

Press Release

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NEW DIRECTOR ANNOUNCED FOR ZAHA HADID FOUNDATION



Aric Chen

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The **Zaha Hadid Foundation** is pleased to announce the appointment of the American architecture and design curator and writer **Aric Chen** as its new Director.

Since 2021, Chen has been the General and Artistic Director of the Nieuwe Instituut, the Netherlands' national museum and institute for architecture, design and digital culture, in Rotterdam. In this role, he led a public institution with around 120 staff that holds the 4 million-item National Collection of Dutch Architecture and Urban Planning; presents a dynamic programme of exhibitions and events; is known for its forward-thinking, cross-disciplinary research and its active role in talent development, internationalisation, and culture and heritage policy; and commissions the Dutch pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale, alongside other activities and international collaborations.

Prior to assuming his role at Nieuwe Instituut in 2021, Chen served as Professor and Founding Director of the Curatorial Lab at the College of Design & Innovation at Tongji University, in Shanghai; Curatorial Director of the Design Miami fairs in Miami Beach and Basel, Switzerland; Creative Director of Beijing Design Week; and Lead Curator for Design and Architecture at M+, Hong Kong, where from 2012-2018 he oversaw the formation of that new museum's design and architecture collection, team and programme.

Aric Chen said, "It's a huge honour to be building on the forward-looking legacy of Zaha Hadid, and the great work the Foundation has already done. I look forward to seeing what new directions we can chart, expanding the understanding of Zaha's work while furthering her desire to support new voices, and creating a voice of our own with a boundarylessness that I hope would make Zaha proud."

Brian Clarke, Chair, Zaha Hadid Foundation, said, "I am delighted that Aric Chen will be joining the Zaha Hadid Foundation as its new Director and will lead the Foundation into its next phase. He brings a wealth of experience from institutions and projects he has directed all over the world. We have asked him to bring Zaha's energy to both a UK and global audience and he has enthusiastically embraced that challenge."

Chen will take up his post in July 2025.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Aric Chen

Born in Chicago to Taiwanese parents, Aric Chen received his BA in architecture and BA in anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley, and an MA in the history of design from Parsons/Cooper-Hewitt in New York.

Chen has curated numerous museum exhibitions, biennales and other projects internationally and has been a frequent contributor to publications including *The New York Times*, *Architectural Record*, *Wallpaper**, *GQ*, *Metropolis* and others. Most recently, Chen co-curated *I.M. Pei: Life is Architecture* (2024-25) at M+, Hong Kong; co-curated *Arata Isozaki: In Formation* (2023) at Power Station of Art, Shanghai; was Co-Chief Curator of the UABB Shenzhen Biennale (2022-23); and led the Nieuwe Instituut's artistic direction of the London Design Biennale (2023). He also oversaw the reinstallation of the 20th century and contemporary design permanent collection galleries at the Brooklyn Museum, and in 2017 curated the Designs of the Year exhibition at the Design Museum London.

About the Zaha Hadid Foundation

The Zaha Hadid Foundation (ZHF) is a charitable organisation founded in 2013 by the globally renowned architect, designer and artist Zaha Hadid. Fully launched in 2022, and based in its two buildings at 10 Bowling Green Lane and Shad Thames in London, the founding purpose of ZHF is to preserve and make publicly available the full range of Zaha's extraordinary output, and more broadly to advance research, learning, and the enjoyment of related areas of modern and contemporary architecture, art and design.

Zaha Hadid

Zaha Hadid is globally recognised as one of the most important architects of the modern period, frequently credited with developing a whole new architectural language in her quest for what she described as 'complex, dynamic and fluid spaces.'

Born in Baghdad, Iraq in 1950, Zaha was schooled in Iraq, Switzerland, and England, before studying mathematics at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. After moving to London from Beirut in 1972, Zaha soon enrolled to study architecture at the Architectural Association and was awarded the prestigious Diploma Prize upon graduation in 1977.

Zaha then went to work for her former professors Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), Rotterdam. Shortly after, in 1979, she founded her eponymous practice Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA) in London.

As a passionate educator, deeply committed to the support of young people, and new ideas, she continued to teach as her practice flourished, first at the Architectural Association (until 1987) and then at prestigious institutions around the world including Cambridge, Columbia, Harvard School of Design, University of Applied Arts, Vienna and Yale.

Zaha's outstanding contribution to architecture and the arts was recognised during her life with numerous awards, including the Stirling Prize (2010 and 2011). She was the first female recipient of the Pritzker Prize (2004) and the first woman (in her own right) to receive the Royal Gold Medal in recognition of her lifetime's work (2015). She died, at the age of 65, in 2016.