



المنظمة الإسلامية للتربية والعلوم والثقافة  
ISLAMIC WORLD EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION  
ORGANISATION DU MONDE ISLAMIQUE POUR L'ÉDUCATION, LES SCIENCES ET LA CULTURE

Itinerary Zaha Hadid

“From Baghdad to Rabat”

By the Strategic Foresight Center of ICESCO





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# Context

A work designed by an architect today is likely to last for more than a century and tell the stories of the past. In other words, it means that this architect has, in some way, shaped the future.

Architects are now adopting foresight attitudes in their work and are increasingly freeing their imagination beyond what is possible today to imagine what might be in the future. The art of architecture is becoming more and more futuristic, as new projects are becoming more innovative, and avant-garde. These works have been transformed, influenced by inventions and technological developments that have changed the way people perceive the future.

More innovative concepts, so deeply rooted in our minds as belonging to the future, exist today, under our watching. “Breathtaking” is probably the reaction that most of Zaha Hadid’s designs elicit at first glance. Her structures, characterized by the accumulation of layers and floating curves, resemble concepts seen only in science fiction scenes. From Baghdad to Rabat, through China, Scotland and Azerbaijan, Zaha Hadid and her firm have designed iconic projects. Opting for sensual forms, with a certain minimalism, her creations leave their mark.

Born on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1950 in Baghdad, Iraq, and died on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016 in Miami, USA, Zaha Hadid was an Iraqi-British architect and urban planner. Widely recognized as one of the leading figures of the deconstructivism movement, she left her mark and will continue to do so through the achievements of her agency “Zaha Hadid Architects”, which continues to be one of the main points of reference in the current architectural panorama, due to its dynamic and innovative projects, in which it relies on the interrelation between architecture, landscape and topography in order to integrate each construction into its environment. To achieve this, Zaha Hadid Architects uses experimentation and state-of-the-art technologies.

In addition to her work as an architect, Hadid has held the chair of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University and has taught architecture internationally at schools such as the Architectural Association, Cambridge University and Columbia University.

As a representative of the deconstructivist movement, she tried to shake up classical architectural conventions. Her irregular and curved structures are very modern and give an impression of dynamism and movement. Hybrid and evolving, with baroque curves, it frees itself from Euclidean constraints and gives engineers a hard time. Pursuing the desire to marry her architecture to the surrounding environment, the architect used different materials such as glass, plastic, concrete, titanium and steel.

Throughout her career, Zaha Hadid has received several of the most prestigious awards, such as the Mies van der Rohe Award for Contemporary Architecture (2003) and the Praemium Imperiale (2009). In 2004, Zaha Hadid was the first woman to win the Pritzker Architecture Prize. This recognition crowns one of the greatest architects of deconstructivism, a movement that rejects rationality and linear order. Two years later, a retrospective exhibition was held at the Guggenheim in New York. Zaha Hadid is the second architect in history to receive this honor, a testament to her immense talent.

However, while her futuristic designs capture the public's attention, the true impact of Zaha Hadid's work goes far beyond the aesthetic appeal of her buildings. It is her mastery of design, her receptive nature to new technologies, and





her understanding of the people, society, and environment that surround her work that has propelled her beyond any other architect of her time.

The philosophy behind Zaha Hadid's projects begins with the most basic and fundamental consideration: the relationship between the building and the people who will inhabit and interact with it. With each project, Zaha Hadid sought to push the boundaries of the imagination by designing and exploring new ways in which people can use the space.

From the inside out, Zaha Hadid's designs have always been carefully calculated. When preparing a project, she and her team sought to fully understand the potential effect of the completed structure on its environment, both geographically and socially. She put an emphasis on the idea of integration, which refers to the fact that the building has a continuous spatial flow with the landscape around it.

As an architect with over 30 years of experience, she was convinced that architects have the skills and tools to address critical issues. Zaha Hadid's genuine interest and sense of obligation towards the well-being of the present and future society was evident when she explained the power of



architecture as being able to “help reorganize lifestyles so that everyone can contribute to a more ecologically and socially sustainable society.” Hadid has carried this spirit of social consciousness with her to every step of her process, from design to physical production.

Hadid sees “ecological problems and social disparities” as the major challenges of our generation and believes that architecture offers an interesting solution. She has taken this sentiment to the field, citing her research about new materials, design techniques and construction methods as a way to bring significant environmental benefits.

The famous architect’s impact is not limited to the field of architecture. As a designer, she has ventured into fashion, furniture and jewelry with the same avant-garde mentality.

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# The Grand Theater of Rabat,

## an architectural jewel signed by Zaha Hadid

The singular style of Zaha Hadid, known internationally for her bold and avant-garde designs, is present for the first time in Africa in Morocco, in the heart of the Bouregreg valley, in the continuity of the Hassan Tower and the Mohammed V Mausoleum, the long-awaited Grand Theater of Rabat is completed. Perceived as a symbol of the cultural and artistic renewal of the capital of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The Grand Theater is a new cultural icon and will undoubtedly become an international architectural and urban landmark. Wavy lines, curves and fluid forms inspired by the sinuosities of the nearby river and Arabic calligraphy.

