

Rising star Lina Ghotmeh pips big names to win British Museum contest

21 FEBRUARY 2025 • BY RICHARD WAITE



1/17 The competition/concept design proposed by the Lina Ghotmeh - Architecture team for part of the Western Range (mausoleum area)
Source: Lina Ghotmeh - Architecture

Lebanese-born, Paris-based Lina Ghotmeh has been named winner of the high-profile competition to overhaul more than a third of the gallery spaces and behind-the-scenes areas at the British Museum

A team led by the rising star won the major commission – known as the Western Range renewal project – after seeing off an impressive shortlist of big names. However, it is understood a contract award standstill period, which allows time for the competitors to lodge a challenge, remains in place.

The finalists, announced in August, included architect-led multidisciplinary bids headed by 6a architects, David Chipperfield Architects, OMA, and a collaboration between Eric Parry Architects and Jamie Foebert Architects.

Ghotmeh is best known for her 2020 *Stone Garden* housing tower in Beirut, the Hermès leather workshop in Normandy, France, which opened in 2023 and the *Serpentine Pavilion*, in London of the same year. The British Museum commission will be her practice's first major job in the UK.

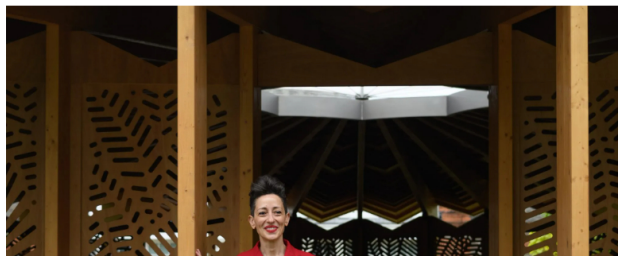
ADVERTISEMENT



An explanation of the team's vision posted on competition organiser Colander's website claims the proposals would 'transform the Western Range into a living museum – a place of dialogue and reinvention' creating an 'archaeology of the future, where historic narratives intertwine with contemporary perspectives'.

The 'bold transformation', it continues, would renew the British Museum as a 'global meeting point of shared history, where poetics and care foster peace and understanding'.

Late last year models and images were submitted as part of a day-long charrette to 'test the capabilities' of each architecture team shortlisted for the overhaul of the western area of the Grade I-listed museum. Those models, showing the teams' initial approaches, went on display in the Round Reading Room in December 2024.

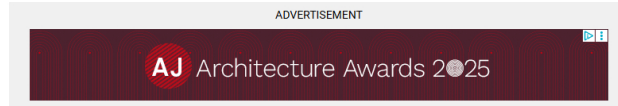




Lina Ghotmeh

The competition was structured to allow the museum to select a team, rather than a fixed outcome in the form of a design proposal, and deliberate limitations were put in place so the finalists did not arrive at a complete plan for the project.

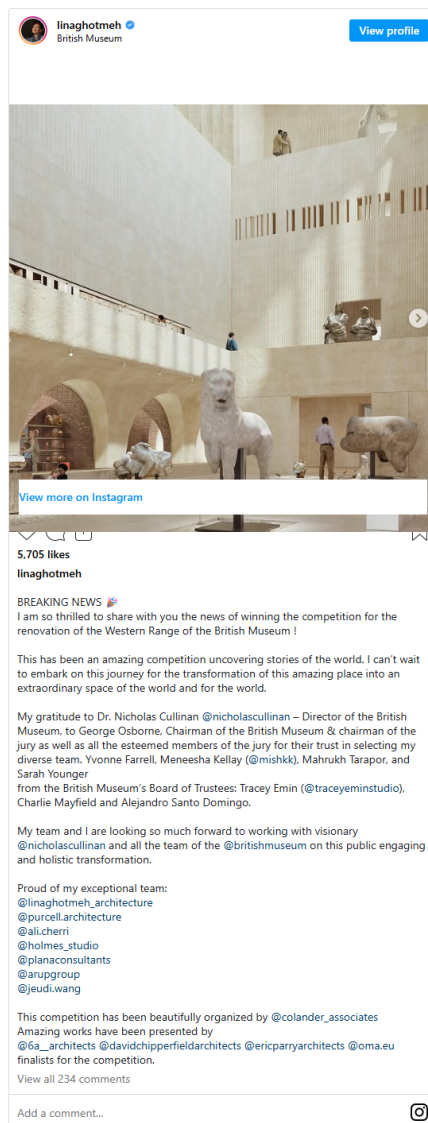
Instead, they were asked to demonstrate their ability to 'lead a collaborative process that responds to the complex needs of multiple stakeholders, both within the museum and from external groups'.



The British Museum had earlier refused to verify Ghotmeh's contest victory. A spokesperson told the AJ: 'The active phase of the competition has now concluded, and each team has hosted the panel of judges for a final presentation at its studio.'

'At present, no contract has been awarded. The British Museum expects to award a contract and announce the winning team in the coming weeks.'

But Ghotmeh took to Instagram this morning herself to confirm the news.



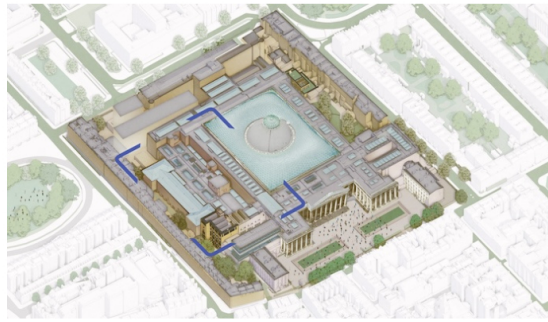
In a separate Instagram post, British Museum director Nicholas Cullinan wrote: '[Ghotmeh's] initial ideas for us unanimously impressed the jury with their beauty, sensitivity and ingenuity and for her deep interest in archeology.

