

# HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE

The ambitious project for a House of Arts and Culture for Beirut, a project which will offer exemplary benefits to the city's development requires an architectural response that assures the urban presence of this new cultural epicenter and posits a spirit of openness in the renovation of the district. The proposed strategy is to erect a framework on which the elements of the program are housed where the frame defines a unitary singular iconic presence for the complex while internally each part is apparent, expressing the variety of cultural disciplines housed. This duality offers the building two scales of interaction. On an urban scale the presence is rotund and blatantly protagonistic befitting a cultural magnet magnifying the scale of the volume. The BCD master plan shows a clear intention to solidify the volume of its block, this is underlined in the proposal with the clean cut cube which becomes gestural only in its pitched roof and hollowed out core. The north south axis on which the lofting operation takes place links the Avenue du General Fouad Chehab and Rue Ghalghoul through to the open space beyond and offering a framed glimpse of the district beyond. The transparency that results exposes the internal components of the center as a cut pomegranate or quartz and defines an internal space of visual interaction and exposure. The morphology of the building is unquestionably blunt, its semantical play of the pitched roof is twofold, house and shed pertain to the shelter and container and production. Internally the sharp stereotomic intent is compounded by limited cuts and openings. The bare language of this geometry is a desire to retain a gradually reducing urban scale that only in the interior and local reveals detailing at a human scale. Materially this intent is reinforced with a plain undetailed rendered finish envisioned as light colored rough concrete. Strategically the reductive finish of the sculpted volume contrasts with the interior finishes allowing the framework to absorb the minimum cost which is transferred to key interior features and equipment from scenographic infrastructure to acoustical and lighting devices. The desired openness of the building provides for both an urban act and internally the creation of a void space which is intended as a space of contemplation and visual interplay while offering an exterior covered space for catering, rest and events that may take advantage of Beirut's weather. Most importantly the framed void operates as a modulated microclimate that acknowledges the environmental and cultural characteristics of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The

configuration of the program

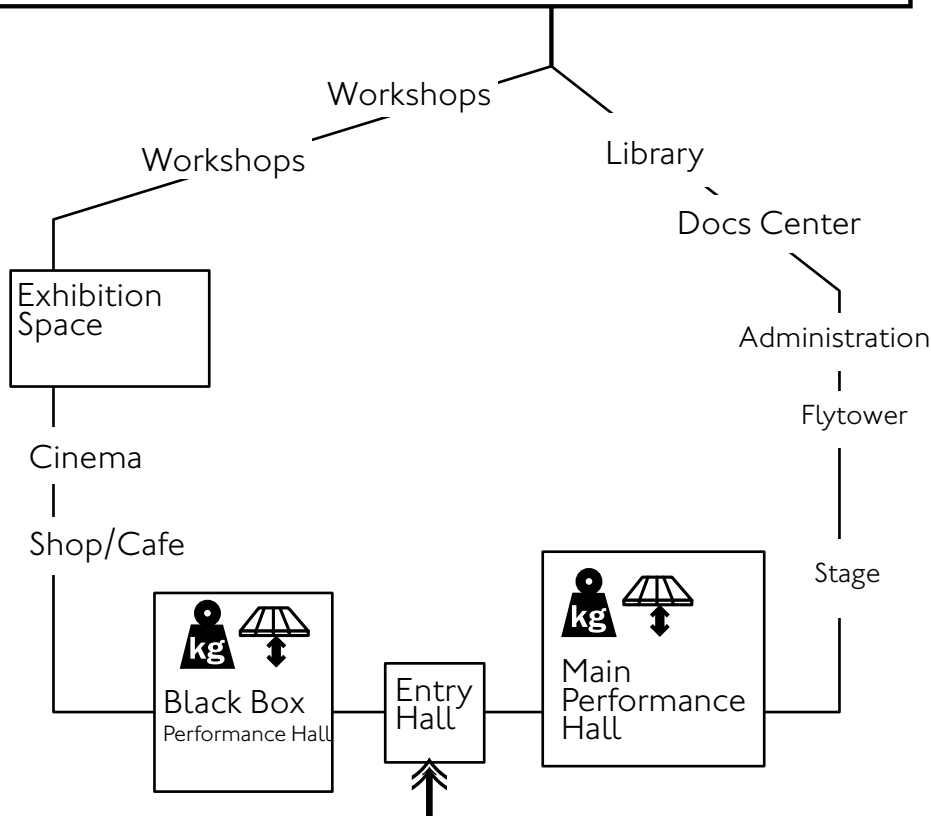
is resolved in three strata with PERFORMANCE

in the base, EXHIBITION in the middle and WORK/STUDY on the

top. The layering responds to the base as program with functional requirements, load and evacuation flow along with ease of access for audience and scenery or equipment. These volumes are also of such size that even partially sunken still have a compounding presence in the void frame. The hovering exhibition box is highly exposed and greatly defined the hollow core of the house, as a sizeable programmatic attractor the gallery spaces with minimum window openings provide the mass to articulate the core against the Main Hall as the two key boxes. Finally the pitched roof holds in its thickness a sequence of terraced workshop spaces intended as an attic for creation and study, a proposal unashamedly drenched in nostalgic visions of atelier style creative production but more so searching for an interactive play between disciplines divided in the least possible way through glass partitions, curtain and screens. **Access at the base is the only instance of protrusions from the clean square ground plan and the base of the FRAME works as a vast hall and vestibule with all functions of reception only modulated by a sunken courtyard that exposes the void above. Access to the performance halls is direct from this space and these are interconnected by backstage areas that have been oversized slightly. Vertical navigation through the house is divided along each side of the frame with west side as more public for visitors to the exhibition and the east side is more restricted for those attending the workshops or documentation center. The shop(s) and café are reached on the west public side linked to cinema and exhibition access while workshops and study spaces are reached through the eastern core accessible through a ramp beyond the main performance hall. On the pinnacle of the study spaces and workshop terraces step up linked visually and spatially when possible and ramp and lift guarantee connectivity and access. Additionally the workshop spaces can link up the exhibition spaces with potential for interesting hybrids between these but depending on the operative concept of both areas.** Structurally the FRAME concept allows for straight forward bearing concept with local variations, The span of the pitched roof is conceived as a slanted deep truss that could generate a rib structure given the continual depth of the frame and from which the incidental cantilevered elements are suspended.

The large scale variable of the exhibition box that protrudes from the frame is met by a structural line that links it to the main hall below. The robust columns reach the roof and act as a stability member for the large span framework along with the two stiff concrete cores on each side. While the material expression of the skin is intended as rough concrete or stone this character is interrupted by the instances where openings are generated by puncturing, piercing and cutting the deep frame revealing the interior. This instances are intended as delicate operations against the blunt frame. Housing Arts and Culture bears a great responsibility, a receptacle for identity and expression has a civic and essential link and responsibility to society, for this reason the search of solidity and singular oneness of the urban presences of the building as a vessel for multitude voices and forms of expression in the interior has drive the design to promote the idea of a national platform for creativity and expression.

# House of Arts an Culture



Iconic



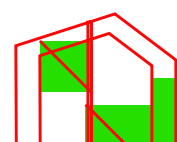
Openess



Transparency



Strata



Structure