

HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE_ introduction text

During the last years and particularly after the construction of the Ring Road, Ghalghoul, the north-eastern border of the Ottoman city and physical extension of the historical center has been rapidly developed. The new trend in constructions in this area is characterized by high-rise buildings which combine a wide range of different uses, such as commercial spaces, offices, residential blocks, accommodation buildings and cultural spaces, composing the new image of Ghalghoul. The construction of the House of Arts and Culture in Lot N° 128-4 is part of that effort for the further development as well as the reforming of the whole area.

Considering the projects which are going to be realized close to Lot N° 128-4 we expect intense pedestrian flows towards our plot from both Ghalghoul Road and the underground passage which will connect the opposing sides of the Ring Road. So, it was important to absorb these flows and have these people get in the House of Arts and Culture. As far as the car flows are concerned, there are two main road axes which define our site and which have a quite important hypsometric difference. So we let the vehicles enter our plot from two different points each one of which serves different needs.

The mandatory-built lines proved to have a key role in that they lead us to a bold geometric shape at start. In addition to our intention for an open space in the north-west part of the plot, so as to keep our building away from the relatively bigger one which is going to be built on the other side of the road, we place that bold shape tangent to the south-east border of our site. The open space in the north-west part came to be a highly interactive space with green areas, pedestrian as well as vehicular (service road, ramp for the underground parking) flows and views to the green areas of the adjacent plot.

So, the building is being placed appropriately in the heart of a rapidly developing area.

Our project manages to be embodied appropriately in both time and place. It is a contemporary building with all those theoretical / ideological and material characteristics which connect it straightly with the exact country, the exact city, the exact site – making it unique.

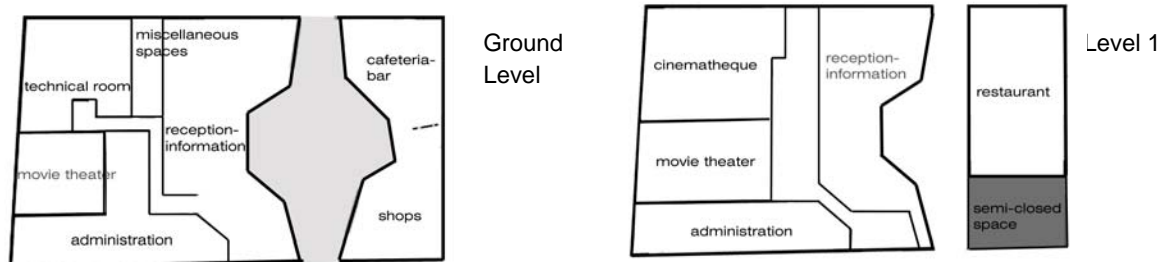
Generally, the building consists of two bold geometric shapes. The idea for the biggest one, the one with its base on the ground, stems from the mass structures of raw plinth which were a characteristic of the Arabic culture. So it is a heavy structure which is planted firmly into the ground. The second mass is lighter, more transparent and it stands on air becoming a symbol of the new era, a symbol of optimism and

development. Moreover it lets partial view of the inside space from outside connecting the inside space with the outside in a highly interactive manner – making it a true incubator. This function as an incubator becomes more intense with a force – motion which creates a hole, a semi-closed space in the heart of the building. This course makes a passer-by to pass through that space, to feel it, to interact with it. This space is interactive by all means. It is both passage and station, it is both outside and inside space, it is both open and closed, it is both transparent and opaque. Different fields, different qualities, different people meet, together and at the same time individually, independent but yet dependent and in all interactively. It is the space in which multi-linear fields come together in a sort of atrium, an area of concentration, an interface in shared places of movement, it is the place of public and friction space.

The shape of the openings stems from Arabic patterns. Using a horizontal and a diagonal line we form our pattern, our system and we use it to cut that mass and form the openings.

