

IGEA TROIANI

ZAHA: An Image of “The Woman Architect”

Using as a departure point Bridget Fowler and Fiona M. Wilson's sociological reflections on the slow progress of women architects towards achieving equality within the profession, as published in their essay, “Women Architects and Their Discontents”, the aim of this article is to examine the image of Zaha Hadid in relation to Despina Stratigakos' arguments about what “a woman architect” looks like today. By referring to the feminist theories of Simone de Beauvoir, Stratigakos and Rochelle Martin, this article uses the image of Hadid to examine, firstly, the relationship women architects have with work and mothering; secondly, the image of the woman architect in relation to that of the male architect; and thirdly, the effects that the image of “the architect” has on gender traits and the practices of women architects.

What Would She Look Like?

[Andrew] Saint's work [*The Image of the Architect*] explores the diverse ways in which the architect has been imagined in Europe and North America, and his illustrations depict the architect in various garb [...]. For all their variety, however, the images share one common characteristic: their insistence on the essential manliness of these various guises. Into this masculine cast of characters, it is difficult to imagine where or how one would interpose an image of "the woman architect," or even what she would look like.¹

When Andrew Saint published *The Image of the Architect* in 1983, he was writing at a time when architects in Britain were questioning their professional efficacy in an industry enduring an economic downturn.² Saint opens his book strategically, with the image of heroic modernist architect Howard Roark, a character in *The Fountainhead*, Ayn Rand's 1943 novel, which was later adapted into a film directed by King Vidor (Fig. 1).³ Saint uses the figure of Roark to argue against the idea of the singular architectural genius who doggedly refuses to compromise his creativity for financial gain. But Saint's position was not universal: in an essay published that same year, Martin Pawley disagrees with Saint's dismissal of Roark-like architects, arguing that many architects show that they can be both idealistic and successful in business.⁴ Almost 30 years later, Despina Stratigakos also questions Saint's efforts to redefine the "image of the architect". Whether hero, professional, businessman, gentleman or entrepreneur, Stratigakos astutely notes that the people and illustrations in Saint's book show the architect always as a man and she asks the reasonable question: beyond the

reimagining of the architect from (male) heroic creative genius to (male) successful businessman, what is an image of "the woman architect"?

Since the late nineteenth century, intellectuals both from within and outside of architecture have examined the place of women in public and professional life. First-wave feminists from Virginia Woolf to Simone de Beauvoir focused on equality through women's suffrage. Gaining the right to vote allowed women legal parity through the opportunity to own their own property. Second-wave feminism or the Feminist Movement of the 1960s to the late 1990s aimed to question women's identity in relation to work, home, marriage, sexuality, difference and so on. Challenging binary social and philosophical structures, writers such as Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler dismantled not only the notion of the sexes (male and female), but also gender (masculine and feminine) roles.

Architectural critics contributed late to the feminist movement. In the 1980s and 1990s, many writers—mainly female critics and historians, but also some male theoreticians—wrote on women, gender and architectural professionalism. Many of the writings aimed to acknowledge and revalue the contribution of women designers, who had previously been omitted from architectural history. Of the texts produced during those years, only a small proportion dealt with the contemporary woman architect working in practice. In 1989, in the United States, Ellen Perry Berkeley and Matilda McQuaid collated the important collection of essays, *Architecture: A Place for Women*.⁵ Included in it was the seminal lecture of complaint later published as the article, "Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture", by Denise Scott Brown, detailing the discrimination she experienced



Figure 1. *The Fountainhead*, director King Vidor, US, 1948. Image courtesy of the BFI, London.

during her career in practice and her consistent omission from credit as the collaborator of Robert Venturi.⁶

In 1984, in the United Kingdom, the all-female feminist architectural practice, *Matrix*, published *Making Space: Women and the Man-Made Environment*.⁷ In 2000, ex-*Matrix* employee Jane Rendell, along with Barbara Penner and Ian Borden, edited *Gender Space Architecture: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*, in which influen-

tial writings published by many of those mentioned above were brought together.⁸ Later, there emerged several publications just on contemporary women practitioners, mainly produced by women architects questioning their place in a male-dominated practice environment. In 1990, Clare Lorenz published *Women in Architecture: A Contemporary Perspective*.⁹ In this book about female architects from 20 countries, Lorenz begins to show us images—photographs and biographical

summaries—of ‘the woman architect’. In a similar format, Maggie Toy edited in 2001 *The Architect Women in Contemporary Architecture*.¹⁰ Of the 33 female architects photographed and represented, ten are shown to practise in the UK. They include Irena Bauman, Alison Brooks, Zaha Hadid, Jane Harrison, Christine Hawley, Katharine Heron, Patsy Hopkins, Eva Jiricna, M. J. Long and Sarah Wigglesworth. Of these, Toy writes, ‘If a cross-section of nonarchitects [sic] architects, and students were asked to name the single most influential woman in architecture today, a large percentage of them would probably say Zaha Hadid’ (Fig. 2).¹¹ Ten years later, it is unquestionable: the most well-known of the architects in Toy’s book is certainly Hadid. The first female Laureate of the Pritzker Prize in 2004, Zaha Hadid Architects has won innumerable prestigious awards. Most recently, the practice was recipient of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stirling Prize. In 2010, it was awarded for the MAXXI Museum in Rome, and then again in 2011, for the Evelyn Grace Academy in London.

