



*zaha hadid lounge*

**Design Zaha Hadid  
Review and Photography Stephen Varady**

From the beginning of her studies Zaha Hadid has questioned preconceptions about what architecture is or what it might be. From her strictly Suprematist explorations in 'Malevich's Tektonik' (1976-77) (a work she completed in her fourth year at the AA) to her winning entry in the Hong Kong 'Peak' competition (1982-83), and through to her first successfully completed building, the Vitra Fire Station (1990-94), Zaha Hadid has been testing the parameters of what architecture could be. Along the way her output has been enormous, each new project accompanied by her signature swirling super-perspectives. For many, the exuberant graphic sensuality of those renderings blinded them to the depth of ideas buried within each project. Sometimes these drawings explored a number of different design approaches to the same scheme, or showed different angles of the same building, or even showed the layering process of the ideas and forms of the one building. The wealth of research and depth of ideas laid out in Hadid's drawings has been phenomenal. The concept/presentation drawings for Vitra are a great example of this. Having a 'different' conception of what spaces might be like, it's as if all of these views and perspectives have been both a tool for her research and a means of explanation to others of her ideas. For example, Zaha's spatial explorations of the Kurfurstendamm 70 project relayed all the inherent possibilities of such a narrow commercial site, those ideas becoming ever more clear when one studies the far more conventional finished building by Helmut Jahn on the same site. For me, Zaha's 'Cross House' and 'Spiral House' for the 1991 Hague Villas project remain two of the greatest unbuilt houses of recent times. Her Cardiff Opera House competition winning scheme, tragically abandoned by the promoter, and 42nd Street Hotel design are also beautiful, intriguing, challenging explorations of their type. With only a handful of built projects in her first 20 years, many architects and professors dismissed Zaha Hadid's output as mere folly, but as her 'LF One' Landesgartenschau Building (1997-99) in Weil-am-Rhein showed (reviewed in ar68), the 20 years of research and development were about to pay dividends. Her ideas about space and form, and the deeper resonances that these can make with human beings, were all about to be more widely exposed. Since the completion of that building Zaha has won three competitions for large, serious buildings: The Contemporary Art



Contemporary Art Centre in Rome, Italy, and the Science Centre in Wolfsburg, Germany. As part of the public education process about the Science Centre, the City of Wolfsburg and the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg have dedicated a section of its Contemporary Art Gallery to an exhibition of Zaha's recent works. There has been a corner of the existing Kunstmuseum dedicated to 'different' projects and so for this one they have asked Zaha herself to design the exhibition space for them. They then called it the Zaha Hadid Lounge and open it every day from 10 in the morning until 10 at night for all to come and enjoy a coffee, drink, or snack and then walk through the sinuous spaces of the exhibition to view Zaha's latest projects.

The design for the new Science Centre is like a giant slab penetrated by fluidic supports. One perspex model looks like a slab of ice supported by rather special ice cubes. These supports connect the building to the ground, and allow for the services and circulation systems to penetrate the building. It is an intriguing sensual series of spaces, and it is these forms that are mimicked (in a much more modest fashion) in her design for the Lounge. Walls swoop and curve and bulge to create the spaces for the exhibition, as well as a directional flow through those spaces. Spaces are compressed, vistas are created and a series of 'different' spaces are alluded to through the organisation of these fluid forms. Within and around these forms are the displays of models and drawings. Some elements have projections of the work cast on to them.

Without Zaha's exhibition design the space would be quite small and cramped, and rather dull. Through the exhibition insertions the space becomes alive and dynamic, giving the works a suitable frame. Those works include concept and detail models of the Wolfsburg Science Centre; concept models, drawings and a series of those wonderful paper cutout models of the Cincinnati Art Centre; and a series of concept models for the JVC Hotel in Guadalajara, Mexico; amongst many others.

The concept of an 'art café' is far from new. Perhaps it is a little more intriguing however that a more mainstream gallery has devoted some of its space to such an exercise, and allowed the exhibiting architect to design their own exhibition. The resulting combination of meeting place and viewing space appears to have become a popular venue. Construction of the Wolfsburg Science Centre has begun, and the Zaha Hadid Lounge should be open until close to its completion in 2003. I believe that when it is complete, we will come to see what Zaha Hadid's 'different' spatial relationships are really like.