

The factors behind Zaha
Hadid's success and the
challenges she overcame



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Abstract

Zaha Hadid's architectural journey emerges from her early exposure to diverse cultures and her natural curiosity sparked at a young age. Born into a family of influence in Baghdad, Iraq, Hadid's upbringing, characterized by travels and exposure to significant buildings, laid the foundation for her prestigious career. Despite facing gender biases in the architectural profession, Hadid's determination motivated her to pursue her passion at the Architectural Association in London, where she improved her visionary skills under the mentorship of renowned architects.

Transitioning from a "paper architect" to a builder of architectural wonders, Hadid's growth period witnessed the realization of her avant-garde designs, overcoming skepticism and challenges. Her distinctive style, marked by fluid forms and unconventional angles, earned international acclaim, resulting in her historic recognition as the first woman to receive the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2004.

Embracing Parametricism as a new architectural paradigm, Hadid's late period demonstrated her adaptability and innovation. From the MAXXI museum in Rome to the London Aquatics Centre, her projects pushed the boundaries of architectural geometry, leaving a lasting mark on the built environment. Despite facing criticism and challenges, Hadid's consistent commitment to progress and creativity elevated her to the prominent position within the architectural community.

Tragically, her early passing in 2016 marked the end of an era, yet her legacy endures through the Zaha Hadid Architects firm, which continues to realize her transformative vision. Currently, her impact is felt worldwide, motivating upcoming generations of architects to question norms and explore new possibilities.

Introduction

Context

Throughout the twentieth century, women navigating careers in architecture confronted formidable challenges, often confined to domestic roles and marginalized by influential figures such as Bruce Goff. Despite a growing presence in the field, female architects struggled with a lack of recognition, while opportunities to design public spaces remained predominantly reserved for male-dominated partnerships. The discouraging sentiments expressed by Pietro Belluschi in 1955 underscored the prevailing biases, suggesting that architecture was a suitable profession for only exceptionally determined girls (Foster, 2017).

Nevertheless, Zaha Hadid, an Iraqi-British architect, emerging onto the architectural scene approximately two decades later, challenged these deep-rooted limitations. Hadid not only became a pioneer but also an enduring inspiration for women and minority architects globally (Foster, 2017). Her journey represents a transformative moment, challenging historical biases that marginalized women within the architectural profession.

Zaha Hadid

This history thesis delves into the historical role of women in architecture, with a specific focus on Zaha Hadid. Chosen for her significance as a woman and a person of color in the field, the thesis aims to explore the intersectionality of these aspects. It seeks to identify the challenges faced by Hadid, examine the factors that contributed to these challenges, and explore how she successfully navigated and overcame them to achieve success.

Despite Zaha Hadid's remarkable success as an architect, being the first woman to receive numerous prestigious awards in the field, she still faced discrimination and challenges throughout her career. In her own words, she highlighted that the significant difficulties she encountered were not solely due to her work but stemmed from her identity as a woman, an Arab, and particularly as an

'Arab Woman' (Van den Heuvel, Tanis, van de Sande, 2023). In a profession where the odds appeared to be stacked against her, she not only exceeded the expectations imposed on female architects but also emerged as a trailblazer in her field. Notably, she holds the distinction of being the first female architect to receive the prestigious Pritzker Prize (Zaha Hadid, 2019).

"I never use the issue about being a woman architect," she told the Guardian in 2004, "but if it helps younger people to know they can break through the glass ceiling, I don't mind that." Even though there is a lot said about her gender and ethnicity, she refused to let these define her or dictate her path. During her interviews she preferred talking about her projects rather than her struggles. Hadid, was the first woman to win the Pritzker, architecture's most prestigious prize, as well as the first female to be awarded the Royal Gold Medal by the Royal Institute of British Architects (Miranda, 2016).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality, a concept rooted in feminist theory, rejects isolating gender, race, class, and other systems of oppression. It explores how these systems mutually construct each other, acknowledging their interconnected nature. Originally aimed at understanding oppression's interactions, it encompasses various social structures like race, gender, class, disability, and more. Intersectionality isn't exclusive to marginalized groups; it's a fundamental aspect of social organization affecting everyone. Recognizing that individuals can experience both privilege and disadvantage across different structures, it emphasizes the need for a nuanced analysis of social dynamics (Weldon, 2008). By examining the intersectionality of Zaha Hadid as both a woman and a person of color, this thesis seeks to draw inspiration and knowledge from her experiences. It recognizes the specific circumstances she navigated and triumphed over, highlighting the importance of acknowledging successful and industrious women and people of color in architecture to ensure their contributions are not overlooked or relegated to obscurity in the annals of history.

As indicated earlier, the thesis centers on

examining the intersectionality of being a woman and a person of color, aiming to uncover the factors contributing to Zaha Hadid's success. To delve into this, it is crucial to analyze Zaha's strategies that played a pivotal role in her success. This involves examining the networks she engaged in, the various professional environments she navigated, and the diverse activities she undertook. By doing so, we can understand the specific strategies she employed within the field.

Zaha Hadid's journey

The study will also explore her early career, including her association with OMA in New York, and trace the transformative moments and game changers that shaped her career trajectory. Additionally, the research will focus on a crucial moment in her life when she considered leaving the profession, after the realization that her competition-winning design could not be built. This period will be followed by an examination of subsequent successful projects leading up to her historic achievement as the first woman to receive the Pritzker Prize.

Furthermore, the thesis will examine instances of resistance she encountered and analyze how she navigated and overcame these challenges, offering insights into how these experiences influenced her work and career choices. Ultimately, the research aims to uncover the broader effects of Zaha Hadid's journey on inspiring others, especially women and people of color, within the field of architecture.

Research question

To gain insight into these issues, this thesis aims to address the following question:

“What factors contributed to Zaha Hadid's success and what challenges did she face as a woman and a person of color in the field of architecture?”

Hypothesis

The thesis suggests that Zaha Hadid's success can be attributed to her distinctive work, strategic mindset, resilience, and the recognition she gained from numerous awards for her innovative projects.