The forms, both soft and powerful, curve towards the ground and provide an outdoor amphitheater that gradually merges with the surrounding landscape<sup>1</sup>.

With its modern design and bold, airy architecture, the style of the Grand Theater of Rabat draws on the energy of the Bouregreg and blends in with the valley's landscape. This infrastructure is mainly characterized by a propensity for intertwining taut lines and curves, pointed forms and the superposition of plans. The dynamics of the river are represented by the design of the park that encompasses the theater and the amphitheater. Thus, the integrated urban development model was designed to work in harmony with the environment and heritage of the site.

The Grand Theater of Rabat will host a wide range of cultural events: theater, opera, modern or traditional dance performances, ballet, symphonic or pop music, cinema, and conferences. The project includes an 1,800-seat theater, a 7,000-seat open-air amphitheater, a more intimate stage, teaching spaces and a restaurant with a panoramic view. The main auditorium is composed of a crystalline geometric pattern reminiscent of the traditional Moroccan muqarnas that adorn vaults or domes in Islamic architecture, while being futuristic<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> "Grand Théâtre de Rabat – Zaha Hadid Architects." 2019. Zaha-Hadid.com. 2019. <https://www.zaha-hadid.com/architecture/grand-theatre-de-rabat/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Grand Théâtre de Rabat." n.d. Accessed December 7, 2021. [http://www.bouregreg.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/brochure-GTR-PARTITIONE\\_2.pdf](http://www.bouregreg.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/brochure-GTR-PARTITIONE_2.pdf).

The realization of this work is part of the policy of equipment in cultural infrastructure throughout the country. It reflects the Royal will to provide the city of Rabat with a theater that will raise the city to the rank of major metropolises of the Mediterranean, in an integrative and sustainable approach of the Bouregreg valley, location of Rabat and its twin city Salé, on the other side of the Bouregreg.

Another fascinating feature of the theater designed in Rabat, nicknamed the city of lights, is the light, which proves to be an essential element of the design, moving away from the stereotypical theater, a dark space with lines that leave little room for fantasy. Day light permeates the curvilinear façade and monumental glass entrances; the building literally glows from within. Inside the theater, floodlights illuminate the golden walls of the auditorium, while outside, visitors walk through a tiered amphitheater, with subtle lighting nestled in the stairs and railings.



# Itinerary Zaha Hadid "From Baghdad to Rabat",

A cultural icon for Rabat, cultural capital  
of the Islamic World in 2022

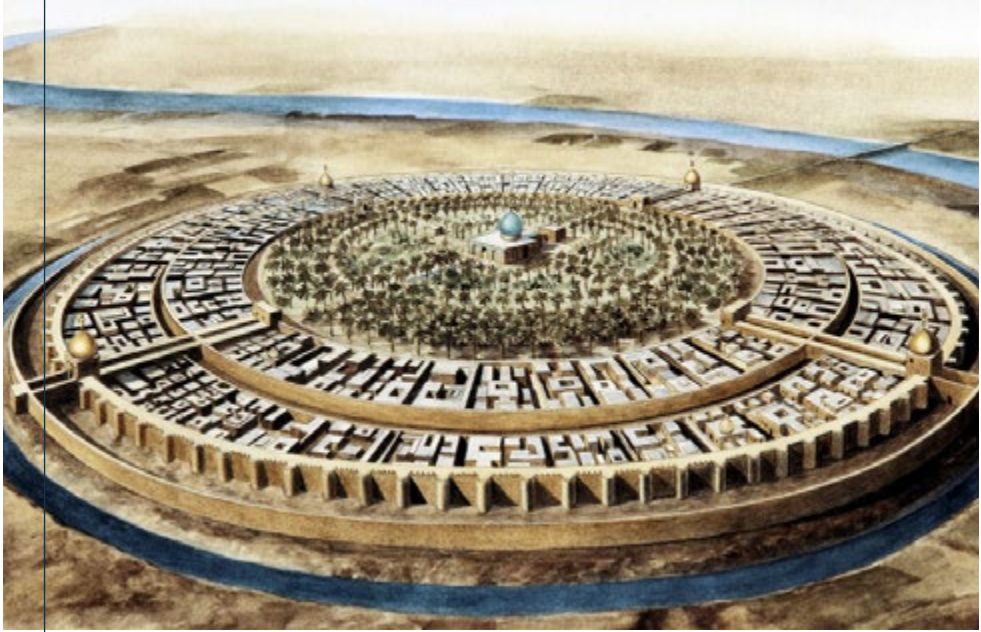
By choosing as a title for this project "Itinerary Zaha Hadid from Baghdad to Rabat", we make a subtle nod between the ancient round city of Baghdad of the Abbasid caliphate founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and considered an architectural jewel built during the golden age of Islam, the nationality of the famous architect Zaha Hadid and the new development project of the city of Rabat which plans to follow a circular architecture.

