



Poetry in motion

The decision to charge iconic architect Zaha Hadid with reinterpreting the conventions of traditional brassware has led to a truly revolutionary creation

Report: Jackie Daly





Top row: Zaha Hadid's design for Triflow Concepts reinterprets the form of the conventional tap in finishes of chrome, gold, nickel or pewter. **Above:** Hadid has designed the London Aquatics Centre for the 2012 Olympic Games. **Opposite page, middle:** Zaha is known as a radical designer with rare originality as exemplified in her design for the Dubai Opera House. **Bottom:** The collection includes a kitchen tap as shown.

There is some debate in the world of product design whether an association with a big name in the field of design, architecture or fashion has real merit or is little more than a marketing ploy designed to tempt us to buy. Triflow Concepts' collaboration with architect Zaha Hadid, however, is nothing short of a masterstroke – in the design of a humble tap, this Iraqi-born but much-cherished British icon has created something truly unique in both form and function.

Commissioned by Triflow to design the 'tap of the future', the resulting creation reflects a sweeping flow of water frozen in time. "Our starting point was a series of formal studies on the conceptual terms of 'fluidity' and 'seamlessness' as we wanted to generate the fluid geometries of water in motion," Zaha explains. "From the outset we sought to re-imagine what is possible with the form of an everyday object, while seamlessly integrating new technologies in manufacture and design."

The tap is a formal expression of the continuous flow of liquid that merges the tap spout, body and handle in a seamless trajectory of curves. This form was created using advanced 3D computer software where experiments in the viscosity of liquids gave way to a final design that can only be described as groundbreaking.

Yet style does not win over substance in this new incarnation. Triflow (previously Avilion), already renowned for its patented three-way technology – whereby filtered water is delivered through a dedicated waterway, therefore isolating it from hot and cold water supplies – has incorporated

the technology into the design, while a touch-sensitive electronic button activates the filtered water. Moreover, it took a whole new approach to tap production, utilising a manufacturing process never seen in the UK before, to make the collection for both bathroom and kitchen, which is offered in finishes of chrome, gold, nickel or pewter.

Zaha Hadid is an architect known for producing creations so forward thinking that, in the past, initial responses to her imaginative designs have been one of startled bewilderment – several of her early architectural designs won competitions but were never built as they were deemed too avant-garde for an 'unready' public.

Take her proposed mountainside club design of 1982 – the Peak Club in Hong Kong – which was a design competition winner. "Her amazing design, a 'horizontal skyscraper', called for four huge beams to be rammed into a mountainside, yet it looked as sleek as a UFO," wrote McGuigan in *Newsweek*. The structure was never built, though it appeared in a show at New York's Museum of Modern Art. More controversial was the much-publicised design for the Cardiff Bay Opera House – the negative reaction and opposition to her winning design of a glass courtyard with an inner auditorium is still an issue that saddens Zaha to this day. That said, she has battled convention in what has conventionally been a man's world, challenging the architectural world and sometimes alienating it, while rising to the top purely through genius, vision and determination.

The proof? As it stands today, Zaha is the first woman to win architecture's most coveted prize – the Pritzker prize – in its entire 26-year history

and is celebrated for her modernist approach, which plays with spatial awareness, the interplay between buildings and landscape and optical perception. Her buildings include the Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art in Cincinnati (2003) and the Bergisel Ski-Jump on Bergisel Mountain in Innsbruck, Austria (2002), plus the Chanel Pavilion designed in collaboration with Chanel head Karl Lagerfeld, and the Dubai Opera House (2008), while planning permission has been granted on London's Hoxton Square building and an Aquatic Centre for the 2012 Olympic Games. She has even put pen to paper for Lacoste and created a pair of plastic shoes, while her z-Island kitchen design for Corian presented the kitchen of the future in glorious free-flowing form.

Despite the diversity, all these projects are linked in Zaha's mind. "The ideas for my work always come from the same source. All my projects are connected somehow," she states. "In terms of form they all interest me equally, but when designing a product the pieces are experimental, quicker to execute than the architecture and inspire creativity. We learn a great deal from them."

And it seems her tap collection in collaboration with Triflow Concepts is just a taste of things to come. Nothing has been confirmed, but watch this space for showers, bath fillers and much, much more. "Yes it is certainly being considered," Zaha concludes, "and I would enjoy developing the pieces into a full collection."

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