Literature review

This thesis delves into a comprehensive exploration of various works that significantly contribute to the comprehension of women in architecture, individuals of color in the architectural discourse, and the challenges and successes of the renowned architect Zaha Hadid. The literature incorporates diverse perspectives and focuses on different aspects, highlighting both the commonalities and distinctions among the sources.

One of the sources, “Architecture Archives of the Future,” edited by Van den Heuvel, Tanis, and van de Sande (2023), delves into Zaha Hadid's experiences, underscoring discrimination and challenges faced due to her identity as a woman and an Arab. This work sheds light on the intersectionality of Hadid's identity and its impact on her architectural work, exploring projects like Moonsoon and Cardiff Opera House. It accentuates the cultural hybridity evident in Hadid's designs, particularly highlighting the significance of Arabic calligraphy. This source is instrumental in providing insights into Zaha Hadid's struggles.

Another source, “An Overview of Zaha Hadid Biography: a closer look at Architectural and Structural Designs” by Al Khatib and Khoukhi (2019), provides a detailed exploration of Zaha Hadid's life, education, and architectural contributions. It emphasizes her distinctive approach by integrating Suprematism with Deconstruction architecture, resulting in unique designs. The source acknowledges Zaha Hadid's global influence, highlighting her extensive portfolio and recognition as one of the 100 most influential women globally. This article illuminates Zaha Hadid's achievements and success.

Another source, “Dame Zaha Hadid, Architect: Her history, style, and how they uniquely qualified her to design the Guangzhou Opera House” by Allison Foster (2017), outlines Zaha Hadid's accolades, highlighting the significance of her international acclaim as a woman architect amidst challenges posed by gender and cultural biases. Foster also explores Hadid's multicultural experiences and how her Iraqi heritage influences her personal style and architectural approach. In the 2016 article “Zaha Hadid Architects,” Berengo and Schumacher delve into Zaha

Hadid's architectural journey, tracing her evolution from early experimentation to proficiency with digital tools. This article provides valuable insights into Hadid's projects, which serve as essential references for the theoretical framework of this thesis. The article "Zaha Hadid: Iraqi-British Architect and Painter" from *The Art Story* (2019, July 8) comprehensively explores Zaha Hadid's life and career, spanning her accomplishments, biography, childhood, education, early training, growth period, late period, death, legacy, influences, and connections. It serves as an invaluable resource for gaining insight into her background and professional journey.

These sources collectively address gender-related issues in architecture, providing diverse perspectives on Zaha Hadid's life and career. They explore her experiences, challenges, and contributions as a woman architect, highlighting the obstacles of gender and cultural biases. Delving into Hadid's upbringing, education, and professional journey, they illuminate the intersectionality of her identity and the complexities she faced. Through an examination of her projects and achievements, these sources contribute to a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in architecture, particularly the challenges encountered by women, particularly women of color.

Methodology

The methodology for this thesis involves a thorough literature review, with a specific focus on Zaha Hadid. Multiple sources will be examined and compared to ensure the accuracy of the findings. A critical interpretation of the gathered data to provide nuanced insights and perspectives on the subject matter. Additionally, interviews featuring Zaha Hadid will be analyzed to extract valuable insights directly from the architect herself. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of the Zaha Hadid archive will be conducted to augment the information gathered from other sources. This comprehensive approach ensures a robust foundation for addressing the research question and contributes to the depth and credibility of the study.

Thesis structure

This thesis delves into key themes surrounding Zaha Hadid's life and career. Beginning with the education and early life of Zaha Hadid, it delves into her cultural influences as a Middle Eastern immigrant and her academic journey, setting the stage for her future endeavors. Transitioning to the professional domain, the narrative unfolds Zaha Hadid's working life, tracing her impactful journey at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture and the founding of Zaha Hadid Architects. A closer look at the challenges faced by Zaha Hadid as a female architect of color provides insights into specific obstacles she overcame. The exploration of her success strategies analyzes achievements, resilience, and strategies for recognition, shedding light on her unique approach in a male-dominated field. This thesis is structured into three chapters, each representing distinct periods in the life of Zaha Hadid. Chapter one delves into her childhood and early career at OMA, while chapter two examines her life from the inception of her first project. Chapter 3 begins with her first major project. The conclusion synthesizes the findings presented throughout the thesis. Additionally, the thesis includes a bibliography, providing an exploration of Hadid's influential journey.

Timeline

Below is a timeline I've illustrated outlining the life of Zaha Hadid: including her Early Period, Growth Period, and Late Period. This comprehensive chronology highlights significant moments, landmark projects, and prestigious awards spanning her life from birth on October 31, 1950, to her passing on March 31, 2016, and beyond. Through textual descriptions and accompanying images, the timeline presents a captivating narrative of Hadid's evolution as an architect and the enduring legacy she leaves behind. For this timeline, primary reliance is placed on the article "Zaha Hadid - 'From Birth Till The RIBA Royal Gold Medal', 2015." However, to ensure accuracy, additional sources are consulted for fact-checking purposes, particularly in verifying dates.

