

Zaha Hadid: Architecture of Performance

Zaha Hadid Foundation, London

Autumn 2026 – Winter 2027

Guest Curator, Libby Sellers

ZHF Curator, Catherine Howe

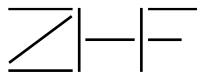
The Zaha Hadid Foundation presents *Architecture of Performance*, its first collection-based exhibition dedicated to stage and set designs by Zaha Hadid Architects. Opening Autumn 2026 at the Foundation's London exhibition space, it explores how Hadid's architectural language extended into immersive environments for contemporary dance, classical opera and pop music.

Architecture of Performance reveals a lesser known yet vital dimension of Zaha Hadid's work in which architecture becomes choreography, and space itself performs.

Spanning 1989 to 2014, *Architecture of Performance* focuses on five pivotal projects:

- d1., London, UK (1989) – a collaboration with British choreographer Rosemary Butcher that brought Hadid's spatial abstractions for urban redevelopment into direct dialogue with the moving body, using her sketches as the basis for a floor-based set design.
- Music Video Pavilion, Groningen, Netherlands (1990) – commissioned for 'What a Wonderful World! Music Videos in Architecture,' an urban festival intended to propel the emerging music video phenomenon into the public sphere. One of five experimental buildings by 'deconstructivist' architects, Hadid's pavilion cast its visitors as performers.
- Metapolis Ballet, Charleroi, Belgium (1999) – a visionary stage environment for a contemporary ballet choreographed by Frédéric Flamand, reflecting Hadid's fascination with the dynamic city.
- Pet Shop Boys' *Nightlife* world tour (1999-2000) – an extravagant collaboration with the British pop duo, translating architectural form into a technologically driven stage spectacle.
- *Così Fan Tutte*, Los Angeles, USA (2014) – a bold reimagining of Mozart's opera for the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, which integrated costumes designed by Hussein Chalayan into a fluid architectural landscape, echoing the curved forms of Hadid's later landmark buildings.

Together, these projects parallel the layering and dynamism of Hadid's earlier abstract paintings and follow the development of complex geometries using new digital techniques that later defined Zaha Hadid Architects' major built projects worldwide. Furthermore, they reveal Hadid's lifelong pursuit of a total environment for performance. Across stage sets and performers, architectural planes dissolve into movement, light and choreography.



Collaboration was central to this process. Hadid worked with artists who shared her experimental ethos; from the sculptural choreography of Rosemary Butcher to the conceptual world-building of the Pet Shop Boys, and the innovative fashion practice of Hussein Chalayan. Each project emerged from the collective creativity of her architectural office and was ultimately completed by the dancers, musicians, and singers.

Architecture of Performance will present original sketches, digital designs, models and costume from the Foundation's collection alongside archival photography and rare film documentation. A special section will examine the phenomenal *Nightlife* world tour, situating Zaha Hadid Architects' stage design within the broader creative universe of the Pet Shop Boys. This coincides with Thames & Hudson's 2026 publication of *Volume*, a major survey of 40 years of the Pet Shop Boys' visual imagery, featuring new scholarship and archival material.

About the Zaha Hadid Foundation

Established by Dame Zaha Hadid (1950-2016), the Zaha Hadid Foundation is an independent charitable organisation dedicated to the legacy of the boundary breaking architect and her commitment to perpetual experimentation across architecture and related disciplines.

In addition to maintaining, disseminating and activating Hadid's archive, the Foundation mounts public programs, supports education and emerging voices, and partners with a range of organisations both from its base in London, at 10 Bowling Green Lane and Shad Thames, and around the world.

Exhibition dates

Autumn 2026 – Spring 2027 (exact dates to be announced)

Location: Zaha Hadid Foundation, 10 Bowling Green Lane, London, EC1R 0BQ

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Images and Media Kit: Available upon request