

HOUSE OF ARTS & CULTURE

BEIRUT – LEBANON

The design hopes to achieve a critical goal in the **House of Arts**: to fulfill its role as a leading cultural institution that makes significant contributions to the cultural and intellectual vitality of Beirut by enabling it to expand its artistic impact outside its walls. The design effort begins by understanding the nature of “**Culture Incubator**” and the complexities of an art mixed use program. Architecture is used to set a platform for artistic dialogue and for all users’ interface. It is determined that architecture sustains in house creativity and encourages public interaction.

Designing upon the ideas established above:

HOA defines a special place -even by definition-, however is being seamlessly integrated into its surrounding context. From the high speed, the HOA is a **mass barrier** located right up against the “Ring”, defining the new and the old Beirut. Part of the back mass surfaces becomes a huge billboard with LED panels that advertises current and future HOA events to the highway users.

From the “Ring”, the HOA seems an enclosed protected environment. On the contrary, from the north side, HOA creates an **open transparent hub** which invites pedestrians to explore the program inside. From the Ghalghoul District establishes itself as an open active and productive place. This cut in the massing is the **cultural conduit** between the HOA, the Grand Theater, the Beirut Gate Project and the Landmark Project. It is the interactive extension of the different learning and exhibition spaces inside to the outside; where the HOA and Beirut come together.



The building is a holistic, **interdependent system**: a destination place, a communication tool, a model of sustainable design, and an example of transparency-in-intent. Its architecture reflects the HOA concept, its independence and its openness. People will learn from both external and internal design elements.

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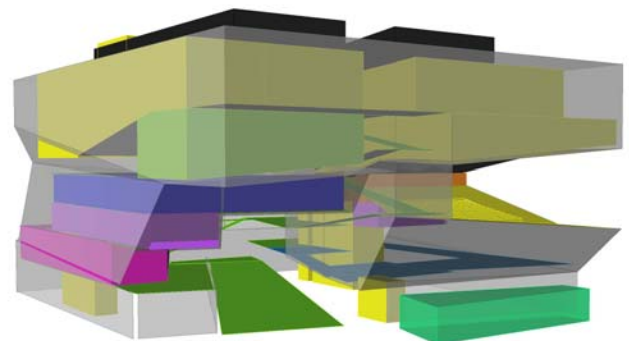
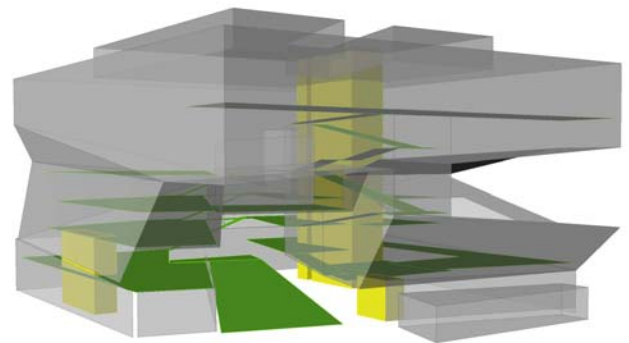
From the pedestrian perspective, the HOA is tied to its surroundings – and together - by an active front ground floor, an “urban layer” of shops, restaurants, and open spaces where people can convene and mingle. At this point, a grand inclined walkway draws the pedestrians into the heart of HOA. The HOA’s community’s achievement in arts is being communicated to pedestrians via digital **facade display panels** at the end of the big ramp.

Movement is what defines space.

The project’s further refined programmatic relationships are heavily influenced by this cut.

Program is organized along the ramp and around the massing cut.

The HOA’s public program is developed in two traditional wings with the open hub in between. These two wings are in a constant dialogue with its other. Users in the one wing can **observe** and **explore** movements and activities in the opposite wing. For example, there are workshop classrooms inside the exhibition massing. Students, instructors, researchers and visitors will learn, explore and **sense** first hand through demonstration, participation, exhibition, and design transparency.



At the top of the inclined walkway, there are the performance hall and the black box theater. Even at this point, part of the theater is transparent. To compensate from the reflective nature of the glass panels next to the audience seating area, size, thickness and slant angles of each of the glass panels can be selected to adjust the reverberation characteristics of the space. In this way, the whole HOA works as a **Vertical Gallery** with a continuous series of spaces devoted to the display or performance of art, supporting the mission of HOA as an integrated **experimental environment** focused on art and design. The notion of the Vertical Gallery engages especially the students by challenging them to populate and curate HOA with their own work, elevating the status of the everyday experience spaces of the HOA.

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The House of Art is a vertical campus. It is made of public and semi-public activities; from its auditoriums, cinema and its meeting rooms, workshops, classrooms are to be perceived from the series of **oblique lounges** that **link** the multiplicity of functions into a new **Cultural Happening**. Each visitor celebrates culture through his movement in the building. The importance of “sense in between” sets a vision for the quality of environment and the “sense of community place” created with open space design. Between the HOA facilities, there are opportunities for green lounges: inside patios or outside gardens and an outside amphitheater.

Materials.

Unification of the campus image in programmatic boxes is achieved through materials. At the base **concrete** is used, a **material prevalent** in the historic centre of Beirut. At the bottom back of the building, we've placed the loading dock, technical rooms and back of the house facilities. But the space above was intended to be as transparent as environmental surroundings allow. For this purpose, we used double glazing with clear glass and a low E coating on plastic film. This **film** creates a **metallic effect** during the day and offers full transparency with technical light during the night. The performance halls, cinema and meeting rooms are enclosed by a **decorative perforated steel rain screen**. It looks like a jewel box on the top of a solid base. At the top of the building, there are the administration facilities inside a dense mullion glazed box.



Sliding Wall Panels

In response to end-user feedback, the design provides sliding wall panels mounted with tack board that increase the amount of available pin-up space for teachers. Especially in the workshops, adjoining dance, art and theater studios can be joined to one big exhibition or rehearsal space. These can be further positioned to increase or decrease the amount of natural light entering the classroom, performing as a large solid shade.

Theater /performance hall.

The hall serves the wide range of theatrical and musical performance needs of the HOA. The stage house is fully rigged to handle theatrical scenery and the ceiling elements of an orchestra enclosure. Moveable wall towers complete the stage enclosure, which can accommodate works for full orchestra plus chorus or smaller recitals. An orchestra pit accommodates ensembles for musicals, and hydraulic lifts, can provide an extended stage or additional main flooring seating.