

the world's most renowned female architect

TIME



Zaha Hadid and her legacy

How the first woman to win the
Pritzker Prize redesigned more than
architecture—she reshaped ambition.

#Womeninmalefield

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Dame Zaha Hadid was known as the “*Queen of the Curve*” for her swooping designs.



Zaha Hadid (1950–2016) wasn't merely a visionary — she was a provocation. Her bold, sweeping architecture shattered the linear, box-bound traditions of modernism, replacing them with flowing, organic geometries that seemed to defy gravity and time. Born in Baghdad and educated in London at the Architectural Association, Hadid carved space not just in cities, but in culture. In 2004, she became the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize — the “Nobel” of architecture — a turning point for women in a field long dominated by men. Yet Hadid didn't just make history through accolades; she did so by pushing boundaries. Her buildings, from the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku to the MAXXI Museum in Rome, look less like buildings and more like landforms or frozen waves. Her architecture was not submissive: it was muscular, theatrical, and futuristic. She called it “fluid space,” and used it to explore dynamism, speed, and femininity not as opposites but as complements. Her untimely death in 2016 left a void, but her studio continues to evolve her ideas: architecture in motion, with no apologies.

“There are 360 degrees, so why stick to one?” — Zaha Hadid

Iraqi British architect Zaha Hadid became famous for her intensely futuristic style characterized by curving façades, sharp angles, and severe materials such as concrete and steel. The structures she designed have successfully accomplished what mystifies so many when they observe great architecture: She took the strongest materials in the world and manipulated them to form objects that appear soft and sturdy at the same time. Over the past two decades, her work has been honored by a long list of awards. In 2004 she was the first woman to be awarded the Pritzker Prize; in 2010 and 2011 she received the Stirling Prize, a British decoration for excellence in architecture; in 2014 her Heydar Aliyev Cultural Centre, like an undulating sheet of graph paper, won the Design Museum design of the year award; and in 2016 she became the first woman to win the RIBA Gold Medal. After moving to London in the 1970s and studying at the Architectural Association under Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, she quickly became known as a maverick. Her conceptual designs were unlike anything seen before—dynamic, explosive, and unapologetically avant-garde. Her drawings of The Peak leisure club in Hong Kong (1983) looked more like abstract paintings than blueprints. Hadid's projects, many of which transform depending on the viewer's perspective, turn architectural convention on its head. The world lost a true visionary in 2016, when 65-year-old Hadid died unexpectedly in a Miami hospital.

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London Aquatics Centre

When Zaha Hadid entered a room, space shifted.

The architectural concept of is inspired by the fluid geometries of water in motion, creating spaces and a surrounding environment that reflect the riverside landscapes of the Olympic Park. An undulating roof sweeps up from the ground as a wave - enclosing the pools of the Centre with a unifying gesture of fluidity, while also describing the volume of the swimming and diving pools.

The pool hall is expressed above the podium by a large roof which arches along the same axis as the pools. Its form is generated by the sightlines of the 17,500 spectators in its Olympic mode.

Double-curvature geometry has been used to generate a parabolic arch structure that creates the unique characteristics of the roof. The roof undulates to differentiate between the volumes of competition pool and the diving pool. Projecting beyond the pool hall envelope, the roof extends to the external areas and to the main entrance on the bridge that will be the primary access in Legacy mode. Structurally, the roof is grounded at 3 primary positions with the opening between the roof and podium used for the additional spectator seating in Olympic mode, then in-filled with a glass façade in Legacy mode.



The Vitra Campus is a vast complex comprising factories, showrooms, and the Vitra Design Museum. Since the original factory's destruction by a fire in 1981, Vitra has commissioned replacement structures by renowned architects from around the world: buildings by Frank Gehry, Tadao Ando, Alvaro Siza, and several other notable designers all stand within the same estate. After a bolt of lightning caused a fire that burned more than half the factory campus in a single night, Vitra was determined to prevent a similar disaster from destroying its new campus. Commissioned after a fire devastated part of the Vitra Campus, the project wasn't just a fire station.

