

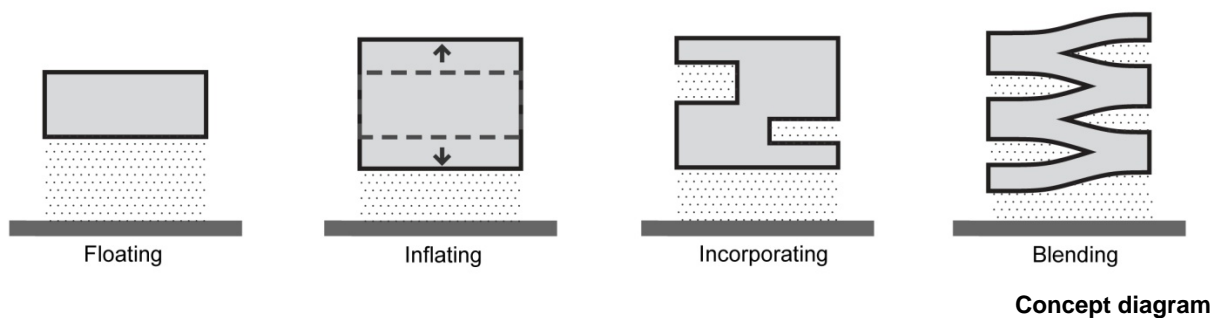
The House of Art and Culture - The Lebanese-omani Centre

Introduction

For the Lebanese-Omani Centre we propose a building that blurs the boundary between the inside and outside. We believe that the purpose of the centre should be focused on promotion and proliferation of the growing art and culture scene of Beirut and we believe that the success of such centre would be largely influenced by the level of public integration. Therefore our proposal aims to open up the building as much as possible for general public to freely explore the spaces in and out as part of their day-to-day lifestyle where these public spaces within the centre are surrounded by the cultural and art activities.

Concept

Our strategy for incorporating the public spaces within was based on the typology of courtyard house. In a courtyard house, the open space is interiorized as semi public space which offers intimacy and comfort. It is not only creating inviting and intriguing atmosphere but also act as interstitial space where interior and exterior communicates more delicately. It is typically more popular in areas with hot climates as it also helps to circulate the air around more effectively.



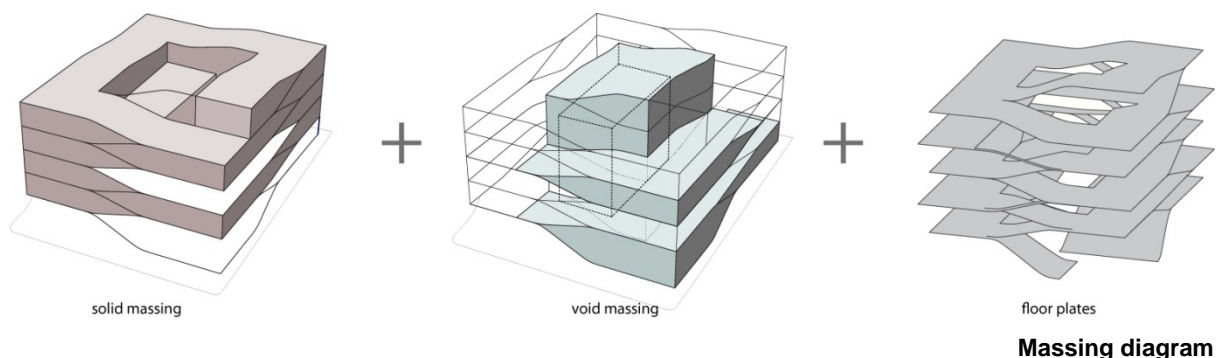
In our proposal, we have expanded this courtyard typology into three dimensional one, where linear massing and void spaces are intertwined vertically as well as horizontally creating interlocking spaces of interior and exterior as if multiple courtyard spaces are formed in a three dimensional volume like a sponge. This interconnected public space is the central space to the centre acting like a forecourt for visitors, but at the same it is an attractor for the public providing sheltered shaded public spaces that they can freely access. We envisage that these spaces are used by those who seek place to gather and relax not just who are interested in the activities in the centre, therefore the centre will be able to absorb larger number of public and be promoted to a larger audience. These spaces also provide

space for outdoor exhibition and performances and open up the possibility of any outdoor activities which can be in direct contact with general public. And those who using the space will be able to get glimpse of various other types of activities within the centre which will raise the interest of people towards the art and culture scene of Beirut.