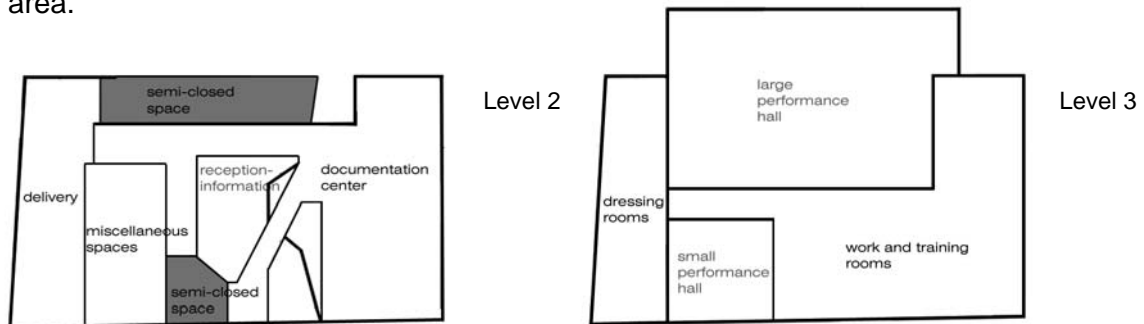
As it mentioned above, the semi-closed square in the ground level is the core of our building. From that central space the visitor as well as the passer-by have immediate contact with the more public and commercial spaces (reception hall, shops, bar) which are placed around it. In the ground level there are also the administration which is accessible from both the reception hall and the outer space, technical rooms, miscellaneous spaces and the restaurant's delivery space.

At the first level, on the north-east side (over the bar and the shops) there is the restaurant which is accompanied by a big semi-closed space extending its capacity during the warmer months. The restaurant, as all the uses in upper levels which are placed at this side, has a nice view to the opposing green area. At the first level, there are also the cinematheque with the movie theatre and the upper floor of the administration and a small foyer which serves them and which has immediate eye--contact with the reception hall.



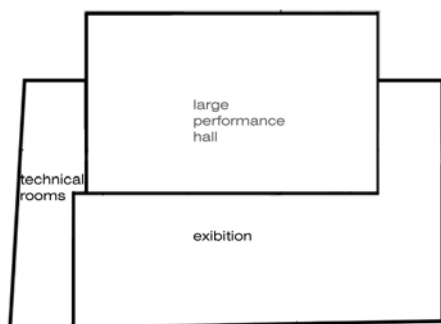
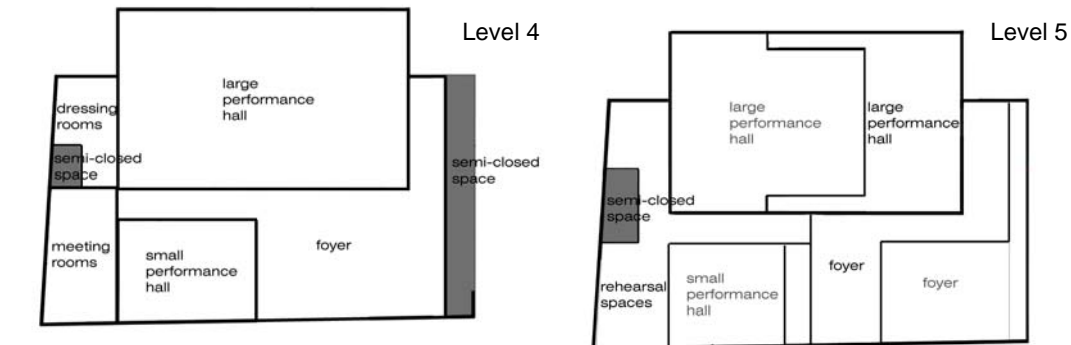
The second level includes three functional zones – the documentation centre, the delivery area and miscellaneous spaces. The documentation center is placed over

the restaurant. The reading room and the library are taking the nice north-view to the opposing open green space. At the north-west part of the floor and in the same level with the Ring Road, in order to be easily accessible by tracks, there is the delivery area.



One level up there are the workshops and the training rooms. In the inner sides of these spaces it is used a lot of glass in order to make these rooms function interactively. At the same level there is part of the dressing rooms which serve the performance halls.

Going up, at the fourth level, there are the two performance halls with its common large foyer with a semi-closed space in front of it. A smaller foyer is organized in a higher level to serve the dress circle and the boxes.

