



LINA GHOTMEH ARCHEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

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KIYO FUJISHIRO(KF) You are from a very unique country, Lebanon, and now you are in Paris. How did your career start?

LINA GHOTMEH(LG) How I started it — Well, I would say Paris was a bit of a coincidence. I began studying architecture at the American University of Beirut, and during my studies, I had the opportunity to complete an internship abroad. I was accepted into an internship at Jean Nouvel's office in 2001. You know, arriving in Paris from Lebanon was, for me, an amazing discovery of a completely different context. And I saw this city, it was so beautiful, where everything was homogeneous, and designed in a way that Heidegger had brought this kind of continuity to the city. Also, the history present is completely at odds with my own upbringing in Beirut. I had a great experience at Jean Nouvel's office, and after I finished my studies, they called me back to work on a project in Beirut. The idea was that I would spend a little time in Paris and then establish a small satellite team to follow the project in Beirut. During my internship, I had already worked on the Qatar Tower in Doha. Then they asked me to come to Paris in one week, and I said okay. I just packed my things and arrived in Paris. It was supposed to be for 6 months — and here I am, 23 years later with my practice setup in Paris.

KF That's interesting. Talking about your country and projects there, Stone Garden (2020) stays with me because it feels quite different from Japan. There have been many conflicts in Beirut, and sometimes nothing is left, nothing remains. Yet you are creating new architecture using historical stone and traditional building methods. What led you to approach the project in that way?

LG It's a city where you're always questioning your identity, the sense of rootedness, and the history of the place. It has such a rich history of different civilisations that have passed through it. Every time you dig archaeologically, you discover the history of the Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Romans, and you begin to understand humanity through the layers of the earth in the city of Beirut. But at the same time, with all the demolition, there is always this question of who we are. When you constantly lose the traces of what your ancestors built, that question



Stone Garden, Beirut, Lebanon, Housing and Hsu Art Foundation, © Lina Ghotmeh — Architecture. Photography © Ivan Baan, 2021-2022

becomes very present. For me, the building of Stone Garden then really speaks about anchors and about the roots of architecture, almost thinking of architecture as something that grows from a place, like a plant. It grows out of that ground. At the same time, it's also about the possibility for architecture to respond to difficult questions such as war, destruction, and the memory of conflict, and how those things might be transformed into something constructive or impactful through architecture.

KF In Japan, as you know, we also have experiences with loss and destruction. We had the Second World War, and 2025 marks eighty years since the end of the war. Then, about thirteen years ago, we had the big earthquake in the Hanshin area, and fifteen years ago, there was the earthquake and tsunami. Sometimes we lose everything. People in Japan are not always very talkative about questions of identity, but at the same time, they deeply feel those losses. Still, somehow, people want or try to recover from those difficult situations.

LG I think the way we talk about it is different. I mean, every culture speaks about these experiences in its own way. In Lebanon, they come out socially through humour and sarcasm, sometimes even self-sarcasm, almost reacting in the opposite way of what you might expect. Maybe it is also expressed through a very strong desire for life, for celebrating, for gathering, for constantly making things. Architecture, design, and art become ways of responding to those experiences. And I feel that in Japan, the reaction is expressed through the way you master space — the way you draw out beauty and cultivate a relationship with nature. There is this intensity in how beauty is shaped and appreciated. Creativity and design become a way of responding to moments of instability, moments that destroy your environment and suddenly bring everything back to zero again.

KF That's right. When we talk about creating something new after those experiences, it seems your work emphasises horizontal connections rather than vertical structures. It's not just about building something new — it's about linking people, nature, and places. For example, the Bahrain Pavilion at the Osaka Expo (2025) creates a journey between Japan and Bahrain, highlighting connection and continuity across spaces.



LG

Yeah, I think it's about the ground. You know, when we talk about horizontality, it's mainly about weaving. I almost imagine what I'm working on as knitting or stitching relationships together.

I realised this very clearly when I did the exhibition of Olga de Amaral, the fabric artist. Looking at her work, I saw a parallel between making fabric and making architecture as a way of creating relationships and connecting people. For the Bahrain Pavilion at the Osaka Expo, I wanted to create emotional connections with Japan, with craft, and with wood construction, but also with codes and experiences that make people feel comfortable in the space. At the same time, I wanted to connect with the essence of Bahraini culture, highlighting what is shared between us. I hope the language of space can create common threads and help us understand that, even if we are different, we are also connected.

KF

How do you think your project has been received? In Japan, or more broadly in Asia? Have you had any reactions from people?

