When all said and done, architecture is at the will of the architect. Without Frank Lloyd Wright, we would not have the Guggenheim. Without I.M. Pei, we would not have the entrance to the Louvre. It is very easy to take the genius of architects who have revolutionized the culture of architecture for granted; however, the truly understated impact of architecture is exemplified by the seemingly peripheral effect it has not only on people's mindsets, but on their lives as well. In expressing local and global culture, the individual architect plays an extremely important role in the development of architectural ideas, while simultaneously impacting and informing the individual lives of local inhabitants.

In the discussion of architectural forms and styles, the impact of the individual architect is often overlooked. However, architects as individuals exercise tremendous importance in the progression of the architectural context and creation of new styles. Though history points to a number of prominent architectural periods, transitions in form between the periods would be impossible if not for the creative minds of individuals. Consider, for example, Filippo Brunelleschi and the birth of Renaissance architecture; Carlo Maderno and the early Baroque period; Louis Sullivan and the shift to modernism; and Frank Gehry and post-modern and contemporary architecture. Though these figures' works fit into the broader context of their respective eras, their innovative approaches to design and the use of new materials in their buildings undoubtedly instigated changes to the architectural landscape.

Accordingly, architects of the contemporary era now build incredible structures which fit the contemporary style while also displaying eclecticism and uniqueness, serving as defining pieces of local cultures. As urban areas work to deal with population growth while maintaining the characteristics and beauty of cities, city planning has grown in importance. As a result, local cultures need architects to create public and private buildings according to the atmosphere of the cities. In Nashville, for example, where the music industry is an important aspect of Nashville tourism and the economy, some recently developed public buildings like the Music City Center or the Country Music Hall of Fame feature contemporary form while evoking the mood and appearance of Nashville. Thus, the individual architect carries immense value in modern society.



The unseen effects of architecture exist on a more abstract, social level. Fundamentally, architecture has a direct impact on individual lives. Strictly on a socio-economic foundation, architecture affects people by creating a hierarchy of classes - exemplified by the gentrification of impoverished areas. Only certain people have access to certain places because of where they live. An example could be shopping malls or large city centers in downtown areas where only people of a higher socio-economic background attend - thus establishing an architectonic societal class system. The problem is that the wealthier people only encompass a small part of the general population. With so much discussion regarding economic disparity in nations, it is imperative to understand that architecture becomes a tangible source of that disparity. If we create more communal places, we would probably see a more equitable society come to fruition. Our burden is to understand that architecture can either reinforce or break down stereotypical stigmas regarding races or economic backgrounds, we just have to make the decision of which one.

Another effect architecture has on the individual is its ability to influence outlook and awareness on a variety of issues. Perhaps the most important issue modern architects face is environmental sustainability. As such, a good deal of recent building emphasizes energy efficiency while cultivating attractive contemporary styles. For example, the Reichstag Dome in Berlin utilizes solar energy, mirror lighting, vegetable oil generators, and a heat recycling system, among others, to conserve energy and resources. Similarly, the Wayne L. Morse U.S. Courthouse in Eugene, Oregon, built with a number of recycled materials, uses rainwater collection to reduce conserve water and has large windows with specially insulated glass to retain heat and provide natural lighting, all while embodying a modernistic style. In creating environmentally conscious buildings, architects help spread general knowledge and concern to individuals about the state of our planet and the necessary course of action for long-term sustainability.

The significance and impact of architecture is expansive and apparent. This vital influence is what makes architecture so beautifully engaging and important. A structure is just not only a structure anymore. It's a building that can break down barriers, or exemplify environmental consciousness. This dichotomy is created by the mind of the architect, whose importance cannot be trivialized. The seamless blend of creativity and practicality makes architecture consequential.

