

Applicant Code: 199001

### Beirut House of Arts and Culture Narrative

The image of the House of Arts and Culture pays homage to the regional vernacular while aspiring to transcend into an international icon celebrating Lebanese contemporary arts and culture. It becomes an exposition of artistic creation that both inherits the local history and tradition while promoting radical investigation and the exchange of new unrestrained ideas. The building borrows from the materiality, ornamentation, and classical orders that are representative of the rich Lebanese architecture layered in a history of multi-cultural influences.

The Houses grows from a contextual base transforming into intentions of transparency and experimentation. Its upper envelope consists of an ornamental copper exterior skin that is composed of an abstracted patternization reflective of the Roman adapted Islamic arch. It is the morphing of the pointed arch that promotes logic of investigation rooted from a multi-cultural base. The envelope becomes the beacon ushering in the artist community and setting the stage for an international exchange of ideas. It embraces transformation and seeks to attract the youth and promote the growth of emergent artists. Its apertures allow the façade to constantly shift, creating unique conditions throughout the interior. They define moments of reflection and reorientation of the contextual setting as well as a projection of ornamentation through the play of light and shadow that allows for constant transformation of interior spaces.



The buildings mass and programmatic composition is organized in a tripartite which reflects three components; art production and exhibition, social exchange and performance arts. As the building transcends it allows one to experience the arts and culture not as a product but rather a process in which interconnections can be formalized to stimulate a cross pollination of ideas and mediums. Navigating the building is an intuitive journey as the exposed program reveals itself around the vertical circulation. This circulation hall is axially aligned to the main square of Beirut's Central District in order to continually provide views and reaffirm its contextual and cultural ties that form its base. From the foyer level visitors have the opportunity to ascend directly to specific program areas or choose a path that that mimics the process of creation, research, exhibition, and performance.

The plinth of the building consists of artist's workshops, the documentation centre and galleries. They are organized to interconnect the nonlinear process of production, exhibition and research. The workshops are exposed at the grade level as well as from within the foyer. This allows visitors to become instantly oriented and conveys that the House is open to the community and an accessible entity primarily rooted in the process of individual creation. The galleries and documentation centre are adjacently located on the next level and equally expose themselves to the vertical circulation hall. The documentation library occupies the NE corner of the site with expansive views over the Gateway and BCD. The galleries are oriented around the loading dock and freight elevator core to allow for efficient changing of exhibitions and a direct connection to archive and storage.

At the mid level of the house lies an open terrace dedicated to social exchange. This is a destination point that offers a range of activities including foodservice, retail, and cinema experience. Here visitors have an opportunity to look back over the city. The terrace level is designed to be an adaptable place allowing for special events and art exhibitions while promoting social dialogue influenced by the arts and performance spaces it bisects.

At the top of the House of Arts and Culture rests the performance and conference spaces. The small and grand halls provide the utmost flexibility through the use of adjustable seating systems. The 250 seat small hall is a convertible space with retractable seating and wall curtains which allows for a range of events and ability to provide natural lighting and expose views of the district beyond. The 730 seat grand hall is a world class performance hall which includes a 20m fly tower, hydraulic lift stage, orchestra pit, half house reduction for smaller capacities, and retractable seating. It has the ability to host a variety of events from lectures to

music in the round. The exterior of the halls is wrapped by the circulation hall and foyer spaces that are sized to host various events and services while providing views over the BCD.

The building works within the restrictive confinements of the allowable buildup relative to the program requirements by building to maximum envelope and placing program spaces not requiring natural light below grade. Mechanical services are distributed below grade and the roof level for efficiency and natural lighting is used throughout the interior spaces. Program areas requiring column free long spans are elevated to the upper portion of the building to minimize structural transfers.

