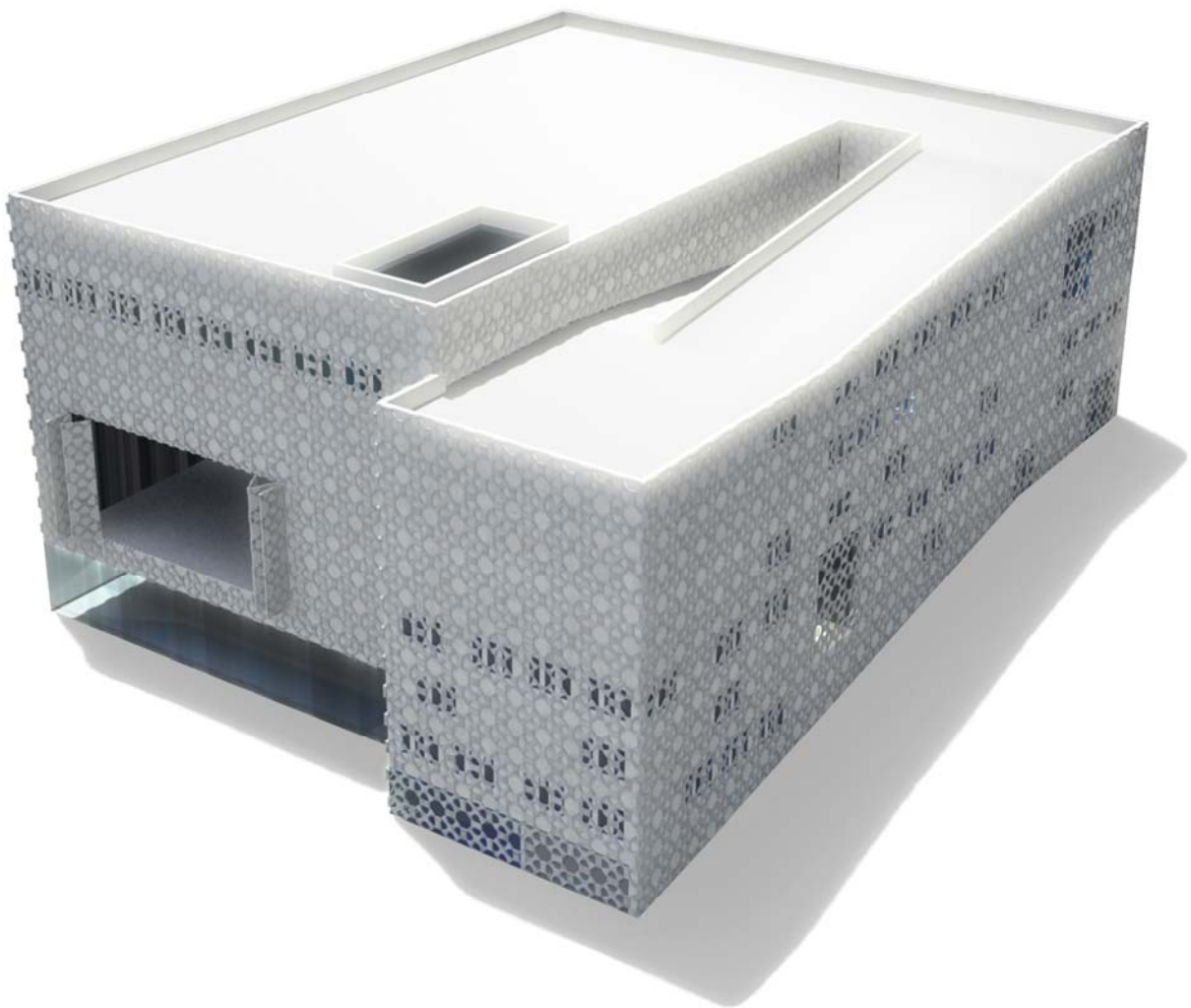


International Architecture Competition  
**The HOUSE OF ARTS & CULTURE**  
The Lebanese-Omani Centre

*'A subtle sponge during the day – a multifaceted lantern in the night'*



## **Urban Objectives**

The house of Arts & Culture is becoming the new icon for Beirut. It occupies a strategic location in the new central district at the threshold of the inner to the outer city districts. Our urban concept aims to strengthen the physical and visual relationship to the adjacent neighbourhoods.

The building occupies the entire site. It uses the given setback to the north to differentiate the volume in one part facing the Riad el Solh Square and one part facing the Bakri House. By this set back it is also possible to extend the Riad el Solh Square to the main entrance as the end destination of the promenade coming from the Place de l'Etoile. To the south the building is articulated as one volume with the height of the adjacent buildings (32m) completing the street profile of the Ringroad (Avenue du General Fouad Chehab). To the west the roof slopes down to 28m to adapt to the height of the Bakri House. This roof is accessible as public space for open air activities and exhibitions. Furthermore it is articulated as fifth facade.