'These including using Portland stone spolia, 40 per cent of which otherwise goes to waste, and the striated surface of the process of chiselling would instead be employed here, along with rubble from the building process being reused to line the walls of the Lycian wing to ravishing effect.'

Although the international competition attracted 60 entrants, it proved controversial, due to the major financial backing the museum is receiving from fossil fuel giant BP. In January last year environmental campaigners called on architects not to take part in the contest because of the £50 million funding pledged to the Bloomsbury-based institution by BP.

In recent years, BP and other oil and gas companies have been increasingly shunned by Britain's cultural industries, with Tate, the National Portrait Gallery and the Royal Shakespeare Company among the institutions turning down sponsorship.

When the British Museum announced its partnership with BP in late 2023, it prompted the resignation of trustee Muriel Gray, former chair of the Glasgow School of Art, while Doug Parr, the UK policy director for Greenpeace, said the deal 'must surely be one of the biggest, most brazen greenwashing sponsorship deals the sector has ever seen'.



The Western Range scheme is part of a decade-long renovation masterplan billed as one of the 'most significant cultural redevelopment projects ever undertaken'.

The job will be the museum's biggest building project since the 1820s when work began on Robert Smirke's original Greek Revival-style quadrangle. The 100,000m² museum has around 3,500 different rooms and features more than eight million items in its permanent collection.

The museum's chair, former chancellor of the exchequer George Osborne, described the redevelopment last year as one of the 'biggest projects of our time'. He said: 'We asked for the best of the architectural community to step forward to help – and they have, from Britain and across the world.'

The competition comes three years after the museum **named four architects on a £45 million construction consultancy services framework**: Avanti Architects, Dannatt Johnson Architects, Nex Architecture and Wright & Wright Architects.

Stanton Williams completed a new Al-Bukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World at the British Museum in 2019. In 2014, RSHP completed the museum's World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre extension.

Each of the shortlisted teams received an honorarium of £50,000 to participate in the design phase of the competition.



Model submitted by Lina Ghotmeh Architecture for competition

The shortlist

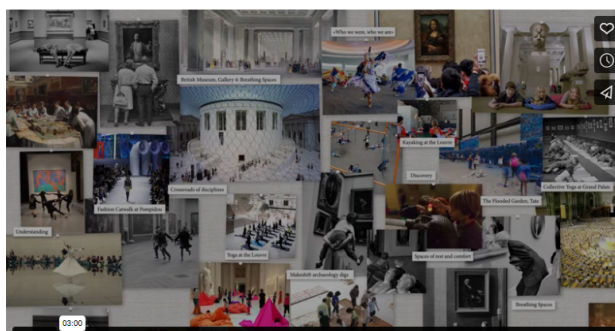
[WINNER] Lina Ghotmeh – Architecture with Ali Cherri, Arup, Holmes Studio, Plan A, Purcell

6a architects with Advanced Integrated Solutions, Arup, David Bonnett Associates, Gitta Gschwendtner, Kellenberger-White, London School of Architecture, Purcell, Studio ZNA

David Chipperfield Architects with AEA Consulting, Adamson Associates, Alan Baxter Associates, Arup, Atelier Brückner, Atelier Ten, Lobe Lloyd, Julian Harrap Architects, Plan A, Reusefully, Neal Shasore

Eric Parry Architects and Jamie Fobert Architects with Buro Happold, David Bonnett Associates, Max Fordham, Mima, Price & Myers, Purcell, Space Syntax, Studio ZNA

OMA with Arup, Benoy, Cookies, Ducks Scéno, EQ2 Light, Purcell, Salvatore Settis, Studio ZNA



Find out more on this topic



Who are the shortlisted teams for the British Museum revamp contest?

How does BP's funding impact the British Museum revamp contest?

What is the significance of the British Museum's masterplan?

Why did architects boycott the British Museum revamp contest?

What does George Osborne say about the British Museum's renovation?

Ask a question



COMMENT AND SHARE



TAGS

6A ARCHITECTS BRITISH MUSEUM DAVID CHIPPERFIELD ARCHITECTS ERIC PARRY ARCHITECTS JAMIE FOBERT ARCHITECTS
LINA GHOTMEH OMA

You might also be interested in...



British Museum shows off early concepts in major revamp competition



British Museum names winner in entrances contest



RIBA Stirling prize 2025: AI picks its shortlist



Hodder's National Wildflower Centre set for demolition as listing bid fails

Most popular

1. RIBA Stirling Prize 2025: The six finalists
2. Controversial 1,000-home scheme by trio of architects approved in Romford
3. The AJ's view: The Stirling Prize shortlist is random and disappointing
4. dMFK starts work on major revamp of City's iconic Tower 42
5. UEA to launch contest to rethink Lasdun's ziggurats
6. John Pardey hits back at critics after Lewisham housing development fury
7. RIBA Stirling prize 2025: AI picks its shortlist
8. NBS and RIBA under fire as architects lament cost hikes
9. Chris Williamson: the RIBA president without a Place
10. Owain Williams Architects creates 'public building in miniature' on garage site

Leave a comment

Logged in as Gino Spocchia. Log out?

Type here...

POST

Please remember that the submission of any material is governed by our [Terms and Conditions](#) and by submitting material you confirm your agreement to these Terms and Conditions. Links may be included in your comments but HTML is not permitted.



CONTACT US

ABOUT THE AJ

ARCHIVE

WHY SUBSCRIBE

FAQS

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

ADVERTISE WITH US

TIP US OFF

PRIVACY POLICY

COPYRIGHT © 2025 EMAP PUBLISHING LIMITED