

Zaha Hadid

SERPENTINE GALLERIES

Kensington Gardens

December 8–February 12

Titled “Early Paintings and Drawings,” this sizable collection of almost fifty two-dimensional works by the recently deceased architect Zaha Hadid is a celebration of her noteworthy contributions at the crossover of fine art and design. Housed in a building that Hadid expanded and remodeled with Patrik Schumacher in 2013, the exhibition highlights drawings, paintings, and notebook sketches initially created prior to the construction of her first building in 1993. Citing Kazimir Malevich as her main influence, Hadid’s output does take its cues from Suprematism. Constructivism, however, with its hybridity of form and function, would seem more fitting.



Zaha Hadid, *Metropolis*, 1988/2014, acrylic on canvas, 216 x 94".

The knockout large-scale canvas *Metropolis*, 1988/2014, is made up of abstract shapes in a limited palette with sinuous white lines hovering over a vast red field that could be read as a landscape. It greets viewers upon entry and sets a utopian tone, where fluid forms create adaptable habitats for humans. *Hommage à Verner Panton* and *Blue and Green Scrapers*, both 1990, are arranged vertically. The works create a rhythmic interplay between colorful, undulating shapes on a black ground: The forms exist in a nebulous expanse in *Hommage*, and they drift through a subterranean plaza in *Blue and Green*. An even more traditional ink-on-Mylar drawing such as *The Ambulatory and its Connection*, 1991, which was a proposal for an extension of the Dutch Parliament in the Hague, resembles a heroic space station or a tricked-out Erector Set, of which mere mortals are unworthy. Donning goggles and headphones, visitors are also given a chance to see Hadid’s paintings in an immersive environment—with an accompanying atmospheric electronic sound track—as an alluring virtual-reality experience. You stare at a white dot on one of four floating works, only to have it plunge you into an animated realm where flying shapes above and below the surface allow you to live out a fantasy of actually being in the future, if only for a few minutes.

— Chris Bors