

*URBAN DESIGN OBJECTIVES*

The House of Arts & Culture, The Lebanese - Omani Centre (HAC\_LOC) shall become a hinge joint between the Grand Theatre Building and the Landmark Project. A stone throw from the two buildings away, divorced through a cozy urban plaza with a giant tree in its middle, the tree identities of the buildings will form a cultural triangle, which will become a new distinctive cultural focus in Beirut. This means speaking of both a focus in the Mediterranean sphere and the whole Arab world. So on the level of the physical building and the level of the institutional content the HAC\_LOC will arise as a catalyst in its immediate urban environment and in the cultural life far beyond the boundaries of Lebanon.

The HAC\_LOC is the smallest in the triangle of the three projects to come in the Bachoura precinct. Without doubt it will attract the largest number of visitors through 24 hours and over the entire year due to its multifaceted and complex program. The HAC\_LOC in the context of Beirut CD is placed on the fringe, turning one flank to Avenue du General Fouad Chehab. Awaiting the future of a magnet, the HAC\_LOC will blow up Beirut DC for pedestrians, which will trample a new main path from the Souks towards HAC\_LOC.

From Avenue Chehab the HAC\_LOC will be a new face of the Beirut CD for the city *en gros*. Drivers zooming by from Saifi on Avenue Chehab will have a quick glimpse of the HAC\_LOC. In future this impression will be a sign for the passerby by car, driving in from East, that Beirut CDs "centre line" leading to the Souks marked through Khalil Gibran Garden and the ESCWA Gate Building will appear in a few seconds.

The HAC\_LOC will be a signpost for orientation in the city's geography, even for those who do not care about fine and performing arts, film, literature and so forth. We want the HAC\_LOC to be a signature building without being a boisterous and crazy volume of individualistic vanity. For us it was fundamental to find an approach for the HAC\_LOC that has the potential to become a positive and deep thought in the collective memory of Beirut.

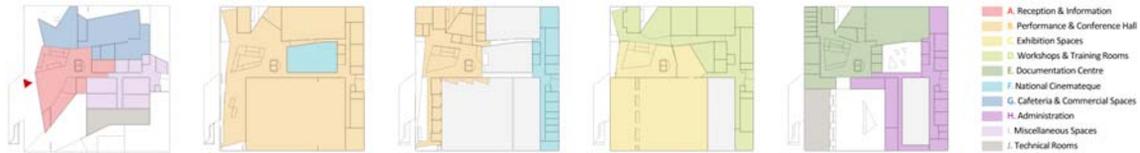
***ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT***

The HAC\_LOC is a monolithic almost cubical object building dressed in an expressive skin. All five elevations: the one to the north facing towards to sea and *Etoile* Square, the lateral elevations, the side to *Avenue General Fouad Chehab* and the roof are composed out of a dual conceptual principle: The coating of the massive wall is made out of prefabricated concrete panels with a three dimensional rapported pattern, the window openings resemble free tachistic brush strokes. The pattern of concrete elements is developed out of the cedars cone texture, the brush strokes conclude out of the cedars barge structure.

We are using two analogical motifs out of a known positive aspect of a collective memory to compose something “other”. The image of the cedar is a totally accepted and respected symbol for the whole Mediterranean culture and for the wholeness of the Lebanese society anyway. The cedar stands for ancient times, it has been glue for a diverse society and it has been the national Lebanese symbol ever since.

Being the heraldic symbol for a heterogeneous society, we innocently stole detailed geometries from the cedar, transformed them, and molded them in the way we needed to dress the building with diverse program in order to make a whole out of the multifaceted content of the HAC\_LOC and to root it in its place. This also means we want to respect the genius loci using a method embedded in *Zeitgeist*. The funny thing about bio- and floral texture and *Zeitgeist* is that this architectural strategy of dressing is archaic and pops up regularly.

The simple overall volume of the HAC\_LOC is based on a square of fifty four by fifty four meters. The height of the main cornice line does not exceed twenty-seven meters. The main visitors entrance is from Rue Ghalgoul. The entrance is marked by the most extensive tachistic brush stroke, which gives light to the foyers of the different uses on all levels of the building. The ground floor is positioned slightly higher than the level of the Rue Ghalgoul sidewalk. A Piranesian space vertically connects the entrance lobby with the foyers of the main functions on the upper floors through flying staircases, an elevator core and a gallery space. A skylight floods the foyers with filtered sunlight. The vertical foyer zone embraces the diverse functions of the HAC\_LOC to a whole. From each of the singular foyers visitors have a view of the Beirut CD. The last bio-analogy we want to bother the reader with, is the one of the vertical foyer being like a tree trunk fueling the branches: the auditoriums, the exhibitions space, library, archive, offices, roof garden – with interested visitors keen on new and old arts of all sorts.



## ***SPATIAL & FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION***

### Ground level

The ground level contains the main reception hall, the ticket booth, the restaurant with a terrace and the bookstore. The delivery zone is on the south side towards Avenue Chehab. Adjacent to delivery are storerooms, one workshop and an archive room. Delivery for the kitchen is extra from the east. Bookshop and restaurant are also accessible directly from the street. The spaces accessible for public are recessed to create a shady intermediate area between sidewalk and the building itself. Five open staircases and two elevators connect with the first floor. One core with staircase and two elevators serves the back of the house, on the south flank.

### First level

The large and small performance and conference halls and the cinema are placed here. A generous foyer fuses the three units together. Dressing rooms for performers are placed back stage. A gallery space open to the reception hall on the ground floor and the levels above lies in centre of the foyer (tree trunk).

### Second level

The three large spaces of the first level have their air space in this floor. Meetings rooms are placed to the foyer. Technical rooms and offices are positioned on the south flank of the building. Lighting and sound control, recording, interpretation booths are

### Third level

The third level is designated for the fine arts. It contains the exhibition rooms, classrooms, workshops and training rooms. The large exhibition space has filtered skylight to avoid a black box atmosphere. The lobby space admits generous views over Beirut CD.

### Roof

The Documentation Centre with its spin off functions and the administration is housed here. Two large roof gardens, also to be used for installations and sculpture give the top of the house an attractive destination.

### Garage

The garage contains 352 parking spaces. The ramping is ensured through a split-level system. The structural grid in the garage floor is 800cm by 850cm.

### Sectional development

The main concept of the sectional development firstly is the open vertical lobby connecting all the functions and the interlocking of the large performance areas rigging loft with the exhibition space. Back stage uses and serving spaces a clearly separated from each other.

## TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

### Building Shell

The basement slab lies on bored piles; the exterior reinforced concrete walls are waterproofed. The columns are reinforced concrete. The structural system of the ground floor and upper floors consists of reinforced bearing concrete walls and columns. The cores are also out of (elevators) reinforced concrete.

### HVAC

Heating and cooling works through air conditioning. Energy is supplied according to local systems and geothermal energy. The building is rather closed for mainly architectural and functional reasons, yet also for the reason to save energy through a heavily insulated wall system.