Using as a departure point Bridget Fowler and Fiona M. Wilson’s sociological reflections on the slow progress of women architects towards equality within the profession, as set out in ‘Women Architects and Their Discontents’, the aim of this article is to examine the image of Hadid in relation to Stratigakos’ question of what ‘a woman architect’ looks like today.¹² It responds to the following questions: What image does the architectural press present of Hadid as a woman architect? What image does Hadid present of herself as an architect and as a woman architect? What image does the non-architectural press present of Hadid as a woman architect? Do the architectural and non-architectural press differ in representing her persona and professional life and, if so, how? How has her image been culturally constructed inside and outside the profession?

By referring to the feminist theories of Stratigakos, Simone de Beauvoir and Rochelle Martin, this article uses the image of Hadid to explore, firstly, the relationship women



Figure 2. Zaha Hadid at the MAXXI art centre in Rome, © Franco Origlia, 2010; AFP/Getty Images.

architects have with work and mothering; secondly, the image of the woman architect in relation to that of the male architect; and, thirdly, the woman architect in relation to gender stereotypes. Strigopoulos, Beauvoir and Martin have been chosen over other feminist writers because of their research and reflections on the specific problems facing the balance of professional and personal life for working women. The unique contribution of this article is the contemplation of the image or images of 'the woman architect' through a study of Hadd's image.

The Image of Zaha as a Woman Architect in the Architectural Press

While there are innumerable texts on the architecture of Zaha Hadid Architects, there are few publications about Hadid specifically as a woman architect. Even though the architectural media has not always been supportive of Hadid's architecture, nowadays, the press in Britain and the United States are. When she began to succeed in building highly unconventional architecture, the media often framed this as a victory, not just for women architects, but for the lone woman architect. In *The Journal of Architectural Education*, Ann Forsyth admires Hadid's singular success in 'In Praise of Zaha: Women, Partnership, and the Star System in Architecture'. Forsyth writes 'I'm a fan of Zaha Hadid. Her buildings are certainly elegant. But what interests me most is that she did it, very obviously alone'.¹² The same year, Suzanne Stephens writes

One could argue that definite progress has been made over the past 30 years, in the number of women running their own firms and in the range of commissions they get. More needs to be done for

them to crash through the famous glass ceiling [...] After school, the decision is up to women. They can have successful, happy lives within larger firms, or as partners with men. Or they can go it alone. [...] While they are not Zaha Hadid, her success is helping bring to the public the notion that a lone female architect can indeed create significant, even great architecture.¹³

In the 'Women in Practice' issue of *The Architects' Journal* (AJ), Hadid is recognised as a role model for women architects. Kathryn Findlay, director of Ushida Findlay Architects, cites Hadid's 'extraordinary imagination' as an inspiration.¹⁴ Issue editor Christine Murray frames Hadid as an exemplar of 'things that were once unthinkable' in architecture.¹⁵ Then Head of the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield, Flora Samuel writes, 'She [Hadid] undoubtedly forged new ground, not only in her architecture, but also in what a female architect might be'.¹⁶ Nowadays, Hadid is admired by her architectural peers in academia, practice and publishing, not only for her creativity, but also for her sheer success. Unlike other famous female architects who have worked collaboratively with their architect-husbands and gained recognition for, and independently of, that collaborative work, Hadid has not married a male architect, nor directly collaborated with one in the process of obtaining her professional position and practice. Hadid started her own practice in 1980 and has developed it into a large and successful business. Architecture critics universally agree that Hadid has shattered the glass ceiling that has otherwise prevented women from achieving architectural success. But if the architectural press portray Hadid as a heroine, how does the architect herself control or dictate her public image?

