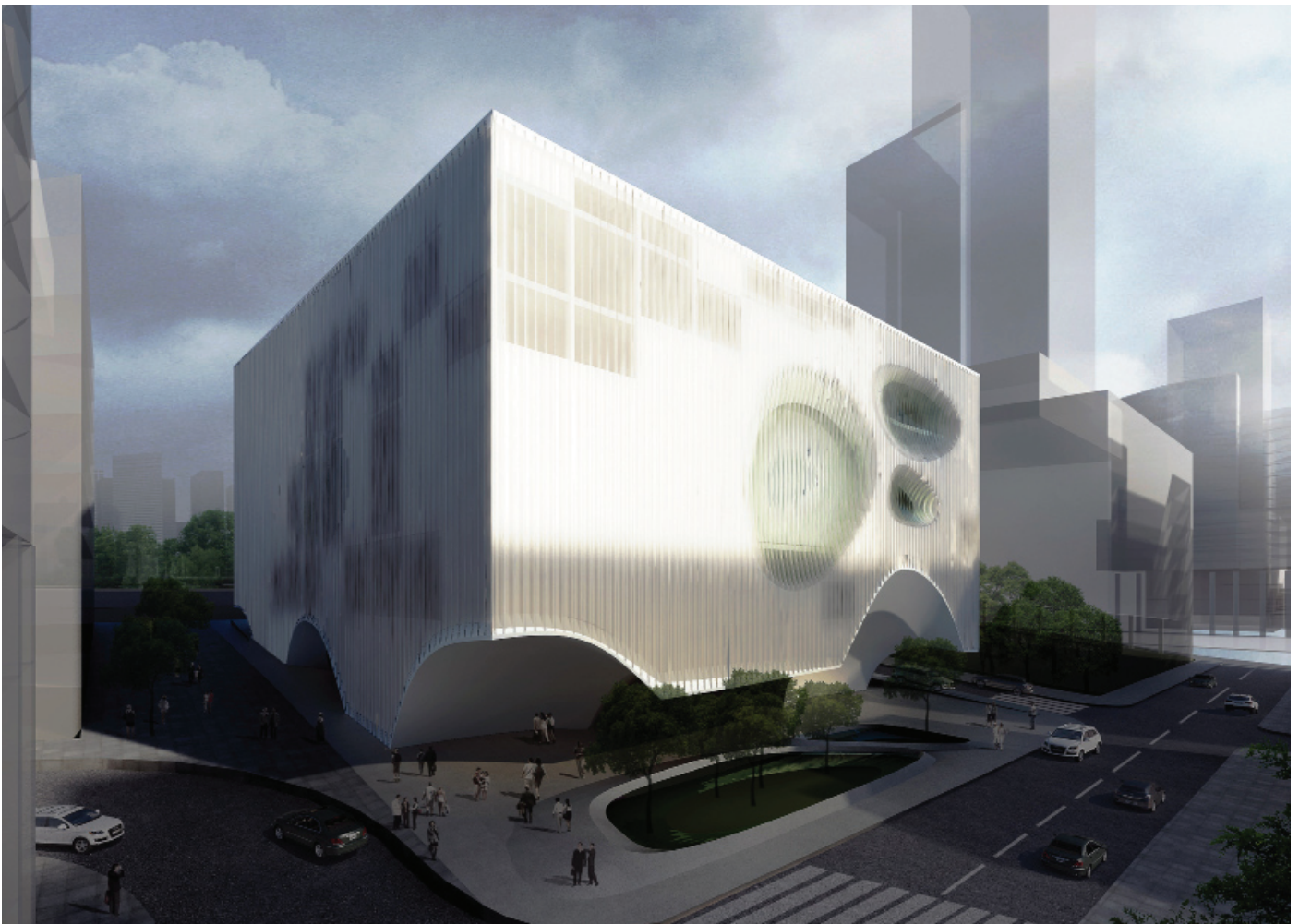


THE HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE INTRODUCTION TEXT



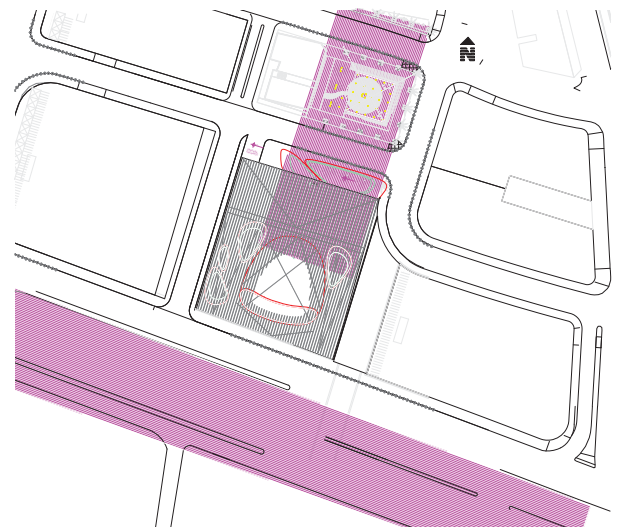
THE SITE

The site constraints and topography were the major drivers to the architectural concept of the new House of Arts and Culture. Situated at the edge of the Beirut Central District, it has the advantage of being along the major city axis of the Ring Road , an extremely busy and dynamic artery; but on the other side, it also benefits from being across the street of a open green space that offers the site a much more pleasant approach.

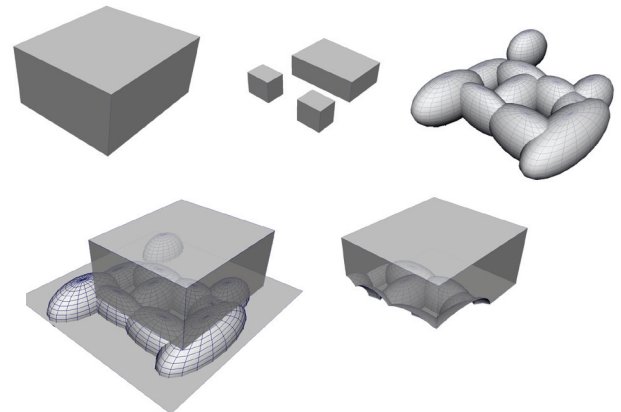
(DIAG1)

The lot 128-4 also benefits from the very large level difference between its North and South edges. This inclination of the site became a crucial aspect for the organization concept of the building.

The strategy here was to use this inclination in order to lift the building above a sloped plaza extending the exiting public space, and inviting in the users of the House of culture.



DIAG 1: SITE STRATEGY - PUBLIC SPACE EXTENSION



