

# design Speaks

Every obstacle in life has a **design** solution.

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November 2016, Volume 2, Issue 23

## Round or Square?

Square rooms.  
They don't listen  
They don't care  
If a man is in despair.

-- Lyrics of "Square Rooms," by Al Corey

Is it possible that the shape of a room affects our thinking? The editor Julie Beck writes in the Atlantic that, among Western cultures, people are apt to see the individual as separate from the environment. Move to a different house, yet you are still the same person. But in South Asian cultures, she writes, "home isn't just where you are, it's who you are." There is little doubt that people impact their physical environment, living spaces included. But what of the reverse?



photo credits: Anne Burgess

### Illustration:

The Round Square in the U.K. is one of a number of buildings said to have been built to a circular plan so that there would be no corners for the Devil to hide in. It is now part of Gordonstoun School.

Many people tend to want scientific evidence of any assertions (though it is seen as quite acceptable to ignore scientific evidence). But while there is no definitive answer to these questions, there is evidence of the ways that the physical dimensions of a space affects occupants.

Ancient peoples, and some of their modern day descendants, built round structures; the yurt, for example.

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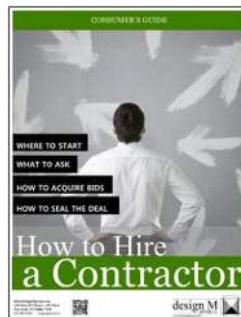
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## Did You Know ?

We are the leading local provider of tools and resources for people planning on adding on to, renovating or building a home.

We have several consumer guilds to help you.

**One of our recent publications is...  
"How to Hire a Contractor"**



Download it here and share it with your friends.

## Archi-fact:

The Clapp Octagon House has had several note worthy residences throughout its long 130 year history. Among these residents include: Mary Antin, author of The Promised Land; Norman MacLeish,[5] artist and brother of Pulitzer Prizewinning poet and Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish; and Lea Wells, the first female architect in St. Augustine.

# Iconic Building of the Month

## The Clapp Octagon House

Clapp Octagon House stands on Anastasia Island, off the coast of St. Augustine, Florida. It was built for Rollin Clapp of St. Louis, Missouri, in 1886.

Though today octagon houses seem unusual, they were popular for a time in the 19th century U.S. Lecturer Orson Squire Fowler first popularized the octagon house. According to architect James Dixon in his YouTube video, "Eight is Enough," Fowler felt the advantages include efficiency and compactness through elimination of dark corners and provision of up to 20 percent more area for less wall. Author David Nolan writes that Clarence Darrow, who defended John Scopes' right to teach evolution, grew up in an octagon house.

Nolan calls Clapp House one of "the pioneer Florida beach cottages." Among the Clapp Octagon House's former occupants: Lea Wells, the first female architect in St. Augustine.



*photo credits: Ebyabe*

## Archi-Quote

"Arithmetic! Algebra!  
Geometry! Grandiose  
trinity! Luminous triangle!  
Whoever has not known  
you is without sense!"  
[Comte de Lautréamont](#)



*photo credits: Wikipedia*

## Round or Square?

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This shape can be advantageous in highly windy places, as the air flows around the structure. There can be other advantages as well in terms of thermodynamics, efficiency, and acoustics.

Yet a discussion on the website Quora affirmed what anyone might guess, that square rooms and structures are preferred. This is especially true, said one thread, when there are several people, partly because of the round room's magnification of acoustics! Other threads focused on the idea that square rooms are quick and easy to construct because of the linear nature of prevalent materials. They are also seen as accommodating furniture better than a round room would.

Round or square, other aspects of dwelling space affect the intellect: The psychologist Joan Meyers-Levy found that people in low-ceilinged rooms do better at solving anagrams with words like "restricted," while those in high-ceilinged rooms do better with words like "freedom." Ceiling height influenced thinking, she found.

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# Round or Square?

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Likewise, the author James Clear writes that, while researching the polio vaccine, an exhausted Jonas Salk retreated from his University of Pittsburgh lab to the Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi in Italy. "Whitewashed brick covered the expansive exterior," Clear writes, "and dozens of semi-circular arches surrounded the plazas between buildings. Inside the church, the walls were covered with stunning fresco paintings from the 14th and 15th centuries and natural light poured in from tall windows."