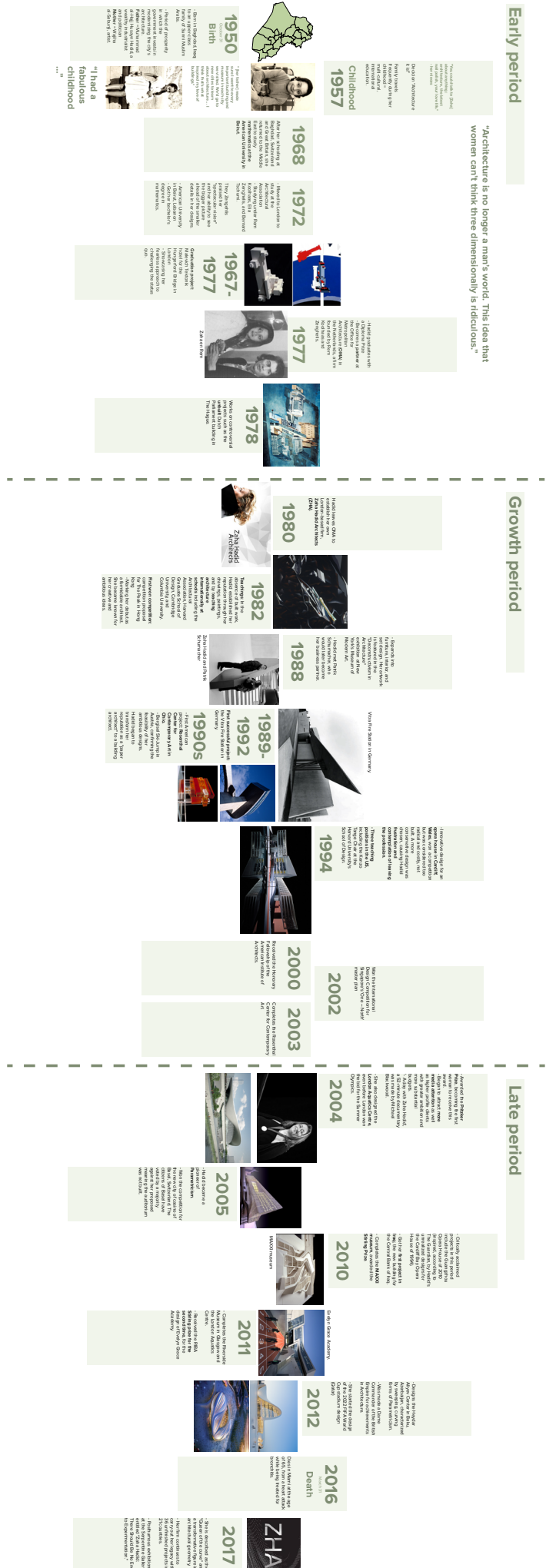


Figure 1 Timeline Zaha Hadid, Sodaba Khalili

Chapter one: Early Period

This chapter provides insight into the early life and career of Zaha Hadid, an architect whose legacy resonates throughout the world of architecture. Born in Baghdad, Iraq, Hadid's early years were shaped by the influence of her parents. From a young age, her fascination with building design was ignited, setting her on a path towards architectural greatness. Her multicultural upbringing, her determination to pursue architecture despite societal norms, and the evolution of her visionary design philosophy is to be explored. It is important to look at these aspects and to analyze by the information explored what factors contributed to Zaha Hadid's success in her early years.

Zaha Mohammed Hussein Hadid Al-Lahibi, born on October 31, 1950, into a prosperous family in Baghdad, Iraq, was influenced by



Figure 2 Zaha Hadid, the child. ("How Zaha Hadid Became Zaha Hadid - Five Important Days in Her Life!", 2022).

her artistic mother, Wajiha al-Sabunji, and her father, a progressive businessman actively engaged in politics. Her father, Mohammed Hadid, served as the former Iraqi finance minister in Prime Minister Abdul Karim Qasim's government, which came into power following the 1958 coup (Khatib, 2019). It is remarkable that Hadid was raised in a well-educated and artistic family. This upbringing likely had a significant impact on her thinking and career choices. Moreover, given her father's prominence in government, they likely had connections with many educated individuals occupying high positions in government, thus providing valuable networks.

At the age of six, her interest in building design was sparked by the architect working on her aunt's new home, a friend of her father's who would bring designs during visits. Upon seeing the plans and model in the living room, Hadid felt a subtle "trigger" that sparked her curiosity about architecture. This curiosity led to a childhood spent reading books and quietly exploring images of the ancient Mesopotamian city of Sumer, captured by the explorer Wilfred Thesiger, a friend of her father (Foster, 2017). It's evident from this that her father's connections provided her with the knowledge and opportunity to delve into the world of architecture. This early exposure is noteworthy, showcasing her privileged access to observe the design process of her aunt's new home.

By eleven, Hadid had committed to architecture, supported by her parents who encouraged her to design interiors in their home. Her father's commitment to exposing her to significant buildings during travels further fueled her passion. She reflected on the influence of traveling with her father: "[He] ensured I visited significant buildings and museums in every city we explored. Our trips to new cities were educational, aiming to learn about architecture... I believe that's what fueled my appreciation for buildings." (Zaha Hadid, 2019) This early exposure, coupled



Figure 3 Zaha Hadid, the teenager. (Ponsford & Jamshed, “How my childhood made me the designer I am today”, 2015).

with the multicultural experiences gained from travels to London and beyond, provided her with a wealth of perspectives and insights. It underscores the privileged position of her upbringing in a prosperous family, which not only facilitated her exposure to diverse architectural works but also nurtured her intellectual and creative growth from a young age.

Since the age of 12, Zaha’s dream of becoming an architect grew, but she wasn’t inclined to attend Cambridge University and had hoped to go to the American University of Beirut. During her childhood, she went to various primary schools with diverse religious backgrounds, including French-speaking Catholic nuns school in Baghdad and Switzerland. At the age of 16, she was

enrolled in boarding schools in England and Switzerland. Her two brothers, Foulath and Haytham, who were 16 years older, had studied at Cambridge University in London, and Zaha spent time with them there. In 1968, she joined the American University to study mathematics, deliberately avoiding architecture due to the program’s location within the faculty of engineering. She wasn’t comfortable being the only female student among groups of male students (Khatib, 2019). It’s worth noting that Zaha struggled with the scarcity of female representation in engineering studies, and she would have appreciated the presence of more women in her field.

In 1971, Zaha graduated with a Bachelor of Mathematics from the American University of Beirut. She then moved to London in 1972, at the age of twenty-two, enrolling at the Architectural Society College. She later gained British citizenship. Her entry into architecture education happened at the Architectural Association (AA), the oldest independent architectural college in the UK. These multicultural experiences offered diverse opportunities to engage with various cities and individuals, enriching the spectrum of inspiration for Hadid’s architectural work (Foster, 2017; Zaha Hadid, 2019). It is evident that having attended schools with diverse cultural backgrounds and studied in prominent cities, Zaha’s early exposure to multiculturalism and many travels significantly contributed to her understanding of different people, cultures, and perspectives. This underscores the profound impact of her education in a prestigious London university, where she gained invaluable knowledge and insights.