## **Functional / Spatial Organization**

The differentiation of the building volume reflects the distribution of the program inside. The part facing the Riad el Solh Square contains the main auditorium as well as other event spaces separated from each other by large voids. These void spaces enable a visual relationship between all the different users of the cultural center even if there is no physical connection desired. The small performance hall is placed on the first floor in such a way that it can be opened and used as a stage for the outside world on the Riad el Solh Square.

The four different departments (workshops, documentation centre, cinematheque, administration) with the small-scale units are located on one floor level each in the building part behind the Bakri House. They can be run and accessed independently from each other but are also connected by the main circulation space, which operates as buffer zone towards the auditoria. In this public buffer zone the different users move on stair ramps in vertical direction from the lobby / exhibition space along beautifully lit spaces up to the roof level, so that the circulation becomes a kind of "stairway to heaven".

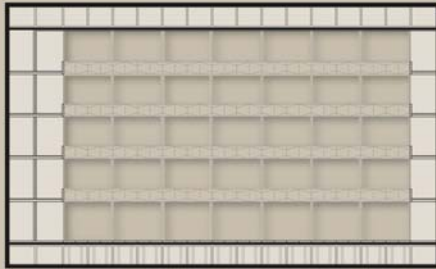
## **Architectural Objectives**

The main auditorium is the heart of the cultural center. It is developed as a multiple space, a versatile, variable and flexible construct.

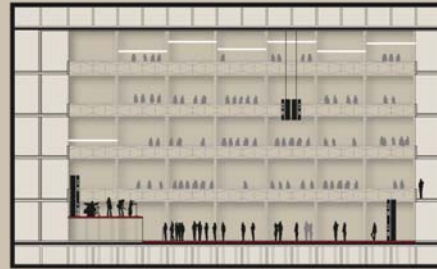
The possibility to adjust the levels of its ceiling and ground with spiralift columns allows adapting the area of the auditorium to the specific acoustics and spatial requirements of different performances. It is a neutral empty space with the possibility of being transformed without major efforts to house different types of events: concerts, conferences, shows,

Italian/Japanese style theatres. The main circulation zone is wrapped around the auditorium. At specific location it penetrates the framing spaces of the adjacent program offering fantastic views over the city in different directions.

## variability / flexibility of the large hall (configuration schemes)



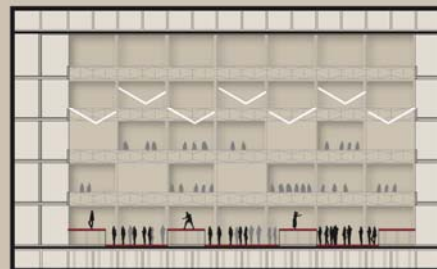
flexible / variable space



rock / pop concerts



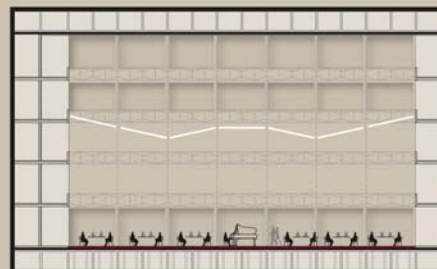
traditional western theatre / music



traditional japanese theatre / kabuki



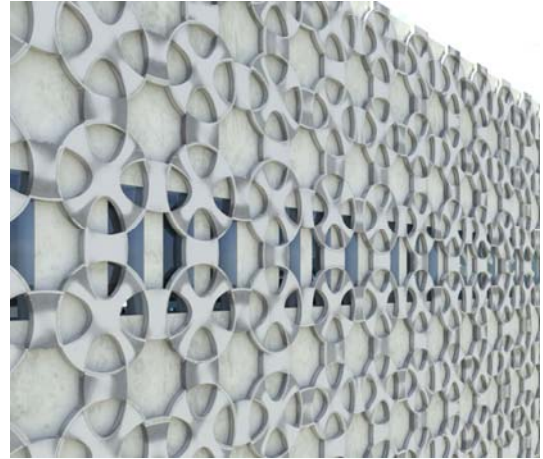
fashion show / center theatre



banquet / ball

The structure is made of concrete (walls/floors) combined with stony materials and glass. In the interior it is complemented by wooden panels and plaster in warm colours. The whole volume is covered by a continuous facade pattern with a geometrical ornament out of concrete elements. During day this homogeneous, porous skin supports the perception of the building during day as one cultural centre in which all departments belong together. During night this volume is transformed into a big, luminous lantern in the city. Different uses show different illuminations.

There are three miscellaneous facade conditions. The entrance zone is the only area with no facade pattern on top. That clearly marks the main access for the building. In the facade areas with windows the facade pattern is used as brise soleil generating incredible plays of shadow and light inside the building. On top of the closed facade areas the pattern is reduced to pure geometric ornament.



Our proposal aims not only to reflect upon the multiplicity of layers from the site, but also to make a charismatic spatial composition of the different building units. This spatial composition is capable of responding respectfully, but also independently in scale and style to the context. We find it essential that we create a place where people can connect with their built environment and cultural inheritance – a place where people can become aware of or fully appreciate the context in which they are living.

