

What is art? What is culture? What is Beirut? What is the trend of Art and Culture in Beirut today and its global relationship? What is a House?

We began this project with a series of questions in order to enable us to understand who we are designing for. At the same time we were analyzing the strategy involved with the revitalization of the Ghalghoul District. The “close proximity to the presence of the “Gateway into the city” heightens the value of this project. The presence of prominent building such as that of the ESCWA Building, Jean Nouvel’s Landmark Project and others highlights the critical nature of the design for the House of Arts and Culture.

Lot 128-4 has a very prominent location for a project primarily due to its presence on the edge of the highway. Our scheme is based on the fact that the House of Arts and Culture should be a place that reaches out to people of all age groups and genres. It is a place which would be a womb for all the different artists within Beirut. A “House” is a place where all are welcome hence so should the House of Arts and Culture be a place where all artists – renowned and unknown have the ability to perform and share their work with the world. We believe the project is one with which the entire city could interact with.

We have divided our project in to the juxtaposition of formal and informal spaces. The ground floor is proposed to be in the form of a free flowing dynamic space within a city. “Level 0” Comprises of a series of raised podiums and carved out niches which wrap around the dome of the Performance Hall. These niches offer great platforms for potential poets, singers, musicians, dancers, mimes, puppeteers, street plays and other informal yet integral performers to display their talents. It is our suggestion that a “House Committee” be formed to constantly interview and select unknown raw talent to perform at “Level 0”. The price for these performances could be set at a lower rate than normal and held at hours that do not affect the major events. This would do a number of things that would to enable the enhancement of art and culture . 1) It would keep the floor of the project constantly engaged and stimulated 2) It would be a platform to discover new talent within the city that may be hidden 3) It would generate extra funds from exhibition space 4) It would begin the process of organising different artists and cultural organisations in a movement to promote their forms of art in order to perform.

The floor of the project is designed by creating digital art that responds to interactivity of the people visiting. The central dome is carved out so that the walls may provide large viewing screens for media presentations. The dome is also made of a translucent light weight structure that glows with the sign “On Air” whenever a performance is taking place within the hall below. This is also visible through the glass curtain walls on the edges of the building creating a sense of curiosity for the person on the sidewalk.

We have also designed two screens on the North and South facades of the project. The North screen is a series of large format monitors that would exhibit the growing world of digital art. The role is to educate the city about the various aspects of art and culture. We have proposed a ramp over the existing green space. We envision people taking over this space and performing on top of this ramp with the screens as a backdrop. The Northwest Corner of the site is developed into a News Kiosk that offers a part distorted image of the news depicting a statement of how we perceive news and the distorted portrayal of reality. The building in itself is designed to create a dialogue between the people and their city.

The South façade is a digital monitor that imparts information to people on the highway about global warming issues. From the time of the day to the amount of heat our cities are generating around the world are depicted via this format to the hundreds of people on the highway.

The project is designed keeping in mind the journey of the people who visit. Spaces and situations are created for people to interact in one form or the other with art. Our design began with understanding this process and ambience of simple things as buying a ticket to interacting with complex understandings of the abstract.

Sustainability issues are of critical importance. All overhangs are designed to keep the building in shade thereby lowering cooling costs. We have proposed to position offices to the north side of the site in order to obtain natural light and minimum heat gain through glazing. The southern part consists of the movie theatres and secondary performance hall. these act as a heat buffers between the more inhabitable spaces.

We would like people of the city to be intrigued by our building as it stands for a symbol of possibilities in a very rigid urban context. The East side of the project is treated more on the lines of an industrial texture. A secondary role for the design is to plant the project on a global scale in comparison to various other similar institutions.

Our goal as designers is to create an environment that offers the ability to be stimulated and create a dynamic spark within the city fabric. The magnificent historic setting of the city with the opportunity to create a global symbol of art and culture is a great challenge for us designers. It is through this challenge that we hope to raise questions and issues, very much like the artists - performing through their mediums, at the House of Art and Culture.