In AA in London, under the guidance of Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis, and Bernard Tschumi, her talent was acknowledged. Zenghelis admired her “spectacular vision” and her ability to grasp the broader perspective ahead of the finer details in her designs (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This highlights the significant recognition Zaha Hadid received from renowned architects, like Koolhaas and Zenghelis, during her studies, showcasing the exceptional quality of her work even at that early stage. Thus, her time at AA not only contributed to her professional

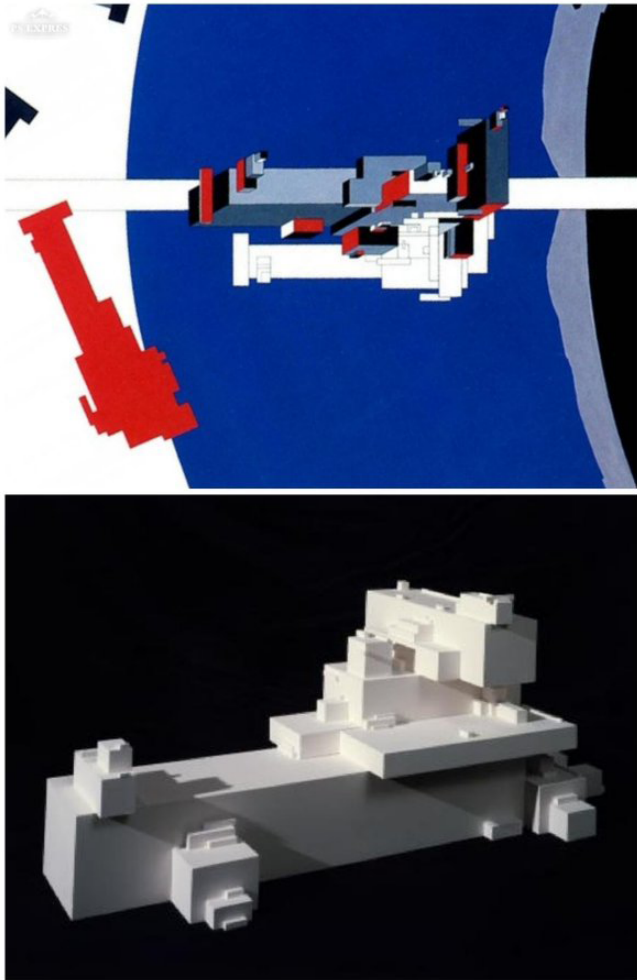


Figure 4 Zaha Hadid's graduation project: Malevich's Tektonik. ("How Zaha Hadid Became Zaha Hadid - Five Important Days in Her Life!", 2022).

network but also underscored the remarkable nature of her architectural abilities. In the Western world, women's progress in traditionally male-dominated professions has been slow. Architecture stands out for its notably delayed recognition of women within the field. The beginning of the modern architect profession traces back to Elizabethan England in 1563 when John Shute claimed the title of architect. Astonishingly, it took 335 years for women to be professionally involved in architecture in England. Ethel Charles became the first woman accepted to the Royal Institute of British Architects sixty years after its founding in 1898. The Architectural Association School of Architecture, Hadid's alma mater in England, was founded a few years after the Royal Institute and only allowed women into its ranks at the turn of the century in 1900 (Foster, 2017). This highlights the fact

that Zaha Hadid's alma mater only admitted women two years after the first woman was accepted into the Royal Institute of British Architecture. In 1972, seventy-two years after women were first admitted to the Architectural Association, Zaha Hadid pursued her studies there. This illustrates that women in architecture were still relatively new to the field during that time. Despite the slow progress of women's recognition in architecture, Hadid's journey resisted norms. In her fourth year at university, she designed the Malevich Tektonik hotel for the Hungerford Bridge on the River Thames in London, showcasing her fearless challenge to architectural norms. The radical project drew inspiration from Kazimir Malevich's Suprematist paintings, marking her anti-design movement (Khatib, 2019). In 1977, Hadid was honored for her graduation project with the Diploma Prize at AA, with Koolhaas describing her as "a planet in her own orbit" during the ceremony (Zaha Hadid, 2019) Figure 4 shows her graduation project. The vibrant discussions, idea defenses, and design explorations fostered by the close relationships between students and faculty members at AA may (Khatib, 2019) have influenced Hadid's fearless and radical approach to her projects. In 1977 she became a partner at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) in the Netherlands, founded by Koolhaas and Zenghelis (figure 5). After contributing to notable projects like the unbuilt Dutch Parliament building in the Hague (1978), Hadid left to establish her London-based firm, Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA), in 1980 (figure 6), (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This highlights how her connections and mentorship at AA, particularly with Koolhaas and Zenghelis, likely played a pivotal role in her joining the OMA office, possibly through their invitation. It underscores the valuable networks she cultivated during her studies. Her experience at OMA proved to be a significant and enriching step in her early career, providing her with invaluable insights and opportunities. Subsequently, after gaining substantial experience, she made the decision to launch her own architectural firm. Zaha Hadid's architectural philosophy embraced various schools of thought,



Figure 5 Zaha and Rem in the 70s. (The Editors, 2013, "Photo of the Day: Hanging Out With Zaha and Rem in the 70s (Updated!)" 2022).

notably Suprematism, an abstract art form by Kazimir Malevitch, and Deconstructivism or Deconstruction architecture that emerged in the early 1980s. Hadid fused the art of supremacy with deconstruction architecture, resulting in a unique style represented in five architectural patterns: the Suprematist or Deconstructivist, the topographical, the style of architectural designs with water forms, the architectural style with organic shapes, and the borderline design style or the Parametric Architectural form (Khatib, 2019).