DIAG 2: CARVING OPERATIONS SEQUENCE

THE BUILDING

The concept of elevating the structure above an open air plaza leads to a significant reduction of the footprint of the building. Our architectural approach was to geometrically carve out that outdoor space from a monolithic volume containing all the program of the House of Culture on the in order to reduce the impact of the building on the ground.

These formal carving operations produce an intricate public space shaped by various intersecting vaults and arches, creating a complexity in the geometry that is aimed to drag in the curious visitors of the Cultural Center.(DIAG2)

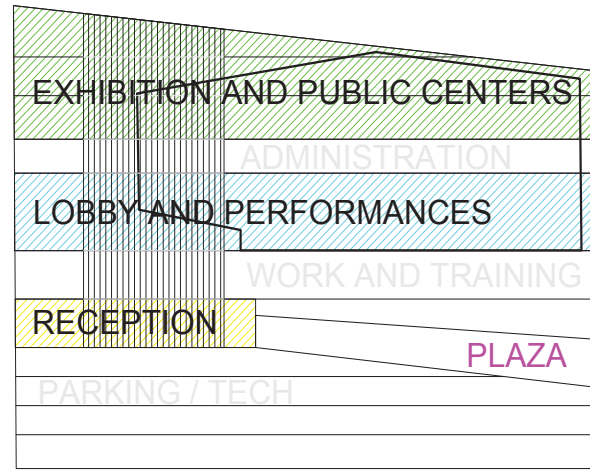
This interstitial space between the building legs establishes a public lobby-reception and articulates a continuity of the surrounding landscape with the inside of the building –blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior and inscribing the building into the flows of the public on the site. These structural legs contain the main cores of the building that offer the visitors , staff and delivery their three separate entrance lobbies.



