

9 Reasons to Become an Architect

by Jan Doroteo



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Making the decision to pursue architecture is not easy. Often, young students think that they have to be particularly talented at drawing, or have high marks in math just to even apply for architecture programs. Once they get there, many students are overwhelmed by the mountainous tasks ahead. While the path to becoming an architect varies from country to country, the average time it takes to receive a Masters in Architecture is between 5 and 7 years, and following that is often the additional burden of licensure which realistically takes another couple of years to undertake. Knowing these numbers, it's not particularly encouraging to find out that the average architect does not make as much as doctors and lawyers, or that [1 in 4 architecture students](#) in the UK are seeking treatment for mental health issues. These are aspects which architecture needs to work on as an industry. However, beyond these problems, there are still many fulfilling reasons to fall in love with the industry and become an architect. Here are just some of them.



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1. Architects are able to unleash their creativity.

The most beautiful aspect of architecture as a profession is how the industry embraces the individuality of each person. Of course, designing buildings is in itself a fulfilling creative pursuit; but even beyond that you are allowed, and in fact encouraged, to have a style which can manifest beyond your work. The idea of wanting to live an “authentic life” has been a trending buzzword lately, and being an architect can certainly serve as conduit to a desire to live creatively: [to wear what you want](#), to don unconventional eyewear, and to just express *you* through your lifestyle. [This Oscar-nominated short film](#) shows just how humorous and fun that could be.

2. Architects get to (very clearly) see the fruits of their labor.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of being an architect is having a lifetime’s work that remains after you’re gone to remind people of your efforts. You can ultimately live a life much larger and longer than your own mortality allows because the buildings that you design will represent you. Due to the literal “material nature” of the work, it’s difficult to second-guess your contribution to society and the value of your work when it’s 10 stories high and staring right at you. In some places, architects are even encouraged to “sign” their buildings like artists with a plaque or inscription; most recently, a [new policy by the Ontario Association of Architects](#) requires new buildings over 1,000 square meters to include a prominent credit to the architect near the main entrance or on the main facade.

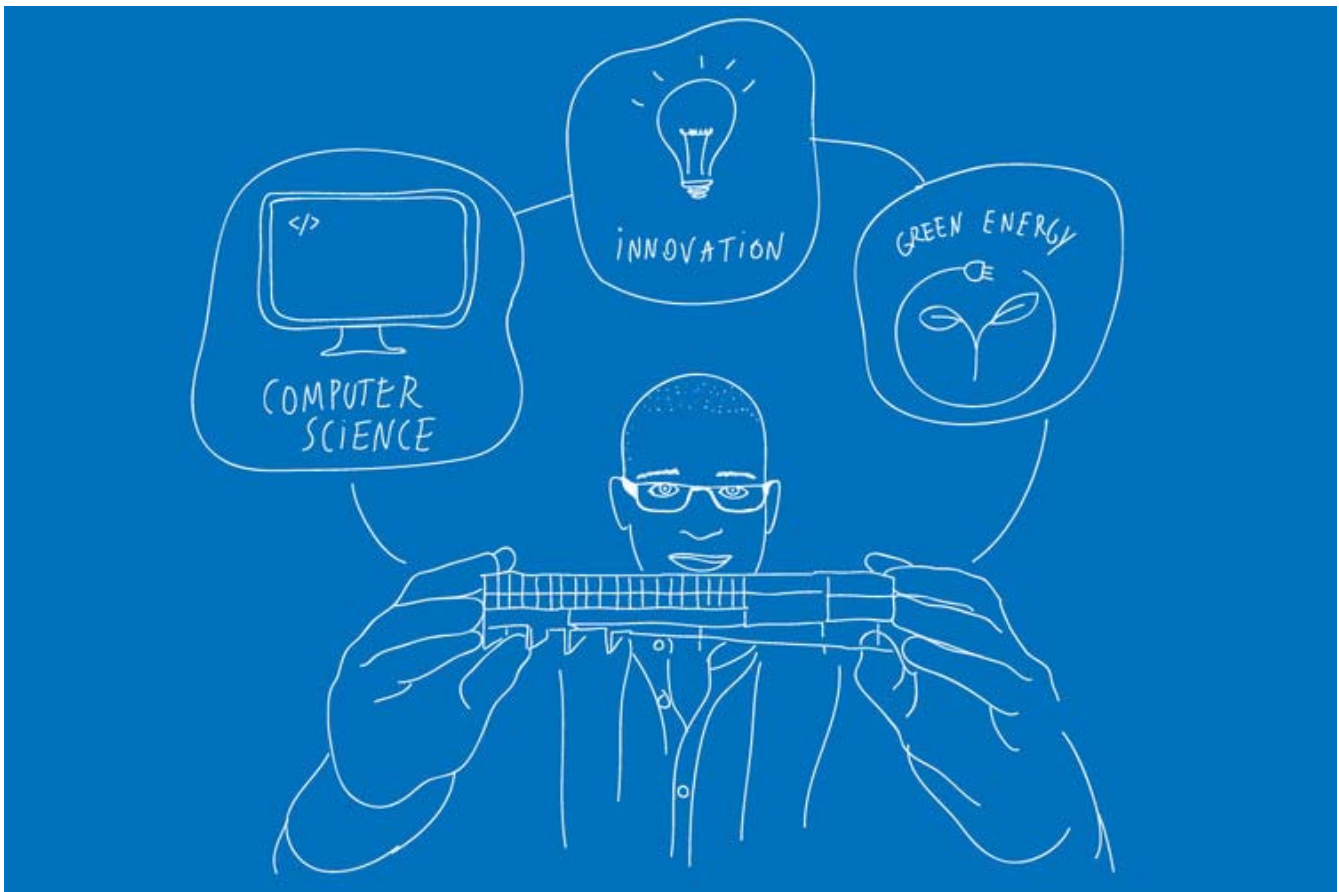


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3. Architects do not get bored in university.

