

BEIRUT HOUSE OF ARTS + CULTURE



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EXTERIOR

The Beirut House of Arts + Culture is the first building of its kind in Lebanon. By combining multiple facets of art + culture, exhibition, performance and training, from traditional through to contemporary, accommodating the past, present and the future all in the one building, it is perhaps the first building of its kind in the world. It is a building that brings together the experimental and the traditional and is a place for performance, experience and learning.



The House of Arts + Culture is a house of many rooms, of diverse and distinct functions and uses, brought together as a unified whole in a building with a strong, positive presence that sits boldly and confidently on its site. The building's overall image is strong and dramatic but its design is also subtle and sensitive at its detail level. Its main street frontage (originally inspired by Ant Farm's 'Media Burn' installation and a Joseph Cornell sculpture) will be interpreted in many ways. It is a multifaceted composition of large and small scale elements that are simultaneously windows, screens, 2D displays, 3D showcases and performance spaces, allowing for a rich representation of the performances, exhibitions and events within. The façade does not represent one single use for the building, but a rich multi-layered reading, more accurately representing the diversity and the exuberant spirit of the activities within it.



The building is predominantly of concrete construction, a robust material allowing for prolonged and vigorous use. Glass and steel complement the concrete with specific areas softened through the use of stone and timber, and certain interiors refined and enriched further through the use of fabrics and carpets. The building follows passive solar design principles (like the ventilating atrium space through the centre of the building) and will follow rigorous ESD principles in its detail resolution and construction.

The building has a main entry, expressed as a tower on the south-west corner, but also has entry and exit points along the entire length of the southern façade, making a clear and continuous visual connection at street level with pedestrians and passing vehicles. The entry tower contains the information area and reception hall, connecting through beyond the ticketing area to the exterior courtyards and decks to the north, allowing for receptions to spill outdoors. It is also an alternative performance area, allowing for arrival performances and cameos from its upper level performance balconies.

The entry foyer flows through to the theatre foyers on the east. This foyer is a grand multi-tiered public space composed of stairs, walkways, lift and platforms that turns the act of circulation into a theatrical event in itself. The foyer connects all the main spaces and functions on 7 levels of the building through this one area – the main performance and conference hall, multimedia performance hall, meeting rooms, movie theatre, national cinematheque, exhibition space, administration, workshops and training rooms, documentation centre, and the cafeteria and shop. The multi-levelled volume contains many walls, niches and balconies that allow for a myriad of alternative exhibition and performance spaces outside of those specified in the brief, even allowing for it to be used as an electronic dance venue.

The lowest level of the foyer connects to the 2 performance halls to the north, the bar along the southern perimeter and the BHoA+C shop to the west. Both performance halls are directly connected on the same level to the loading area and directly connected via a stair and lift to the dressing rooms one level up. The main performance and conference hall allows for a wide range of seating configurations using state-of-the-

art retractable seating, from traditional 'Italian style' theatre to theatre-in-the-round to thrust stage, dual-sided stage, and a variety of other configurations. It also allows for conference seating configurations or a catwalk arrangement. The main performance hall allows for performers to arrive at the main lower level, or from a performer's balcony connected to the dressing room level. At an upper level, the conference meeting rooms can also open to the main performance + conference hall for use during conferences, or for various alternative performances. The projection rooms for both meeting rooms and the movie theatre can also be used for projections into the main performance + conference hall. A retractable section of the ceiling allows for an opening through the exhibition space above to the sky and sunshine outside should this ever be desired. This opening also allows for another alternative entry point for performers. The multi-media performance hall has been designed as a black-box space allowing for any configuration desired by a director or performer.

The movie theatre is accessible directly from the ground and level 1 and is adjacent to the national cinematheque on level 1. The administration offices are on level 2 with the director's office looking out over a private roof garden and adjacent to a 'director's balcony' in the main entry tower that overlooks the reception hall. This balcony doubles as a cameo performance area. The meeting rooms are also on level 2 overlooking the main performance and conference hall. Level 3 houses the documentation centre containing the library and audiovisual services. Good natural light and ventilation are important aspects of this design and so an atrium space has been cut through the centre of the building allowing the opportunity for natural light and ventilation to all levels, especially the library's eastern edge. The library also has a 'special reading room' within the main entry tower overlooking the reception hall and connected to a choir performance balcony. Level 4 contains the workshops and training rooms on one side and the exhibition spaces on the other. The art workshops are positioned on the north side to catch the northern light, and the theatre and music workshops sit along the western side overlooking the roof decks and gardens below. The dance workshop is another space attached to the main entry tower overlooking the reception hall, with its own special performance balcony attached. All workshops also have skylights for additional natural light and ventilation. Classrooms, computer rooms and the printroom are positioned beside the atrium while the spaces requiring little or no natural light are located in the centre of this area. On the eastern side of level 4, the exhibition space sits directly over the main performance + conference hall. It is one big room with a courtyard cut into the centre. This courtyard allows for natural light if and when required as well as an outdoor exhibition space. It also contains the retractable opening in the roof of the performance hall. The ceiling of the exhibition space is 5.45m high with two sections that pop up to 9.95m high, both with northern highlight windows. The configuration of the plan allows for one continuous gallery space, but with the insertion of some additional walls, the gallery can be broken into numerous separate and distinct spaces when required. There is also a separate 'special gallery space' connected to one of the windows of the southern façade, allowing for showcase exhibitions with direct visual connection to the public outside.