Throughout her professional journey, Hadid continued to paint, employing abstraction to develop new designs. Dissatisfied with the traditional system of architectural drawing, she pursued a new means of representation. Through abstraction, she challenged the conventional perception of a building as a solid mass, exploring adventurous spatial relationships between building elements. These principles resulted in her 1982 competition-winning proposal for The Peak, a mountainside leisure center in Hong Kong. Although the project was never realized, it marked her debut as a respected architect,

gaining recognition for her creative and ambitious ideas (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This demonstrates Hadid's innovative spirit and dedication to pushing boundaries in architecture. Through her continuous exploration of different styles and techniques, coupled with her willingness to take bold and radical decisions, she was able to achieve success, winning competitions just two years after establishing her own architectural firm.



Figure 6 Zaha Hadid Architects. (Zaha Hadid (1950-2016), z.d.).

Chapter two: Growth Period

This chapter delves into Zaha Hadid's career journey, highlighting pivotal moments such as her partnership with Patrik Schumacher and the completion of her first built project, exploring their impact on Hadid's career trajectory. It further examines the challenges she encountered and how she navigated them, alongside discussing the impact of her multicultural upbringing on her architectural aesthetic. Additionally, her approach to design, her notable projects, and the recognition she received despite facing obstacles in a male-dominated field will be explored.

In the absence of realized architectural projects, Zaha Hadid established her reputation through drawings and paintings. She had an international teaching career that extended until 1987, spanning esteemed institutions such as the Architectural Association, Harvard Graduate School of Design, Yale University, Cambridge University, Columbia University, and the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. Additionally, she explored various design fields, including furniture, interiors, and set design. Notably, her artwork was featured in the 1988 exhibition "Deconstructivism in Architecture" at New York's Museum of Modern Art, curated by Philip Johnson and Mark Wigley (Berengo & Schumacher, 2016; Zaha Hadid, 2019). With few realized projects, Hadid developed her skills in drawing, painting, and teaching at diverse universities worldwide. This experience likely contributed to broadening her multicultural perspective, fostering new connections, and acquiring new knowledge. During this period, she crossed paths with Patrik Schumacher, an architecture student at the time, who would later become her business partner (figure 7). Schumacher joined Zaha Hadid in 1988. Despite never identifying as a Deconstructivist, Hadid maintained an interest in its sculptural architecture characterized by dramatic angles (Zaha Hadid, 2019). In the 1990s, Zaha Hadid successfully

transitioned from being labeled a "paper architect" to becoming a practitioner who brought her visionary designs from paper to tangible construction. This transformation marked a significant shift in her career, overcoming previous challenges and earning her recognition as a builder of innovative architectural wonders. Hadid's first realized project was the Vitra Fire Station in Weil am Rhein, Germany (1991-93) (figure 8). Despite her admired yet rejected avant-garde style, Hadid persevered and founded Zaha Hadid Architects in 1979, completing her first building, the Vitra Fire Station, in 1993 (Berengo & Schumacher, 2016). It's quite remarkable that Zaha Hadid's first built project happened shortly after Patrik Schumacher partnered with her. It took 14 years for her architectural office to realize a project, which is quite uncommon in the industry. Partnering with Schumacher could have been a strategic move for Hadid, considering his status as a German male in a field predominantly dominated by men. Moreover, Schumacher's relatively young age when he joined Zaha



Figure 7 Hadid & her business partner, Schumacher. (Zaha HADID & Patrik SCHUMACHER, z.d.).



Figure 8 Hadid's first realized project was the Vitra Fire Station in Weil am Rhein, Germany (1991-93). (Zaha Hadid (1950-2016), z.d.).

Hadid Architects likely gave Hadid a level of authority in decision-making, as she was the senior figure in their collaboration. Despite the admiration for her work, her avant-garde designs faced skepticism for construction. The rejection reached a significant point with her 1994 competition-winning design for an opera house in Cardiff, Wales, where a more conservative design was chosen for cost considerations. This led Hadid to consider leaving the profession. She struggled to understand the client's unwillingness to take on the ambitious design, insisting her project "could easily be done." (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This highlights the gravity of the situation and her internal struggle, portraying it as a significant challenge she faced. However, it's important to approach this information with skepticism. Despite claims of Hadid contemplating leaving the profession, the extent of this contemplation is ambiguous, as there isn't enough evidence to fully support it. Moreover, the media's portrayal of Hadid may have twisted interpretations of her intentions and the challenges she encountered. The Vitra Fire Station in Germany marked a turning point, leading to more projects in Europe, including a housing project in Berlin, exhibition spaces in London's Millennium Dome (1999), and contributions to Weil am Rhein's horticultural festival (1997-99). Hadid described this transformative period as "the years when I didn't sleep for four nights in a row, or weeks... It was a very exciting time"

(Zaha Hadid, 2019). This underscores the significance of these years in her career, contradicting media reports suggesting she considered leaving the profession. Notably, all of these achievements occurred after 14 years, coinciding with Schumacher's arrival at her architectural firm.

Her designs gained validation with the construction of projects like the Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art in Cincinnati, Ohio, and the Bergisel Ski-Jump in Innsbruck, Austria, in the late 1990s. The former was acknowledged by The New York Times as the "most important American building to be completed since the Cold War" and marked the first American museum designed by a woman (Zaha Hadid, 2019). Hadid's global perspective, shaped by her unique life experiences, is evident in the Guangzhou Opera House's design, showcasing her theme of interaction between different peoples (Foster, 2017). This highlights the positive influence of her multicultural upbringing on her later architectural works later in her career.

Despite facing common sexist attitudes directed at successful women in various professional fields, Zaha Hadid encountered labels such as "frightening" and "a diva." Unfortunately, discussions often centered more on her personal choices regarding clothing, makeup, and hairstyle rather than her substantial body of work. Despite numerous international awards and competition successes, her representation in museum reports was often reduced to "Zaha Hadid (the only woman)," emphasizing her gender rather than her architectural proficiency. This contrasted sharply with male architects, who were described in terms of their sources of inspiration. Despite these challenges, Hadid reflected on her enduring success, acknowledging the extended struggle that toughened her and made her more precise, potentially reflected in her architectural work. She recognized that resistance persists, emphasizing the need for confidence as a woman in architecture (Foster 2017). This demonstrates that Zaha Hadid's success was achieved despite facing numerous challenges and enduring negative commentary, which often focused on her appearance and gender rather than

her architectural achievements. Sadly, this trend continues today, with undue attention placed on superficial aspects rather than her substantial body of work. However, Hadid consistently prioritized her work, though she did not shy away from acknowledging her struggles.

