House of Arts and Culture Beirut

The Urban Context

Embeded in a neighbourhood that grows fast and occupies most of the possible area, our House of Arts and Culture leaves the west part of the plot free to create a public space. This area allows additional programme like outdoor theater or open air performances and can be read as an extension of the inside program to the city. Neccessary elements like the declinated covering of the garage are used as a tribune to support these activities. In the same time this place is used as the service and delivery zone- connected with two streets it provides accesibilty for any kind of vehicles.

The building itself follows with a lightly sloped roof the topography of the plot and the backdrifting west-facade generates a more open feeling of the free space.

In the southern facade, facing the highway, we project a huge window, the other sides- facing the streets with pedestrians and slower traffic- have smaller openings.

The three Elements of the House

The building itself is organised by concentrating the different programs in three groups:

The Theater Machine   The small performance hall and the movie theater are placed on the ground level. The Grand Hall, shaped as a box to provide best acoustic and highest flexibility is situated on top of them. To get acoustic isolation and to become an identification element it is covered with the wood of Lebanon Cedar. All three halls are connected by a movable stage. This combination allows a big variety of uses. It is possible to run the halls independently or to link them together for big congresses or concerts. This Theater Machine can play classic italian opera as well as a car show or a rock concert. Furthermore it is possible to open the stage to the south and get it connected to the street.

The Wrapped Programme   All the other programme like workshops, exhibition, restaurant are combined with pocket gardens and wrapped over the Theater Machine, leaving a big entrance hall free. This "enriched" skin provides a maximum visibility of all what happens from the inside and the outside of the building. It enforces interaction between the different programms and negotiates the boundaries of the house.

The Directory Tree   To connect all the programme, a distribution element is placed in the center of the big entrance hall. People can choose the transparent elevator for quick access, or the upwinding stairs and escalators. Both ways allow an overview to all the

programme and happenings. The visitor as well as the artist and also the employee becomes immediatly part of the House of Arts and Culture. Moving from one part to the other is like moving across a panopticum of artistic sceneries.

The Directory Tree is the element of orientation, information and distribution, it is connecting the different parts of the house and on the same time offering place where people meet each other, where interaction and exchange happens.

The Facade

Small scale programme mixed with pocket gardens are stacket together to generate the facade. This chessboard system is repeated in a smaller scale for the skin of the building as a perforated surface made of encoloured concrete. This filtering layer covers the openings to provide protection from the sun as well.
The gardenloges are vaulted to give the system more stability and to create an iconic element. This green zones are filtering the sunlight and produce cooling micro climates to minimize the costs of airconditioning.

The Structure

The building construction follows a regular grid of 5,5m. The possibility of using proofed and simple systems and materials keeps the erection costs low. The space of the roof construction is filled with functiones. The ramped underground parking allows an optimal use of space and good orientation.

The Growing House

We interpretate the House of Arts and Culture as a vertile growing organism. According to that, we propose extra spaces in the communication areas of the big entrance hall, used for additional workshops, artists in residence, presentations and celebrations. Proper space instead of sprestigeous materials!