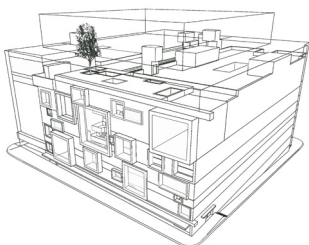
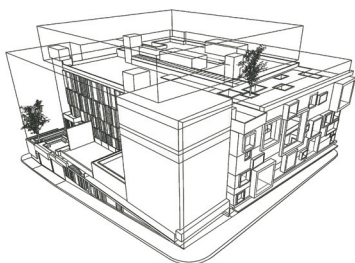
As mentioned earlier though, the entire front façade of the building is a grand exhibition space - a display cabinet representing the wondrous things inside - with spaces to display artefacts, paintings, sculptures, and any number or type of prints and posters. Some of the windows are frosted to allow for projections, and some have more sophisticated media technologies built into their surface. One large window box close to the front entry can accommodate a full choir, orchestra, dance group, band or experimental performance group to perform as people are arriving for one of the many events inside.

There is a subtle banding on 3 faces of the building and on some of the interior walls. There are eight bands in total. The lowest seven bands are representative of the seven layers of civilisation on which Beirut is currently built. The eighth band contains the exhibition hall and workshops and represents our currently evolving civilisation. The facade of the entry tower is left as a bold blank surface. While there may be some subtle etching to the surface, this element has been left deliberately blank giving a strong but calm face to the entry of the building. On certain occasions though, this entry tower will act as a blank canvas on which certain artists and performers may make their temporary mark for the duration of their exhibition. In addition, the uppermost section of the entry tower is a glazed 'lantern' clad in media-mesh, allowing for unlimited possibilities for video projection that can be viewed both inside and outside the building. The cafeteria is located in the base of the entry tower, connected to the entry, reception hall, ticketing areas and the series of adjacent exterior roof decks and gardens. The roof decks and gardens allow for outdoor functions, performances and gatherings of all kinds. They are located adjacent to staff rooms to allow for outdoor quiet time and connected to the dressing rooms giving performers and the public a garden setting to meet in. One of the roof decks also allows the possibility for an outdoor cinema. While the cafeteria is connected to all of this it also has a direct street frontage for connection with the neighbourhood, and is also connected directly back to the theatre foyer within the building. The commercial spaces/shops are also located directly beside the theatre foyer. Access to the parking and loading bay is from the north-west corner of the site, allowing for safe and efficient vehicular access to and from the building. On the corner of the building adjacent to the vehicular access is a public art wall allowing a location for a programmed series of changing art installations. The western half of the main roof is also a series of decks and gardens and interspersed with skylights, shade structures and photovoltaic solar panels. The eastern half over the exhibition hall is a sculpture garden.

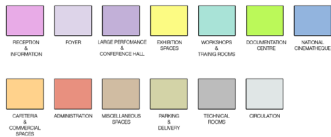
The building has an urban scale that sits well within the neighbourhood and a massing that will be a positive contribution to the urban fabric in the area. While the building conforms to the allowable building outline and build-to lines, it does not reach the maximum height requirement, nor does it completely fill the allowable volume on the south-western part of the site. This strategy allows for future expansion into these areas. All the levels containing dressing rooms, cinematheque, administration, library, and workshops could be extended at a future time towards the western boundary and the gallery could be extended upwards. The workshop level could also be extended upwards, or an entirely new level added on top. Of course, if this were to be a definite plan for the future then the footings for the building would be sized accordingly to

accommodate any such expansion. Keep in mind also that this design has taken all height calculations from a zero point at the north-west corner of the site. This means that parts of the building could be even higher along the southern side of the site than what has been allowed for in this design.