The Image of Zaha Portrayed by Zaha

An extract of an interview with Hadd is included in the "Women in Practice" issue of *AJ* in which she is first in a list of role model women architects.¹⁹ Hadd offers tips on various issues, arguing first against the misconception that men who express their opinion are "opinionated", while women who do so are "difficult". Her advice to aspiring female architects is that "[i]t's important to keep focused to achieve in any profession—but also to make time for your family and friends."²⁰ Trust and teamwork are key to making an architecture office work. Hadd admits that women architects do not have the same access to the diverse social worlds that men do, but adds that in Zaha Hadd Architects, there are no gender stereotypes. She contends that even well-known women architects are subject to sexism and that the best defence against sexism is simple hard work; hard work allows women to improve their confidence, she argues. Many of her comments constitute survival tips about operating and coping in a male-dominated profession. No mention is made of what Hadd sees her being a woman contributes to being a woman architect.

Although Hadd is considered a role model for women architects, she works hard to downplay gender difference. In the architectural media, she often expresses her desire to not be seen as a woman architect. In 2004, in an *Architectural Record* profile, Hadd insists that "[t]here still seems to be prejudice in the world of construction. We all should be considered architects, no gender distinction should be made."²¹

Being labelled an architectural "diva" is also something Hadd consistently downplays. Architectural journalist Joseph Governini used

the term in his article, "Portrait: Zaha Hadd, Architecture's New Diva Makes an International Scene", after Zaha Hadd Architects won the Cardiff Bay Opera House competition.²² Non-architectural critics or journalists use the term, "diva", even more freely to describe her. In 2003, Simon Hattenstone first interviewed Hadd for *The Guardian* and brought up the diva title. Hattenstone writes that "Hadd is often referred to as a diva—the stories are legion of her marching into the hairdressers and demanding that she be serviced instantly being chauffeur-driven round town in her privately-owned black cab, telling power-brokers where to stick it. Does she think her reputation is deserved? No. What is a diva? If I was a guy would they call me a diva? I mean, they wouldn't."²³

In the same interview, Hattenstone brings up the issue of Hadd as a role model. In the "Women in Practice" issue of *AJ*, Hadd identifies the notoriously strong women architects, Alison Smithson and Lina Bo Bardi, as inspiration. Hadd answers the question of her women role models in architecture differently when in earlier conversation with Hattenstone. Hattenstone writes: "I ask her [Hadd] if she has a role model. No, when I was younger I was not one of these people who had heroes. It was difficult to find a hero for myself. Perhaps you are your own role model. I say 'Well, you try', she says."²⁴

The way the architectural media represents Hadd as a woman architect differs from the way in which Hadd presents herself. The architectural media represent Hadd as an inspirational, singular architectural genius who is almost a super-heroic figure because she has succeeded against unpeakable odds in a predominantly male profession. She quite simply is the most successful woman architect

in history, therefore matching the multitude of famous male architects who have preceded her. Hadd is more modest, guarded and aloof in how she constructs her image when being interviewed by architectural critics in the architectural press. She downplays the idea of being a singular architectural genius by valuing those in her life who have helped her achieve professional success. She sees that women architects are subject to sexism and accepts that without too much contestation, just as the profession does. She sets up an image where her gender as a woman is irrelevant to her success and repudiates gender stereotypes. She rejects the label of *diva*, arguing the title has negative connotations for a woman, while, for a man, being strong and opinionated is deemed virtuous. The architectural media relay that Hadd's role models are Smithson and Bo Bedi, both recognised as strong women architects, who respectively collaborated or created on their own highly influential architecture. Hattenstone reveals that Hadd saw herself initially as her own role model. While the architectural media are cautious not to expose too much detail of Hadd's persona and personal life in relation to her professional life, Hattenstone proves the non-architectural press have no such inhibitors.

The Image of Zaha as a Woman Architect in the Newspaper

On Saturday, 9 October 2010, a second Hattenstone interview with Hadd was published in *The Guardian*.²⁷ Zaha Hadd Architects had one week earlier won the 2010 RBA Stirling Prize for the MAXXI Museum and the article celebrates that accomplishment.

A regular features editor for the *Guardian*, Hattenstone interviews mostly very famous

mainstream celebrities. He has gained notoriety for interviewing the artist, Banksy and the musician, Lou Reed. More recently, he has interviewed strong women successful in their field such as the pop star, Nicky Minaj. To my knowledge, Hattenstone has never interviewed a famous male architect, so it is unclear what his line of questioning would have been. In his interview with Hadd, Hattenstone uses his conversational questioning style to discuss more than her RBA award. He pries under the surface of the public figure and presents Hadd more candidly than she has been in the architectural media, more as a normal person than a famous architect. Having reached the status of 'star architect', Hadd's personal life becomes material for a cult of personality.

The article reveals Hadd's lifelong struggle, beginning as a young Muslim teenager. Hattenstone explains: 'Hadd was born in Baghdad in 1950 [...] She grew up as a secular Muslim, attending convent school. In the Iraq of her teens, Muslims lived alongside Jews and Christians, the 1960s were in full flow, women were empowered and anything seemed possible'.²⁸ In relaying her heroic journey from teenage girl with dreams, ambition and talent to successful architectural designer and businesswoman, Hattenstone dwells on her first major architectural success-failure, the Cardiff Bay Opera House, revealing how she learned valuable lessons from it and was able to move on. Hattenstone portrays a rocky road to success.