Architecture school is difficult, but it is also a very fun and exciting time because of the dynamism in your experience. Knowledge and theories from other fields are openly welcomed within architecture, and these sources could be as varied as social work, philosophy and economics. Due to architecture's wide-ranging knowledge set, many architecture programs advocate interdisciplinary learning for their students, meaning that you will either have a wide range of topics embedded within your architecture classes, or you will get the opportunity to take varied classes ranging from environmental studies, to computer science. If there is a particular topic you are interested in, you can incorporate it within your architectural work.

Additionally, there is a lot of improvisation in architectural education and this is where it gets fun. Unlike science students who have to adhere to strict formatting with lab reports, and humanities students who go through copious amounts of textual analysis, architecture students are encouraged to embrace innovation. Who says you can't include a well-informed research component with your studio project, and when you write essays for architecture class, custom-made visuals often allow you to explain your ideas more clearly and result in very good marks. You are free to do what you think is best in communicating your ideas.



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4. Architects are often specialists at everything.

As mentioned, what makes Architecture an exciting subject of study is the wide array of learning and research that you have to conduct on a regular basis—and this extends far into one’s working career. There is no such thing as having too much knowledge as an architect. Each new project is a window for inquiry into new technology, theories of organization, or methods of construction. To articulate this information in your building designs, you need to very quickly understand expert knowledge on the specific technique that you wish to include in order to collaborate with corresponding professionals. As maestros of the orchestra that is the whole construction team, architects become specialists at everything.

5. Architects learn to be very good at defending their opinions.

For every individual, there will be a set of buildings that they simply find *beautiful*. Many students dive into the world of architecture because they were emotionally affected by a beautiful building, but in the classroom “beautiful” is not necessarily a qualifying trait that will convince colleagues and professors. The simple rule is that if you like a form, a

motif, a detail or anything really, you must go beyond “beautiful” and make a case for its existence as a “profound aspect of the experiential articulation of the built world” (or [whatever phrase your colleague might offer](#)). This gives rise to lively and stimulating debate amongst architecture professionals which also extends to written discourse. Architectural literature contains very colorful vocabulary and a rhetorical style that is nothing short of *poésie*.



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6. Architects can manage stress... and lots of it.

[Mental health issues](#) plague architecture schools for many reasons that cannot be determined very clearly. But causes of stress will always linger, in any situation, in any job, and in any discipline. While the health challenges faced by many students should not be trivialized, there are at least as many people who emerge into the workforce as healthier individuals who are incredibly resilient in the face of life’s slings and arrows. Going to architecture school takes you through a very in-depth journey of introspection, understanding your needs, and figuring out how you can be successful on your own terms.

7. Architects are able to do what they love for the rest of their life.

Assuming that what you love is Architecture, there seems to be no barrier to continuing to do what you love past the age of retirement. As the saying goes: “Choose a job you love and will never have to work a day in your life.” Many

of today's architectural masters are still heading their highly successful firms decades past the age of retirement and are honing their craft just as ardently as before—as if they've never worked a day in their life. [Frank Gehry](#) is actively pursuing building projects at 87, [Norman Foster](#) leads more than 140 partners in his firm at 81 years old, and [Zaha Hadid](#) won RIBA's Royal Gold Medal at 65. Most spectacularly, Oscar Niemeyer still dabbled in the occasional project right up to his death ten days before his 105th birthday.



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8. Architects are held in high esteem.

Thanks to its origin as the “mother of the arts” and its subsequent development as an influential profession, architecture has achieved near-universal recognition as a noble pursuit. In the workplace, architects largely interact with clients from the upper reaches of society. With the many general myths and legends that surround architecture outside of the actual profession there is a certain reverence attached to architects, and you may be able to take advantage of this to impress other people while still having the opportunity to do something that you are interested in.

9. Architects improve the lives of countless people.

Modern Architecture, as we know it today, emerged from a period of social upheaval in the 20th century. In the hope of creating a better world for everyone, the visionaries of modern architecture developed a heroic rhetoric that continues to inspire architects of today - even if we haven't exactly figured out how to recapture that spirit. For a brief moment, we lost hope on that endeavor but emerging practices are today re-invigorating architecture's social agenda.

Architecture always wants to help people and when it does it's an incredibly satisfactory feeling. Unfortunately, architects are the biggest critics of architecture and there is often greater focus on when architecture *doesn't* work, rather than when it does. We must not forget the little slivers of success: the elderly woman that is comfortable in [her transitional flat](#); the son that is extremely grateful to the architects who [redesigned his mother's dilapidated home in a humble neighborhood](#), or the lowly office worker that finds entertainment in the [interesting-looking skyscrapers](#) that populate her daily commute. Architecture is significant and the ability to touch on an integral part of a person's life is a reason to be an architect.

