



EXPLORING A WORLD ON THE MOVE

Frank Gehry has mesmerised architects of the last 50 years with his monumentally lyrical pieces of work. His design partner and close collaborator Edwin Chan offers a glimpse into Gehry's creative world.

Frank Gehry Creation is pleasure in motion

"**g**ehry likes to say that he grew up as a Modernist and as such learned to scorn decoration. Only materials remained as a way to humanise a building", Edwin Chan sums up. Actually Gehry certainly knows how to use industrial materials in surprisingly poetic ways. Voluptuous forms curve, billow and dance. Metallic cladding reflects and transforms light. These have become his trademark. Already in 1977, when Gehry worked on his own house in Santa Monica, "all the important early influences are on view, the "unfinished" aesthetic, the use of industrial materials", says Edwin Chan. Gehry added an exuberant, oddly angled structure of glass, chain-link and corrugated metal around a prim, pink Dutch colonial that peeks out from inside. Edwin Chan insists that Gehry strives for a new style and approach in every project. The satisfaction is not just the final product but the journey, the creative process itself."

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Creations never without technics

Gehry is famous for refining his creations via a series of scale models in different sizes. These follow manic pen-and-ink scribbles, and crude miniatures in which Gehry's assistants patiently clip, fold, corrugate and tape together endless bits of cardboard under the master's feverish gaze.

But once pen, ink, cardboard and tape have yielded up his quirky vision, Gehry's team uses state-of-the-art computer tools, based on aeronautics design software, to ensure that every twist and turn can be adequately rendered in concrete, glass and metal – and according to code. "He uses the computer to build, not to visualise," explains Edwin.

These days Gehry is concentrating on his design for a new sports arena, housing, and mixed-use development in Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards. "We try to preserve a sort of ecosystem of large and small projects", says Edwin. "The small projects are our testing grounds for new materials and new ideas. We'd love to do an exterior in concrete – though that definitely takes a good knowledge of the material and a certain level of budget," especially for the curved surfaces that Gehry is fond of. "But we're looking out for an opportunity." ■

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GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
The Guggenheim Foundation's museum opened in 1997 in Bilbao (Spain).

FRANK GEHRY

Born in Canada in 1929, Frank Gehry studied architecture at USC and Harvard's Graduate School of Design. In 1989 he won the Pritzker Prize for lifetime achievement, but Gehry had only just begun. The most significant achievements in Frank Gehry's prolific career include LA's Disney concert hall and of course the Guggenheim Bilbao – but also Frank's own house in Santa Monica.

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