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# TOWER<sub>AND</sub>TOWN

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# TOWER<sup>AND</sup>TOWN

THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES

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## EAST-WEST

This edition conveys richness and connectivity. Paul Collins, (the Ashmolean Museum), draws our attention to the cultural connections with Mesopotamia, (Modern Iraq), plus to the Ashmolean collection and recent Basrah Museum development; an insightful and timely article that is greatly appreciated.

Ancient Iraq, arguably, was a crucible for one of those East-meets-West episodes that have had such a huge impact on global history. The late international architect Zaha Hadid has gained from this as pointed out in my relevant article; and John Osborne reminds us of the different thoughts associated with Persia/Iran.

Japan is another East-meets-West case, and here Hugh de Saram eloquently describes some enriching cultural transmissions. Moreover, the onset of Covid-19 lockout and the forthcoming Olympics in Tokyo, (Japan), have prompted Jonathan Jarjis to write for us about the economic impacts of the pandemic and the pros and cons of hosting the event.

Looking nearer home Germany often conjures East-West thoughts. My Berlin article deals with witnessing re-birth at a time when Germany was in flux. In addition I have penned an article that highlights an interesting East-West episode in the pottery tradition. You will also find a really local flavour in the article by Peter Noble about the technique of fencing.

I would like to express my gratitude to the authors, volunteers and key workers.

**Raik Jarjis**, Editor

Front cover & Edition Design: Raik Jarjis



# *A New Museum in Iraq*

By

Paul Collins

**Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum is the oldest public museum in the UK (established in 1683) but its collections from the ancient Middle East were largely formed in the first half of the twentieth century, a direct result of British occupation and administration of large parts of Palestine (modern Israel, Jordan and Palestinian Authority) and Mesopotamia (modern Syria and Iraq) following the end of the First World War. Such a legacy can be viewed as problematic and, as the current curator for the Ashmolean's Ancient Middle East collections, I am working with colleagues to create new displays and a temporary exhibition which will not only reveal the region's ancient stories but tell something of this recent history and the importance of heritage for the region's modern inhabitants. One of the most exciting projects that I have had the privilege of supporting is the development of an archaeology museum for Basrah, Iraq's second city.**

To understand the Basrah Museum project it is necessary to understand the longer history of museums in Iraq. This story starts in the aftermath of the First World War with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by allied forces. Britain, who had occupied Ottoman Mesopotamia (the land 'between the rivers' Tigris and Euphrates) during the war, was granted mandate control over the region. After a major rebellion against the occupation in 1920, a Kingdom of Iraq was established the following year under British administration. European and North American Universities and museums were already applying pressure in these years to undertake archaeological excavations and shortly after the signing of the Anglo-Iraq treaty of 1922, a Department of Antiquities was created with Gertrude Bell - traveller, writer, archaeologist and civil servant (the British administration's Oriental Secretary in Baghdad) – as its Honorary Director. Under the existing law, half of the excavated objects could be exported, the rest were to remain in Iraq. Thousands of objects were sent to Oxford, London, Chicago and Philadelphia. By 1923 antiquities were also piling up in Iraq and something had to be done with them. Gertrude Bell managed to convince the administration to give her a room in one of the government offices in Baghdad. In 1926, the museum moved to a new building and one functioning room was opened by King Faisal on 14<sup>th</sup> June. A month later Bell was dead from an overdose of sleeping pills.

After Britain formally withdrew



*Figure 1: The Basrah Museum*

from Iraq in 1932 the former Education Minister Sati al-Husri became the first Iraqi Director General of Antiquities. He revised Bell's antiquities laws in Iraq's favour, and the first Iraqi-led excavations were carried out. Planning began for a much larger and more accessible museum but it was not until after the Second World War that it became a reality; the Iraq Museum was opened in 1966. With the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s regional museums were established across the country. The Iraq Museum delivered to them highly uniform mini-collections of artefacts to display so that the single, unifying story could be told from Dohuk in the north to Basrah in the south (where the museum was housed in a fine Ottoman building of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). Then came the disasters of First Gulf War of 1990-91. Many provincial museums, including that in Basrah were looted in the post-war Shia uprisings of spring 1991 and then stayed permanently shut. The Second Gulf war and invasion of 2003 (the third time in a century that British forces had occupied Iraq) brought more misery with the looting of the Iraq Museum and Mosul Museum.

In 2007 a project to develop a new museum for Basrah was initiated by Lieutenant General Barney White-Spunner who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of British troops in Iraq and General Officer Commanding the Multi-National Division South-East. He was due to be deployed to Iraq in February 2008, and wanted to know what he might do to help protect Iraqi cultural heritage. Following a meeting at the British Museum with its director Neil MacGregor and Dr John Curtis, head of the museum's Middle East Department, White-Spunner assigned Major Hugo Clarke as project manager. The State Board had appointed Qahtan Al Abeed as the director of any future Basrah Museum and he began to work closely with Clarke. A former palace of Saddam Hussein known as "the Lakeside Palace"- which I first visited with John Curtis in 2008 - was adopted as a possible candidate for the museum. However, with no prospect of any British government funding, and the withdrawal of the British army in 2009, a UK charity *Friends of Basrah Museum* was established to help raise funds. Years passed **waiting** or money promised by Basrah Provincial Council but, as Iraq continued to be plagued by conflict and corruption, this was never forthcoming. Therefore, with the agreement of Qahtan and the Iraqi authorities, the Friends of Basrah decided to use their funds to refurbish one gallery devoted to the history of Basrah; it was opened to the public in September 2016 and was celebrated with an international conference that I attended. An application was then made to the British government's newly formed Cultural Protection Fund for a grant to complete the museum. This was successful and in 2018 I led a training course for the museum staff and, by March 2019, three more galleries, devoted to ancient Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria had been opened; objects for the museum had been selected by Qahtan

from the stored collections in the Iraq Museum. I was back at the Museum in October 2019 and discovered that great strides have been made in creating a building that is now welcoming increasing numbers of visitors. Qahtan had already produced object labels in Arabic and we focused on translations into English. Future work will be the establishment of a modern library on the upper floor of the museum. The aim is to make the museum a cultural resource for academic research as well as popular enjoyment. This is part of a wider initiative now fully supported by the Basrah Provincial Council to refurbish neighbouring buildings and lay out surrounding parks, all adjacent to the waters of the Shat al-Arab, in order to make this part of the city a focus for families and cultural events into the future.

