

The Mix

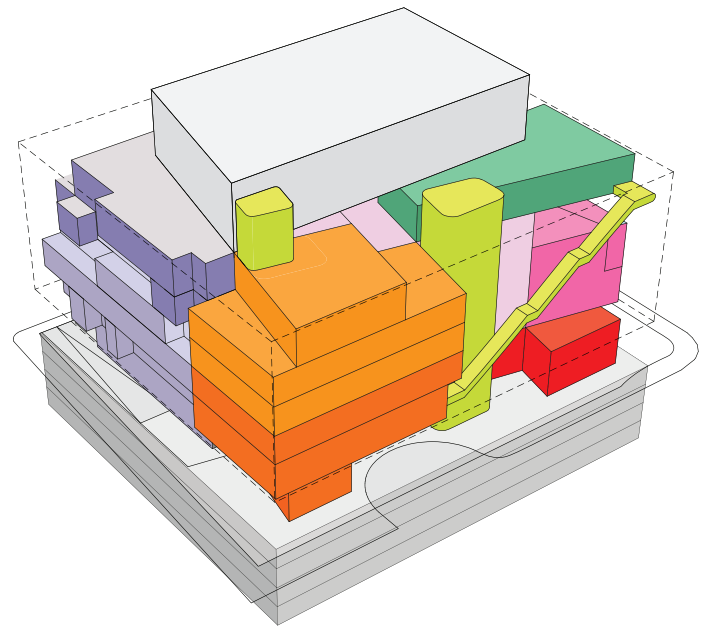
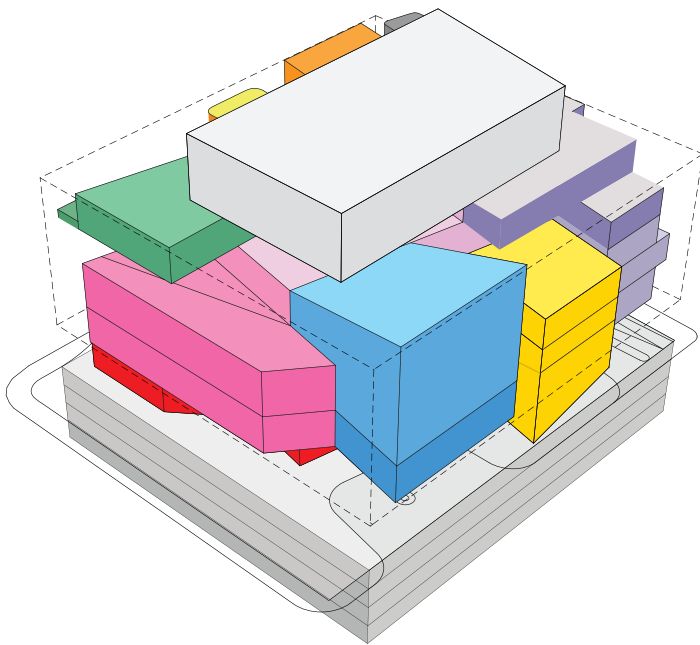
Lebanon celebrates diversity. That is both its cultural heritage - of different peoples, beliefs and a varied landscape - and its artistic tradition of individual expression, which continues strongly today with the proliferation of new artistic visions, approaches and venues. Lebanon, however, is also strongly tied together by its sense of community, its national identity and its shared values – even by its cuisine, which is itself usually arduously prepared and mixed together from an incredible *mélange* of ingredients. The creative tension between the individual and the collective elements of society defines Lebanon - and was our inspiration for the new House of Arts and Culture.

The emphasis on diversity is underscored by the range of artistic programs envisaged for the new House of Arts and Culture – from performance to exhibition to libraries and workshops and cinema - and we felt it was important to emphasize these individual elements. We also imagined a similar variety of spatial experiences. Visitors coming at different times or for different purposes could come away with completely different impressions – giving a sense of exploration and discovery to the building. At the same time, and as a first concrete step to reasserting Beirut in its historical role as the cultural heart of the Middle East, we felt it important that the building project a singular,

institutional image – a “mix” of the collective artistic spirit of the country.

Our design centers around series of programmatic boxes shaped to accommodate their functions and stacked upon and next to one another in a carefully considered composition that creates a myriad of spaces, connections, entrances, intersections and terraces. Organized around a public entrance to the west, an artists and administrative entrance to the east, and delivery and parking to the south, many of these boxes can be independently accessed, maintaining their individuality.

