

## HAC

The HAC will be the first public edifice with a purely non-profit cultural vocation to be built in the reconstructed Beirut Central District (BCD). It is by nature detached from any competitive commercial desire to dress flashier, reach higher or pose proud. It is a building about art, content, thought, talent, capacity, production, movement and the celebration of all that on one premises open to all.

Even with the Ring road hindering its reach to a wider urban fabric, the proposed HAC resists orienting itself in any direction. An expanded metal skin wraps its body like white canvas making it an unobtrusive neighbor, friendly to a surrounding packed with architectural heritage.

Except for some strategic viewing windows, the body of the building is silent behind its protective see-through skin. In flagrant contrast, the base is a spectacle of color and light and constitutes the attractive communication platform with the public on street level. Fitted with transparent colorful glass incorporating a LED display system, it is constantly changing natures and moods, displaying images, videos, news, agendas of upcoming events and digital art works.

As a nod to many urban stairs in the capital that house art presentations during summer time (e.g. St.Nicholas stair in Gemayzeh, Ashrafieh), the main access to the reception hall is located on Level 1 along a created urban art stair that symbolically connects the old and new Beirut.

In order to draw youth and non-regulars to HAC, another strategic access has been designed by gradually placing the most popular functions from ground floor level up to main the reception hall, thus a wide stair cuts through the Cafeteria/Shops area on Ghalghoul street towards the Movie Theater on mid level. This “Stair of Happenings“ becomes an area for temporary informal exhibitions, art/music improvisations and information display of all events at HAC.

The proposed HAC design goes beyond providing spaces for the artists to work/perform and the public to be mere audience. The interaction between both users has been an integral part of the design that enables at different levels a direct contact between public and Workshop users. In that sense, the theaters’ hall has been replaced by the “Performance Plaza” offering an open indoor public space fusing foyers, meeting rooms, arts workshop and an extension space for the black box. This plaza can house experimental presentations of any type including open movie screening on the wall of the black box. The Performance Plaza runs diagonally through the whole building and opens to two views on different extremities of the plot: on one side towards BCD with the renovated Bacri building as scenery foreground and on the other side towards the urban cityscape beyond the Ring road.

Going up to the Main Hall balcony level, the public travels on a wide gentle rise stair usable as exhibition space. Theater Workshops can take advantage of being connected to the balcony foyer allowing quick presentations during intermissions and getting exposure to an already present audience.

The Library enjoys a quiet high location above the Workshops away from the highway noise and opens to a roof garden with view on BCD.

The exhibition space crowns the building with corridors overlooking the city on three sides in addition to a roof garden.

Due to the large space of the exhibition area and its location on the last level, its flat roof constitutes a suitable platform for a substantial installation of photovoltaic panels producing passive electric energy thus cutting down on the operational budget.

Another green feature of the building is its use of expanded metal as a sun-shading solution lowering cooling loads in summertime. The expanded metal is considered as a green material due to its waste-free production (no metal waste is produced during its production) and its high durability requiring very low maintenance. It is perfectly suitable to resist humid winds in maritime areas as well as air with high levels of lead due to car pollution (Ring road).

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