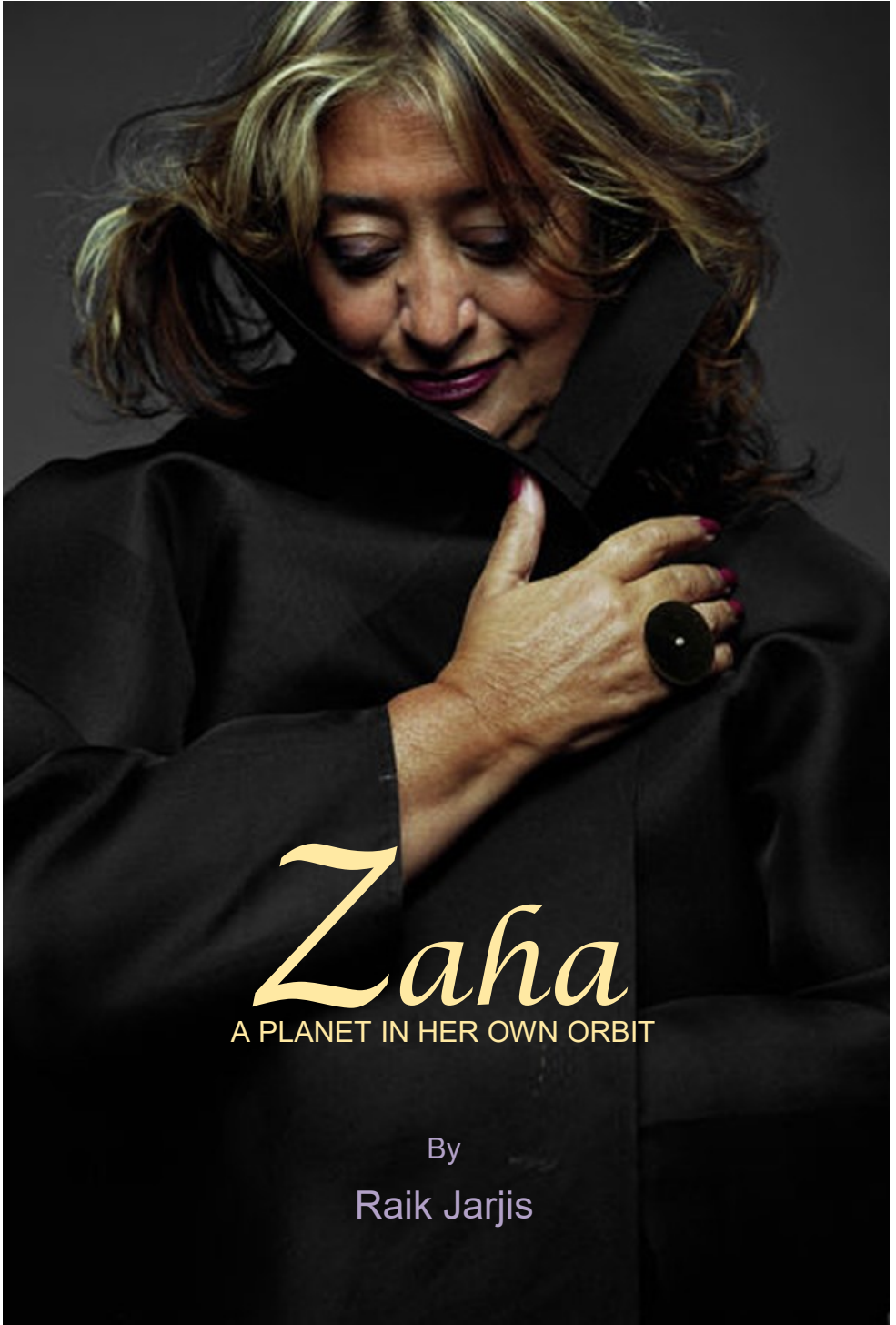


Figure 2: The Sumer Gallery



Figure 3: The Basrah Gallery

**Dr Paul Collins** is Jaleb Hearn Curator of Ancient Near East in the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, and is currently a Hugh Price Fellow at Jesus College and holds a supernumerary Fellowship at Wolfson College. He has worked previously as a curator in the Middle East Department of the British Museum and the Ancient Near Eastern Art Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. He is currently Chair of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq.



