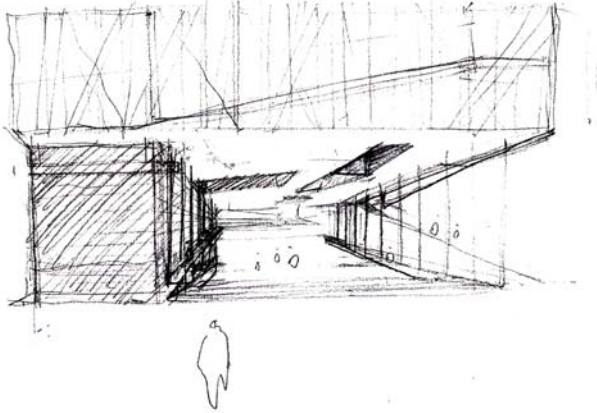


The HOUSE OF ART & CULTURE

The Lebanese-Omani Center



Introduction¹

Art is dead; Culture is bread.

Art is exclusive; Culture is inclusive.

Art is separation; Culture is regeneration.

Art is ruling, Culture is seeking.

Observations

In the early 70s, the periphery of Beirut was known as “the misery belt”.

The “Ring” is a separation line between Down Town Beirut and Bachoura.

Since 1994, reconstruction occurred exclusively in Down Town Beirut.

In Down Town Beirut, public spaces are exquisitely designed.

In Down Town Beirut, public spaces are controlled.

In Down Town Beirut, public spaces are often empty.

In Down Town Beirut, buildings are exquisitely designed.

In Down Town Beirut, buildings are controlled.

In Down Town Beirut, buildings are often empty.

Objectives

The HOUSE is a meeting place located between Down Town Beirut and Bachoura.

The HOUSE operates as a social catalyst in both its functions and its public spaces,

The HOUSE offers versatility and flexibility of usage and maximum openness to the city.

The HOUSE enables its visitors to interact with the artistic production.

¹ illustrations 1-2

The covered arena²

A large public plaza (1770m²) (reference to Piazza d'España in Rome) is developed along the north south axis of the plot. On its northern part a public space stretching on a 26x45m landscaped flat ground extends the public garden facing the plot and allows the activities of the HOUSE to expand outdoors (exhibition spaces, café, etc.). On its southern edge an open amphitheatre allows a strong visual and spatial connection between Bachoura and Down Town (Ahmad Al Jabbouri street) and transforms the plaza into an impressive stage with the Landmark Tower in the background.

The Rooted Foundation³

A concrete monolith oriented north-south comprises all operational activities of the HOUSE (exhibition, documentation center, cinémathèque, administration, workshops and studios, etc.). It is the founding element of the project in which artists and visitors meet and interact. The internal life of all these spaces always reconnects to the public plaza through voids, framed openings, cantilevered spaces and terraces. The proximity of the various activities encourages the dialogue between disciplines; it is this positive congestion that liberates the public space at city level and generates the maximum openness for the suspended performance spaces.

The Floating Head⁴

The Performance spaces are developed within a glass box (W55mx68mxH14m) in which the various functions (Conference hall, performance hall, movie theatre, etc.) are combined. Two large prisms (100m² & 70m²) pierce the different levels bringing natural light until the public plaza. The large performance hall can offer various spatial and stage configurations one of which allows the spectators to contemplate the city skyline (north) while attending the show. The multimedia performance hall contains both a movie theatre and a flexible theatre space with different stage configurations. The embraced and suspended theatre allows a freer structural scheme; it emphasizes the character and identity of the HOUSE as an incubator and reshapes the cityscape with recognizable and familiar lines.

² illustrations 3-4

³ illustration 5

⁴ illustration 6-7-8

The Urban Promenade⁵

Pedestrians can cross the project through the public plaza linking the “Ring” level (+38m) with Ahmad al Jabbouri street level (+30m) by either taking the large public stairs or the ramps located east of the plot. These ramps also provide direct access to the large performance hall which gives the theatres and the cinema a certain independence from the remaining functions of the House. The main exhibition space is also a continuation of the urban promenade stretching below the large public stairs through which a series of “light barrels” allow natural light to wash the 30m long exhibition wall (south).

The Active Façade

East of the plot, the web of columns and beams nesting the ramps filter the morning sun rays into the public plaza.

The covered plaza creates a protected environment for the project and generates a cooling effect by means of natural cross ventilation (north-south) from bottom to top (light wells).

The capillary glass used on the façades achieves good light diffusion, reduces glare, protects against heat and heat loss and provides protection against UV radiation. The insulating glass elements contain countless little translucent white capillary tubes in the interpane cavities which break up the incident daylight and diffuse it through the interior. The little capillary tubes work like air cushions which prevent the convection of gases in the interpane cavity while reducing thermal radiation from the sun.

The Green Roof

The roof system is by itself sustainable through adopting the green roof technology. The entire surface of the flat roof provides 8-10cm growing medium for draught tolerant plants, succulents and sedums.

The green roof which does not require maintenance or irrigation helps in rain water management through reduction of storm water runoff, increases green space, decreases the urban heat island effect by acting as a thermal insulator; it also reduces sound and noise pollution and extends the life span of the roof.

⁵ illustration 9