

The HOUSE OF ARTS & CULTURE

Design Philosophy and Approach

To design a 21st century building that is not merely an icon within the city of Beirut, but an active and productive space for exchange and interaction between the Lebanese people and the rest of the world. The House of Arts and Culture is envisioned as the "House of the Public" that allows for "artistic expression with no boundaries". It is within this "House" that the Lebanese, particularly the youth, will generate cultural and artistic works that would be presented to Lebanon and the world, opening alternative routes to critical thinking and debates. The "House" should encourage synergy amongst the different programs, allowing the diverse cultural and artistic activities to collide with one another amplifying the activity and interaction within the house.



The House of Art & Culture should interpret the culture and climate of Lebanon and Beirut.

How to interpret the culture and climate and bring it into a building form?

- 1- The essence of each program is analyzed as an independent unit. Different scenarios of each program are drawn up in search for its best fit form and identity.
2-To reflect the diversity and plurality of culture by stacking the different independent volumes and achieving the necessary relationships to one another.
3- To exploit the pleasant climate by generating semi-outdoor spaces through the process of stacking volumes and generating an image analogous to the traditional landscape and Lebanese house in the mountain sides.
4- Through the delicate reflections of Light the unity in atmosphere of the House of Arts & Culture is achieved.

As a result of the following design procedures we are able to achieve plurality and a comfortable semi-outdoor space that the people can enjoy.

General Understanding

Throughout history Lebanon has been a melting pot of different cultures and civilizations. It is this collective diversity that has allowed Beirut to thrive as the link between the Orient and the West. Beirut's location on the Mediterranean Sea has also characterized the city with a pleasant , moderate climate and four distinct seasons.

Lebanon's topographical morphology of a narrow coastal strip edged by a steep mountain range leaves it with a rich visual landscape. Since most of Lebanon's area is mountainous terrain, Lebanese vernacular architecture has been developed to accomodate for this topography. Traditional Lebanese villages and houses terrace up Lebanon's mountains, becoming part of Lebanon's landscape. The terrace, courtyard and semi-outdoor balcony become signature elements in Lebanon's vernacular architecture. This appealing architecture becomes a crucial feature in our design approach and interpretation.



Image 02: Lebanese Village

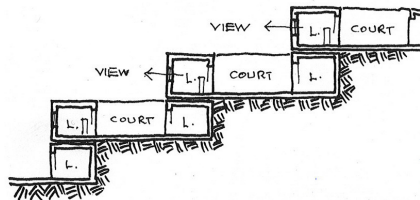


Image 03: Section

## The Site (Lot No 128-4)

Both sides of the site have a strong gap. How to treat this gap as a positive factor is the essence of our site planning. As the site is surrounded by massive building blocks, our approach of stacking small volumes reveals a unique appearance within BCD. The House of Arts & Culture is envisioned to be the Gate to the downtown. (kindly refer to SITE PLAN photo in the A1 panels)

## Design Objectives / Spatial Organization

Key questions and issues that were set up to tackle in designing the House of Arts & Culture in Beirut:

- 1- How to design a 21st century building that both reflects the plurality and diversity of Lebanese culture and people, as well as their coexistence?
- 2- How to exploit Lebanon's climate?
- 3- How to design a House of Arts & Culture that has a new typology and flexibility to meet current needs?
- 4- How to design a flexible Performance Hall of 800 seats that can cater for many different activities?

The target of the design was to address all the following questions and propose a unique architecture that is not merely a monumental icon which imposes itself on the city of Beirut. The Architecture is perceived to be a landscape for the activities of arts and culture, allowing the co-existence of plurality without hierarchy.

### Program Massing:

The character of each program is first analyzed as a stand alone unit. Various scenarios of its daily functioning are drawn up to determine its best fit form. Programs requiring necessary adjacency are then grouped together to form independent volumes. The shapes of the independent volumes are then determined by two factors; one is their functional spatial requirements and second their relationship to one another. The design intent is to generate volumes that are non-hierarchical to one another and have independent access.

The Given Program has been grouped into the following volumes:

Volume A - Large Performance and Conference Hall Volume

Volume B1+B2 - Small Multimedia Performance Hall Volume separated slightly from Movie Theater and National Cinematheque

Volume C - Workshops, Training Rooms and Documentation Center

Volume D - Exhibition Spaces

Volume E - Administration and Meeting Rooms

Volume F - Reception, Information, Foyer and Circulation located within "Reversible Space" Volume (refer to "Reversible Space" below)

Notes: Parking is located in the Basement. Delivery, Storage and Technical Rooms are located at Ground level.