# Zaha

A PLANET IN HER OWN ORBIT

By

Raik Jarjis

*When I was growing up in Iraq, mathematics was an everyday part of life. My parents instilled in me a passion for discovery, and they never made a distinction between science and creativity. We would play with math problems just as we would play with pens and paper to draw -- math was like sketching. In my teens, my family would go to London each summer, visiting the many art galleries and museums, including the Science Museum. I am forever grateful to my parents for introducing me to art and science in a way that drew no boundaries between them. I believe education at all levels is critical. As a woman, education gives you the confidence to conquer the next step and make exciting new discoveries. (Zaha Hadid, 2015)*



### ***A Flame Burned Brightly***

Accredited by the Guardian Newspaper for liberating architectural geometry, giving it a whole new expressive identity, Dame Zaha Hadid (1950-2016) was the Iraqi-British architect, and the first woman winner of the Pritzker Architecture Prize. She successfully applied advances in design in order to enable re-thinking of space and form for realising wonderful fluid surfaces and structures. Hence she was able to transform cities around the world through structures that most of her contemporaries could never have dared to imagine. Known in the architectural world as the “Queen of Curve,” Zaha loved to eschew linear lines in favour of curvy, futuristic shapes. Her UK legacy includes the London Aquatic centre and the Investcorp Building in Oxford (*“At Home with Frodo Baggins”, p11, T&T May 2017*). And as a trailblazer Zaha’s flame burned brightly from an early age. She graduated in mathematics from the American University of Beirut and headed to London in 1971 where she met her school friend Zina Kafilmout, (then a UCL postgrad architect). Zaha qualified at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (London), where she was described as “A Planet in Her Own Orbit” and possessor of a kind of mythological aura. She was at that stage inspired by the supermatist work of the Russian artist Kazimir Malevich (the supremacy of pure artistic feeling.)





*Zaha Hadid on Supermatism*

Most importantly, Zaha was a seeker of the un-bounded bigger picture; and it is in this spirit that I endeavour painting a somewhat bigger picture of her by looking east for some of her earlier inspirations.



### *Imagine*

I would like you now to imagine yourself in June 1965 admiring a modern building by the Italian architect Gio Ponti. This building belongs to the Iraqi Ministry of planning situated on the western bank of the river Tigris adjacently to Jisr Al-Jamhuria, (The Republic Bridge). You would then cross to find your destination immediately on your right, the buildings of Rahibat Al-Taqdama fil Bab Al-Shargi (Secondary/High Convent School at the Eastern Gate). You would also



note ahead the striking Nasb Al-Hurriyah, (Freedom Monument), of Tahrir Square.

Now I would like you to imagine being welcomed at the gate of the convent school as a guest for the 5th year leaving ceremony staged by the 4th year students. Founded in 1928 this Catholic school applied high academic rigor and admitted girls from different faiths. On this particular hot June day there would have been an aura of optimism among the pupils. After all, they were a crop of the future makers and heirs of the Abbasid Caliphate flourishing of over millennium earlier. And as six 4th year names were announced for the Hawaii dancing sketch you would have noted those of the two 15 years old girls Zina Kafilmout,



(my cousin), and Zaha Hadid (*note their 1971 London meeting, previous section*). Zaha (*right*) at the Rabubat School

### *Two Views for Zaha*

It was during Zaha's schooling that Baghdad was central in developing Iraqi/pan-Arab visual language; and that she would have found the modernistic views in the vicinity of her school very stimulating indeed. She would have gazed across the Tigris at the Gio Ponti building, and also at the impressive Freedom Monument, Tahrir Square, with its underlying eastern-western connotations that rendered the product both strikingly modern yet also referenced traditions. .

Captured in bronze, the sculpture of this monument symbolises people's strive against tyranny visualised by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century co-founder of the Baghdad Modern Art Group, the late Iraqi painter/sculptor Jawad Saleem, (1919-1961)., Saleem sought celebrating Iraqi art history by incorporating elements of Babylonian



*Two Views for Zaha: The Liberation Monument and the Gio Ponti building across the Tigris*



*Beijing Daxing Airport*

wall-reliefs and Abbasid art. The project architect for the monument was the prominent Iraqi architect Rifat Chadirji, who was responsible for pushing architectural boundaries within the context of “*International Regionalism*” whilst grounded in the discourse of the Baghdad Modern Art Group.

### *Zaha Hadid: A new expressive identity*

It is fair to state that cultural/artistic fusions could be liberating for those aspiring to spread their wings; and that Zaha was undoubtedly a true subscriber to this. She grew up in a liberal Baghdadi household with ancestral roots in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. Her schoolmates were also predominantly from multi-cultural professional families that valued learning and modernity. Moreover, her schooling era was when the capital city was entering its initial phase of ‘*metropolization*’, in which Baghdad’s courtships of A-list architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright and le Corbusier, provided means for constructing a progressive identity encompassing elements of spatial modernity. With such rich heritage the outcome was not surprising when the mythical Iraqi bird, Zaha, spread its wings and flew west in order to liberate architectural geometry, giving it a whole new expressive identity.

*I am grateful for the invaluable contributions of my cousin Mrs Zina Allos, née Kafilmont.*



# East-West: Britain and Japan

By Hugh de Saram

In 1600 at the battle of Sekigahara, Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated a rival to become the first Shogun (general) to unite a country seething with quarrelling warlords ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Sekigahara#/media/File:Sekigaharascreen.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Sekigahara#/media/File:Sekigaharascreen.jpg) to view a magnificent Japanese screen painting commemorating this pivotal event – think Bayeux Tapestry). Arguably his most decisive move, once established, was to close Japan to all foreigners, many of whom were missionaries commissioned by Rome to work to bring the country under the worldwide influence of the Pope. Ieyasu was having none of it and took drastic measures to make sure it didn't happen. The only contact allowed was through the tightly controlled port of Nagasaki at the westernmost, remotest end of the country.