The resulting complex network of experiences and shapes is then wrapped with a delicate metal screen which functions variously as a sunshade, a space for the projection and broadcasting of information, a trellis for vines to grow on...and most importantly provides the coherent and institutional identity for the center. The use of the screen resonates not only with traditional Arabic screens and patterns, but also with Beirut's rich modernist heritage of buildings that incorporate *brise-soleil* and other shading devices. From the city, the collection of individual elements is read against this foreground of the unifying screen – both revealing and concealing the mix of shapes and activities within.



Program Distribution













The Performance Hall is the largest volume. In order to ensure that each aspect of the House of Arts and Culture is given a significant visual presence and not overwhelmed by the mass of the Performance Hall, we placed the Hall at the center, with the other spaces wrapped around it. To create an open and inviting ground floor we raised the Performance Hall, allowing the Reception Hall to be accessible and visible from all sides. The Cinema and Cinémathèque are stacked together in a volume located south of the Reception Hall with its own entrance and ticketing.

The Black Box Theatre is to the west of the Performance Hall, and while it shares the main Foyer, it is accessed at a higher level, allowing some distinction between audiences. A bridge connects it to the Backstage. The Conference Center is below the Black Box, at the level of the Performance Hall; a bridge connects it to the Cinema for combined events.

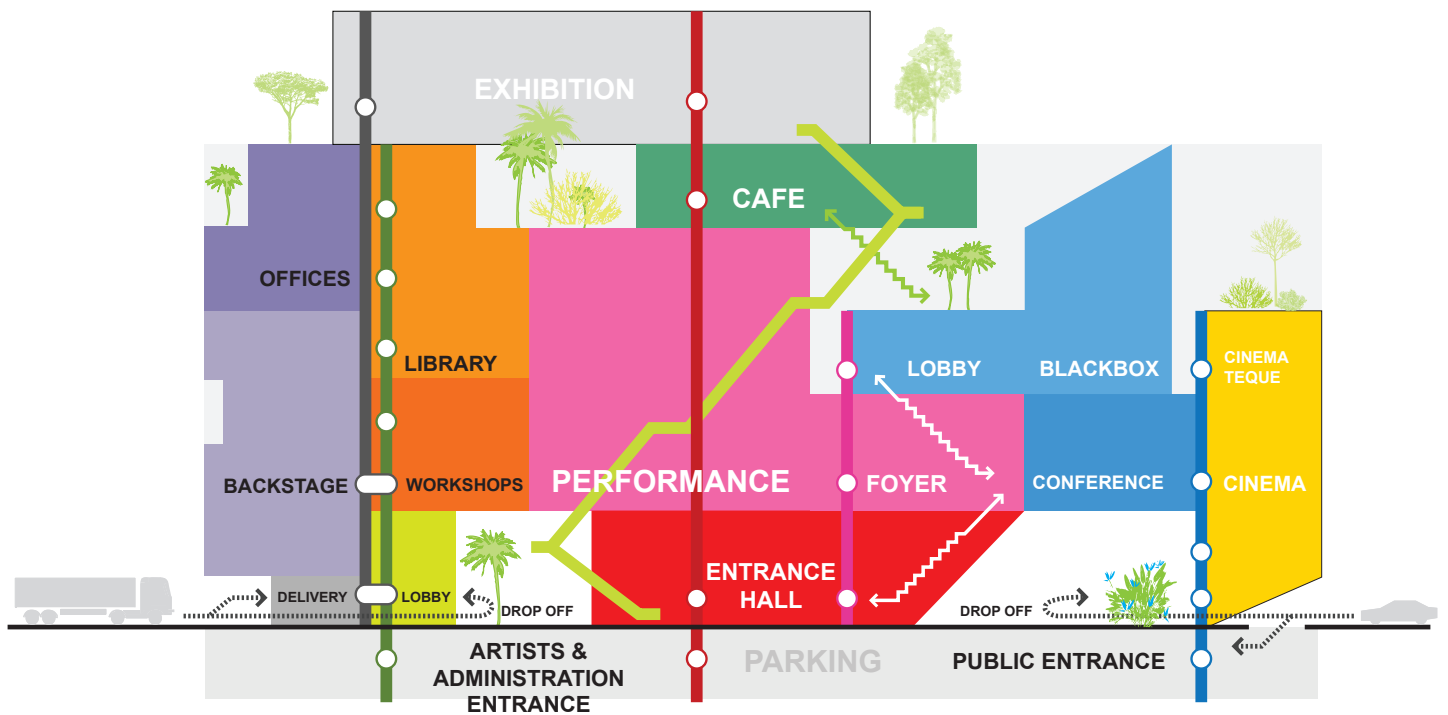
The Workshops are stacked together with the Library on the east side of the building. The Backstage and Administration offices are stacked to the south. Each volume creates a rooftop garden, accessible from higher programs. At the rooftop, the Café cantilevers out with a view over downtown and the sea.

