

House of Art and Culture

Urban context: *the site and its surroundings*

The building is located on the border of the planned new city centre around the *Square of the Martyrs* in the north and a historically developed district in the south.

The border between the old, partially war-damaged quarter of Beirut and the new center is strongly defined by an east-west traffic route, the „Ring“.

The building area is delimited by the planned western tower of the new city gate.

As component of the new block ensemble around the green city square defined by the master plan to the north of the building area, the new block provides the square's southern façade.

The border of the new *House of Arts and Culture* is additionally delineated at the site by the slope differential from the northern square and the traffic axis in the south.

The building lines of the surrounding block structure defining the square are continuing inside the building so that the public space reaches into the interior of the open entrance lobby on the ground floor.

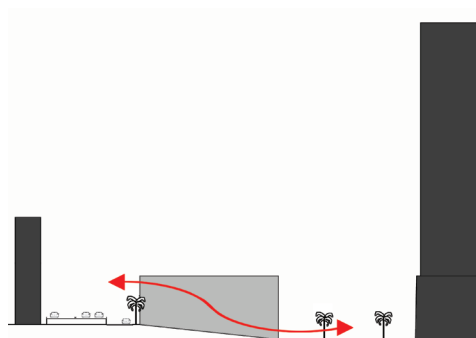
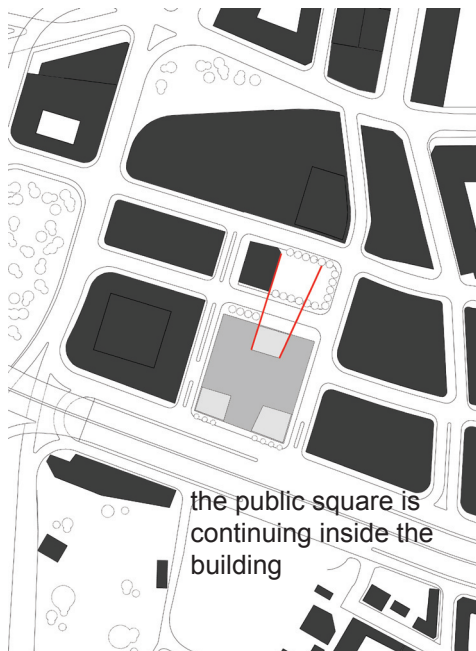
Via the entrances from the northern square and the „Ring“ road in the south, as well as the views between the lobbies on the different levels of the building, the House of Arts and Culture mediates between the different city quarters and topographies.

The public is vicariously involved in the various activities within the building which are displayed through the several separated open spaces on each level.

These open spaces are subordinated to the different enclosed areas and their uses.

Due to the importance of the building within the new city center and the fact that two of the adjacent buildings are of significant height, the roof surface is understood as a sculptured fifth façade by the external areas which are defined on the top level.

Interaction between activities on the inside of the *House of Arts and Culture* and the outside urban environment is enhanced by displays on the exterior surfaces.



the entrance split-level mediates between new city center and the historical development

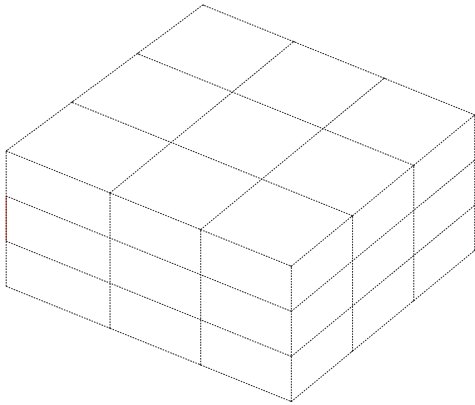
Building concept: *an incubator for artistic development*

.....boxes in a box.... cells within an organism.....

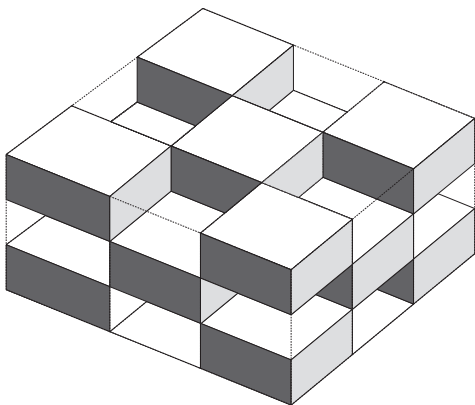
The design is based on a programmatic scheme reminiscent of a chessboard which can be perceived both in the facades themselves as well as in the different floor layouts.

Every interior utilization is combined and associated with an outdoor space.

