

How significant a figure is the individual architect?

How do you see architecture's impact on the individual over your lifetime.

The concept of the 'individual architect' did not come into prominence until the late nineteenth century. There were rules set in stone pertaining to different architectural styles that were on trend at the time and architects were given very little leeway in terms of how they designed their buildings. Of course small details such as the decoration on the doors, or the fluting of the fake columns running up the facade of the piece were designed by the architect but eventually, when completed, it would look just the same as another building of that style.

The original so-called 'Starchitect' was a Catalanian. In a world of Neo-Gothic architecture, he stood out with his organic buildings inspired by nature. Straight lines and block-like buildings were no more. His name, of course, was none other than Antoni Gaudí, possibly the first ever recognised 'individual architect'. Unluckily for him, being the first, he was considered too individual resulting in the ransacking of his studio and the general neglect of his work during the time directly after he died. The public's general dislike of his *Modernista* style at the time was, however, mainly due to the 'stiffness' of society during the 19th Century. Gaudí's outlandish designs were so different to anything anyone had seen that they were almost disgusted by them. Nonetheless, he had started a revolution in the world of architecture - a revolution boosted by the First World War one hundred years ago.

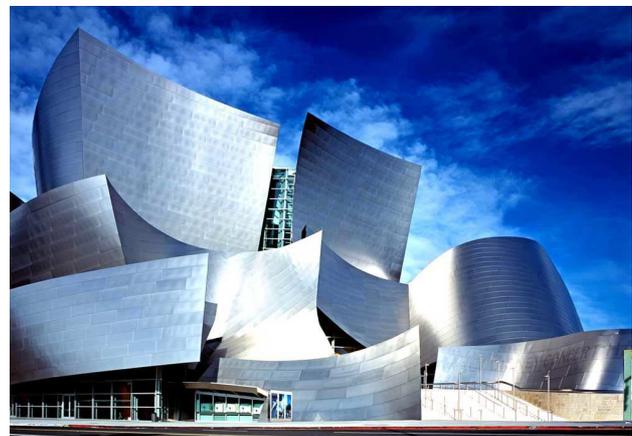
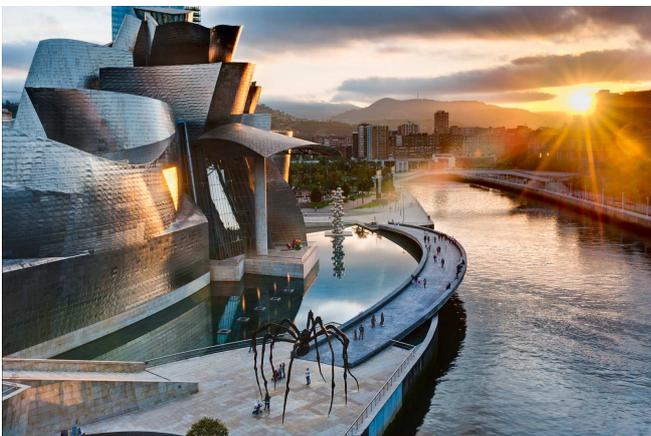


With the coming and going of the Great War, society was forced to

learn to accept change and adapt to it. This allowed for the individuals to stand out from the ordinary without being shunned by the public. Although artists had been doing this for years, possibly even centuries, it was only then that architects began to do the same. Gaudí had already opened up a portal for them. Thus began the rise of the ‘Starchitects’.

In the present day, the world is full of Starchitects: Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind and more. In a world where, excluding a few notable exceptions, religion and nationality are slowly becoming less of a social dividing line, globalisation has become a key idea. Global forces have become much more dominant than national or even religious forces. The impact of globalisation can already be seen in economics and is also becoming visible in architecture. Individual architects are essential to facilitating it. National styles are a thing of the past, for example, the renowned deconstructivist style of Frank Gehry’s buildings can be seen all over the world: Bilbao (Guggenheim Museum), Hong Kong (Opus), Prague (Dancing House) as well as Los Angeles (Walt Disney Concert Hall) where he’s based.

Architecture is the design and creation of space, man’s interaction with the landscape<sup>1</sup>. Architecture also happens to be perhaps the most influential thing in our lives. We are constantly interacting with



the spaces that surround us, our environment, either actively or even passively. This will never change. People don’t seem to realise the scale of architecture’s impact on the individual. The aesthetic qualities of buildings are what normally come to mind when architecture is mentioned and this is an example where we seem to have misplaced our priorities. Architects such as Le Corbusier

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond, Mark. “Victims of the City” 06 Dec 2011. TEDxPortofSpain. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdP3XIMDDb4>>

always aspire to design more than a building that looks aesthetically pleasing. They promise to design a new environment that has the ability to alter the behaviour of the people that would use it. Large windows are now a common feature in modern pieces of architecture because the large amounts of light stimulate an optimistic attitude to life. The same goes for large spaces. With multiple design factors each altering a set behavioural patterns in multiple people, an entire society can be changed within a day of the space being created. We take it for granted, however, the effect undoubtedly is this big.

With architects now taking into careful consideration design factors such as lighting and space and using them to generate positive responses in society, over the coming century, there should be a general increase in productivity in society.

In addition to this small changes, there come large ones. Frank Gehry, with his designing of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao inadvertently created what would later be called the Bilbao Effect in which a city or area is regenerated through culture<sup>2</sup>. Cities that before were trying to find an identity would now have an icon that represented them. This would have a positive effect on the people living there. Bilbao was the first to be undergo the 'Effect', there is no saying which cities may be next.

Architecture has always had a large effect on the individual and now also is greatly affected by the individual. Individual architects and even people now how have a very large influence on what is built and what isn't and these buildings and spaces will always have an effect on our everyday lives.

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<sup>2</sup> Aspden, Peter. "Interview: Frank Gehry" 22 Nov 2013. Financial Times. <  
<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/1c87963c-51cb-11e3-8c42-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2mPzHUu00>>