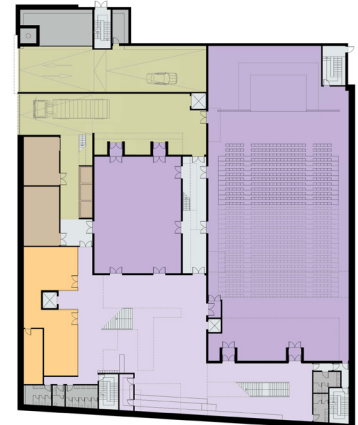
This proposed design has generally complied with the required floor area requirements. It is only the theatre foyer area that is somewhat larger than the required area. We anticipate the Beirut House of Arts + Culture to be a very popular venue and believe this foyer area (and associated restrooms) will need to be larger than the specified area in the brief to cater for the larger volume of expected visitors. A large part of this foyer is also below ground level and would therefore not be included in any BUA calculation. This enlarged foyer area would also allow for the display of any archaeological excavations that may be uncovered during construction.



After studying the drawings, together with this written explanation, you will understand that this design is a very functional building - a very functional building that is also totally infused with the drama, energy, sensitivity, excitement, complexity and beauty that a building such as this deserves.



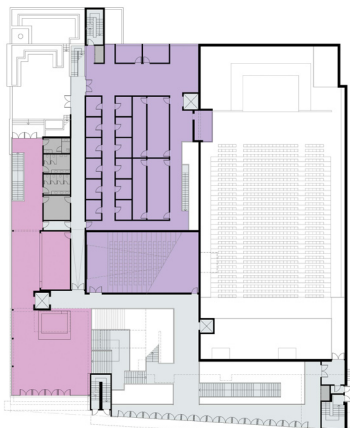
PARKING 1



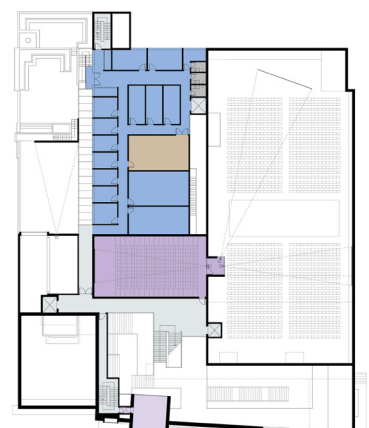
LOWER GROUND 2



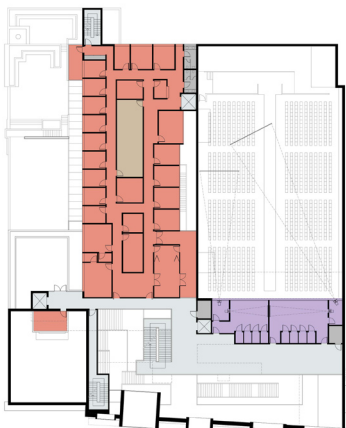
LOWER GROUND 1



GROUND



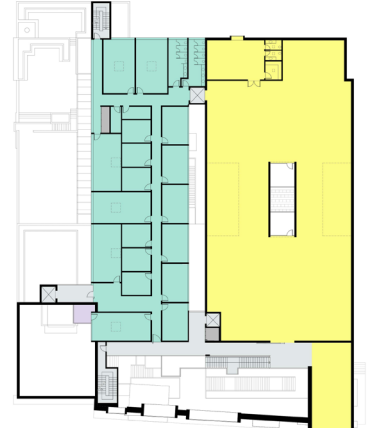
LEVEL 1



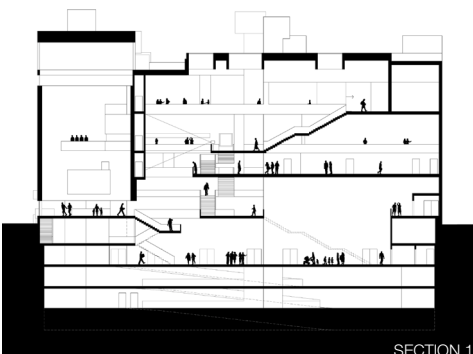
LEVEL 2



LEVEL 3



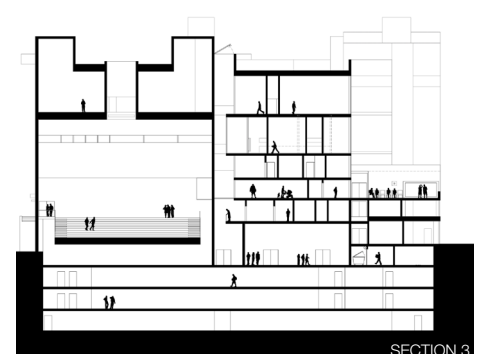
LEVEL 4



SECTION 1



SECTION 2



SECTION 3