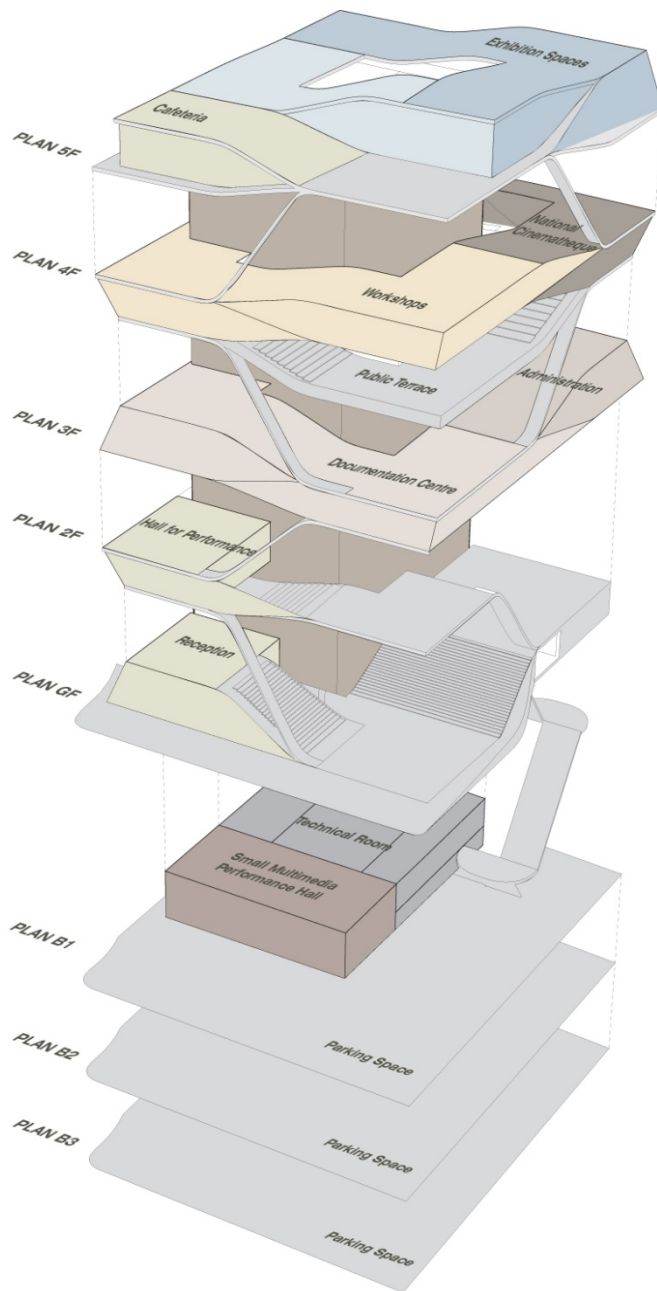
The exterior concept of the building came from the shading devices that are commonly used in middle-eastern architecture in the form of integrated patterned screen in the facade. We took this idea of the shading screen which typically a static image into something can actively creates interests by being able to generate moiré effect. The subtle changes in the scale of the pattern applied with the louver shadings on the facades creates ever-changing moiré pattern from different distances, which makes the building to appear differently when viewed at different location and angle. Especially at the Ave. Du General Fouad Chehab, in a fast moving car, the façade of the building will be viewed as constantly changing pattern. The depth and orientations of the louvers are also purposefully designed in order to allow differentiated views through the façades according to the program and the position of the viewer. This visual interactivity of the building in relation to public who is passing by is used as an instrument to engage with public even more to raise the level of interests of the centre and its contents.

Program

The proposal consists of three parts in terms of massing, a box containing the performance halls, linear volume of crisscrossing strips that surround the box and the void, and void spaces that exists between the box and the strips and in-between the horizontal layers of strips, which interconnects and bring together all the different areas of the centre.



The floors are zigzagging vertically in order to produce much more fluent connection between different parts of the centre by create 'split-level' type of connections between floors and functions which allows circulation to remain more horizontal rather than vertical hence



exploded axonometric view

creating loop of spaces. Also some parts of diagonals are creating spaces for seating or lounging spaces both utilized inside and outside.