In 1997 I spent a term teaching in a Japanese high school. In one of many east-west discussions, my Japanese mentor extolled the beneficial effect of Ieyasu's closure of Japan to foreigners on the development of Japan's unique and special culture. I found myself arguing that, from Britain's experience, it was not necessary to close the country to foreigners in order to retain and develop one's unique culture. Indeed, one could argue, Britain's culture had been uniquely enriched by remaining open but fiercely independent; that our continental neighbours regarded us as just as much different in our island fastness as did Japan's continental neighbours in their view of Japan, but that our openness to people, trade and ideas had made us immeasurably the richer whereas Japan, up until the arrival of Commodore Perry 250 years after Sekigahara, was inward-looking and under-developed by comparison.

However, in 1868 Japan overthrew rule-by-Shogun, re-instated the supremacy of the Emperor (the Meiji Restoration) and reformed itself at breakneck speed to jump from feudalism to western-style democracy. It embarked on a phenomenal catch-up race with the West, leading to its becoming one of the most modern and powerful nations on earth.

Japanese culture quickly became the rage in Western Europe. Vincent van Gogh famously acknowledged the influence of Japanese woodblock prints on his own art. He was a particular admirer of Hokusai's famous *Great Wave*, and his *Blossoming Almond Tree* owes an obvious debt to Japan. Hiroshige's *Plum Blossom* of 1857 was directly echoed 30 years later in van Gogh's *Japonaiserie: Flowering Plum Tree; after Hiroshige*.

In 1892 Toulouse-Lautrec was commissioned by Edouard Fournier to produce



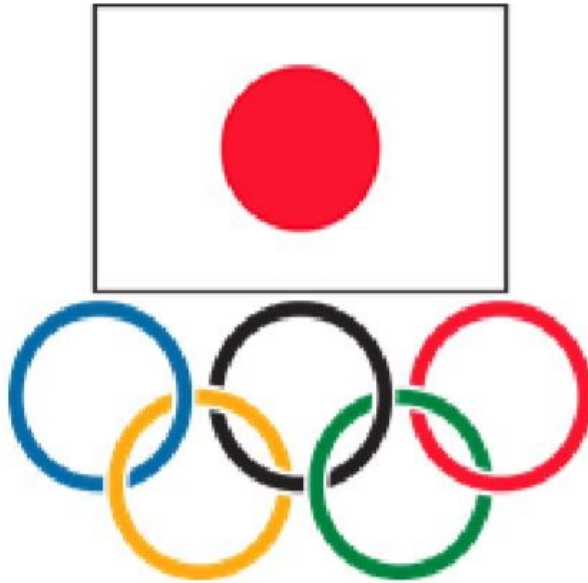
his *Divan Japonais* as part of the refurbishment of his Paris cabaret with Japanese motifs and lanterns.

The Japanese love Shakespeare. London is regularly visited by Japanese theatre companies playing Shakespeare, in Japanese, to full houses; worth watching, even if you don't understand Japanese, for their endearingly different stagecraft.

Film-maker Akira Kurosawa exemplifies perfectly the interplay between western and eastern culture. On the one hand, Kurosawa took two of Shakespeare's greatest plays, *Macbeth* (as *Throne of Blood*) and *King Lear* (as *Ran*), and made them into stunning films. To my mind, his *Ran* ("Chaos") is a masterpiece that outdoes its mighty original. On the other hand, western film-makers have equally rendered homage to Kurosawa. *Rashomon* set a trend illustrating how multiple eyewitnesses of the same event see and remember confusingly contradictory versions; it even gave rise to "the Rashomon effect". And then of course there is the immortal *Seven Samurai*, surely one of the best films ever made, most famously copied in *The Magnificent Seven*. Perhaps most surprisingly, Kurosawa, with other Japanese film-makers, collaborated with American colleagues in the making of the Hollywood blockbuster *Tora Tora Tora*, portraying the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, that "date which will live in infamy".

My favourite east-west crossover, however, is the shared Anglo-Japanese love of whodunits. Both countries have produced a stream of gripping crime-writers. Two of the best from Japan are *Points and Lines*, by Seicho Matsumoto – a gift for railway lovers – and *Togakushi Legend Murders*, by Yasuo Uchida, both available in English on Amazon. I can promise you, you won't be able to put them down!





**OLYMPICS:  
MONEY-MAKER OR MONEY-TAKER?**

By  
JONATHAN JARJIS



The modern Olympic Games are a party where both the East and West celebrate sport, multiculturalism, peace, unity. Since its introduction in 1896, as well as the wide array of sports and contestants, there has been a wide range of host cities. Aside from a power statement that has been used by countries in the past, such as the USA, former USSR and China, there are many reasons a country might host the Olympics, such as raising the morale of the people through patriotism or giving them a once in a lifetime chance to attend the Olympics, creating jobs, boosting the economy through tourism as well as being an opportunity to invest in long-term infrastructure such as transport links and build cutting-edge sports facilities for post-games. Yet, interest to host the Olympics has taken a harsh decline, with many claiming that the Olympics are a bad investment for the host country. Japan decided to host the Olympics to help their lackluster economy, but the past tells they could possibly get the very opposite.

Japan has many reasons to be skeptical going into the Olympics. The celebration that was once millions is now billions in cost; hence the question is whether Japan will be able to repay the \$12.5bn estimated cost and eventually achieve economic growth. It is ironic that the very country



that began the Olympic Games, Greece, suffered economic failure when it hosted the 2004 Olympics. Moreover, this debt has prevented Greece from hosting sporting events, so instead of using the Olympic facilities to bring in money, most of the facilities remained unused. The result of this is that many of the stadiums are left in a derelict and depressing state, such as the 8,000 seat stadium built for table tennis which is now empty and desolate. Today, many blame the 2004 Olympics as the cause of the Greek Recession. Yet, hosting the Olympics has not just had negative economic impacts in the past, but negative social impacts too, such as the case with the 2016 Rio Olympics that costed \$13 billion. But will Japan suffer the same fate as Athens and Rio? Rising costs due to the delay of the Games to 2021 (some sources claim it could cost \$5 billion in order to do things like maintaining the venues and hiring volunteers) suggest there is a possibility.