FIG 1: EXTERIOR VIEW

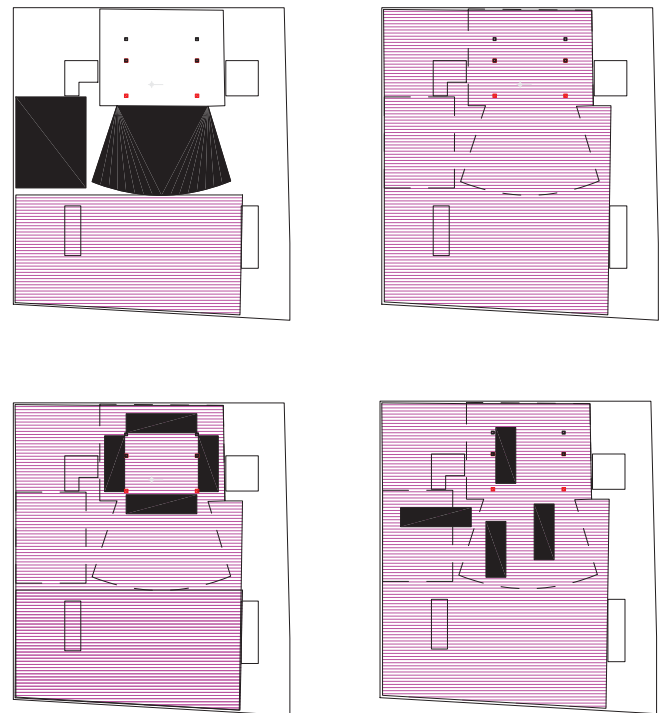
THE PROGRAM

The internal organization of the building revolves around the position of the main performance halls and the large exhibition and public spaces. These two public attractors are sandwiched in between more specialized and private program areas. (DIAG3) A large atrium in the back of the theatre facilitates all vertical connections between these two public zones.



DIAG 3: INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Both accessed on level +7.00 through a grand lobby, the 2 theatres sit on an entire floor of shared amenities such as dressing rooms and workshops all fitting on level +3.00 with an easy access to their backstages. The strategic positioning of these halls along with various techniques of adaptability could create a large flexible area for various events and shows. When the seating and stages of the main hall and the blackbox theatre are retracted, and the partitioning walls put up, the level +7.00 offers a large flat surface that could accommodate various movable seating layouts as well as experimental stage configurations (DIAG4).