The horizontal looping of spaces which is enclosing the main courtyard space also increases the level of contact with the public space and the various part of the program. The main courtyard space therefore becomes the focal point of all the activities in the centre where public and the contents of the centre naturally mingle together.

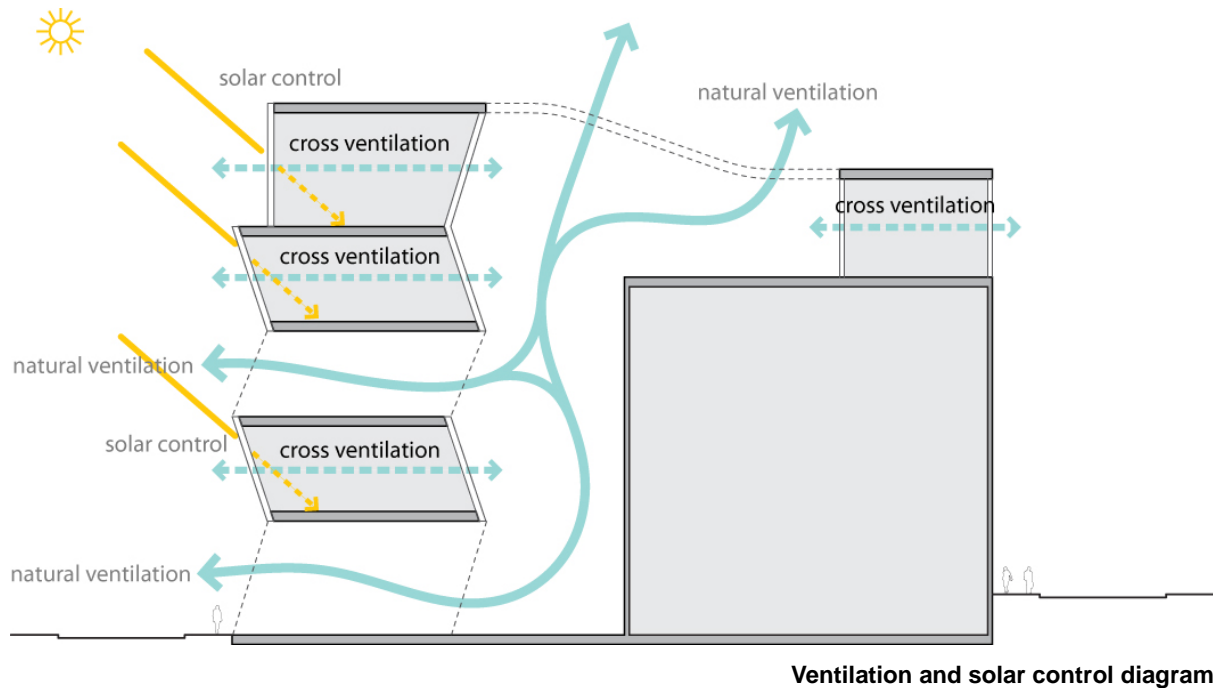
On the ground floor, the West side of the building floats above the ground creating a covered open space. This also works as public passage between the Rue Ghalghoul and the Ave. Du General Fouad Chehab. This space is connected to the public terraces on the third and fifth floor of the building via escalators which is also freely accessible without interfering with interior activities of the centre while still being intimately surrounded by them.

In order for the public spaces in higher levels to work more effectively which in turn will activate the centre throughout not just on the ground floor, retail shops and café/restaurants are situated on the top level accessed through these public spaces.

Sustainability

Our architectural concepts were also developed with sustainability in mind. As briefly touched upon above, the traditional means to naturally ventilate and cool the building has been explored in contemporary ways. The idea of the void spaces that are creating various

porosities in the building is designed to create fluent air circulation throughout the building encouraging natural ventilation and natural cooling of the building. The mass of the building are designed to be as slim as possible so that the cross ventilation is easily achieved as well as increasing the surface area that are in contact with outside air.



The timber louvers will be sources from sustainable produce and are to provide high degree of solar control. The spacing of these louvers varies according to the requirement of visual connection and the degree of solar control needed. So where more solar control is favored denser pattern is applied where as visual connectivity between inside and the outside is more required a coarser pattern of louvers are applied.