A Legacy Etched in Glass and Steel

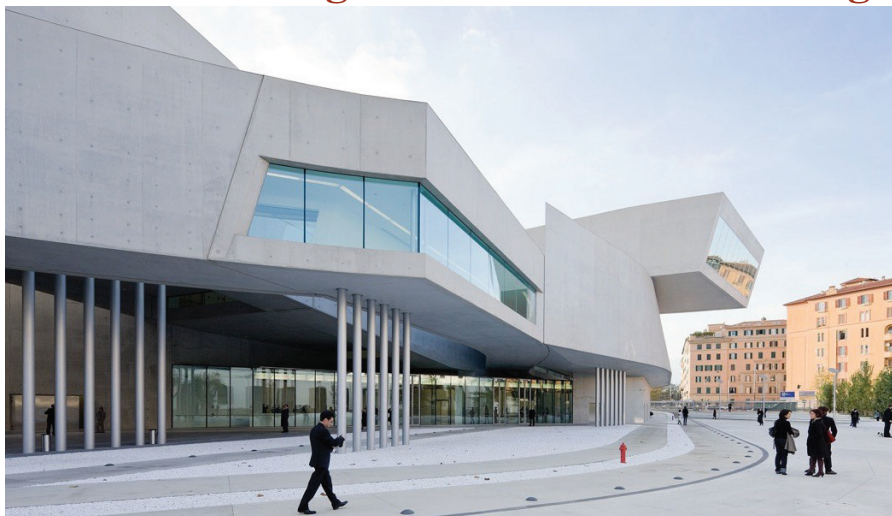
"I don't think of myself as a female architect. I'm just an architect."

As declared by the architect, the museum is 'not a object-container, but rather a campus for art', where flows and pathways overlap and connect in order to create a dynamic and interactive space. Although the program is clear and organized in plan, flexibility of use is the main goal of the project. Continuity of spaces makes it a suitable place for any kind of moving and temporary exhibition, without redundant wall divisions or interruptions. Entering the atrium, the main elements of the project are evident: concrete curved walls, suspended black staircases, open ceiling catching natural light.

Fluidity in architecture is not new to this region. In historical Islamic architecture, rows, grids, or sequences of columns flow to infinity like trees in a forest, establishing non-hierarchical space. Continuous calligraphic and ornamental patterns flow from carpets to walls, walls to ceilings, ceilings to domes, establishing seamless relationships and blurring distinctions between architectural elements and the ground they inhabit. Our intention was to relate to that historical understanding of architecture, not through the use of mimicry or a limiting adherence to the iconography of the past, but rather by developing a firmly contemporary interpretation, reflecting a more nuanced understanding. Responding to the topographic sheer drop that formerly split the site in two, the project introduces a precisely terraced landscape that establishes alternative connections and routes between public plaza, building, and underground parking. This solution avoids additional excavation and landfill, and successfully converts an initial disadvantage of the site into a key design feature.

Located in the Flaminio district of Rome, the museum rises from a former military barracks site. But instead of flattening history, Hadid chose to layer it—creating a dynamic web of pathways, suspended bridges, and interwoven galleries. Visitors don't just walk through the space; they drift, loop, and flow through it, often losing their sense of orientation—and time. The building's most striking feature is its horizontal fluidity.

From Baghdad to the World Stage



Zaha Hadid Architects was appointed as design architects of the

Heydar Aliyev Center following a competition in 2007. The Center, designed to become the primary building for the nation's cultural programs, breaks from the rigid and often monumental Soviet architecture that is so prevalent in Baku, aspiring instead to express the sensibilities of Azeri culture and the optimism of a nation that looks to the future.



The structure serves as a cultural center, housing a museum, gallery spaces, a conference hall, and an auditorium. But to call it a "cultural center" barely scratches the surface. Every inch of the building is a spatial experience. The envelope of the building folds into itself, transitioning effortlessly between roof, wall, and floor. The exterior is clad in smooth white panels that reflect the sky, transforming the building into a living sculpture that shifts with the sun. The building is named after Heydar Aliyev, the former president of Azerbaijan, and was commissioned as part of the country's effort to modernize its capital. But Hadid's design turned that political statement into an artistic revelation. It broke completely from Soviet-style brutalist architecture, signaling a new national identity—one tied to innovation, futurism, and global design leadership. Structurally, the project was groundbreaking. The curves required advanced engineering and custom digital modeling. No two panels are the same. It was an architectural puzzle—each piece unique, each surface fluid. And yet, the result feels effortless. Inside, the same elegance reigns. Vast white interiors curve like dunes, blurring the line between art and architecture. Visitors often describe walking through the center as a meditative experience—like being inside a wave, or inside an idea still forming. The Heydar Aliyev Center stands as one of Zaha Hadid's most beloved works—a building that embodies her signature vision of motion, innovation, and fearless beauty. It's not just architecture.