LG

You know, I really love it when I do a project, and then I observe the people who are there. I try to hide and watch their reactions because, for me, it's so important to see how people are engaging with the space — how they like it and how they make it their own. But it's not just about the public; it's also about the process during construction. My first encounter with the construction team was very important because I wanted to know if they understood the project and if they could appropriate it as part of their own culture. I was really happy when one of the team members told me, "We love this project. It really resonates with what we do, and it motivates us to do our best". That, for me, is super important. Architecture isn't just an idea. You need the people building it to care about it. The emotional attachment developed during construction is what makes any architecture worthwhile.

KF

So, do you often adjust your plans based on feedback from the construction team after the planning stage, and then you make changes accordingly?

LG

Yes, I'm always working with the construction team, and sometimes with craftspeople as well, to see how to integrate craft into the architecture. On our current project in Toyama, the Nature of Observatory, where we're also designing some cottages, I visited local craftspeople working with glass and wood. I really try to understand the materials and the making process, all while doing the design.

KF

So, is it more of a communicative, collaborative process?

LG

It's communicative, collaborative, and rooted. When you plant something, you open the ground, you try to understand it, you put the plant in, you water it, and you nurture it. You're really recreating the roots, the invisible part that you don't always see.

KF

With *Windows of Lights* (2024), the focus is on light, a kind of intangible element, yet it also connects back to the book. As a book publisher, I'm interested in how the book explores light, even though your architecture produces something tangible and physical. What drew you to focus on light, and how does it relate to the project?

LG

Maybe the first reason is a bit literal, but I have two reasons. The first is that light has always fascinated me, both in architecture and in the way I design projects. Light is the material that shapes the atmosphere of a space; it's really an essential element of the materiality and experience of any architecture. Reading Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* also made me reflect on this. Light is very much part of culture. In Lebanon, the Mediterranean sun brings strong light that enhances beauty, creates sharp shadows, and brings colour, allowing nature to flourish. Here in Japan, light is about gradations, it's about the shadows, about the nuances. I'm fascinated by how we relate to light and how it shapes our perception of time and space. But another reason is that I was approached by Zumtobel Group, a lighting manufacturer that publishes a book with an architect every other year. They've worked with people like Francis Kéré and Frida Escobedo. They invited me to work on this book, which we published with

Lars Müller. It was a great opportunity to explore light in depth, not just tackling it through an architectural lens, but from its very origins. What is light? That's what I wanted to explore. The book even starts with the Big Bang, showing the first bay picture of universe. From that moment, you can trace how light shapes everything, how we, the world, and even architecture are made from particles of light. It's amazing to think about, and it completely changes the way you view architecture and the work we do.

WINDOWS

LINA GHOTMEH
ZUMTOBEL GROUP

OF LIGHT

WINDOWS OF LIGHT

Lina Ghotmeh in collaboration with Zumtobel Group.
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KF

So, you're not only working with material, but also with light — light as a material. And how it relates to cultural resonance. It seems like you're researching a lot about material, and when you talk about roots, light is one of the roots as well.

LG

I was also really fascinated by the *À Table* (2023), how people communicate around the table, sometimes without knowing their roots, and sometimes with a deep understanding of who they are. Either way, they're very much engaged, talking and connecting. It feels very present, very of-now. Was that also part of your concept?

KF

That's interesting. Stories, novels, and texts often carry layers of meaning — a kind of intertextuality. For me, it's not just about publishing a book; it's about engaging with the audience. Their reactions become part of the work. Sometimes it reminds people of their own lives, ancestors, or history. It's memory in action, and that's what makes creating books so fascinating. People often say that making a book or creating something is about submitting a perfect product. But that's only half of it. The other half comes from the audience, the people, the atmosphere, or even the natural context. And I got the same feeling from your project.

LG

It's really nice that you talk about books be-

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cause they're about narration, a series of events and memories. We, as humans, exist thanks to our memories. Memories exist because of the narratives we create. It's these memories that allow us to experience a sense of time, or maybe to think that time exists at all. Maybe time doesn't exist in itself, but it does exist for us because we can narrate what we've lived and store it in memory. So, reading a book or experiencing architecture, for me, is an intense way of being human. It's about living in time in a conscious way, or exploring what time could mean. And it's this kind of amalgam of a series of events.

KF

Are there any specific projects where you engage with the theme of time? Of course, in a way, every project seems to involve time, but could you talk about one in particular? Like the British Museum evokes a sense of time, the depth of history, and its many layers. Time can feel different for everyone. Sometimes it flies, sometimes it moves slowly, its pace shifts depending on perspective. The British Museum, in particular, seems to hold so many layers of time...

LG

Yes. Concentration of time.

KF

How did you plan the British Museum project?

