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**Dame Zaha: design's rock star comes to town**  
Pininfarina's winning aerodynamic designs  
Get out! great ideas for cool outdoor spaces  
New glamour: hotels that ooze sophistication

DHS 20.00 RO 2.00 BD 2.00  
QR 20.00 SR 20.00 KD 1.50



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# Larger than life

TEXT: STEVE HILL

**THE Zaha Hadid exhibition** at the Leila Heller Gallery runs until 29 February, providing a rare and privileged chance for the residents of Dubai and the UAE to take a close look at the career to date of the most famous woman architect on the planet.


Eye-catching buildings highlighting new spatial concepts such as the MAXXI Museum in Rome and London's Olympic Aquatics Stadium are, though, only one part of a remarkable story, as this show makes very clear, with the spotlight also falling on striking designs for objects as diverse as a concept car and a perfume bottle.

It's all a far cry from Baghdad-born Hadid reading mathematics at the American University of Beirut, ahead of moving to the UK at the age of 22 in 1972 to study at the progressive Architectural Association.

Seven years later she established her own practice in London, no doubt little imagining that she would go on to become the first woman to win the Pritzker Architectural Prize (2004), ahead of being made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire (2012).

Yet the most singular honour of Hadid's career came in September with the announcement that she is to receive The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Gold Medal 2016.

First awarded in 1848, it is the world's oldest and most established architectural prize. There have been previous female winners – Ray Eames in 1979, Patty Hopkins in 1994 and Sheila O'Donnell in 2015 – but they were recognised



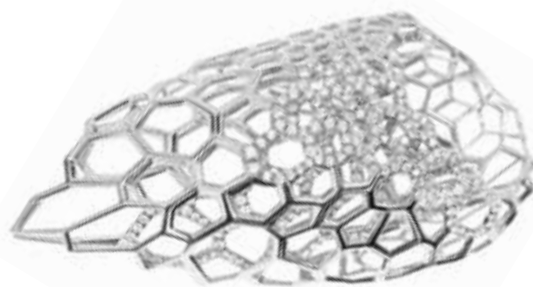
The Orchis stools (2008) were developed using the mathematical principle of non-oriented surfaces – the idea that an object does not possess a distinct inner or outer edge.



The *Z-Chair* (2011) and its subtle play of contrasting corners and curves encapsulates the essence of contemporary design and the research conducted by Zaha Hadid over the last three decades.



Designed for Citco, the *Tau Vases* (2015) appear organic; emerging as a series of intricately rendered pleats expressing the formal complexity of natural growth systems.



Zaha Hadid collaborated with Swiss goldsmiths Caspita on the *Skein* collection (2013), which includes rings and bracelets in 18-carat gold – some featuring precious stones within the delicate latticework.



René Lalique asked Zaha Hadid to design two vases for the *Crystal Architecture* collection (2014): *Manifesto* and *Visio*, which are enhanced by contrasting satin and polished finishes.



The playful nature of these two mirror polished stainless steel vases, designed for Alessi Spa (2005-2006), means they can easily be configured to make a variety of different shapes.



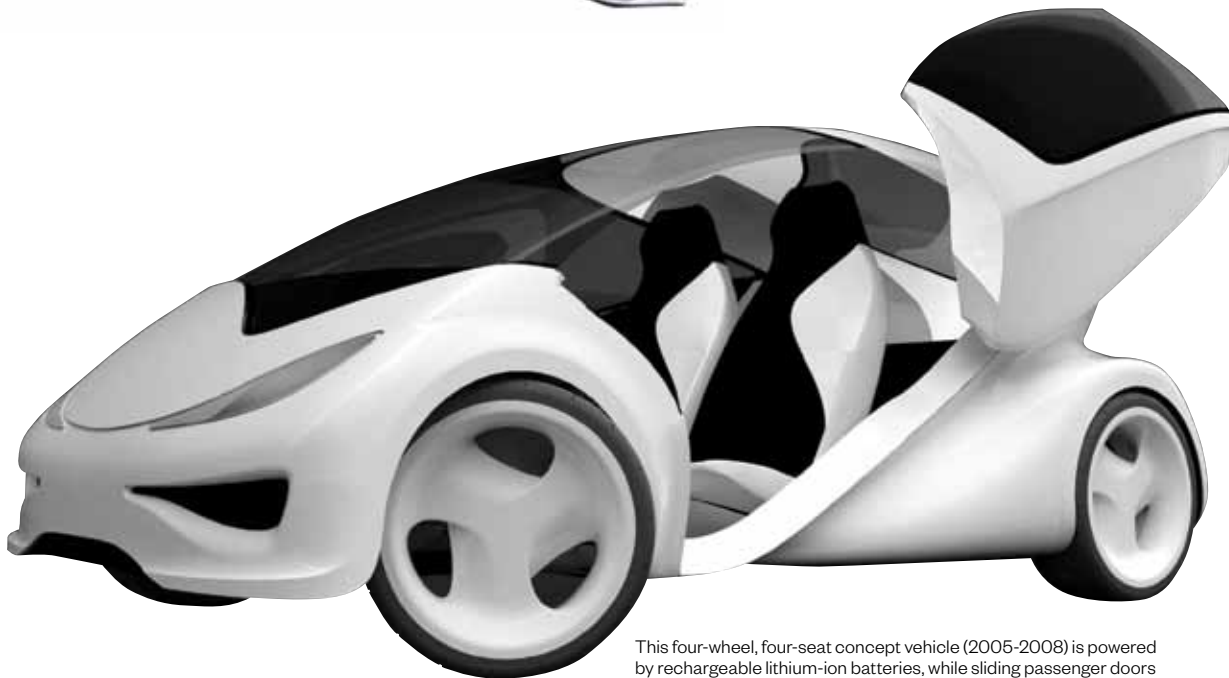
Zaha Hadid's knowledge and expertise of working with complex geometric techniques acted as the catalyst of inspiration for the Braid Double Candelabra which unites sharp directional lines.