The New Arena: Where Sports and Culture Collide



At just 21, Jude Bellingham has already become something of a football myth. Not because of scandal. Not even because of flash. But because of substance—a rare commodity in the modern game. His rise from Birmingham City’s academy to dominating Real Madrid’s midfield is more than a tale of talent—it’s a story of generational focus.

“He plays like a veteran, moves like a dancer, and speaks like a captain,”

Born in Stourbridge, England, in 2003, Bellingham was always several steps ahead. He debuted for Birmingham City at just 16, and his impact was so seismic the club retired his jersey number—an unprecedented move for someone who had barely played a season. Critics scoffed. But those who watched him understood. He wasn’t just a player—he was a presence. That presence carried him to Borussia Dortmund, where he became a Bundesliga star before the age of 20. But it was his 2023 move to Real Madrid—football’s most sacred theatre—that made headlines. In his debut season, he quickly silenced the skeptics, delivering goals, assists, and leadership in equal measure. He didn’t slot into the team—he redefined it.

What sets Bellingham apart is more than skill—it’s poise. He reads the game like a scholar, tackles like a bruiser, and scores with the timing of a striker. Off the pitch, he speaks with clarity, purpose, and humility rare for a player of his status. While others build brands, Jude builds legacy. And yet, he’s become a brand all the same. Bellingham’s No. 5 shirt is one of the best-selling jerseys worldwide. Nike and Adidas reportedly competed for months over his endorsement. And TikTok clips of his calm celebrations—arms out, face still—have become iconic. But fame hasn’t distracted him. He’s turned down reality shows, fashion collabs, and even a high-profile autobiography.

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When Temilade Openiyi, better known as Tems, first appeared on the international radar, she was cloaked in mystery—an ethereal voice on Essence, the summer-defining hit with Wizkid that quietly rewrote the rules of pop in 2021. But what began as a breakout feature has evolved into a movement. Tems is no longer just the future of African music—she is its present, reshaping R&B on her own terms.



The Voice Rewriting Global R&B

Born in Lagos in 1995, Tems grew up surrounded by gospel music, British soul, and Nigerian street rhythms. But it wasn’t until she quit her job in digital marketing and taught herself how to produce on YouTube that things began to shift. Her 2020 EP *For Broken Ears* wasn’t just a debut—it was a declaration. Songs like “Free Mind” and “Damages” introduced a new kind of vulnerability: confident, but cracked open. Tems isn’t just a singer; she’s a symbol. For many African women in creative spaces, her rise represents something deeper: proof that global success doesn’t require compromise. She isn’t remixing herself for the West—she’s bringing the world into her sonic universe, one hypnotic melody at a time.

“She brings quiet power,”

In 2023, she became the first Nigerian artist to debut at the top of the Billboard Hot 100 for her feature on Future’s “Wait For U.” That same year, she performed to a sold-out crowd at London’s Royal Albert Hall, barefoot, bathed in soft blue light, refusing any choreography or costume theatrics.

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In the post-pandemic, post-polarized 2025 world, power no longer looks the way it used to. Military might still matters, but influence today is being carved out in code, in carbon, and in culture. As the traditional global order frays under the weight of shifting alliances and economic instability, a new world map is forming—not drawn by borders, but by broadband, diplomacy, and shared crises.

For over seven decades, the United States held the mantle of global leadership. But recent years have tested its moral authority: from insurrection and impeachment to economic inequality and climate denial. As internal challenges mount, the world watches—with caution, not admiration. Meanwhile, China has evolved from factory of the world to architect of a new global network. With its Belt and Road Initiative now expanding into digital infrastructure and AI collaboration, Beijing is no longer just exporting goods—it’s exporting governance. Its state-sponsored companies are helping build smart cities in Kenya, surveillance systems in Serbia, and deep-sea ports in Pakistan. But this is not a simple bipolar contest between Washington and Beijing. A multipolar world is emerging, and countries once dismissed as peripheral are stepping onto the global stage.