On the other hand I would like to emphasize that it is not all gloom and doom.

The Olympics still has the ability to be a roaring success, as demonstrated by the London 2012 Olympics. Hosted partly as an attempt to restore prosperity in poorer areas of London, the London Olympics was at the time hailed as a great success; it decreased unemployment over the whole of London, regenerated areas hosting the Olympics, such as Stratford and Tower Hamlets, massively improved transport links – Stratford is now second to only King’s Cross as the most connected areas in London, and the Olympics is thought to have generated an extra £10 billion in income for the UK economy. The Games also delivered on the morale boost – more than two thirds of the UK’s population believe the £9 billion cost was worth it – and received admiration from the UK, with the then Mayor of London Boris Johnson calling it ‘the greatest Games ever’, as well as the rest of the world admiring it, with the New York Times calling the London Olympics an ‘extra-strength dose of mood-enhancing drug’. Yet, what is perhaps more impressive was the Olympic legacy, which refers to the long-term benefits of hosting the Olympics. The London Olympics have had a fantastic legacy, which ranges from the 8,000 affordable homes now available as part of the former athletes’ village to the 40,000 jobs on and around the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park; and also to the numerous sporting events held post-games in former Olympic venues, including the 2017 World Championships in Athletics and home matches for the football club West Ham United. Not bad for an Olympics that went £528 million below its £9.29 billion budget.

In conclusion, London 2012 proved that hosting the Olympic can still be a gold medal in itself. Yet, ultimately the Olympics guarantee no victory, so the risk of an Athens or Rio-like event always lingers. Either way, all eyes will be on the Japan in 2021, to see if they can provide the greatest celebration on Earth.





## **Persia? Iran? What's In A Name**

**By John Osborne**

**The name Persia gives the country a romantic edge. We get Persian carpets and Persian cats from it, and over two thousand years ago there was the mighty Persian Empire, the formidable opponents of the ancient Greeks in the Persian wars.**

But **Iran?** The name recalls the news stories of the last year: attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf; the USA's killing of a top Iranian general; the mistaken shooting down of a civil airliner as it departed from Tehran's international airport; disturbances on the streets of Tehran and other major cities; a hard-line Islamic regime and now the Coronavirus....

Some time ago my wife and I lived and worked in Iran and in recent years we have regularly led tours there. In fact, we should be there now with our nineteenth group but – not surprisingly, you may think – it didn't recruit enough takers. The most frequent question that people ask when they hear that we go to Iran (aka Persia) is: "Is it safe?" The answer is, of course: "We wouldn't go if it wasn't."

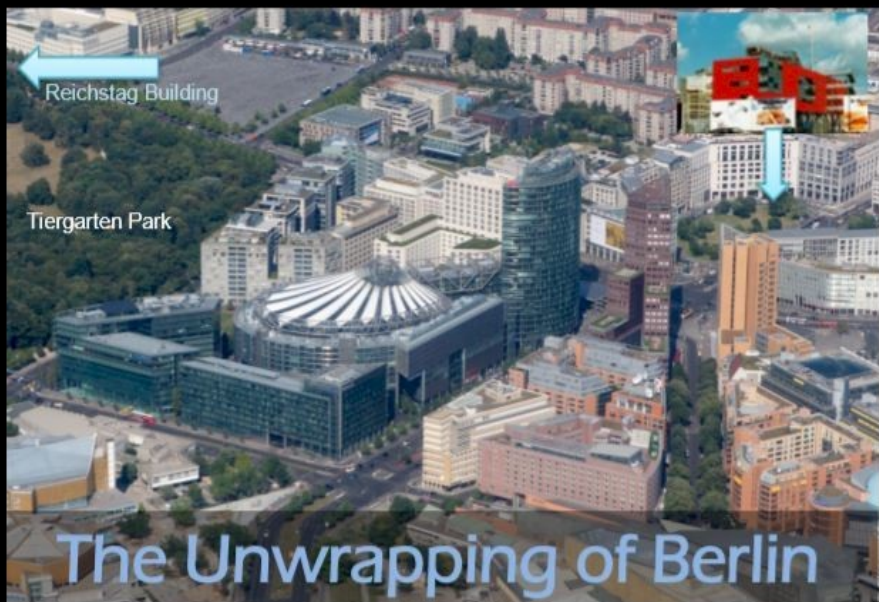
The monuments from the long history of Iran, the wonderful, tiled decoration of the buildings – palaces, mosques and so on – and the beautiful gardens are deservedly famous. Visitors rightly expect to be entranced by these. But the unexpected aspect of your visit is the amazing friendliness of the people. Everywhere you go, instead of any hassle you might have expected from a hostile regime, you find smiling, courteous people, greeting you with "Welcome to Iran!" And a sense of humour: in Islam it is said that we mortals can know only ninety-nine of the one hundred names of God; only the donkey knows the hundredth\*.

Only the other day I received an e-mail out of the blue from someone whom I don't know but who has travelled there: *"I loved Iran and all the ancient history. I also loved the local people who were so welcoming to us. I am so glad we went there, despite everybody advising us not to go! They missed a treat."*

Or, as we say, never judge a book by its cover.



(\*Because however hard you beat him, he still won't say anything.)