The first Zaha Hadid *Homeware Collection* (2014) was inspired by the forms of her architectural work and included the use of contrasting materials such as bone china and modern resins.



The *Seoul Table* (2008), in common with the *Seoul Desk*, is constructed from carbon fibre using a complex process that gives the pieces lightness, strength and a highly textured finish.



This four-wheel, four-seat concept vehicle (2005-2008) is powered by rechargeable lithium-ion batteries, while sliding passenger doors are seamlessly integrated with the sleek aerodynamic body.

alongside their husbands and practice partners... Hadid is the first woman to be honoured in her own right.

Professor Sir Peter Cook, in his Gold Medal citation, stated: "Surely her [Hadid's] work is special.

"For three decades now, she has ventured where few would dare: if Paul Klee took a line for a walk, then Zaha took the surfaces that were driven by that line out for a virtual dance and then deftly folded them over and then took them out for a journey into space."

It is a journey that will continue, as Hadid made clear in her acceptance of the Gold Medal.

She said: "We now see more established female architects all the time.

That doesn't mean it's easy. Sometimes the challenges are immense.

"There has been tremendous change over recent years and we will continue this progress... Part of architecture's job is to make people feel good in the spaces where we live, go to school or where we work – so we must be committed to raising standards.

"Housing, schools and other vital public buildings have always been based on the concept of minimal existence – that shouldn't be the case today. Architects now have the skills and tools to address these critical issues."

Newcomers to Hadid's work will surely be as fascinated by her approach to building projects such as the Guangzhou Opera House and the Sheikh Zayed



PHOTO BY JACOPO SILBERGO

The design of the Liquid Glacial Table (2012) embeds surface complexity and refraction within a powerful fluid dynamic; the table's legs seem to pour from the horizontal in an intense vortex of water frozen in time.



The *Woman* fragrance bottle (2013) was commissioned to mark the 25th anniversary of Donna Karan's fashion house, with whom Hadid and perfumer Anne Flipo collaborated.



The WMF Cutlery Set has been inspired by the creative tension between the formal architectural research of the studio and its explorations into industrial design.



PHOTO BY JACOPO SILBERGO

The shape of the *Zephyr* sofa (2013) was inspired by natural rock formations caused by erosion, while the carved profile incorporates deep backrests and generous undercuts, ensuring plenty of comfort.

Bridge in Abu Dhabi as they are by her take on a new lighting collection, a sofa and even home ware.

Vases and jewellery are just two further areas of design to receive the unique touch of Hadid, who was expected to make a much-anticipated personal appearance at the Leila Heller Gallery.

The largest private art space in the UAE opened only in November, showcasing leading regional and international artists in its three exhibition spaces.

Few are ever likely to rival Hadid, whose daring and imagination have led her to be connected with a series of A-list celebrities, including the musician Pharrell Williams with whom she collaborated on the design of a training shoe.

For an Arab woman to be making waves in a generally male-dominated world has not always sat easily with her rivals and critics.

The final word therefore goes to Sir Peter, who concluded his citation thus: "Such self-confidence is easily accepted in film-makers and football managers, but causes some architects to feel uncomfortable; maybe they're secretly jealous of her unquestionable talent.

"Let's face it, we might have awarded the medal to a worthy, comfortable character. We didn't, we awarded it to Zaha: larger than life, bold as brass and certainly on the case.

"Our heroine. How lucky we are to have her in London."

And now in Dubai, too. ■