A large terrace connects the two sides of the building and the roof of the Black Box swoops up to create an outdoor amphitheatre. As in the traditional image of Lebanese daily life overflowing outwards on to the balconies, our design creates outdoor spaces at every level - sponsoring gardens, terraces, outdoor meeting rooms, amphitheatres, classrooms, sculpture courts... Crowning the House with the Exhibition Spaces allows artwork to be shown in controlled natural light. A system of fins and glass skylights create consistent and indirect light for the galleries.

To emphasize the individual program stacks, subtle color differentiation will be used in the interiors. The overall composition, with its gently colored volumes, generous outdoor spaces, exterior sun shading and programmatic determination, creates a strong vision for the diversity and vibrancy of Beirut's artistic future. This approach can also be seen as a re-reading of Beirut's architectural past. The city's creative embrace of Modernism – and its doctrine of formal expression of buildings' functions - resulted in some of the most iconic Modern buildings in the Arab world; our project can be seen as a contemporary heir resonating with this long tradition.

	Exhibition		Library
	Café		Workshops
	Foyer		Performance Hall
	Reception Hall		Cinema / Cinémathèque
	Black Box		Administration
	Conference Center		Backstage



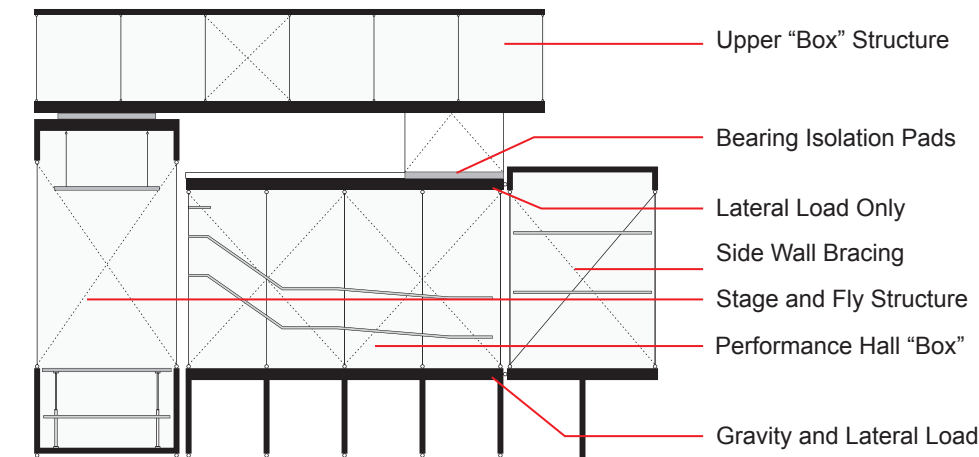


Circulation

The public drop-off on the west side of the building leads directly to the Reception Hall. From the main entrance hall (containing shops, ticketing and box office) visitors can either turn to the north and ascend a grand stair to the performance and conference spaces or continue directly ahead to express elevators to the rooftop café and exhibition spaces. One of the music rooms also drops down into and is visible from the Reception Hall. An escalator to the side of the Reception Hall leads to a 'vertical promenade' which takes visitors on a leisurely trip up through the building to

the rooftop terraces, Café and Exhibition. The Cinema and Cinematheque, can be entered independently via the public entrance and drop-off.

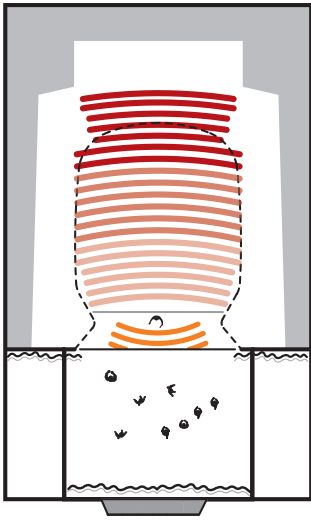
On the east side, a second entry has been designed for artists coming to use the workshops or library, and for administrative and backstage access. This 'Artists Entrance' (Entrée des artistes) is also accessible from the Reception Hall. The loading dock and parking garage entrance is provided at the south, accessible from both the east and west sides of the building. Truck loading directly into backstage is provided at the higher level via the highway access road.