# The Unwrapping of Berlin

By

Raik Jarjis

*Following the historical coming down of the wall in 1989 the German Reichstag decided on 20 June 1991 to transfer the parliament and seat of government from Bonn to Berlin; creating Europe's youngest capital by July 1999. There were also discussions about the Nazi history of the WWII damaged dome-less Reichstag Building and the opportunity presented 1Km south of it by the attractive 60 hectares bombed site of Potsdamer Platz, straddling the erstwhile border between east and west, and which on 11 November 1989 hosted an early Berlin wall crossing. This was also the site where on 21 July 1990 ex-Pink Floyd member Roger Waters staged a charity concert of his former band's rock extravaganza, The Wall, to commemorate German unification.*

Aerial view of Potsdamer Platz, Berlin 2016 Avda / avda-foto.de



*(Figs. 1 & 2) Potsdamer Platz, (Berlin): November 1989, and recently.*

**I was fortunate to be one of the first western scientists to visit East Germany after the momentous events of 1989. An early invitation to deliver a lecture at Rossendorf Forschungszentrum, the nuclear research centre on the outskirts of Dresden, led to several long stays during 1990s as a guest scientist from the University of Oxford. On one such a stay in Dresden I received an invitation to give a lecture at the Hahn-Meitner nuclear institute in Berlin. This proved to be much more rewarding than expected.**

I was busy looking through my lecture notes when the modern morning train moved out on time from Bahnhof Dresden-Neustadt. Two other lines of thought crossed my mind during the journey: the first concerned anticipating meeting my scientist friend, Dr Andrea Denker, (now head of the Synchrotron Accelerator, Berlin), at the train platform in Berlin; the second was realising that I have missed the wrapping in reflective material of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Reichstag Building as devised by the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claud. This required 24 year effort, and the artwork was realised in June 1995 following a political vote. The installation, however, proved to be transformational till the building was unwrapped and handed over to the builders for renovation and construction of the iconic glass and mirrors dome by the British architect Norman Foster. Many hailed the cleansing values of the artwork and acknowledged the metaphorical new beginning symbolised by its unwrapping.

Andrea took me to the institute where I gave my lecture. This freed us for some Berlin touring on the following day. It was on that particular day that I witnessed a capital in the



*(Fig. 3) The wrapped dome-less Reichstag Building.*

making.

### A Red Box with a view

We passed the dome-less ruin of the Reichstag Building towered by a set of building cranes as we headed to our destination 1Km south past the Brandenburg Gate along Ebert strasse. Soon we arrived at the southern right corner of Tiergarten Park and the object we sought was there clearly on our left at Leipziger Platz 21.....THE RED BOX. (please refer to the locations marked on the title page, below, and the following page).





*The fully un-wrapped Berlin (now) Shown are our route and location of the Red Box 1997.*



Designed by Schneider und Schumacher “The Red Info Box” was intended to be a temporary structure to provide information about, and a viewing station for, the construction around Potsdamer Platz. It was raised eight meters above the ground on irregularly-placed steel tubes in order to surmount the Wall in exuberance not commonly noted in Berlin at that time. Oddly enough though I have since discovered that the Box was initially installed straddling the actual Berlin Wall, but that the underneath section of the Wall was later dismantled.



Andrea and I looked at architectural exhibits within the interior of the Box before climbing to the top platform in order to view the biggest building site in Europe which was expected to turn into a futuristic centre of commerce at the heart of Europe's youngest capital city.



*1997 views of Potsdamer Platz from the Red Box:*

But there was also in sight a folly part of a fading lunar desolation on our left, namely a Berlin Wall curved section waiting to be submerged under the dunes of time, as would be the Red Box and our own tracks from that innocent day at the would be capital Berlin.



*The curved Wall is apparent in front of the parked cars .*



*Dunes of Time: Line on the ground marking where the Wall used to stand, on the edge of Potsdamer Platz, (recent photo).*



# ECONOMICS OF COVID-19: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

By **Jonathan Jarjis**

Ever since the emergence of Covid-19 in Wuhan, China, both the East and the West have experienced a plethora of economic effects. Dire and detrimental, these effects followed a time of prosperity in the global market; in 2019 shares in the US and Japan went up by 30% and 18% respectively and FTSE 100 (a share index of the 100 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange with the highest market capitalisation) in Britain rose for 12%. China's economy had been growing continuously for 40 years. Now there is turmoil.

It's no surprise a severe recession is transpiring, with some comparing it to the Great Recession of 2007-2009 (where the UK's GDP fell by 4.2% in 2008 following years of growth) and others are even pointing out parallels to the Great Depression of 1929-1933 (where the USA's GDP declined by 30%). While this may seem a preposterous proclamation, the facts speak for themselves. As for the UK, in April the official economics forecaster, the Office for Budget responsibility (OBR), estimated that the economy could shrink by 35% in the second quarter of 2020.

The US isn't far behind with a predicted 30% decrease in this year's second quarter. China's economy has gone through a decrease of 6.8% - the first decrease in the country's economy since it started recording quarterly figures in 1992 – which has had a major impact on the global economy because of China's status as a major producer of goods and goods used to make other goods (they produce 60% of the world's shoes as an example).

Therefore, it is easy to see why the effects are to be so dire when the volume of industries affected by the virus is considered. To name a few; the travel and tourism industry is being devastated due to travel bans and the public rightly fearing to travel while manufacturing companies all over the world such as Apple and Nike have admitted to be feeling the negative effects of the virus. Yet, this represents a small portion of the small businesses across the globe that are being affected, such as the 25% of small businesses in UK closing or stopping trade and the 44% of businesses in UK reporting a lower turnovers.