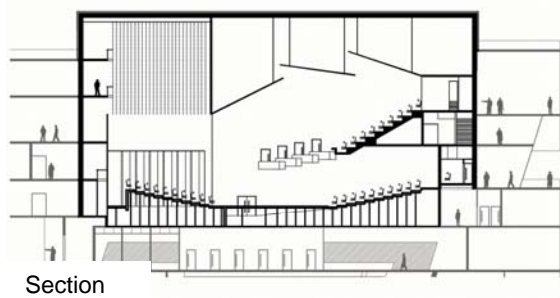


The Large Performance Hall is very flexible being able to be transformed changing style and function. This is possible with mechanical systems which move large platforms transforming the hall's floor.

The exhibition is placed at the last floor. It is an at most flat space with a simple form in order to be flexible and has the capacity of subjecting in a wide range of different mutations.

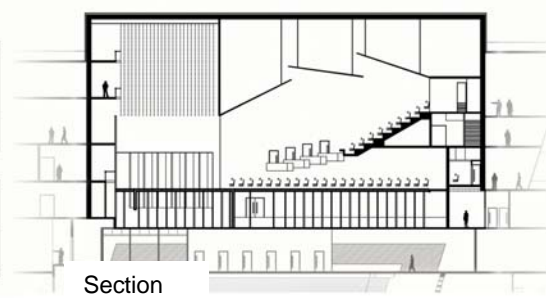
The negotiable roof is partly planted and functions as a roof garden with a view almost to the whole city of Beirut.

Large Performance Hall as round theater

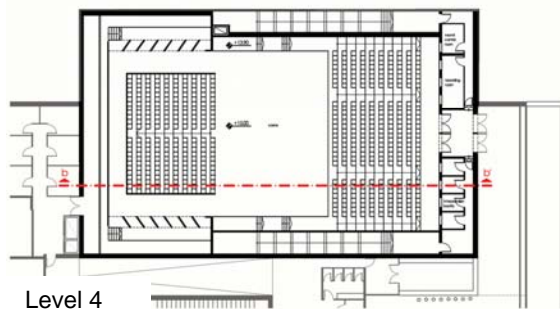


Section

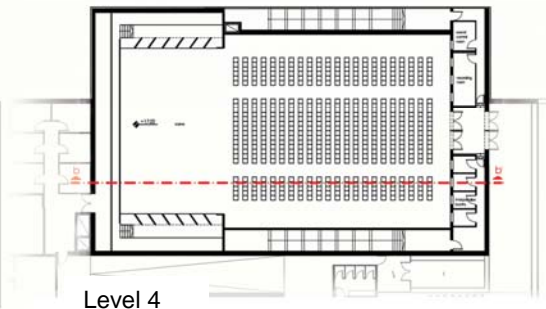
Large Performance Hall as flat space



Section



Level 4

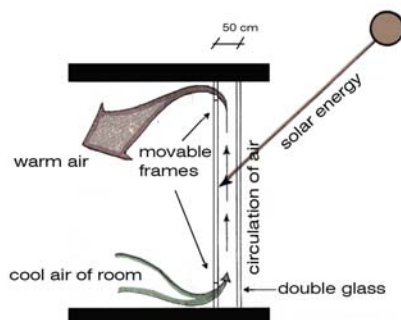


Level 4

As someone walks horizontally or vertically into the building meets different qualities of spaces, different views, firmly closed spaces, semi-closed ones and open spaces. Spaces which can function in many ways, as free spaces, as exhibition spaces, as spaces of projection. The building, as well as the whole city around it, is progressively revealed. The building progressively turns its look to the four points of horizon and becomes the bond between the West and the East, playing a role exactly as the city of Beirut.

In all levels there are extra technical spaces to serve the demands of a such a big project. Also, there is a second entrance to the building (service entrance) which serves the independent access of the building's staff. The parking is underground in two same levels and its entrance is via Ghalghoul Street.

The body of the bigger mass is made by concrete with relatively big width in order to have the appropriate heat-insulating behavior and allowing the use of double glass



partitions at the openings. The body of the smaller mass (large performance hall's body and skin) is a metal structure. Its skin is a metal mesh with a sun-protecting behavior. In general, the building is a mixed structure with appropriate materials as well as semi-closed spaces in crucial places so as to have a better bioclimatic behavior.