The round city of Baghdad, ahead of its time, was considered the center of the world: its architectural prowess met its cultural diversity and intellectual vivacity. A hub of commerce in the region, Baghdad was also the first city in the world to reach a population of one million. The oldest "House of Wisdom" (bayt al-hikma) was created there in 832, where the texts of Greek, Persian and Indian antiquity were translated and where the rationalist ideology was put forward by the Caliph al-Mamoun. The city, famous for its libraries, which concentrated ancient and contemporary literature, was also frequented by astronomers, mathematicians, thinkers and other scholars.

Architecture is indeed the key to the future of society and culture. ICESCO's Strategic Foresight Center, within the framework of the proclamation of Rabat as the Cultural Capital of the Islamic World for the year 2022, aims to provide long-term perspectives on the development of new building masterpieces to meet the challenge of sustainable well-being of present and future generations.

This designation of the city of Rabat as the Cultural Capital of the Islamic World for the year 2022 will contribute to the post-Covid cultural revival at the local and national levels.





ICESCO is thus faced with the great challenge of making this city of lights the city of culture and knowledge, as any other cultural capital of the Islamic World should be.

The program of Rabat, Cultural Capital of the Islamic World in 2022 foresees a series of activities involving different international and local actors who will work towards the realization of various projects related to culture and heritage, training and capacity building of youth.

ICESCO's Strategic Foresight Center also aims to assess ways in which ICESCO can extend the spirit of flexible learning to all its member states and to the entire Islamic world and beyond by connecting technology with human-centered perspectives such as architecture. Thus, the Center planned to implement the project "Itinerary Zaha Hadid from Baghdad to Rabat" to pay tribute to the famous architect while valuing the city of Rabat.

The Center also intends, through this project, to project itself into the future with the benefits of hindsight, which will allow to evaluate the implementation of innovative architectural methods in the context of the Islamic World.

ICESCO, as an organization operating in the fields of Education, Science and Culture, strives to design, plan and implement innovative artifacts with a long-term and human-centered perspective.

The past, embedded in monuments, places, artifacts, collections, memories and archives, is essential to our collective identity as communities and as individuals. That is why the Center of Strategic Foresight proposes to build on these elements that point to a promising future.

# Project Objectives

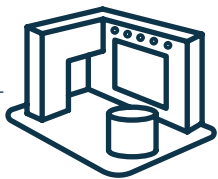


- **Explore** et **mettre en lumière** la dimension historique de la ville de Rabat.
- **Become familiar** with the concept of deconstructive architecture
- **Explore** the mix between futuristic architecture and heritage
- **Organize cultural events** that will enhance the city of Rabat and the new Grand Theater.
- **Develop** a deep understanding of how architecture can inspire the future
- **Exploit** the role of architecture in enhancing personal well-being, individual and community identity, the Islamic values that ICESCO defends and pursues.
- To pay a **posthumous tribute** to the famous architect **Zaha Hadid**.

## Deliverables

ICESCO's Center for Strategic Prospective intends to carry out this project on the basis of several cultural events both on the site of the Grand Theater of Rabat and on other sites such as the Villa des Arts by organizing several activities in relation with Zaha Hadid such as:

- Exhibitions and art gallery,
- Conferences,
- Film screenings,
- Edition of beautiful books,
- and many other cultural events.



# Methodology

The "Zaha Hadid Itinerary from Baghdad to Rabat" project will include a number of events and cultural activities at three key sites: the Grand Theater of Rabat, the Villa des Arts and the ICESCO headquarters. The main objective of this project is to pay a posthumous tribute to the famous architect Zaha Hadid as well as to enhance the city of Rabat as the cultural capital of the Islamic World, by organizing conferences, film screenings, exhibitions and art galleries. ICESCO's Center for Strategic Foresight aims to familiarize young architects with Zaha Hadid's creations, her contribution to the field of architecture and deconstructivism in particular. In addition, the project will rely on a participatory approach by organizing workshops allowing young architects to share their perception of the future. At the end of the project, vignettes and videos will be developed to illustrate best practices, encouraging young architects to follow Zaha Hadid's example and to think outside the box to create more avant-garde designs.

## Parties to engage

- National School of Architecture (Ecole nationale d'architecture)
- UIR Architecture School (L'école d'architecture de l'UIR)
- Association of Landscape Architects of Morocco (Association des Architecte-paysagistes du Maroc)
- CNOA - Architects of Morocco (Architectes du Maroc)
- ASSAR – Architects Association (Association des Architectes)
- AJAM - Association of Young Architects of Morocco (Association des Jeunes Architectes du Maroc)
- The Ministry of National Territorial Development, Urban Planning, Housing and Urban Policy
- Villa des Arts
- Grand Theater of Rabat
- Mr. Mouad Laalou
- Mr. Saïd Afifi
- Zaha Hadid Architects



# Calendrer of the project



**12<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

Inauguration of the project at the Grand Theater of Rabat



**13<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

Exhibition at the Villa des Arts Rabat

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

Conference at ICESCO headquarters





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