

The CAMBODIA DAILY WEEKEND



Bernard Touillon
People walk by an art installation in MAXXI: National Museum of the 21st Century Arts in Rome—a building designed by Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid that took home the 2010 Stirling Prize.

A Genocide Museum Re-imagined

Zaha Hadid to design Cambodia's repository for Khmer Rouge information

By DENE-HERN CHEN • THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The fluidity of the structures designed by renowned Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid bring to mind the gentle waves of a river — her skyscrapers are never angular and block-like, her museums mimic the sprawling infinity of the ocean.

Now, Ms. Hadid—a two-time winner of the Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize, one of architecture's highest accolades—will be bringing her vision to Cambodia. Her firm, Zaha Hadid Architects, has agreed to design the long-awaited new institute for the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)—the country's largest repository of information relating to the Khmer Rouge regime.

The Sleuk Rith Institute, whose name refers to dried leaves historically used by religious leaders as writing paper, plans to be the leading center for genocide studies in Asia. DC-Cam will also use the institute—to be located next to the Boeng Trabek high school on

Monivong Boulevard—as its home base to store, analyze and preserve information relating to the regime.

Ms. Hadid said that Youk Chhang, director of DC-Cam, inspired her to take up this project, which has gone through several design iterations, with the final plans to be released in December.

“He has a very particular vision for this building which greatly inspires us: that beauty and optimism can heal and reconnect a country,” Ms. Hadid said by email. “We share [these] principles and we believed this is an opportunity for something very special and unique for the people of Cambodia.”

Ms. Hadid said that her firm is currently doing extensive research to incorporate “the richness of the Angkorian architecture,” and once Mr. Chhang is satisfied with the designs, they will move ahead with the construction—of which she declined to provide an exact timeline.

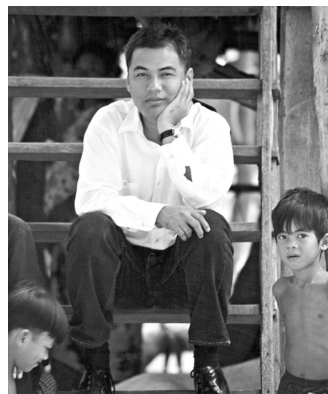
“[T]aking on such an important project is a great responsibility.

Youk Chhang's work is critical in documenting the event, but the work also aids the healing process by moving forward with education, understanding and inspiration,” said Ms. Hadid, who refers to all of her past designs as her children.

“We are privileged to be trusted with such an important task.”

The institute was Mr. Chhang's vision. He was evacuated from Phnom Penh to his grandparents' home Takeo province in 1975, before being moved to Banteay

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Vanthan Poedura
Youk Chhang sits in front of his grandparents house in Takeo province in 2004.



A QUESTION OF DANCE

Performers explore the technical and philosophical aspects of their art

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PARALLEL WORLDS

The 38th parallel, separating north and south, is Korea's most important dividing line

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TWO SIDES TO LOU REED

His tough, streetwise image was matched by songs of real tenderness and fragility

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Top: Siv Channa
Center: Reuters
Bottom: Creative Commons



Architect Zaha Hadid

Reuters

Meanchey province later that year. For him, all the memories of the Khmer Rouge, and the need to move past its traumas, are wrapped up in his grandparents' home.

"This poor house, which has already been demolished, is full of bitter-sweet memories which gives me hope for a better future," he said.

Designing the institute has been a difficult project. In a design competition held in January 2012, Cambodian architect Asasax was chosen as the winner, with his drawing of the Institute featuring a giant stupa in the middle flanked by two angular towers. In front of it would be elevated structures on stilts—bringing to mind Cambodian homes on the flood plains—that would house a school, library, ballroom and an amphitheater.

"I had several local design competitions but they do not meet global standards. I see genocide as a crime against humanity and I want to beautify it," Mr. Chhang said. "It will be a totally new design by Zaha Hadid."

In a concept note, Mr. Chhang said he selected Ms. Hadid because he does not want his museum to be dark and oppressive—a design undertaken by most genocide museums to signify the tragedy of such events.