ENTRANCE

ENTRANCE

STAIRS DOWN

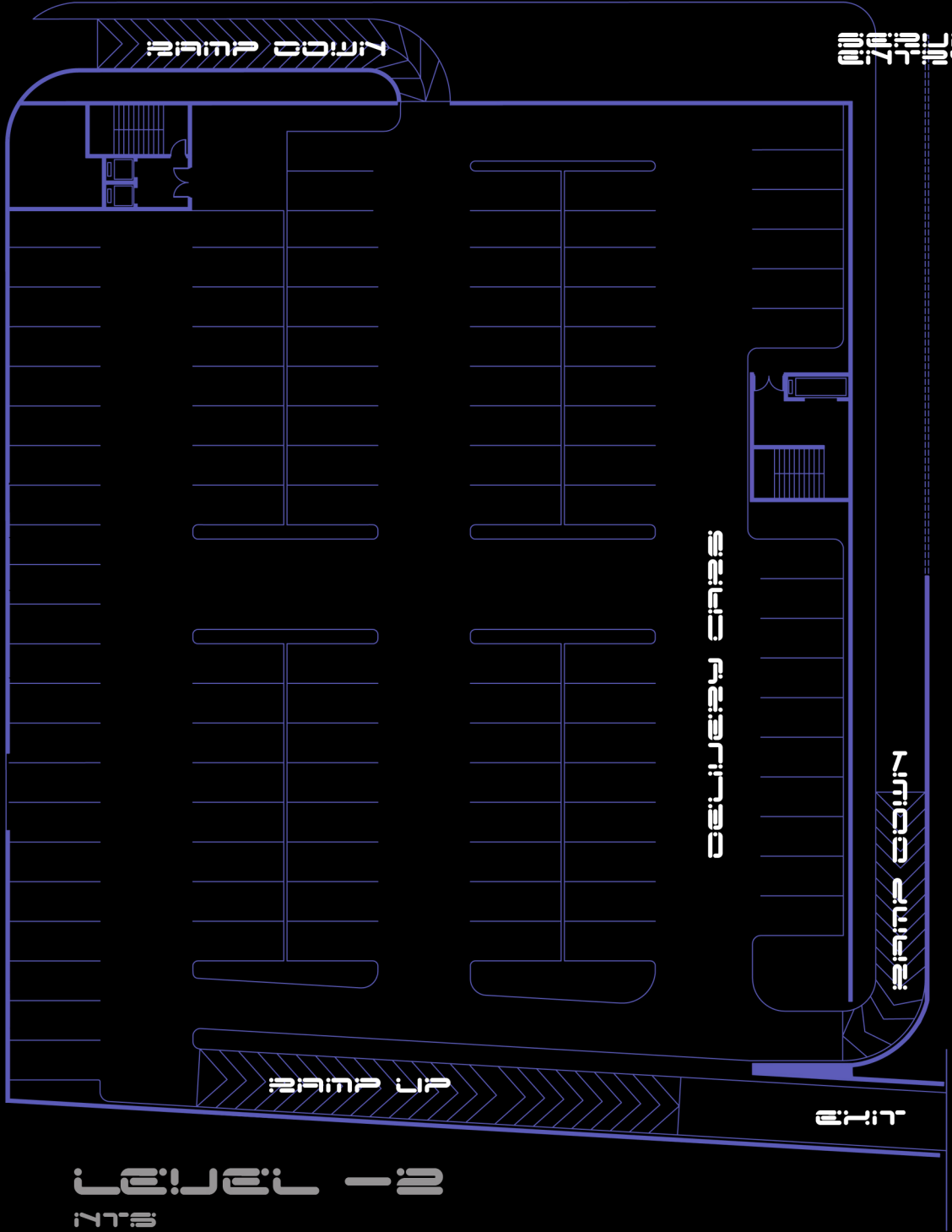
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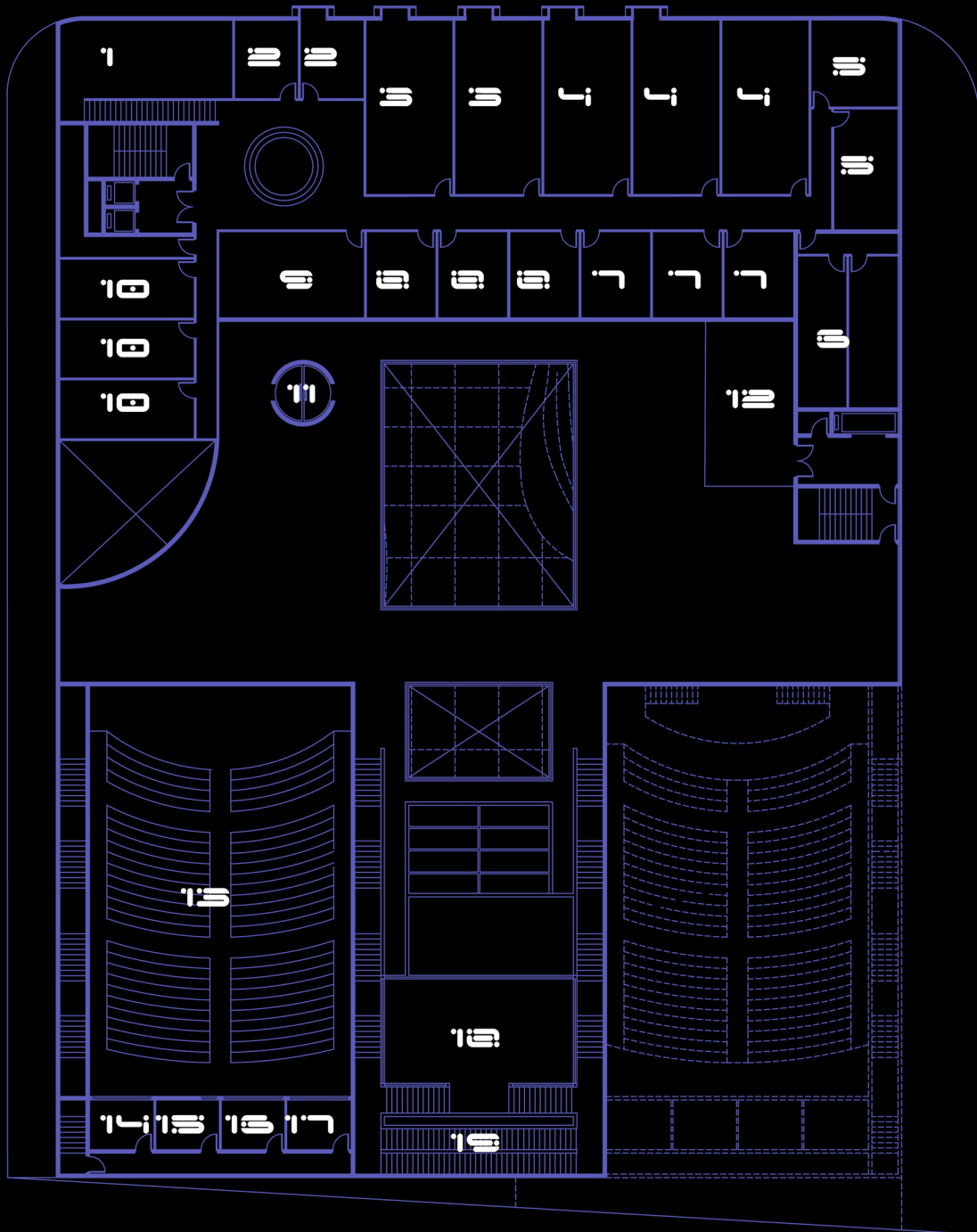
STAIRS UP

EXIT

SEATING AREA

LEVEL 1
PLAN





LEVEL +3

1. DANCE WORKSHOP 2.PHOTO LABORATORIES 3.ART WORKSHOP 4.THEATRE & MUSIC WORKSHOP 5.COMPUTER ROOMS
 6.RESTROOM 7.SOUND STUDIOS 8.CAMERA/ VIDEO/EDITING 9.PRINTING ROOM 10.CLASSROOMS 11.GLASS TUBE ELEVATOR
 12.COFFEE BAR 13.MOVIE THEATER 14.LIGHTING CONTROL 15.PROJECTION ROOM 16.SOUND CONTROL 17.RECORDING ROOM
 18.TERRACE OF MEETING ROOM USED AS GALLERY AND WAITING AREA 19.ESCALATORS