

**A PERMANENT  
NOSTALGIA  
FOR  
DEPARTURE**

A REHEARSAL  
ON LEGACY  
WITH  
ZAHA HADID

September 22, 2023 – January 8, 2024

Levels 4 & 5

# A Permanent Nostalgia for Departure

In a 2011 ode to Zaha Hadid, poet Etel Adnan urged readers “to discover, in this woman who built a solid rock, a permanent nostalgia for departure. Everything [Hadid] made seems to always be the day before a departure, a permanent invitation to the imagination, and to the imaginary.” Referencing the 19th-century poet Charles Baudelaire’s “L’invitation au voyage,” Adnan’s words suggest that Hadid’s works have “a poetry, a spirituality, such that in sheltering us, it makes us dream, it sets us off on a journey.” This exhibition expands Adnan’s prompt and proposes we view Hadid’s practice not as static and conclusive, but as a point of departure full of potential and reflection. Reconsidering what legacy means, the show challenges us to actively engage with the outcome of a creative action and the possibilities that arise when these are mobilized by other artists and architects.

Drawings, paintings, buildings, texts, and ideas—once emancipated from the author—open up a range of questions, meanings, and concepts that, while in constant evolution, continue to generate an ecosystem of knowledge. *A Permanent Nostalgia for Departure* is a take on architectural legacy that refrains from employing a monolithic approach and actively uses Hadid’s architectural process as a source of knowledge that is activated, transferred, and evolved through the artists who are part of this exhibition. Legacy is a loaded term. Its definition is often seen as linear and static, which implies that its preservation should be monolithic and compact. Engaging with legacy in these terms carries a halo of objectivity, even though this might be just an illusion within a highly subjective terrain. This exhibition seeks to appropriate and charge that term, expanding Adnan’s evocative provocation, and enact legacy as an act of preservation that is about dynamism, constant movement, and moving forward. Under this premise, the impact of an artist on another artist, or the encounter of an artist with another artist’s work, even through highly subjective and partial lenses, is as truthful and important as the so-called original concept. This narrative has as much potential and right to be developed as the one coming from the original author. This act of preservation in full motion, far from historical sterilizations, recharges the possibilities of legacy in an expansive manner. In this way, each of the artists has engaged with Zaha Hadid through specific and personal responses, whether as an inspiration, as a persona, as a question mark, as an enigma, or as a trigger.

For each artist, Hadid has thrust a different point of departure: using materiality to challenge the limits of a methodology; unconventionally reenacting the spatial logic of a gallery at the CAC; deciphering her identity as a Middle Eastern woman who unfolds an unprecedented life and architectural practice across cities and continents; unearthing provocative understandings of the urban and the ground through layered compositional logic; using representational techniques and gestures that

trick preconceived logic and perception; grappling with being an Iraqi architect and how to position that identity within the legacy of Iraqi architectural thought. Accompanying the site-specific responses from the artists are a selection of paintings and ephemera by Hadid that depict the architect's aesthetic, offering insight into how her architectural vocabulary preserves the ability to keep evolving.

Each of the seven newly commissioned works is an exercise that departs from Hadid and moves toward the unknown, reflecting the idea of distance in time, history, cultural background, and landscapes and how a legacy can become a conduit for them. Without responding to her as a quote or metaphor, but seizing the opportunity to learn from or question her, the artists addressed subjective and personal inquiries that permit growth and evolution. This approach has led some artworks to offer a seamless connection back to the initial inspiration, while others diverge entirely, illustrating the web of knowledge, inspiration, and fascination that influences the creative process. That starting point, which engages with Hadid, has played a fundamental role in shaping the essence of these new artworks. Traceable or not, legacy has been mobilized into a journey of expansion.

The list of participating artists includes Rand Abdul Jabbar (b. Baghdad, 1990, currently lives and works in Abu Dhabi), Khyam Allami (b. Damascus, 1981, currently lives and works in Berlin), Emii Alrai (b. Blackpool, 1993, currently lives and works in Leeds), Hera Büyüктаşçıyan (b. Istanbul, 1984), Andrea Canepa (b. Lima, 1980, currently lives and works in Berlin), Zaha Hadid (b. Baghdad, 1950 – d. Miami, 2016), Dima Srouji (b. Nazareth, 1990, currently lives and works in London) and Hamed Bukhamseen (b. Kuwait City, 1991) and Ali Ismail Karimi (b. Manama, 1989) as founders of Civil Architecture Studio.

— Maite Borjabad López-Pastor

## Ask Yourself

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- 1 What is a legacy? Why are legacies impactful?
- 2 Aside from Zaha Hadid, each artist in the exhibition created site-specific installations. How have these artists responded to Hadid's legacy? The CAC's building?
- 3 After viewing Hadid's paintings, what words come to your mind? How do those compare to your experience as you move through the CAC's architecture?



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A Rehearsal On Legacy  
with Zaha Hadid

RAND ABDUL JABBAR  
KHYAM ALLAMI  
EMII ALRAI  
HERA BÜYÜKTAŞCIYAN  
ANDREA CANEPA  
CIVIL ARCHITECTURE  
DIMA SROUJI

Curated by Maite Borjabad

# FOR DEPARTURE