But why is this important? The Bank of England was forced, like many other countries, to cut interest rates because of investors ditching assets in many countries. After two cut in one week the interest rates fell from 0.5% to 0.25% to 0.1% - the lowest ever in the Bank of England's 325-year history – which was announced along with a package of measures to support businesses suffering economic damage. Not only has there been a coronavirus pandemic, but one of unemployment, an example being the US where they went from record highs in employment to record highs by increasing from 200,000 to 6.6 million unemployment claims in just one week. There have also been problems with supply and demand of products such as oil and agricultural goods due to disruptions of trade from countries like China. A significant shortage has been that of medicine, which has possibly occurred due to the increase in demand and the inability to increase the supply due to the current market.

In conclusion, we can see that the economic effects will be yet another lasting memory of the virus. Only predictions can be made about how grim future consequences will be. Yet, the more stocks and economies go down and the more people become unemployed, we must not stop trying and we must look to the future. It is still predicted that the world will rebound from the recession and still experience economic growth this year. We cannot save every job, we cannot save every business, we cannot save every share, but we can rebound and make the most of what we've got.



## *A Dragon in St Ives*

By Raik Jarjis

Now if this was 1920 and you were a young person exploring the top of the area behind St. Ives in Cornwall, the Higher Stennack, you would have noted an unusual sight. There would have been two young men hard at work building a curious looking structure that appeared to be “crawling uphill”. Now if you were curious enough, and you indeed looked just so, then the older and taller of the two would have read your mind, smiled and voluntarily announced: “It’s a fire breathing dragon”.

I am sure that you would have found it stimulating to know that you were in fact witnessing the construction of the west’s first Noborigama/Anagama Japanese ancient pottery kiln, which is based on the climbing dragon kiln of South China. You were also witnessing the birth of British Studio Pottery.

This is a brief account of the lives, friendship and works of the two who forged their legends within the crucible of the East-West exchange.



*Noborigama (climbing kiln) in Nashika (Japan).*

## *Where hearts are fused*

The son of a colonial judge, Bernard Leach (1887-1979) was born in the East (Hong Kong) and educated in the West (England). He perceived himself as a courier between the disparate cultures. He lost his mother during birth and was taken to Kyoto in Japan by his maternal grandparents, but was taken back later to Hong Kong and then to Singapore following his father's re-appointment and re-marriage. Leach was eventually sent to England in 1897 when he was 10, and later (1903–08) studied etching at the Slade School of Art in London.

Leach travelled back to Japan in 1909 in order to practise etching and found himself associated with the Shirakaba Art Group which advocated opening up of Japan. He also found himself drawn to eastern philosophy and pottery, which he took up by 1911 after being inspired by the beautiful simplicity of the tea ceremony ware. He exhibited ceramics in Tokyo and studied under the renowned potter Urano Shigekichi, (Kenzan VI), before the end of the decade. Leach was then working in the tradition of Ogata Kenzan (1663–1743), who was a noted maker of raku ware; and in the process of doing so he earned the shared title of Kenzan VII, denoting the seventh generation of Kazan raku potters. (*Raku ware is Japanese hand-moulded lead-glazed earthenware, originally invented in 16th-century Kyōto by the potter Chōjirō.*)

A younger Japanese ceramics technologist with aspirations to become a ceramic

artist was much impressed with Leach's Tokyo exhibition that he wrote to him in order to arrange a meeting. The young Japanese was Shōji Hamada (1894-1978), who subsequently became his lifetime friend and collaborator. Hamada in fact accompanied Leach on his return to England in 1920 in order to help him set up Leach Pottery in St Ives, Cornwall, and build the climbing kiln (dragon) which formed the beginning of this article. Leach and Hamada inspired loyalty within the teams they formed over the years and drew inspirations from each other and their teams.



*Bernard Leach and Shōji Hamada, with the Leach Pottery team in St Ives.*

## *The Hamada Effect*

Hamada returned to Japan in 1923 to become a major figure in the Mingei folk art movement of the 1920s and '30s. He set up his studio in Mashiko, which is situated about 100 km north-east of Tokyo, and led turning the town into a major centre of ceramics, famous for its thick and rustic pottery. He also spent time in Britain where he taught Bernard Leach the art of Japanese pottery. Thanks to Hamada, Mashiko is now an international centre where potters from around the world could go to work. This is unique for Japan because the art of pottery, as other refined crafts like Samurai sword making, is normally handed down through the family line. Hamada was in 1955 designated a "Living National Treasure" in Japan, and he was revered in the West as the archetypal "Oriental" potter. His contributions to Japanese culture and preservation of its traditional architecture are well documented.



## *The Leach Effect*

It was towards the end of the nineteenth century that artists and thinkers like William Morris and John Ruskin began to speak against what they considered to be the decadent taste of the day. Some artists like William de Morgan responded and the radical thinking did bear fruit and, by the end of the century, the Arts and Crafts Movement had emerged in Britain and Art Nouveau was an international art style. In response the pottery industry introduced “Art-Ware” and the monochrome tradition, inspired by Chinese wares, also found favour with artist-potters at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This, unfortunately, resulted in a division of labour style of work by the early studio potters. In hindsight this unsuitable system required a real change that could only come from a new source of inspiration, from someone outside the industrialized system. Such a person was Bernard Leach.