Looking around her architectural studio, Hattenstone wonders where the next generation of Zaha Haddis are? Hadd replies:

'They're there.'
Give me names, I say

"Ah, they're students."

She tells me she has loads of female students (and I've seen them at her office) but there is a practical problem with women. "Especially now they're liberated they look after the home, they look after the children, they look after the work and with architecture I think it's important to have continuity. It's not like nine to five, you can't just switch on and off."²⁶

It seems that Hadd models her staff, female and male, into a certain life-work pattern, one which architecture students from "good" architecture schools are encouraged to pursue, working well beyond the hours of nine to five, sometimes (or often) seven days a week. This modeling replicates her image: one fully committed to a life where work is everything without a moment of relaxation. Hattenstone asks:

What does she do to relax? "Relax?" Suddenly she seems rather foreign, as if she's not quite understood the question. "Relax? Nothing." But with buildings on site in France and Britain and Milan and Azerbaijan and Spain and China, there's not much time for relaxing.²⁷

It is uncommon, when famous male architects are interviewed, for enquiries to be made as to what they have sacrificed in order to be fully committed to a work life, but being a successful woman architect seems to prompt this line of questioning. Hattenstone continues:

I could see her as an earth mother, but she has no children and lives alone in the flat. Has she made sacrifices to get where she has? "No, no." A second later she's

changed her mind. "Of course it has an effect on your personal life. But it wasn't because I'm going to sacrifice everything to do this. It's just the way it is."

Is there a man in her life? "No, no." Has there been one recently? "Well, not recently." Is she happy with that? "I don't think about it in the way things happen in life. Maybe there are people who are more strategic than I am."

When was the last time she had a boyfriend? "I can't talk about that. It's private. I can't." For once Hadd looks almost bashful. Does she think men are scared of her? "No I don't think so." Pause. "Well maybe some men are." She has a reputation for terrifying people.

Did she deliberately create that image? "No I didn't create that. I'm very nice and very charming." And so she is. Today. But she's also known for saying things like "I don't do nice".

Why is it important to ascertain whether Hadd has had a man in her life? Why should we bring into question whether a successful woman architect is "nice" or not? Is there an underlying suggestion being made about Hadd being a proper woman because she has no partner or family or kitchen? Hattenstone writes:

I ask if I can look round the rest of the apartment. Sure, she says. [...] "The only thing about this flat is there's no kitchen," she says. How can she live without a kitchen? "Well it did have one, but I took it away. It was ugly." Does she cook? "No, I used to have someone to cook, but he's gone now. I go out all the time."

Hattenstone's interview is titled "I am Happy to Be on the Outside". It conveys his interest in Hadd's understanding of whether fame allows her to be part of the establishment. Hattenstone writes: "So has the world really changed that much, or has she simply become part of the establishment? [...]" She smiles. "No, I'm not part of the network. I'm not saying I want to be on the outside, but if I'm left on the outside that's where I'll operate from. It's a nice place to be".

Here we see Hadd acknowledging her outsider status. Unclear to us is whether she sees this as a consequence of her non-Anglo background or because she is a woman. Hadd's compliance in accepting the status of interloper shows her decision to treat her difference positively as a sign of uniqueness. What Hattenstone's interview allows us to see is that even success in a woman's professional life does not allow her access to all worlds—a point Simone de Beauvoir wrote about some 60 years earlier:

Simone de Beauvoir's "The Independent Woman"

In 1949, when Simone de Beauvoir wrote Chapter I "The Independent Woman" in Book Two "Woman's Life Today" of *The Second Sex*, she set out diametrically opposed views of the way "the independent woman" was perceived at the time:

There are [...] a fairly large number of privileged women who find in their professions a means of economic and social autonomy [...]. This is the reason why it is especially interesting to make a close study of their situation, even though they constitute as yet only a minority,

they continue to be a subject of debate between feminists and anti-feminists. The latter assert that the emancipated women of today succeed in doing nothing of importance in the world and that furthermore they have difficulty in achieving their own inner equilibrium. The former exaggerate the results obtained by professional women and are blind to their inner confusion.²⁸

Written when Beauvoir was 41 years old, she used *The Second Sex* as a way to understand her own place as a woman in a male-dominated world and the complex nuances associated with that struggle. Although Beauvoir has been criticised by second-wave, difference feminist critics for her focus on positioning a woman's self-worth in relation to success in the male sphere, many of her comments on the difficulties incurred by the independent woman remain pertinent. Of particular relevance to a critical examination of the image of an independent woman architect is Beauvoir's contention that professional emancipation does not necessarily constitute complete liberation. Beauvoir's argument is that even if a woman can achieve financial independence, the social structure of the world still belongs to men.²⁹ For Beauvoir, a key issue is that sociocultural universals are at the heart of sexual asymmetry. A girl is not raised in the same way as a boy. If the possibility of a professional career is offered to a young girl, the reality of social structures means that achieving equality in her profession is not necessarily automatic.

