

Architects - artists for life

Architecture touches the lives of most people on earth. Unless you are out in nature, architecture is all around you. For the sake of argument, think about a tourist walking around beautiful old cities in Europe. Barcelona looks different from Amsterdam. And Amsterdam looks different from London. The thing that makes these cities look different from each other is the buildings. The architecture, in other words.

Many buildings are so famous we know what city or country they are in. If you see the Eiffel Tower, you think of Paris. If you see the Taj Mahal you think of India! If you see St Basil's cathedral, you think of Moscow and if you see the pyramids, you think of Egypt.

Burj Khalifa, Dubai

Architects have had a dramatic impact on the city of Dubai. Contemporary architecture has transformed an Arab desert state into one of the most important trading hubs in the world. They built the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, to prove that Dubai is a great city, in a class of its own. The Burj Khalifa is 828 metres tall – three times taller than the Eiffel Tower. The tower is inspired by a flower, the spider lily.

The Dancing House, Prague

The design of this building in Prague was very controversial at the time. People complained that it did not go with the Baroque, Gothic and Art Nouveau buildings in the neighbourhood. Today it is a big tourist attraction. Two architects designed it. The Czech architect said that the building symbolizes the change of Czechoslovakia from a communist regime to a democracy. The American architect thought it looked like two Hollywood dancers. The *Dancing House* is such a good description of the building that the name is still used today.

The Gherkin, London

The Gherkin was completed in 2004. Although not open to the general public, it has appeared in many advertisements, drawings, photographs, films, television shows and video games. It has a striking appearance, so it is a good way of marketing British architecture. It is also eco-friendly. The building uses natural light and natural ventilation as much as possible. That is why The Gherkin uses only half the energy used by a normal office block.

The 2050, Beijing

This building is only an idea. Nobody has built it yet. It will have residential space, office space, schools, theatres, a swimming pool, parks and shops. It will be self-sustainable. Solar panels, wind turbines and recycled rubbish will provide enough energy for the entire building. Food will be grown on roof farms. All grey water in the building will be recycled and re-used. All human waste will be recycled and used in the roof farms. People in this building will live high up in the clean air. Maybe they will never have to down to earth at all.