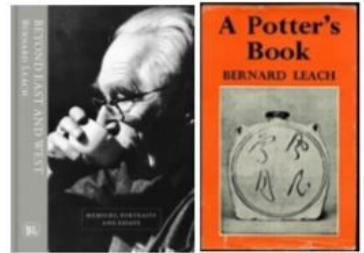
In fact many potters today work in the way he propounded in “The Potter’s Book”, which he wrote in Dartington in 1939 setting out his belief in the potter as a craftsman concerned in every aspect of the making, including the design and making of his own kilns. Leach’s work also fitted admirably into certain aspects of the Arts and Crafts Movement, especially the quietist and more anonymous-seeking ideals of those British potters that preceded him; although, ironically, he knew of William Morris through the Japanese philosopher Yanagi. Moreover, his lifelong fascination with the Far-East, and his recognition of the beauty and simplicity of the lifestyle and philosophy of its people, reflected in their crafts, made him a major contributor to the revival of pottery as a craft in the West. This was reflected in his aspiring to marry certain Far Eastern traditions with the mediaeval English style making him father of British Studio Pottery and a leader of the avant-garde movement of his day – a revolt by cultured people against the garishness of factory-



made pottery.



Bernard Leach also gave St Ives its international reputation, and consolidated the status of the artist potter through international lecturing and publishing; including *A Potter's Book* (1940) and the biographies *Kenzan and His Tradition* (1966) and *Hamada, Potter* (1975). You might be also interested to learn that an annotated edition of his 1978 “Beyond East and West: Memoirs, Portraits and Essays” is due to be published in August 2020 by Unicorn.



## *Where the hearts are buried*

*As a young man I was once told by an older Mancunian friend named Eric Banner that “the years gallop once you are 18”. I presume we have all experienced this one way or another and resorted to visiting our yesterdays to pursue unfinished business and say few tender words to loved ones swept away by the torrent of time.*

And when you finally get overtaken by the galloping years and you begin telling stories of foolish times and loved ones, and of 1920 and its fire breathing dragon, a day might arrive when you would surprisingly find yourself actually in the pottery town of Mashiko in Japan. Some thick black smoke would be bellowing high in the sky and a person in the know would be animatingly pointing out that its source is the Mingie Pottery. So you would head there to find a not slumbering large dragon venting its heat and fire.

Some squeaking noise however soon would distract you to look into a room

within a nearby outbuilding where two very old men would be sitting facing each other next to a window. They would have been sitting on an elevated wooden platform with their legs dangling within two rectangular openings containing foot-operated potter's wheels. This would



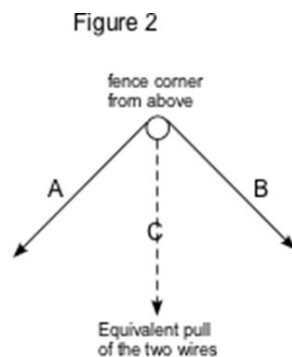
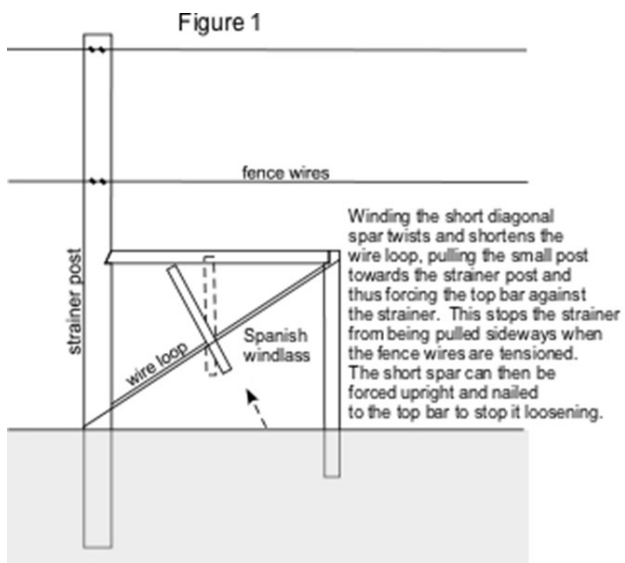
have set you wondering: it must have been a few years.....but there is something rather familiar! Suddenly the older and taller of the two, seated on your right at the larger platform opening, would have read your mind, nodded tenderly to his friend and turned smilingly to you and said:



“And if you my old story teller wandered again atop the Stennack in St Ives remember to tread carefully over where our hearts are buried”.



*Bernard Leach jam-pot stoneware circa 1960*



Those who have wandered the forest since last autumn may have seen the structure below (fig.1) and wondered at its complexity and purpose. Many (and I do mean many) years ago whilst in the 6th form, my friend and I landed a summer job with a forestry company in North Wales. The task was singular: to erect a fence around a nature reserve that happened to be on a steep mountainside. Apart from learning a lot by trial and error about lifting and carrying heavy wooden stakes, awkward rolls of fencing wire, and how not to slip with such loads on steep grass or scree, I learnt about fence construction.

To build post by post, stapling the wire as you go, would produce a very poor, slack-wired, wobbly-wiggly fence. To get the wire tight it has to be tensioned between two strong 'strainer posts', ours were 6 foot logs buried 2 feet in the ground but even these would be pulled off vertical when tension was applied with the 'wire-winch'. We were taught to support the strainers with a diagonal brace post on either side. This worked for us in our rocky terrain but in softer ground those diagonal braces could be slowly pushed into the ground as time passed and the wires go slack. The later technique, as in the forest and on many down land fences, looks complicated but is very effective using a tightening device called a Spanish Windlass, as explained in fig.1.

To take the tension on the other side a second Spanish windlass structure is required. However at a sharp corner, physics tells us that the pull of the wires on both sides is equal to a single inward pull bisecting the corner (fig.2). It could be argued therefore that a Spanish windlass is needed at C but if fence construction is from A towards B one should not need a windlass at B - think about it!