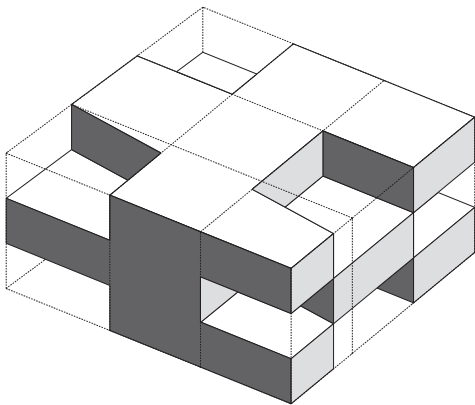
Enclosed and open areas alternate on each level.



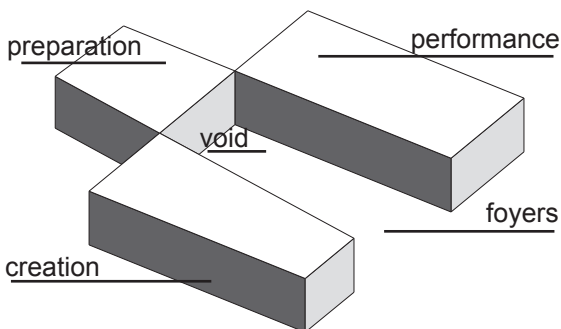
the grid



alternating open and enclosed areas

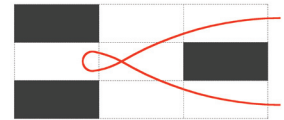


exterior areas



The open areas are divided into several exterior spaces at the edges of the building and open entrance foyers in the midst of which the stairs provide access linking the adjacent utilizations.

The open space within the building center offers a display of the utilizations of the various levels and invites public participation throughout the entire complex, starting from the entrances on the lower split-level over the event lobby to the exhibition lounge on the top level.



The lines of sight and visual relations between the individual entrance foyers function over the void formed by the stairwell. The different enclosed spaces flank this area so as not to affect the continuity and the view relationships between the different foyers.

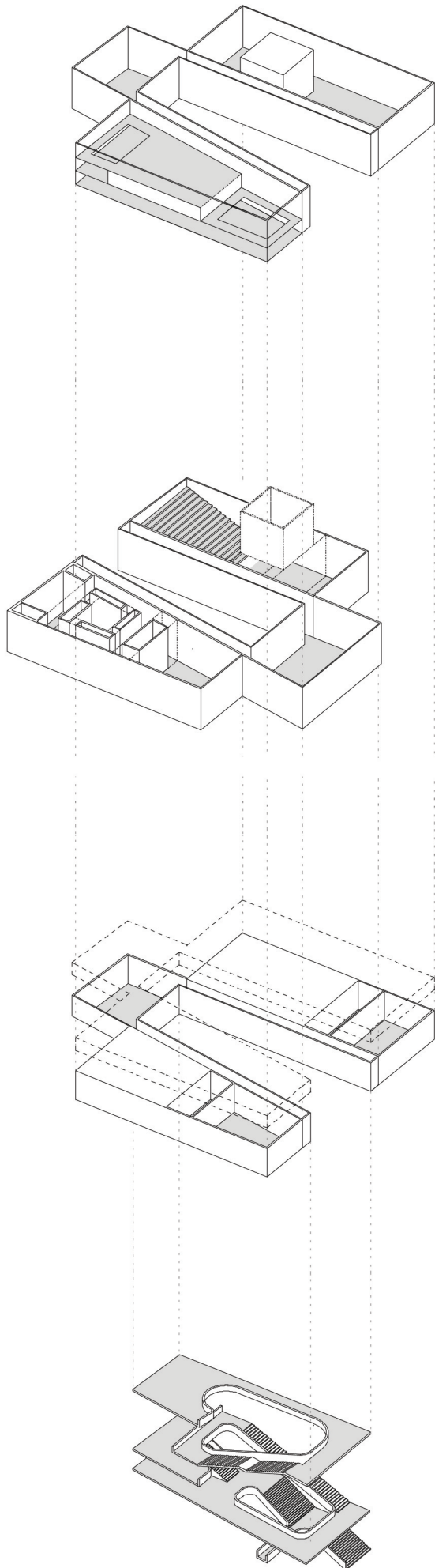
The ancillary rooms of the enclosed areas are found across from the entrance foyers (facing north and south) which connect them within the same level.

Independent use of the different enclosed areas is made possible by direct access to each area over the sculptured staircase within the middle void, thus enabling separate economic utilization of each of the enclosed areas.

The entrance foyers are differentiated into:

a) the **main entrance hall** on the split-level, accessible from the square (north) and the Ring (south) on the first and second floor;

b) the **performance lobby**, with entrances to the big performance hall and small multimedia hall as well as to the tier of the big performance hall when used as theatre, mediating with its view over the Ring between the new and the old districts of the city and



c) the **exhibition lounge** connecting the work and study area with the big exhibition hall and offering an open view towards the square and to new constructions such as the landmark project by Jean Novel.

