

Art



Ahead of the curve

Zaha Hadid takes a break from bending buildings and sets the record straight. By Noah Chasin

As the first and only woman to win architecture's most prestigious honor, the Pritzker Prize (in 2004), and now the second recipient of a solo architecture show at the Guggenheim (Frank Gehry was the first, in 2001), Iraq-born Zaha Hadid is poised to become a superstar on the level of her friend Daniel Libeskind and former teacher Rem Koolhaas. Hadid's London office has its hands full these days, with many new projects underway or just completed—including the Maxxi Centre for Contemporary Arts in Rome and the Phaeno Science Center in Wolfsburg, Germany. During the installation of her midcareer retrospective, *TONY* sat down with the architect for a prickly but fascinating discussion.

A lot of material at the Guggenheim can be seen both as drawings or paintings and as architectural proposals.

I disagree with this curatorial aspect of the show, I have to say. I don't think they should be shown as drawings; I think they should be shown as [architectural] projects. They can be read as individual works, but if you don't know the full story... there should be some sort of video explanation. I did want to do an exhibition many years ago, deliberately separating the drawings from the paintings from the models. But this was not intended for the

Guggenheim. As much as I like the ramps and the fact that one can show things in a continuous way, it was an issue of space. To be honest, we had to cut a lot of stuff because of budget.

You were included "Deconstructivist Architecture" at MoMA in 1988...

No, I wasn't.

Well, your drawings and so-called "paper architecture" proposals were in it.

Yes, I was in the show.

The architects in that show—Peter Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Daniel Libeskind, yourself—are now at the vanguard of the profession. Do you have regrets about participating?

I think that it was very misleading. They tried to portray us as a movement, but we weren't; they just brought a group of people together and put a name to it, a combination of Constructivism and Deconstruction. Of course, there was some sense of

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connection. All of us were looking at things in terms of organization and fragmentation. The show was originally going to be called "Fragmentation" or something like that. At the time, I thought it was important to do the show. It was the height of postmodernism, and I think it did set an agenda for the work to be accepted as a valid response to current urban life.

Since September 11, architecture in New York has an increasingly contentious relationship with politics. What do you make of this development?

I think it's difficult. Aligning architecture with a political movement is very tricky. I think Ground Zero is a mess. There was no correlation between the developer and the competition. There should be great buildings on that site. Downtown needs something; otherwise, that site disappears into the water.

You've never built anything in New York City. What would be your dream project here?

I would love to do a tower. I also love the United Nations, because it defies the grid. It would be quite interesting to do something different like that.

Have you given any thought to participating in the reconstruction of Baghdad, your hometown?

Of course I would like to be involved somehow. But it wouldn't be about doing some great project. It seems urgent to think about schooling, housing and infrastructure. It's a much different strategy than doing a nice museum. There was a rumor that I was meant to do a museum there, but I haven't been asked to do such a thing. I think the whole idea [of reconstruction] needs to be discussed, but it needs to be done on a very strategic planning level: How do you lay ground for any positive life there?

"Zaha Hadid" is at the Guggenheim through October 25 (see Museums).