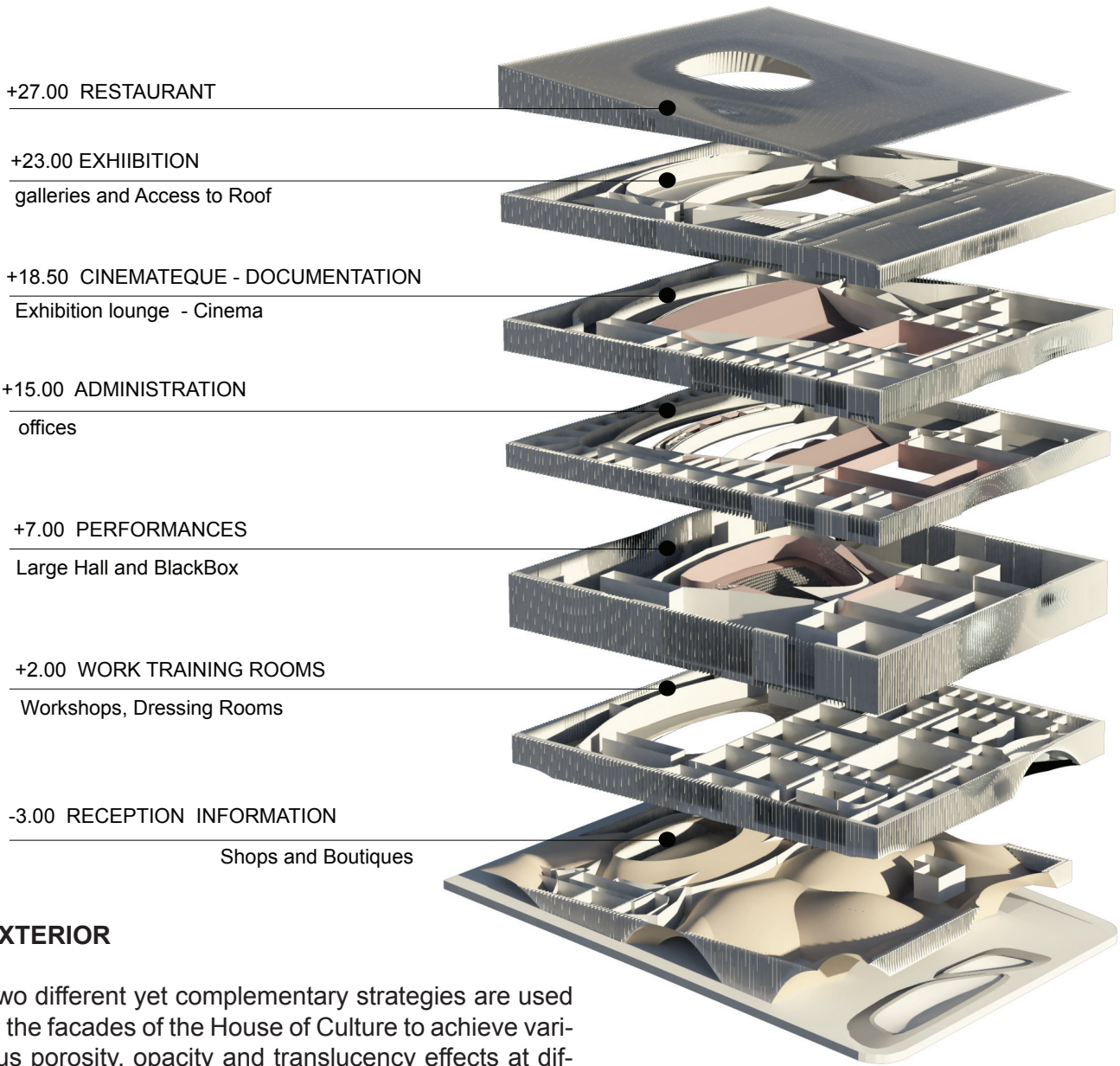
DIAG 4: FLEXIBILITY IN STAGE AND SEATING LAYOUTS

On level +15.00, an entire floor of administrative offices array around the voids from the theatres below. This office level could be accessible directly from the North East core that is opening to the staff entrance on ground level.

The upper part of the building that combines levels +18.50m, +23.00m, +27.00m and the roof is the second biggest public area of the House of Culture. It is designed as one large zone with interconnected floors accessed internally by various ramps and stairs. The layout strategy and the vertical circulation facilitates the connectivity between the Documentation Center, the Cinemateque, the gallery spaces and the Restaurant, and makes the fluid journey from one space to the other a very pleasant experience. The restaurant on top overlooks over the terraced roof sloping up from to the gallery level. This relatively large space could be used for various outdoor events and shows. (DIAG5)



FIG 2: INTERIOR VIEW



DIAG 5: EXPLODED ISOMETRIC

EXTERIOR

Two different yet complementary strategies are used in the facades of the House of Culture to achieve various porosity, opacity and translucency effects at different scales. The first approach, similar to the one used on the ground floor, is to carve out large scale openings that will offer a great amount of light in various lobby and reception areas. The second more controlled approach is to cut smaller windows to ensure the right lighting for the spaces behind. A secondary skin or screen held by additional vertical louvers covers up the openings to ensure that the solid and clean shape of the building is not interrupted at various locations.

The House of Culture is a simple building yet full of richness and character. The aim with this proposal is to present an elegant solid container for the cultural program that gains its quality in its dynamic internal organization and in its various external compositions. It should not have a style nor be a formal gesture, it should rather inspire imagination and reflect creativity.



FIG 1: EXTERIOR VIEW