Corresponding to the different activities, the building is vertically divided into three main levels:

a) the entrance and information level:

- *arriving and administrating* -

Over the height difference of the slope between north and south, the split level entrance area connects the two entrées at the beginning of the stair sculpture.

The depth of the void lets the visitor impact with the dimensions of the building.

On the ground floor a bookshop which could also be divided in smaller modular shopping units and a restaurant are located.

These retail outlet units thus can also be separately entered and utilized directly by city square from pedestrians.

Besides serving as a seating area for the restaurant, the entrance area further houses the information desk, ticket counters, lockers and bathrooms.

On the southern side of the building the middle atrium provides the street level entrance. A direct entree to the administration area is located west of the middle atrium with reserved outdoor parking spaces for employees.

On the opposite side of the northern entrance hall on the outdoor terrace is a roadway for underground parking as well as for commercial deliveries with freight elevator access and connections to the performance and exhibition hall.

Parking:

Public parking spaces are hidden in the southern part of the city square level and on two underground levels.

A visitor coming from the Ring road can drop passengers in front of the southern entrance and then park the car in the underground garage.

Building entry is available from the parking lots by several hallways leading to the platforms of the stairway and the elevators.

b) the event and performance level:

- *training and performing* -

The performance lobby spans two stories with entrances to the big performance hall, the multimedia hall as well as to the tier of the big hall. Through its large window on the southern district

the lobby mediates yet again between inside and outside activities.

The stage of the big performance hall (west) can be moved aside, allowing the connected external area to merge with the performance space or to allow a performance with outside public attendance from the city square. Attached to the multimedia and conference area (east) is another terrace where outside lessons and meetings could take place. South of the small multimedia hall the self-sustaining conference area is found with two meeting rooms and technical support facilities such as projection, translation, sound-control, light-control.

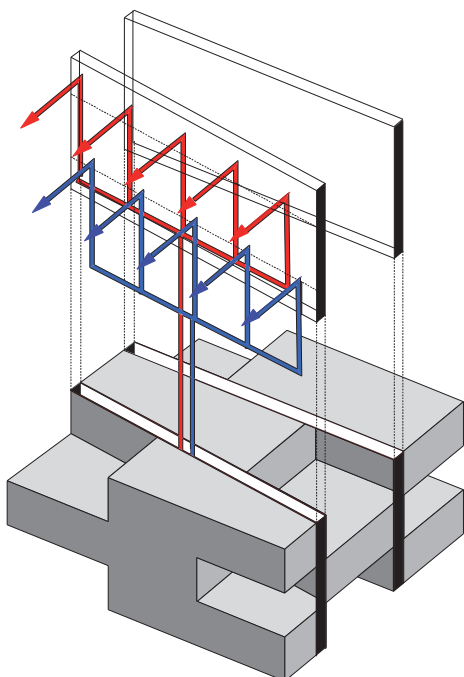
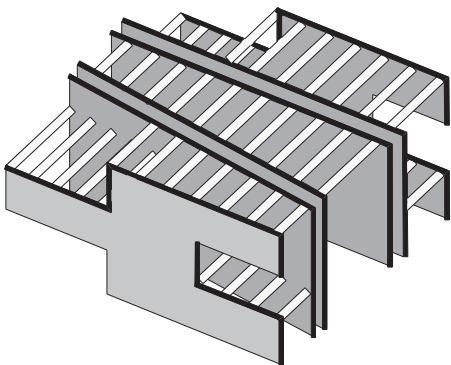
The collective and single dressing rooms for the performing artists are located opposite the performance lobby.

The big performance hall is equipped to be used as an Italian Theatre but can also be transformed by lifting the seating and stage platforms into a hall at the same height as the affiliated terrace.

c) the exhibition and workshop / research level:

- producing and exhibiting -

The exhibition lounge facing the square connects the workshop area in the west with the big exhibition hall in the east. The library and the cinematheque (film collection) are located on top of the workshop area to keep the distance between studying and producing at a minimum. Attached to the workshop area is an external terrace to the south where artists can study and work. The exhibition can also be extended into the external sculpture garden. Across from the exhibition lounge the cinematheque contains a separate cinema in the center section.



Construction and technical solutions

The grid provides the basis for the construction of the building and the system of technical installations. The lines of the grid (in north-south direction) locate four shear walls carrying the main beams spanning over the halls and foyers. The two walls in the middle are widened to provide space for the elevators, the security staircases and technical equipment. within these walls the pipes can reach every part of the building in the north-south direction. From there the pipes lead -then parallelly to the main beams- into the different areas providing fresh air and air conditioning. an additional technical area is located on top of the cinema.