Beauvoir sees that one fundamental problem springing from independence is the maintenance of a woman's "inner equilibrium", that is, the balancing of professional and personal life. Beauvoir writes that "[i]t is difficult for her

to strike a balance between the two; if she does, it is at the price of concessions and sacrifices".²⁶ Beauvoir concludes that until moral, social and cultural liberty—and not just economic liberty—is achieved women will appear "most often as a 'true woman' disguised as a man".²⁷ For many professions, including architecture, a woman's professional identity has always been obliged to negotiate that of the male model in that profession. So what are the gender stereotypes that women architects challenge?

Stratigakos' "Transgendering of the Mind and Body of the Architect Proper"

In her critique of Saint's *The Image of the Architect*, Stratigakos contends that any definition of a "womanly" architect involves the transgendering of the architect's body and mind.

More than one hundred years after the appearance of women architects in Europe and North America, the idea of a "womanly" architect still evokes a sense of misaligned categories—of the transgendering of the mind and body of the architect proper.²⁸

In *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*, Alice Schlegel claims that gender, understood as "the way members of the two sexes are perceived, evaluated, and expected to behave" is a cultural construct.²⁹ For Schlegel, the specific meaning of gender is "the definition of gender according to a particular location in the social structure or within a particular field of action".³⁰ If one is to understand Schlegel's definition of gender "within [the] particular field of action" of architectural practice, Stratigakos' notion of

the image of a woman architect as having undergone "the transgendering of the mind and body of the architect proper" is worth closer analysis.

So, how is it that a woman architect's behaviour can be considered transgendered? We might start with a precise definition of "transgender". According to the American Psychological Association (APA), "Transgender is an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth".³¹ Gender nonconformity is one feature of transgenderedness. In this article, I draw upon that part of the definition which relates to nonconforming gender role behaviour, rather than the physical characteristics of bodily sex. Nor does my enquiry here relate to women who want to change their appearance to be more masculine-conforming. The focus here is a mild version of "female masculinity" not concerned with being queer or butch.³² This is a study of women architects who wish to retain a feminine appearance, but whose daily behaviour becomes transgendered due to male professional standards of behaviour. This is in fact more akin to the category of bi-gender that describes a tendency to move between feminine and masculine gender-typed behaviour depending on context.³³

In her 2008 essay, "The Good Architect and the Bad Parent: On the Formation and Disruption of a Canonical Image", Stratigakos examines the historical origins of the image of the woman architect in relation to that of the architect *per se*, noting the difficult merger of the feminine and the architectural. Stratigakos traces a discourse on the image of the architect that emerged in Germany in the early 1900s at a time when critics were interested in the

favoured attributes of the architect, as they were questioning women's fitness to practice. Stratigakos contends that the image presented at that historic moment resided "the feminine and maternal."³⁸ Referring to subsequent depictions of the "good architect" as a bad parent, she argues that "In-de-sicible stereotypes" continue "to limit and proscribe". While Stratigakos makes a detailed study of the body and mind of the male architect and female architect, most relevant to this article is her focus on the twinned roles of architect and parent, especially for woman architect and mother. Stratigakos writes:

Those who sought to keep women from entering the profession around 1900 emphasized the impossibility of being both architect and mother; they required opposing and contradictory characters, it was said, and success in one endeavour meant necessary failure in the other. Interestingly, this belief was echoed in interviews [...] conducted with the children of women architects who had been active in the 1920s. More than once, I heard the story of the bad mother who was bad because she had put her energies into architectural practice instead of mothering.³⁹

Through a study of the writings of Karl Scheffer and Otto Sarnig, Stratigakos concludes that "[f]or these authors [...] the persona of the architect was defined around a core of 'masculine' traits: integrity, authority, willfulness and creativity or genius. According to the culture of the period, the characteristics of the ideal architect represented the very antithesis of women's expected self-sacrifice, compliance and modesty. In other words, what made a woman a good wife and mother also made her a bad architect."⁴⁰

