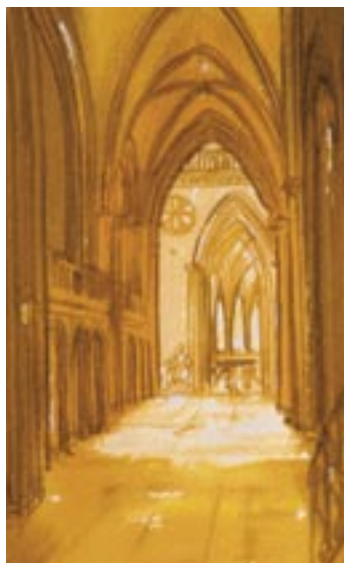




“The prime geometry of this house is a square and then subdivisions of the main square. The windows, doors, archways, and stairways were all proportioned out of the initial square as well. All room lengths, widths, and heights were proportionately designed as well as vaulted ceilings in all of the major spaces in order to create an harmonious whole.” -Robert Armon

Robert Armon created this sketch, based on the geometric principles of the great cathedrals of Europe. Reference to healing designs is common in the ancient teachings of Plato and Pythagoras.



Shaping Your World

::Angela Braden

Shape Therapy, which encompasses Biogeometry and Sacred Geometry, falls under the umbrella of the internationally embraced field of Sacred Architecture. Architect and co-founder of The Academy for Sacred Architectural Studies, Robert Armon, notes “Conscious proportioning in interiors using therapeutic shapes has come into vogue several times in my lifetime, becoming more developed with each cycle.” In the last three years, however, Armon has seen the resurgence of shape therapy reach new heights, “I don’t know where the top (of the cycle) is this time.

The wisdom of the ancients has reflected specific geometric forms and proportions around the world, both in building and design. Most great temples and cathedrals have similar numeric themes based on a mathematical proportion known as the Golden ratio—found in both The Great Pyramid and in Leonardo Da Vinci’s art. This universal ratio mathematically mirrors many forms in nature—DNA molecules, growth patterns of tree branches, butterflies, and even human body proportions. The ancient Egyptians formulated the original mathematic and geometric principles for shape therapy, which were inherited by the Greeks.

The whole of European culture is based on our Greco-Roman heritage at the root of which lay what many expert scientists, designers, and architects consider “sacred” proportions. In design, experts believe we can utilize this phenomenon and achieve harmony in our most sacred environments, or we can ignore them and risk chaos in both our homes and in ourselves.

According to Robert Armon and many of his contemporaries, there seems to be a universal language humans relate to that manifesta in shapes. Even the designs of architectural legend Frank Lloyd Wright incorporate patterns of light and darkness to reflect a connection with nature.

Many therapeutic shapes used in home design are known traditionally as mandalas. Mandalas are symmetrical, geometric designs, usually enclosed within a circle, square, or rectangle, highly developed by Hindus in India where they have been used for meditation since 1500 B.C. Mandalas were further elaborated upon by Tantric Buddhists in Tibet. Martha Bartfeld, author of *Magic Mandala Coloring Book*, explains the therapeutic effects of these shapes. “These geometric designs emit energies of various frequencies, which have



The Michael Keith Design Group in Manhattan applied Dr. Karim's patented biogeometrical shapes within the crown molding of this room.

a molecular-electric influence on the neuromuscular systems of the body." Architect and Doctor of Science Ibrahim Karim, a household name in Egypt, has scientifically documented the effects to which so many of Bartfeld's readers have testified. His extensive research has launched a science of how certain shapes have a balancing effect on vitality and emotional and mental energy levels of the body.

Dr. Karim's studies support the idea patterns of living systems and organs can be channeled through special shapes that simulate the electrical path of each body organ. "The flow of energy through the patterns enters into resonance with the functions of the organ they represent, as similar patterns attune (much like the tuning of musical instruments). This causes a harmonic amplification, which restores the correct balance within that organ." In the U.S., Dr. Karim has indoctrinated New York based designer Michael Keith, whose work is renowned from Hollywood to Harlem. One of Keith's clients, Wendy Mallock of NBC's *Just Shoot Me*, shares the effects of her Biogeometric bedroom: "I was dubious (at first), but since Michael 'did' our bedroom I've been sleeping like a baby."

The ideas surrounding shape therapy eventually spread to Britain, where, today, Prince Charles has become deeply involved in the movement. In 1992, he founded The Prince of Whales Institute of Architecture, where our featured architect, Robert Armon, completed postgraduate work. In a speech at the inauguration of the institute,

Prince Charles expressed what he would like taught: "The fact that the architecture that nourishes the spirit is . . . a particular kind of architecture whose forms, plans, and materials are based on human feeling." He went on to uphold, "Recent research in the field of architecture has begun to identify the particular forms or types of organization, which are able to create such architecture of the heart."

On a large or small scale, various forms and functions of shape therapy differ. From ancient Hindu tiles to modern British architecture, the commonalities seem to include a central point, a mathematically similar design, symmetry, and purpose.

According to Mathematician Sarah Frucht, the purpose is to represent the oneness of the universe (formed by the designs' multiple, diverse, but unified elements). Frucht, the president of Kaleidoscapes, a geometric interior design company in Berkeley, owns a patent on one of her applications of a sacred-geometric room.

Frucht utilizes mirrors on the inside walls of a pyramid-shaped room. This room incorporates entranceways, windows, and skylights based on ancient, mathematical proportions. "Negative spaces reflect into a three-dimensional star mandala pattern that extends throughout the inside of the (room) and completely encompasses its occupants," Frucht explains.

Some possible implementations of geometrically therapeutic rooms like Frucht's would be media rooms, home theatres, meditation and spa rooms/indoor pools, or outdoor tea gardens. If the purpose of

a room is to excite and energize, projecting animated images onto the backs of half-silvered mirror walls creates ethereal images that appear to dance in thin air, thus inducing active participation or energy flow. "Hazy rainbows, sunbursts, flowers, crystals, fire, or mandalas flicker and dance in three-dimensional symmetry," offers Frucht.

If you're not ready to employ a cutting-edge designer or pursue a degree in mathematics, Anthony Lawlor's *The Temple in the House* may be a useful addition to your library. Convinced shape therapy can be the simplest way to create healing environments, award-winning architect, Anthony Lawlor set out to empower the masses to apply these sacred principles to their own homes. Lawlor describes how to put therapeutic shapes into anything from carpet patterns and napkin designs, to window treatments (www.anthonylawlor.com). According to Lawlor, one simple but highly effective approach to independent application of this science is to "find and nurture the 'center' of each room." This does not necessarily mean the spatial center of the room, but rather the power spot, or the place where you feel the most balance and energy. Once you identify that spot, you can organize the room around it and make it the focal point—a concept also consistent with the principles of Feng Shui.

Like honeybees attracted to the shape of flowers, there seems to be a universal law governing the effect of shapes on the human experience. When we create harmony between the bodies within our home and our own physical bodies, we may create a home that truly is a sanctuary. ∴

Inside one of Sara Frucht's meditation rooms.