Zaha Hadid's remarkable accomplishments extend to over 208 projects worldwide, showcasing distinctive and unconventional architectural designs. Her notable awards include recognition from the Japan Art Society, an honorary doctorate from the American University of Beirut, and the Stirling Award from the Royal Institute of British Architects. UNESCO also honored her with the title "Artist for Peace." Beyond her architectural contributions, she served as a visiting professor at prestigious universities. These achievements reflect her unwavering dedication and diligence, overcoming numerous challenges and navigating various stations throughout her career (Khatib, 2019). These successes and awards further propelled her towards success, enabling her to persevere in her career despite the challenges she faced.

Chapter three: Late Period

The upcoming chapter provides insight into Zaha Hadid's groundbreaking achievements and the challenges she faced throughout her career. From being the first woman to receive prestigious architectural awards to her innovative design approaches and the complexities of her project undertakings, this chapter explores how Hadid's legacy continues to shape the architectural landscape today. Additionally, the influence of her multicultural background, the recognition she garnered, and the lasting impact of her work on the architectural community will be discussed.



Figure 9 Zaha Hadid Becomes the First Woman to Receive the Pritzker Architecture Prize. ("How Zaha Hadid Became Zaha Hadid - Five Important Days in Her Life!", 2022).

Zaha Hadid achieved international recognition with the Pritzker Architecture Prize in 2004, often considered as the Nobel Prize of architecture (Berengo & Schumacher, 2016). Known for her groundbreaking built, theoretical, and academic work, Hadid's projects reflect over thirty years of exploration and research in urbanism, architecture, and design. Her Pritzker Prize in 2004 marked a pivotal moment in her career, making her the first woman to receive this prestigious architectural award (figure 9). Thomas Pritzker, the president of the foundation, acknowledged Hadid's relatively small body of work but emphasized the acclaim

she earned and the promise her energy and ideas held for the future. As the first woman to receive the most prestigious architectural award, this recognition elevated her profile, attracting more media attention and higher-profile clients with substantial budgets, allowing her to pursue even more ambitious designs (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This highlights that Hadid was the first woman to receive such a prestigious award, leading to significant media attention and increased recognition for her work. This recognition was a testament to the quality of her work and years of dedication and hard work.

The Phaeno Science Center in Wolfsburg, Germany (2005), became a landmark project, introducing Parametricism and showcasing Hadid's departure from Deconstructivism. Hadid became a pioneer of this approach, which was termed Parametricism.

Parametricism, according to Schumacher, succeeded modernism as a new wave of systematic innovation, shaping a stylistic shift in Hadid's work. Notable projects during this period include the MAXXI museum (2010), the Guangzhou Opera House (2010), the Riverside Museum in Glasgow (2011), and the London Aquatics Centre (2011).

Zaha Hadid's MAXXI museum, recognized with the Stirling Prize, marked one of her final projects in her earlier style (figure 10).

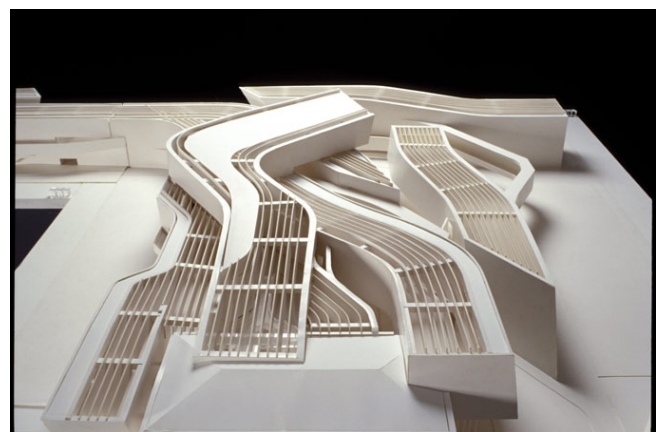


Figure 10 Hadid's MAXXI museum, awarded the Stirling Prize. (Zaha Hadid Architects Maxxi Museum Rome, z.d.)

Subsequently, her design for the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, Azerbaijan, unveiled in 2012, showcased the distinctive and flowing forms associated with Parametricism. The later projects demonstrated her adaptability to new architectural styles and a more open-minded approach to architecture in Britain (Zaha Hadid, 2019). Hadid was an innovative thinker, pioneering various architectural styles and staying abreast of new technologies. Her pioneering work in parametricism further elevated her fame and success, showcasing her open-minded and innovative character. During this period, Zaha Hadid received acclaim for several notable projects, including the Guangzhou Opera House in 2010, which, as per The Guardian, drew inspiration from her earlier, unrealized designs for the Cardiff Bay Opera House in 1994. Additionally, her commendable works encompassed The Riverside Museum in Glasgow (2011) and the London Aquatics Centre (2011) (figure 11). Notably, these projects marked Hadid's initial ventures into construction on British soil, despite having acquired British citizenship and establishing her practice in London. Hadid attributed this breakthrough to a newfound open-mindedness in British architecture, stating, "Something has changed radically here (in Britain) recently. There is no resistance to the new anymore" (Zaha Hadid, 2019). It's also remarkable that more than 30 years elapsed after her graduation in the UK before she embarked on a project in her migrated country. While it's typically uncommon for architects to begin their careers by working internationally, Hadid's unique circumstances contributed to her ability to design projects across borders. Her international education and multicultural background likely facilitated her success in working on projects globally. Revered as the "Queen of Curve," her innovative designs, such as the MAXXI National Museum in Rome, the 2012 Olympic Games Aquatics Center in London, and the Guangzhou Opera House in China, have garnered global acclaim (Foster, 2017). While Zaha Hadid's innovative architectural designs garnered praise from many, critics raised concerns about the high costs and scale of her projects. Some projects faced pressure to be scaled back or abandoned