Structure

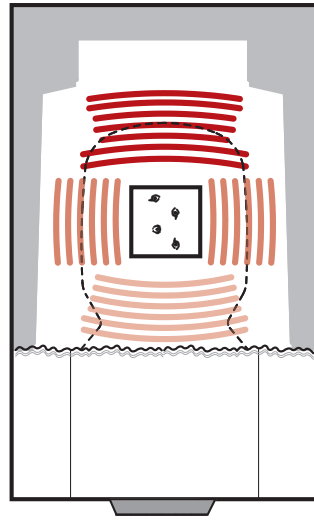
Following from the programmatic concept of boxes stacked around the perimeter of the Performance Hall, the structural strategy is to design the Performance Hall as the primary lateral resistance against wind and seismic loads, using a combination of bracing at the side and end walls and moment frame portals. The other, secondary, boxes are framed separately to minimize interior columns, again using braced end and side walls where possible. Connections between these boxes and theatre will be made at the top and

bottom of each box, with the top connection transferring lateral load and the bottom connection transmitting both gravity and lateral loads. Each secondary box will be supported on one or two columns as needed for gravity loads. The exhibition and café boxes at the roof will rest on bearing isolation pads to mitigate the transmission of noise between boxes and simultaneously to damp the structure, reducing seismic forces. Structural steel frames and slabs on deck are proposed to speed construction and lighten the overall building weight.



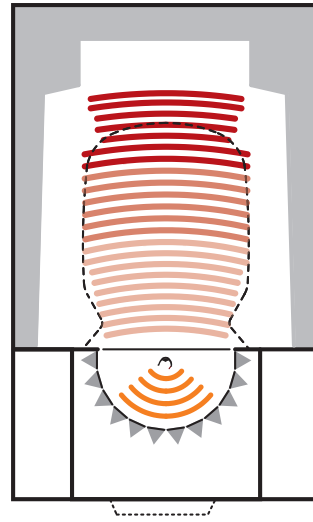
OPERA

- Orchestra Pit Open
- Remove Front Rows



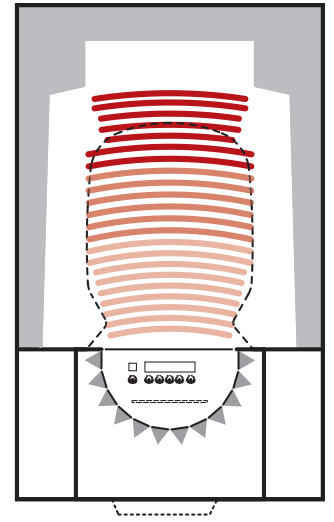
IN THE ROUND

- First Seat Block 180°
- Second Seat Block Breaks
- Move Sections Around Stage
- Flat or Stepped Floor



MUSIC

- EXtra Rows in Front
- Fly Tower Closed, with Reflectors



CONGRESS

- Hanging Projection Screen
- Extra Rows in Front
- Fly Tower Closed, with Reflectors

Flexibility

Working closely with our Acoustics and Theatre Consultants, we have developed an extremely flexible Performance Hall. The basic form creates an intimate theatre, arranged on stalls and two balconies to create an enveloping “Italianate” style space with a fly tower. The stalls floor is comprised of three seating wagons, below which the floor is flat. The front wagon can be divided in two and used perpendicularly to surround a thrust stage. The middle section can be used on stage to support a “theatre-in-the-round” arrangement by moving the wagon onto the stage elevators. In addition, two thirds of the seats can be stored beneath the rear stalls or orchestra, providing a flat floor for runway, ballroom or convention configurations.

A series of stage towers complement these arrangements. The towers can form an orchestra shell for music performance and create a unified space for conventions, lectures, congresses, speech and film events. These events require variation in acoustics - from a “live” sound for music to a “dry” sound for speech and amplified events. To achieve this, sound absorbing curtains will be deployed individually at

each level using a mechanized system with pre-sets. The flexibility is designed in a practical way for ease of use, quick change over and modest cost.

In addition, the Cinema can be opened up to the Performance Hall’s stage with a large roll-down door behind the movie screen, allowing for other, even more radical configurations and combinations.

Sustainability

We are interested not just in sustainable technology – which will be integrated to maximize efficiency – but also in creating a building which exploits the local climate and emphasizes the relation between inside and outside in unexpected ways. The programmatic boxes which make up the project have been composed to maximize the amount and variety of exterior spaces, allowing spaces to expand into gardens and terraces and minimize the need for air conditioning when the weather allows. The screen which provides the striking visual exterior image of the project will be designed to maximize sun protection, reducing cooling requirements without sacrificing views.