In her earlier essay "Architects in Suits: The Public Image of Women Architects in Wilhelmine Germany", Stratigakos examines "the tension between cultural conceptions of femininity and the social constructions of the architect as a masculine figure."⁴¹ Having studied the identity of the woman architect at that particular historical moment, Stratigakos concludes that "to make herself over in the image of the architect was to dislodge the self that was rooted in cultural notions of femininity [...] Becoming an architect meant surmounting the social construction of a 'lady'. At the same time, this feminine identity was also considered desirable [...] Negotiating these contradictory images was the inescapable fate of the woman architect."⁴² Interestingly, Stratigakos notes that while women architects in Wilhelmine Germany embraced both the feminine and the masculine, women commentators downplayed their gender. Stratigakos explains that Ernie Winkelmann, the first woman to study architecture in Germany and who ran her own architectural office in Berlin, was quoted in a 1920 article as stating "I think it is wrong to lay stress on the work of the woman in the building trades; all that matters is quality and the evidence that with an equal education a woman accomplishes the same as her male colleague."⁴³

Rochelle Martin's "Out of Marginality"

Moving from Stratigakos' studies of the pre-1920s to Beauvoir's writings in the late 1940s and now to the late 1980s, a persistent line of enquiry appears—about the ill-defined place of women in professional life and the problems women encounter both in their identity as women working in a male-dominated field and in their balancing of work and family life. In 1989, Rochelle Martin asked in *Architecture: A*

Place for Women: "What does it mean to be a woman in architecture? [...] What kind of human being does the profession nourish?" At the time of the article's publication, Martin had practised as an architect and taught as an architectural academic. Starting in 1982, as part of her dissertation research, Martin had interviewed 40 women architects between the ages of 26 and 60, later focusing on six of the interviewees. Her findings were revealing: "Covering education, professional experiences, and the relationship of work to personal life, these interviews provide[ed] a detailed picture of the problems and satisfactions of women in the profession. Several interwoven themes appear[ed] frequently in these discussions: belonging, image, and ambivalence."⁶⁵

On the issue of belonging, Martin claims that in office environments, women architects often felt themselves to be outsiders because they did not relate to either women or men.⁶⁶ On the image of the woman architect, Martin argues that "professional identity, the internalization of a professional image that becomes a significant aspect of one's self-concept, is derived from standards established by the professional elite and from the organizations and institutions associated with it."⁶⁷ She claims that entry to these professional circles allows women to "learn the appropriate roles and required behaviour of the professional [...]. But are these appropriate to women, are these values shared by women?"⁶⁸ Echoing Stratigakos' contention that from the early twentieth century, a tension has existed between being an architect and being a mother for women architects with regard to professional and private life, Martin writes:

Women who choose both career and family invariably experience a conflict between the traditional expectations

and image of a professional and those of a wife and mother. The resulting ambivalence is reinforced by the narrow definition of the professional, which gives great importance to the satisfactions derived from professional life and denigrates those derived from personal life.

Women who have devoted themselves solely to their careers, attaining positions of prestige in their firms, feel that they can afford total commitment only if they are not married. This echoes a belief in the traditional career path that is structured to fit the male pattern—a young man works long hours at the beginning of his career to establish his reputation and gain necessary skills and knowledge. His entire focus is on his career, often to the exclusion of family and personal life. The degree to which an individual accepts the validity of this career pattern is the degree to which it describes reality. A woman with a family is usually not free to follow this pattern and she suffers by seeing herself, as well as by being seen, as not quite a "real" architect.⁶⁹

Martin identifies an on-going tension, if not an open conflict, between the cultural construction of the woman professional and the woman as parent and romantic partner. This, as we have seen, is evident in numerous studies of women architects, and particularly in the case of Hadd, where it is the clear subtext of the Gordon profile quoted earlier.

Fowler and Wilson's Study of "Women Architects and Their Discontents"

In 2004, cultural sociologist Bridget Fowler and professor of gender relations at work Fiona Pfl

Wilson published *Women Architects and Their Discontents*. Taking up the field of architecture as a case study, Fowler and Wilson used Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice to examine whether professional women architects are reaching equality with professional men architects.²⁵ Fowler and Wilson suggest that unlike other professions like medicine that have transformed to put an end to male domination, "the architectural profession appears an anomaly" since significantly fewer women architects practice.²⁶ This echoes Hattestone's contention that "[a]rchitecture may well be the last bastion of sexism."²⁷