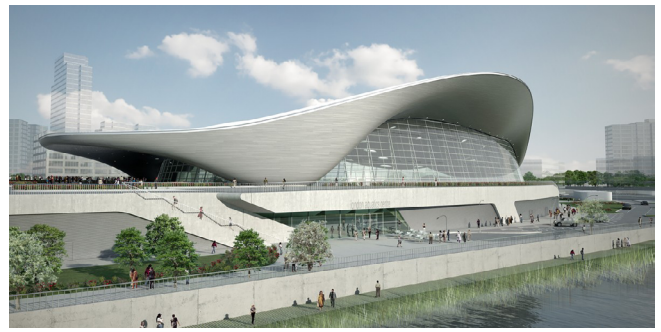


Figure 11 Hadid's London Aquatics Centre (2011). ("London Aquatics Centre for 2012 Summer Olympics / Zaha Hadid Architects" 18 Aug 2011).

due to site constraints and budget limitations. Notably, the London Aquatics Centre underwent modifications to become a scaled-back design, and plans for the New National Stadium for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo were discarded due to financial considerations (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This demonstrates that even after such a long career, Hadid encountered challenges. These challenges often revolved around the scale and high costs of her projects, given their bold and radical nature.

Zaha Hadid's significant contributions to the architectural profession have garnered recognition from esteemed institutions worldwide. Her achievements include being listed on the Forbes List of the 'World's Most Powerful Women' and receiving the 'Praemium Imperiale' from the Japan Art Association. Notably, her architectural prowess earned her the Stirling Prize in 2010 and 2011, a prestigious accolade presented by the Royal Institute of British Architects. Hadid's accolades also extend to UNESCO naming her an 'Artist for Peace,' the Republic of France honoring her with the 'Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres,' and TIME magazine featuring her in their '100 Most Influential People in the World' list. In 2012, Queen Elizabeth II conferred upon Zaha Hadid the title of Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, and in February 2016, she was posthumously awarded the Royal Gold Medal (Berengo & Schumacher, 2016). This highlights the extensive recognition she received for her achievements in the field of architecture, transcending gender barriers and achieving global acclaim.

In 2014, Hadid's firm faced criticism when she responded to reports of poor working conditions on construction sites in Qatar, where her Al Wakrah Stadium for the 2022 World Cup was planned (figure 12). Hadid argued that ensuring safe working conditions was not solely her responsibility as an architect. (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This presented a difficult dilemma, given the competitive nature of the architecture industry. As a woman who had tirelessly pursued opportunities on such large-scale projects, it was challenging for her to refuse. She likely recognized that if she declined, someone else would step in. This doesn't necessarily reflect on her character, particularly considering her own background as a migrant, which likely offered valuable perspective on such matters. It's simple for the media to dictate decisions from afar, but understanding the complexities of these choices requires walking in her shoes.

Despite being unable to witness the completion of structures based on her designs in her homeland, Zaha Hadid utilized her life experiences and cultural insights to create architectural projects in foreign lands. Her ability to work successfully abroad is particularly noteworthy in the context of architecture representing a city and its culture. Hadid's unique qualifications, stemming from her multicultural perspective, experiences in navigating the male-dominated architectural world, and distinctive design style, uniquely equipped her to design culturally significant structures like the Guangzhou Opera House. Today, this iconic building stands not only as a reflection of Guangzhou's city and culture but also represents Hadid's distinct viewpoint. This expertise extends to many of her projects (Foster, 2017). Once again, this underscores how her diverse experiences and multicultural encounters have partly contributed to her successes.

Hadid's impact extended beyond her architectural achievements. Her relationships with high-profile figures like Frank Gehry and Norman Foster highlighted her influential position in the architectural community. At her death, Foster spoke of their close friendship and mutual respect, emphasizing Hadid's role as a dear friend (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This

demonstrates her strong networks. She was acquainted with several renowned architects in the field, such as Frank Gehry, which she may have strategically leveraged to advance further in the field of architecture. Influenced by her parents' progressive outlook, Hadid believed in progress and the role of creativity in advancing it, challenging existing typologies and shifting the geometry of buildings (Zaha Hadid, 2019). This highlights the influence of her parents on her creative and progressive mindset. Regrettably, Zaha Hadid passed away on March 31, 2016, at the age of 65, in Miami, Florida, due to a heart attack while being treated for bronchitis. Despite her untimely death, her legacy lives on through the Zaha Hadid Architects firm, which continues to create transformative spaces (Foster, 2017). Today, the Zaha Hadid Architects firm remains committed to carrying out her transformative vision, overseeing 36 unfinished projects in 21 countries (Zaha Hadid, 2019).



Figure 12 Hadid's London Aquatics Centre (2011). (Khatri, "First World Cup stadium in Qatar to be built in Al Wakrah", 2013).

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore the factors contributing to Zaha Hadid's success and the challenges she faced as a woman and person of color in architecture. It hypothesized that Hadid's success derived from her unique architectural vision, strategic mindset, resilience, and recognition through prestigious awards for her projects.

Chapter one explored Zaha Hadid's early life and professional journey. Zaha Hadid's upbringing in a well-educated and artistic family, coupled with their connections, provided her with **valuable networks and early exposure to the world of architecture**. Her **multicultural upbringing and international education** broadened her worldview, fostering a deep understanding of diverse cultures, perspectives, and architectural styles, nurturing her intellectual and creative development. Hadid's **education at prestigious institutions** like the Architectural Association (AA) in London nurtured her intellectual and creative growth. Her time at AA, **receiving recognition from renowned architects like Koolhaas, Zenghelis, and Gehry**, influenced her bold approach to architecture and contributed to her success. The mentorship and connections she cultivated during her studies and early career, including **her time at OMA**, played a significant role in her success. Hadid's innovative spirit and dedication to pushing boundaries in architecture led to her significant achievements, including winning competitions shortly after establishing her own architectural firm. Early in her career, Hadid encountered a **period of skill development and diverse experiences**, including teaching at various universities worldwide due to the limited number of realized projects. **Her collaboration with Patrik Schumacher** proved pivotal, leading to her first realized project. This partnership may have been strategic, considering Schumacher's status as a German male and his relatively young age upon joining Zaha Hadid Architects,

which likely afforded Hadid a higher level of decision-making authority as the senior figure in their collaboration. Despite the **media's attempt to portray her negatively**, particularly regarding her appearance and gender, Hadid consistently prioritized discussing her work. Her resilience in the face of challenges and her focus on architectural excellence are evident in her numerous successes and awards, which propelled her career forward.