Clear quotes Salk as saying, "The spirituality of the architecture there was so inspiring that I was able to do intuitive thinking far beyond any I had done in the past.



Under the influence of that historic place I intuitively designed the research that I felt would result in a vaccine for polio. I returned to my laboratory in Pittsburgh to validate my concepts and found that they were correct."

**In conclusion, there is what has been proven and then, far more extensive, there is what we know.**

## Archi-Speak

**Can you find these shapes?**

**Decagon**  
**Hexagon**

**Dodecagon**  
**Nonagon**

**Heptagon**

I	N	G	X	V	E	S	L	W	W	B	Q	Q	X	N
N	O	O	Y	U	Y	Q	N	L	Q	V	V	V	T	M
O	N	N	Z	D	R	W	S	R	Q	H	D	O	N	G
G	A	O	S	M	B	E	N	M	O	E	M	D	N	E
A	G	G	W	T	X	T	P	D	G	X	P	R	F	L
C	O	A	G	L	E	P	I	T	H	A	C	D	R	Y
E	N	T	P	C	G	B	U	S	N	G	T	F	D	N
D	U	P	M	B	N	D	T	M	H	O	T	B	S	T
O	F	E	R	K	G	R	U	R	S	N	D	V	M	X
D	S	H	Y	E	Z	X	W	P	T	L	N	Z	W	F
U	R	W	B	Z	P	Q	L	M	H	L	B	V	N	W
B	D	E	C	A	G	O	N	O	K	W	M	G	Y	A
L	G	I	T	U	D	J	U	Q	J	Q	W	P	K	N
D	I	P	O	M	R	W	B	H	U	I	M	U	Z	H
C	H	A	S	Y	W	Z	E	L	B	Q	G	Z	Q	M

## Ask M

In the James Bond books and movies the character "M" heads the Secret British Intelligence Service known as MI 6, of which James Bond is Agent 007.

When contemplating adding on to your home or building, renovating or building a new home or building you should have someone like "M" on your side. Each month the "Ask M" column will answer a reader's question to place more information at your finger tips.

**This month's question.**

There is a piece of property we are interested in purchasing to build our dream home on. However before we buy it we want to know if everything we want in our home can be built on the property. Can an architect help us with this?

*Francine G*

Francine,

Yes an architect can help you. However before hiring an architect to work on the project you **SHOULD** hire one to perform a "*Needs and options Review*". This is the service you need performed BEFORE hiring an architect for the project. Here at Design M Group we insist that all of our clients go through this process with us before we start the project. Only this way will you know what you can do and what you need to make this YOUR dream home. Call us toll free at 877-So Love My Home (877-765-6836)

Email your questions to [info@designMgroup.com](mailto:info@designMgroup.com), and in the subject line type in "**Ask M**". We look forward to hearing from you and hope we can answer the questions to everyone's satisfaction.

# Want to speak with the Architect

Do you have questions but do not know where to start?

Do you know the legal consequences of starting a project without approvals?

Are you sure you have completed all of the research necessary so as not to waste your money and time during construction?

Are what you think are your NEEDS and OPTIONS truly the best for you and your future?

Does the contractor really have YOUR best interest in mind when suggesting solutions?

Answering these questions and more are the reason for enlisting a Needs and Options Review.

We can help you on your way to a successful project with less hassles and problems.

Visit: [www.designMgroup.com](http://www.designMgroup.com)

## Our core beliefs are ...

**Architects have a responsibility to our clients, community and the environment.**

**Architects should help provide information to our fellow world citizens about their homes, offices and the built environment in general.**

**Your Home should move you emotionally like your favorite song does.**

**Let Us Help You Build the Home You Knew Was Always There For You.**



## About

Marcus Marino, RA, AIA  
President



photo credit: Jenna Glatzer

Marcus Marino, RA, AIA is a leading architect in New York City. He received a Bachelors of Architecture from the prestigious Pratt Institute and a Masters in the Science of Architecture and Urban Design from Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation. He received his license to practice architecture in New York State in 1981 and is licensed in a number of other States. Marcus Marino has served on numerous Governmental Panels and serves as an expert consultant to other architectural firms and legal firms. Presently he serves as the Vice President of Public Advocacy of the New York State American Institute of Architects.

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