**Stacking:** The aim of the design is to generate a House of Arts & Culture that is a landscape of volumes that amplify the activity within the house and maximize interaction between the different programs reflecting their plurality. The stacking of the volumes also focuses at creating a rich semi-outdoor shaded space that is composed of a series of terraces on which the different program activities can occur.

**Zoning:** The zoning of different programs on the site is carefully analyzed in relation to the surrounding context. First design criteria established was to set the building front, north, opening towards the park and BCD district. The volumes that are sound insulated are located towards the "Ring Road", intentionally to blocking sound and air pollution emitted from the highway. The volumes with visible activity are located on the northside of the site. Since the building front is north, our building design targets how to deal

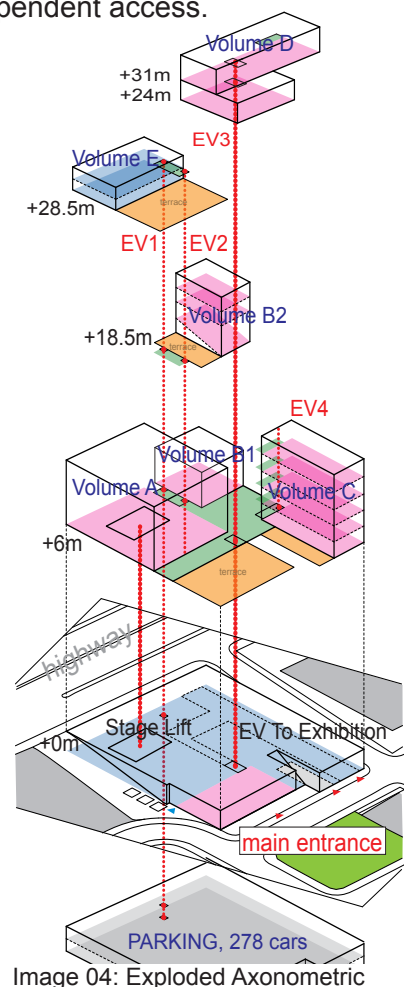


Image 04: Exploded Axonometric

with shadow design. It becomes crucial to analyze how to catch the natural sun light from the south without introducing noise and air pollution from the highway.

**Circulation:** The House of Arts & Culture is accessible from two points. Main building entrance is through the reception area located on the north side of the site opening up to BCD, while the second access located on the south side is restricted to administration staff. Each volume has its own independent access allowing for easy circulation of people. All stairs and elevator cores are connected to the main foyer space, creating a simple and clear circulation.

**Reversible Space:** All the programs are connected by a reversible space that provides access to all the different facilities. This space is not only a circulation space but also includes the Reception and Information facilities as well as the Foyer that is shared by the two Performance Halls and Movie Theater. This space is called Reversible Space because it can transform through the use of regulated glass louvers from being an enclosed space in winter to an open semi-outdoor space in summer. It allows for the flow of light and wind into the building as well as the terraces (semi-outdoor space). In summer the windows open up, catching the south west wind into the building and terraces, while in winter the closed windows block the wind. By this, our proposal is liberated from air-conditioning in summer and becomes a model for raising awareness amongst the public about 21st century environmental issues.

**Semi-Outdoor Space:** The proposed semi-outdoor space provides a pleasant atmosphere for the many activities to occur on. Terraces are attributed to the different given programs, creating a series of diverse activities that interact amongst themselves and with the city of Beirut, becoming a public education space. The semi-outdoor spaces attributed to the given program are:

- 1- Foyer Terrace: Break out Space for large receptions
- 2- Cafe Terrace: Outdoor eating and extension to Foyer terrace.
- 3- Workshop Terrace: Allows people to paint, draw, dance, etc.
- 4- Exhibition Terrace: For outdoor exhibitions
- 5- Cinema Projection Terrace: Outdoor Projections.
- 6- Administration Courtyard: Private for administration.

All semi-outdoor spaces are flexible to allow for other activities.

**Given Program**

**Large Hall:** The Large Hall is easily accessible and well openable to the foyer and terrace, making it possible to create a large space (Hall-Foyer-Terrace) for e.g. a fashion show. (kindly refer to SECTION B in A1 panels). It is planned as a flat space with 20m ceiling height and capacity of 800 seats in Italian style configuration, including orchestra pit. Different seating configurations can be arranged within the hall by using a retractable/ moveable chair system. It will have the latest quality of equipment both in ceiling fixtures and lift floor system, and will ensure exceptional acoustics. The delivery, storage and adjoining rooms are located below the hall and easily connect to it. Part of the stage is proposed to be a lift that directly connects to the delivery, storage and workshop area, allowing for easy setting and transfer of sets, instruments, etc., up to the Hall.