LG

I think what's fascinating about the British Museum is that it's a place with all these layers of time. Sometimes contradictory—times of peace, times of conflict, today's moment alongside ancient history. To work with the British Museum, you really have to understand the collection and the context in which you're working. You need to dig into the layers of archaeology, history, and the objects themselves. It's a place where all these stories are layered, and they become present through the physical materials and objects. The challenge is, how do you allow an object to speak about its own time, but also about today? Like the Lamassu, these incredible sculptures that once guarded Assyrian palaces. You can't just talk about them as historical artefacts that represent Assyrian kings and palaces. You also have to consider that they come from Iraq, and reflect on the current situation there. These objects connect different moments in time, the deep past with the present, while also

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Argentine Pavilion, London, United Kingdom © Lina Ghotmeh — Architecture Photography © Ivan Buis. Courtesy of Argentine, 2022 - 2023



helping shape the future through that understanding. Their richness and resilience lie in these layers of time and the emotions they carry. Through the way the objects are arranged, the space becomes a vessel that allows you to understand this history while carrying it forward into the future.

KF

That's a very interesting story. How does the timing work?

LG

It's a 10-year project.

KF

10 years.

LG

Yes, it takes a long time. I mean, most museum projects do. For example, the Estonian National Museum took 10 years to complete. This project is also large in scale, and on top of that, the building will stay open during the renovation. So part of the time is needed to understand the building, study the collection, and then implement the project. It's really an in-depth transformation of the museum.

KF

Architecture relates to almost everything. History, museums, even shrines and temples. In that sense, architecture can take on a kind of religious or human dimension, reflecting identity and the presence of people. I think what you're doing is connecting all these elements, not just creating the physical architecture.

LG

It's a bit like using architecture as a pre-text—a tool or vessel to create knowledge, to preserve it, and to connect different places. For the manufacturing building I did with my practice in Normandy for Hermès, from the start, the idea was to create a local, low-carbon, energy-positive building. That meant thinking carefully about materials, how to use local bricks and revive traditional artisanal techniques. I worked directly with a brickmaker to produce 550,000 bricks, and we built the entire structure using them. And today, it's rare to see brick used structurally, so it was also updating that knowledge to the contemporary language of architecture.

British Museum's Western Wing, London, United Kingdom © Lina Ghotmeh — Architecture, 2025-Ongoing

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in a way, this building became a way to revive the industrial landscape. In Normandy, many industrial sites are set within beautiful natural surroundings, yet the buildings often look like metal boxes that disrupt the landscape. How do you transform industrial architecture into something more dignified, something with beauty? It's about using arches, brick, and the craft of the hand. When we started building, we realized very few brickmakers knew how to construct in this traditional way, so we trained both brickmakers and masons. It's a series of layers and connections that make architecture more than just building space. Of course, the experience of the building is crucial; like you should feel awe and a sense of the extraordinary; because architecture can transport people. But it also has to have a vocation to connect. And to have a positive impact socially and historically, rather than just being a piece of architecture. So, it's the efforts of actually caring about the place.

KF So, it might be a long way to go? For life, the next generation?

LG Hopefully, I think maybe the point isn't to create a building that will live forever. It's also about challenging the immaterial world, not necessarily just the physical, but the process itself.

KF On a fun note to end. Apart from architecture, how do you enjoy art, music, or other creative areas? Who are your favourite musicians, artists, filmmakers, or writers?

I love the work of a friend of mine, Shafar Youssef, who's a jazz musician. Really, very, amazing work. I love jazz in general, but I'm also very interested in opera and dance performances. Right now, I'm trying to follow up on that, and writing at the moment, I'm very interested in linguistics. I've been reading Carlo Rovelli, the physicist, and a book by Beatrice Colomina and Mark Wigley called *Are We Human?*, which captures the history of humanity in a completely different way. It advocates that our ancestors were not primitive and challenges the idea that history follows a linear path, questioning the Western gaze on understanding the

man development.

A lot of things inspire me. I love the work of my friend Emanuele Ciccio, a philosopher who writes about the power of art and beauty, and how essential these are to human life. Fashion is also central, not an extra, but something inherent. We are all fashioning beings in constant expression of fashion. Even nature has fashion embedded in it, like a butterfly wing, which is constantly "in fashion". Emmanuel tries to rethink life, nature, and human existence by breaking down the boundaries between humans, plants, objects and environment. All of these fields, they inspire me, and they're part of the research that nourishes my work.

LINA GHOTMEH

A Latvian-born, Paris-based architect and founder of the Latvian Group in Architecture, renowned for sustainable, award-winning, and ecologically sensitive designs. Based in Beirut, her work explores rabbits, natural materials, and traditional craftsmanship, blending history with forward-thinking architecture through her concept "Archaeology of the Future." Notable projects include Sana Garden (Jordan Project) of the Year 2020, 2020 Argentine Pavilion (2020), and the 2020 Venice Architecture Biennale. She has been awarded the JACOPO 2025 (Architect's Standing of the Year 2020), Western Europe Galleries at the British Museum, Qatar's permanent pavilion, and the 2015 Contemporary Art Museum. She has taught at YU, Terenhi, and Harvard GSD, and received the Architect's Achievement Award, Great Arab Cities Award, TIME100 Hero, Archiving of the Year by JACOPO and the Venger, and the 2019 International Fellow Award and Honorary of the Year by the AIA at the Louvre.