“We’re seeing a redistribution of power, not in the classic sense of tanks or treaties,” says Dr. Amara Singh, a political analyst in Johannesburg. “It’s cultural capital, technological leverage, and the ability to act amid uncertainty.”



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In the opulent halls of Paris Fashion Week, where elegance often takes precedence over politics, Dior did something radical in Fall 2018: it staged a protest. Not in the streets—but down the runway. The house’s creative director, Maria Grazia Chiuri, turned the catwalk into a revolution, echoing the student uprisings and feminist marches of May 1968.

It was fashion as resistance.

Or at least, fashion in conversation with resistance.

Models walked past mirrored signs with slogans lifted from student protests: “Youthquake,” “Power to the Imagination,” and “Patriarchy = Repression.” The collection itself leaned heavily on vintage silhouettes—A-line skirts, patch-covered jackets, knee-high boots, and plaid mini dresses. It wasn’t just a nod to the past; it was a reanimation of it. That year, French students took to the streets in a wave of protests against capitalism, authoritarianism, and outdated gender roles. It was a moment that shook France’s foundation—and transformed fashion from ornamental to expressive. Chiuri, the first woman to lead Dior, used the Fall 2018 show to remind the world that those battles are still being fought.

The collection felt personal. Chiuri has made feminism central to her vision at Dior, famously launching her tenure with the now-iconic “We Should All Be Feminists” T-shirt in 2017. But Fall 2018 was deeper—less merch, more meaning. She dug into archival Dior pieces, mixing the maison’s heritage with the rough textures and rebellious spirit of ‘60s youth culture.

“We don’t protest only in the street,” she said. “We protest with how we live, how we dress, and how we raise our daughters.”

There were crocheted vests, hand-knit berets, and checkerboard prints. The colors stayed muted—deep maroons, dusty yellows, revolutionary reds. But the message was loud: women’s voices have always shaped culture, even when history forgets to credit them. Fashion critics were split. Some praised the runway’s boldness; others accused Dior of aestheticizing struggle. But Chiuri wasn’t claiming ownership over protest—she was inviting dialogue.

And protest doesn’t always have to be loud. The most striking looks were also the simplest: a soft turtleneck under a structured vest, paired with reading glasses and attitude. It was a subtle reminder that revolution isn’t only for the front lines—it also happens in classrooms, studios, and yes, even on runways. As the final model walked, the words “The Personal is Political” flashed on a screen. It was both a conclusion and a call. Dior’s Fall 2018 show wasn’t about nostalgia. It was about reclaiming the past to demand a different future—where art isn’t afraid to take a side. In a season where many brands played it safe, Dior chose to remember. And in doing so, it made history wearable again. The 1968 student protests in France were not just political; they were philosophical. They questioned identity, gender, freedom, and consumerism.

The fashion world’s reaction was as divided as the streets of 1968. Critics praised the collection’s integrity, its lack of flash, its focus on message over market. Others accused Dior of commodifying revolution—of selling protest as aesthetic. But that tension is exactly what Chiuri was playing with.

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In a world where architecture often leans toward spectacle, Kazuyo Sejima prefers subtlety. While many architects aim for domination—towering skylines, sculptural shock—Sejima builds serenity. Her buildings don’t shout. They invite.

As one half of the Pritzker Prize-winning duo SANAA, alongside Ryue Nishizawa, Sejima has spent over three decades crafting a design language that is minimal but emotional, transparent but profound. Her work is not merely functional or aesthetic—it’s philosophical. Sejima’s signature style—diaphanous materials, blurred boundaries between interior and exterior, and an acute sensitivity to light—has reshaped contemporary architecture in quiet, radical ways. From the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York to the Rolex Learning Center in Lausanne, her buildings dissolve traditional borders. They feel almost weightless, like architectural whispers.

“Architecture should not overwhelm,” Sejima says. “It should accompany.”



Sejima’s leadership extends beyond the drafting table. In 2010, she became the first woman to direct the Venice Architecture Biennale solo, curating under the theme “People Meet in Architecture.” It was a powerful reassertion of her belief that buildings are social agents, not just static forms. And while many female architects have had to carve space in a male-dominated field by mimicking its machismo, Sejima never played by those rules. Her success is not loud but lasting. She leads SANAA with a quiet confidence and insists on collaboration—not celebrity.