Image 05: Reversible Space

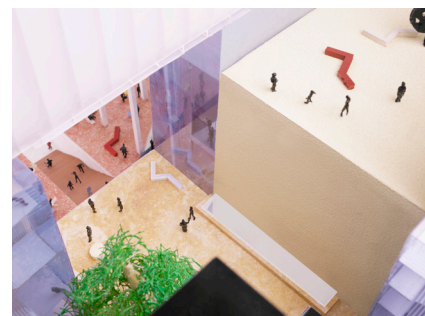


Image 06: Terraces

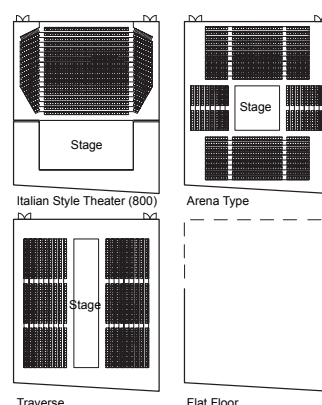


Image 07: Large Hall Flexibility



Image 08: Retractable/moveable chairs

**Exhibition Spaces:** The exhibition spaces are divided into two connected volumes to further allow flexibility for different simultaneous exhibitions. The spaces are directly accessible from the reception area by a 4x5m elevator used for both loading and transport. They are located as the upper most volume to take full advantage of the natural light, especially north, while it still is possible to black out the space completely. The space can be easily partitioned into different zones and ensures enough height to accommodate art works of various sizes. It will be equipped with all lighting and mechanical installations required.

**Other Spaces:** All other spaces comply with the given requirements.

**Finishing Material**

The concept of Finishing materials is that of diversity. Each volume has its own identity. The use of local stone is proposed. Material finishes are also selected in relation to light reflection in both day and night conditions.

**Sustainability / Environment**

We propose an environmentally friendly building that aims at achieving a LEED status of gold or the equivalent. Considering the abundant light in Lebanon/Beirut the use of solar panels is promoted. (kindly refer to Reversible Space above.)

**Universal Design**

The House of Arts & Culture should most certainly be a barrier free building. Our proposal takes the following issue into consideration.

**Flexibility**

Although it was recommended to use 70% of the footprint to allow for expansion of public spaces, our proposal uses 100% of the footprint but still can easily accommodate for expansion of any program. The design method used can easily be re-applied to allow for any program expansion.

**BCD Masterplan Regulations**

Given masterplan regulations were respected in the design. Proposed scheme complies with BCD regulations.

**Control & Safety**

The building is flexible to allow for different functional scenarios. It is possible to easily shut down the entire facility by closing the reception area along with the foyer terrace doors, while the restaurant and shops can hold open since they have their own independent access. It is also easily possible to close down one program and allow others to remain functioning. The foyer terrace is proposed to remain a public space accessible at all times.

**Structure**

The structure is mainly re-inforced concrete.

**Mechanical Systems**

Mechanical rooms are located in adjacency to service/delivery area. These rooms will service the volumes directly above, and we propose to locate other machines on the roof to easily service the volumes below.

**Cost**

Since structure and materials are mainly re-inforced concrete and local materials, and only little glass, initial-and running costs can be decreased.

**Design Process**

It is in our firm belief as architects that projects are developed and realized by continuous discussions and workshops with the clients and end users.



Image 11: Masterplan Compliance

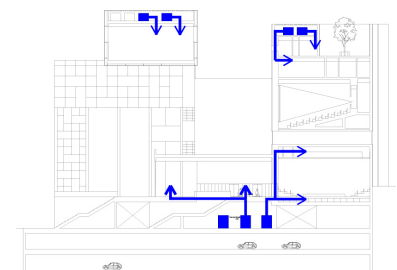


Image 10: MEP Diagram

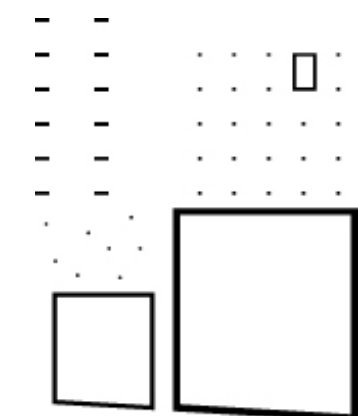


Image 09: Structure Diagram