Zaha Hadid's achievements, including being the first woman to receive prestigious architectural awards, garnered significant **media attention**. **Challenges, particularly related to project scale and costs**, persisted throughout her career, yet her extensive recognition transcended gender barriers and earned global acclaim.

In summary, several factors contributed to Hadid's success. Her upbringing in a well-educated, artistic family exposed her to the world of architecture early on and provided valuable networks. Multicultural experiences and international education broadened her perspective and fueled creative development resulting in international projects. Her time at prestigious institutions like the Architectural Association was crucial which partly led to recognition from renowned architects and her time at OMA, which again contributed to her success. Strategic collaboration with Patrik Schumacher and groundbreaking achievements, including being the first woman to receive prestigious architectural awards, garnered positive media attention. Challenges included negative media scrutiny and issues with project scale and costs.

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Ahrentzen, S. (2003). The space between the studs: feminism and architecture. *Signs*, 29(1), 179–206. <https://doi.org/10.1086/375675>
The author discusses the development of feminist discourse in architecture since a 1979 symposium. Despite progress in feminist writings and projects addressing gender in the built environment, feminism is still viewed skeptically in the architectural field. The article examines overlooked or undervalued aspects of feminist perspectives in architecture, focusing on understanding the implications of neglecting these aspects.

BBC News. (2016, 1 april). Zaha Hadid: A look back at her work - BBC News [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3Bhv2T8Naw>
This highlights Zaha Hadid's desire to focus on her work while acknowledging the challenges she faced due to her gender. Despite recognition of her exceptional work, the media here described as short-tempered and difficult.

Booth, R. (2016, 1 april). Architects speak out about industry sexism in tributes to Zaha Hadid. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/apr/01/architects-speak-out-industry-sexism-tributes-zaha-hadid>
Hadid's passing underscored the ongoing lack of female representation in top positions in architecture. Other female architects have also shared experiences of sexism, facing harsh judgment and discrimination from clients and colleagues. With only 24% of UK architects being women, a substantial gender gap persists.

Foster, A. (2017). Dame Zaha Hadid, Architect: Her history, style, and how they uniquely qualified her to design the Guangzhou Opera House. *AWE (A Woman's Experience)*. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/awe/vol4/iss1/22>
This summarizes Zaha Hadid's achievements, emphasizing her global

recognition as a female architect despite facing challenges related to gender and cultural biases. Foster also delves into Hadid's multicultural background and discusses how her Iraqi heritage shapes both her personal style and architectural philosophy.

Miranda, C. A. (2016, 4 april). Why we talk about Zaha Hadid's gender and ethnicity even though her architecture transcended both - Los Angeles Times. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-zaha-hadid-women-in-architecture-20160331-column.html>
Hadid constantly pushed design limits, being the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize and the Royal Gold Medal. The article reflects her impact as a role model while discussing persistent gender and diversity issues in the field. It acknowledges the progress made by women in architecture but emphasizes the ongoing challenges and the need for more representation.

Omar Al Khatib*, Maatouk Khoukhi. An Overview of Zaha Hadid Biography: a closer look at Architectural and Structural Designs. *Cur Trends Civil & Struct Eng*. 4(4): 2019. CTCSE.MS.ID.000591.
This offers a thorough look into Zaha Hadid's life, education, and architectural impact, highlighting her innovative integration of diverse architectural styles. It recognizes her global influence, noting her inclusion among the world's 100 most influential women. Overall, the article celebrates Hadid's achievements and success.

Van den Heuvel, D., Tanis, F., & van de Sande, W. M. (Eds.) (2023). *Architecture Archives of the Future*. TU Delft/Het Nieuwe Instituut.
This explores Zaha Hadid's challenges due to her identity as a woman and an Arab, highlighting how it influenced her architectural work. It underscores the cultural fusion in her designs, especially the

significance of Arabic calligraphy.

Weldon, S. L. (2008). Intersectionality. Politics, gender, and concepts: Theory and methodology, 193-218.

Zaha Hadid: IRAQI-BRITISH ARCHITECT AND PAINTER. (2019, July 8). The Art Story. Retrieved March 5, 2024, from <https://www.theartstory.org/artist/hadid-zaha/>

This article covers Zaha Hadid's accomplishments, biography, childhood, education, early training, growth period, late period, death, legacy, influences, and connections. It serves as a valuable resource for gaining a thorough understanding of her background and career.

<https://www.zaha-hadid.com/archive/>

The website is a dedicated archive showcasing the work and legacy of Zaha Hadid. It features information, images, and details about Hadid's architectural projects and design philosophy.

Zaha Hadid - "From birth till the RIBA Royal Gold Medal". (2015, 24 september). ZingyHomes. <https://www.zingyhomes.com/latest-trends/architect-zaha-hadid-life-history-timeline-biography/>

The website serves as a resource for creating the timeline for the thesis, offering information, images, and details about Zaha Hadid's architectural projects and personal life, along with associated dates.

Berengo, A., & Schumacher, P. (2016). Zaha Hadid Architects.

The article explores Zaha Hadid's architectural journey, from initial experimentation to mastery of digital tools, offering key insights into her projects crucial for the thesis's theoretical framework.

How Zaha Hadid Became Zaha Hadid - Five Important Days in her Life! - Arch2O.com. (2022, 22 oktober). Arch2O.com. <https://www.arch2o.com/how-zaha-hadid-became-zaha-hadid/>

The website provides information, images, and details regarding Zaha Hadid's personal life and five significant milestones, each with corresponding dates.

Images:

How Zaha Hadid Became Zaha Hadid - Five Important Days in her Life! - Arch2O.com. (2022, 22 oktober). Arch2O.com. <https://www.arch2o.com/how-zaha-hadid-became-zaha-hadid/>

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