"The gracious but powerful architectural legacy of Zaha Hadid, which focuses on curvilinear as opposed to the harsher geometry of rigidly intersecting hard angles...has the potential to shift the dominant design approach of war crimes facility architecture in an entirely new and more enriching direction," Mr. Chhang said, adding that her distance from the issue could bring out more in the creative process.

He added that he wishes to connect the design ideals to a famous Angkorian-era temple—the Banteay Srey temple—located 30 kilometers north of its more famous counterpart Angkor Wat.

Ms. Hadid said she will be relying on Mr. Chhang's expertise in the subject to drive her design forward.

"[A]s a Cambodian who survived the events that have so impacted Cambodia's consciousness, he is very well-qualified to make this decision [of selecting a non-Cambodian architect]," she said, adding that a team of Cambodian and international experts will assist the project.

Life of the Communist Party

A campaign for China's communist discipline confronts a generation focused on personal fulfillment

By ROWAN CALLICK • THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The scene evokes memories of a more certain and compliant era. Xi Jinping, the General Secretary of the world's most powerful organization, sits with his arms folded, leaning watchfully on a conference table at which members of the committee of the Communist Party in China's Hebei province are writing "self-criticisms."

Xi, the party's chief and the nation's president (the latter being the lesser role), has been touring the country, ensuring that party members everywhere bow their heads in the face of the Maoist "mass line" campaign he is directing. This will restore discipline to the party, Xi believes, and regain the respect of ordinary folk who have become skeptical in the face of corruption, a soaring wealth gap and an aristocratic attitude among officials.

If the errant ways of some party officials are the problem—there are about 83 million members within a population of 1.3 billion—the solution is also sought within. The party is China's great given, sitting above and beyond even the national Constitution. But the times are changing, and the party no longer dominates Chinese life as it once did. Most of China's middle class is on a very different kind of long march, through the famous international tourist destinations and the great global universities.

The broader Chinese population knows only in the most general way how the party works. It holds its secrets close to its chest. The party's core features include the selection of the best and brightest, the top-down flow of information and constant self-criticism, designed to ensure a sense of vulnerability rather than of entitlement among its members (even if the presumption that they were born to rule is proving hard to shift).

Liu Meiling (not her real name, for fear of endangering her party position) is a smart, ambitious woman in her 30s who works for a foreign-Chinese joint venture in Wuhan, an ancient but dynamic



Chinese President Xi Jinping

Reuters

city of 10 million in central China. Every month, she and about a third of her 40 colleagues in one section of the firm file into a special party meeting room, either during their lunch hour or just after work. When their general manager enters, he wears, metaphorically, a different hat—as general secretary of the firm's party branch.

Most of the foreigners working there aren't aware that their firm has a party branch. They might be surprised to discover that someone as modern-minded, fluent in English and generally savvy as Liu is a member. Why is the party still so attractive to aspiring young Chinese? The main draw is success. Joining the party opens the door to almost unlimited career opportunities.

Liu became a precocious young communist in high school. Her parents were both members already, and she was invited to join. She applied by writing an essay. "You have to state your shortcomings," she says. "One is enough. Usually people will say something modest, like 'I'm not seriously minded.'"

Members are mostly passive at meetings, she says. When officials read statements by party leaders, "We comment how wise they are. Always very wise. But they are very dull. No real business is conducted." After Liu graduated, her father

helped her to obtain her first job. "I knew he could do that," she says. But she didn't like it: "I read and re-read the novel 'Jane Eyre.' Like her, I wanted to be myself."

By now, Liu's enthusiasm for the party has waned. "People separate this party involvement out from their understanding of the world," she says. "Their membership is like an altar with a Buddha on it. It looks good in its place, but for most people it doesn't penetrate into real life."

Members of the emerging generation feel that they owe their comfortable lifestyle not to the party but to their family's own efforts. And, of course, they communicate obsessively online, often bursting through the boundaries the party-state seeks to maintain.

If Xi persists in trying to restore some measure of the party discipline and passion of the Mao years, he also may revive memories that the party has chosen to keep buried—of the tens of millions who starved due to the Great Leap Forward or of the anarchic cruelties of the Cultural Revolution.

During his decade at the top, Xi is likely to face a challenge in maintaining the party as a political apparatus with a moral imperative to rule. For many of its younger members, it has become little more than a qualification that caps their C.V.s, the ultimate fraternity.