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Architects: ALEXIS DORTCH, NATHANIEL FRANCE, & LISA GHORIEL – *Architecture, Photography:* JEAN SAÏN | © *interior* 2023, 2023-2025

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リナ・ゴットメ——「未来の考古学」

——ゴットメさんは、レバノンで生まれ育ち、今はパリを拠点にして建築家として活躍しているらしいですよ。ご自身のキャリアをどのようにスタートされたのでしょうか？

[illegible]

—— 興味深いところですね。レバノンでのプロジェクトについてお伺いしたいのですが、「Stone Garden Housing」(2010-2012)は、日本にあるものとの違いが感じられます。内戦や紛争のせいで、ベイルートでは色々なものが破壊されるけれども残らないことがある。それでも、石という古来の素材や伝統的な方法を使い、新しい建物を作られていると感じました。そういう方法でプロジェクトを進めてきた理由は何かでしょうか。

ペイルートは、自分のアイデンティティをさらにルーツが
あるという点に悩まされた。そしてその悩みの原因として結
ぶられたものに気づいてくる。そして、この気づきには
文化の価値観を問うて、異文化意識のあり方を、ローマ
人に説明して聞かせる。そして、ペイルートは、アフリカ人、ア
ム人の歴史を教えることになる。この歴史の土地は、あるまじ
うな歴史のミラーを通して、人間はどのような存在なのかと
いうことを私たちに示している。そして、その歴史に、絶えず
人種差別がある。そして、その歴史には、異文化意識のあり方
というものが示されている。そして、その歴史には、異文化
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その歴史には、異文化意識のあり方というものが示されてい
る。

らの設備所、そして建築物の機能的な部分も語るものだと思

っています。建築は貨幣のようにある場所から出てくる。そんなふうにも書けるのではないかと考えています。その土地で育つものなのです。同時にそれは、戦争や破壊、紛争の記憶といった難しい問いに対しての回答にもなるものでもあり、建築を通して物事の経済的であったらイヤポイントをまたらしたくするものに置き換えていく可能性についても語るものだと思っています。

—ご尊いように、日本でも私たちは様々な破壊や震災を
経験してきました。2025年は地震から80年の年でした。
30年前とはには保障、防災大震災があり、16年前には東日
本大震災がありました。なかに以降進んで全てを失った人もい
ます。私たち日本人は、アイデンティティについて喪失に懸
念することは多くはないかもしれませんが、深い喪失を感じ、そ
れでとても難しい状況から回復しようとしている人たちが
大勢いるように思います。

その文化にも、そうした経験について無数の物語があると思います。レバノンでは、その伝説ユーモアや皮肉、ときには無慈悲なものを通して他者の目に留めさせる。中東に広がる荒涼とした風景から、それはまた、我々の心の中にまでとろとろと浸透し、人々が集うことや喧嘩、闘争や戦争を告げようとする欲望として定着するものということが知られます。健康やササティン、アートはそうした経験に迫っていくための道具になると思います。

という形で表わされているように思ふ——「我々の心をよりよく知るために、自然との関係性をどのように築いていくか、という方向性で、我が国に在り、その心をよりよく構築していく、その関係性をいかに築く必要がある」と思ふ。自然現象やササガヤク、天変地変であつたり、健康が破壊される現象がやがておこると思ふべき、つまりよりよい環境にたつたに於ては自然の恵みは破壊されてしまふのだ。

——【喪失の】経験のもとに新しく何かを作ることに、
あんなに豊かな経験につながって終わるとするべき、そこにある
のは何を立ち上げたいというところを鑑みイメージしよう
よりも、水平に、横につながるような感覚なのではないかと
思いました。横に新しいものを産出するというよりは、入る
や自然、場所を導くようなものではないでしょうか。例えば
大塚・関西方面(2025)で事がりられた『バーレーンパビリ
オン』は、日本とバーレーンをつなぐような空間や別のイメ
ージを作り出していました。

そうです。私は、建築は「映画」に似ることだと思っています。構図のつなぎ方について言うなら、それは「編集」ということだと思っています。建築がやっていることは、いかに観客を誘ったり説き及ぼしたりして関係性を持っていく作業なのではないかと考えています。

「オーストリア・ハンガリー帝国」にア・ラ・カルテ、オーストリア・ハンガリー帝国、1912年）の展覧会を挙げたときに、それがはじめて行われました。彼等の作品を見ていて、何を観ることと鑑賞を伴うこととの善い分別は、人々との関係を生み出し、

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