Referring to the writings of AnnMarie Adams and Petra Tareed in *Designing Women*,²⁸ who argue that the double bind of being architect and mother leads many women to go part-time and, therefore, be marginalised, Fowler and Wilson contend "Project deadlines and appointments with clients require an extended working day encroaching on the architect's leisure time. In this context, the effect on women's responsibilities for children continues to be disadvantageous."²⁹ Their interviewing of practicing women architects of various ages, as Martin had done 20 years earlier, reiterates this point. From their interviews, Fowler and Wilson identify that women without children are more readily able to practice architecture. They quote "26-30 age group" architect Cass Dixon: "I can work to whatever hour I like—[since] I have no children ... My friends, once they have had children, have gone part-time. [This] would be very difficult to combine with the deadlines ... You can't take the work home, you are all in it together ... Architecture is a vocation—you can't do it half-heartedly. To be a good architect you have to live the architectural life."³⁰ Fowler and Wilson make a call to women architects to reject "resigned accommodation" to a career based on a male

pattern of work and invite architects to propose "usurpatory" strategies to challenge male monopolies.³¹

Fowler and Wilson refer to Bourdieu's writings in *Masculine Domination* about the way in which men have preserved the right to the most "noble tasks."³² Referring to Coleman's introduction in *Architecture and Feminism*,³³ Fowler and Wilson write: "The privilege to tear open the soil and to create monuments has everywhere been denied women, even in the United States."³⁴ Zaha Hadd Architects is an exception to the rule. Zaha Hadd Architects have proven that the opportunity to design large scale, culturally significant public projects is no longer, or at least not in this one celebrated case, the privileged domain of male architects. Hadd is an example of a female architect who has been given "noble tasks" and succeeded. For this reason, it is worthwhile reflecting on her image as "the woman architect" in all its detail, taking into account Hadd's own "discontents".

Reflecting on Hadd's Image as "The Woman Architect"

Because Hadd is regarded as an exemplar or role model for other architects, thus far in this paper, I have elected to examine her image as publicised and presented by the media. I have endeavoured to examine some of the complex personal, social and professional terrain that women architects operate within and to expose one image of "the woman architect" today. Referring to publications that promote a stoic public image of Hadd, I have also drawn upon an insightful newspaper interview published in 2010 that exposes a fuller picture of Hadd's public and private life, revealing obstacles, doubts and, above all, Hadd in a

more humane light and in relation to gender issues.

In the remainder of the essay, critical analysis of Hadid's everyday work life allows three aspects of the image of "the woman architect" to be revealed. The first aspect expands Beauvoir's notion of "true woman' disguised as a man". The second aspect expands Stratigakos' propositions relating to the behavioural stereotyping of the woman architect. The third aspect builds upon Martin's work, considering how the requirements of women architects who choose to have children can be facilitated by some practical "usurpatory" strategies that allow different images of the woman architect to emerge and flourish.

Raised in the Image of a Male Architect

It is not sure that her [woman's] "ideal worlds" will be different from those of men, since it will be through attaining the same situation as theirs that she will find emancipation; to say to what degree she will remain different, in what degree these differences will retain their importance—this would be to hazard bold predictions indeed.⁶⁰

Architectural education is primarily geared towards a total commitment to a life in practice. Young women are raised with the same aspirations as young men and, if talented and fortunate, they succeed through acceptance and promotion by the current mainly male social networks of power. Hadid was raised in "the 1960s [at a time when] women were empowered and anything seemed possible".⁶¹ Deliberately electing to befriend male students at school, going to the Architectural Association (AA) and studying mostly with men, being tutored by and having worked for architectural

male heavyweight mentors Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, Hadid was inculcated into a powerful architectural elite, a "boys' network". Traditionally, great male architects have mentored younger male architects, who have themselves become "great" in the image of their masters. Hadid is an example of a much more unusual phenomenon: a great female architect mentored by great male architects.

Since completing her education, Hadid has worked, to quote Martin, "in the traditional career path that is structured to fit the male pattern".⁶² In the 2003 interview with Hattenstone, Hadid explains the decision not to have children as a consequence of daily architectural work life: "I promise you I think if I wanted to have children I would have done so. Frankly, there was no time to think about it when I was working" Because she was so driven? "Yeah, and that's why I've never really felt I've sacrificed it. I do think some women think about it differently".⁶³

Stratigakos, referring to comments made by Klara Trost in 1919 in "Die Frau als Architektin (The Woman as Architect)", notes: "The art critic Klara Trost wrote that the architectural profession 'carried out with love and joy, will give the talented woman a life full of inner satisfaction and deep happiness, which will so fulfil her that she will be compensated for all that she will be forced to miss because of spinsterhood'". Commenting on these sentiments, Stratigakos continues, "This statement reinforced the notion that designing buildings replaced making babies".⁶⁴ In Hadid's interview, we see the same ideas reiterated.

A Transgendering of the Mind of the Female Architect Proper

Hadid moves between feminine and masculine gender-typed behaviour depending on context.

In terms of her demeanour, Hadd is often represented as an aggressive, tough woman. Hattenstone describes Hadd as 'the Queen of Hearts screaming 'Off with their heads' at insubordinate subjects'.⁴² Hadd is opinionated and, therefore, has a tendency to scare people, particularly men, though at other times, she 'looks almost bashful'.⁴³ If Hattenstone did not reveal Hadd had no children, he thinks because of her "warmth", he could conversely "see her as an earth mother".⁴⁴ If we look to the movies for a character comparable to Hadd, Miranda Priestly from *The Devil Wears Prada* (Fig. 3) seems a reasonable equivalent image of the tough female boss who shows feminine compassion when required.⁴⁵ Even more so than Priestly, Hadd challenges many elements of the many stereotypes about how women can and should behave in a professional context.

Alternate Images of "The Woman Architect"

*If real change is to occur, it will have to come from outside—from the marginal people, men and women, who question the standards and assumptions and practices of the profession. [...] The task presumes the collaboration of men, in education and practice, who also wish to see a redefinition of the practice and profession of architecture. Women will not be the only beneficiaries.*⁴⁶

Recent statistics support Fowler and Wilson's contention that architecture remains predominantly male dominated. In 'Fewer Women in Architecture' in the *RIBA Journal*, Eleanor Young notes that roughly one-fifth of the architecture profession in the UK are women. The proportion of women in the overall workforce in practices in December 2011 was 21%.⁴⁷ Sarah Wigglesworth argues that this was up 10%

since 1995, but Young reveals it was down 7% since January 2009. Young attributes this to the economic downturn in the UK in which women working part-time were laid off.⁴⁸

Slow progress has been made in securing more media coverage for the successes of women architects. *Architecture: A Woman's Profession*, edited by Tarja Kulack and published in 2011, is a case in point.⁴⁹ The *AJ's* first issue devoted solely to "Women in Practice" also celebrates the growing achievement of women architects. Some, mainly younger women architectural commentators, are optimistic about the future for women architects. Other commentators who have witnessed the incredibly slow increase of women within the profession 'present a cheery 'things are going to get better' image', to quote Flora Samuel, which is counterbalanced with the knowledge that sexism within architectural practices is emerging yet again as an obstacle for women architects.⁵⁰ Even with her very high degree of success, Hadd has suffered sexism and discrimination.

In conclusion, Hadd has offered aspiring women architects one possible image of the woman architect. Still, as both Hadd and Martin point out, other women want different kinds of lives in architecture. The balance between working in an architectural practice and having children is one of the main obstacles for women architects. Taking on board Fowler and Wilson's call to women architects to reject 'resigned accommodation' and to propose "usurpatory" strategies to challenge male monopolies, and expanding on Martin's suggestions above, we might consider the other role models represented in the 12 January 2012 issue of *AJ*.⁵¹ The female directors or partners in architectural practice offer exemplars to women architects on how, to quote



Figure 3. *The Devil Wears Prada*, director David Frankel, US, 2006. Image courtesy of the BFI, London.

Christine Murray to “dispel the myth that you can’t be a successful woman and have a life”.⁷⁵ Hadd’s own role models, Alison Smithson and Lina Bo Bardi are also examples here. Smithson and Bo Bardi are recognised strong women architects both of whom married. Alison Smithson married architect Peter Smithson with whom she had three children, while Bo Bardi married art dealer and activist Pietro Maria Bardi; they did not have children. It is these women’s focus on how to achieve a

balance in work life and private life that is most helpful to other aspiring women architects who want the same things.

So what are the implications of this for women architects working today? While Hadd offers one image of ‘the woman architect’, more nuanced visions of ‘the woman architect’ like these could be presented in the media. In addition, practices (the large to the small) could create options for the variety of flexible

with a shift women just want without an input within the profession. In 2004, Urquhart points out: "There's a perception that in order to run a job, architects need to be employed in a firm. In a firm, the day-to-day basic practice before that clients want to have access to the person in charge through out the week, not just the day they are in the office. There may be some truth to this, but it is also the case that some of the most successful practices embrace flexible working in order to retain talented architects as they move on from it." The real shift is thinking if that a design project can be led by more than

one person, that all working in one studio does not mean that it is no longer essential if communication between team members is kept tight, that projects can be done at home as well as the office using virtual technologies, that architectural excellence is not bound to the singular architectural genius leader. These already emerging "autocrats" strategies begin to challenge and open up opportunities for alternative images of "the woman architect." As Perry-Lewis has said, "The big question is whether the gatekeepers of the profession are sufficiently flexible for the next generation to flourish."

Notes

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17. Flora Samuel, "Essay", in Murray (ed.), "Women in Practice", *The Architects' Journal*, 26.

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23. Hattenstone, "Master Builder", n.p.
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54. Fowler and Wilson, "Women Architects and Their Discontents", 102.
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63. Hadid, quoted in Hattenstone, "Master Builder", n.p.
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