

METROPOLITAN ART HOUSE

SITE

The site sits at the junction of two very different urban realities, the vibrant Ghalghoul District to the South and Ring Road 8m higher to the North. The Metropolitan Art House responds to the two sides by opening a South facing public plaza that is protected from the sun and noisy traffic by the building. To the North the site faces the Ring Road with a lush landscape that insulates visitors within a sloping oasis that surrounds the building.

MASSING

By lifting the large programs into the sky, the building creates a generous and accessible public space. The Metropolitan Art House plaza becomes a public gathering space for formal and informal artistic events. People stream in from the Ghalghoul or through the new pedestrian tunnel that connects the districts north of the Ring Road to see plays and exhibitions

CULTURE PLAZA

The Plaza in front of the building creates a social bridge to the community at large. Here informal exhibitions, performances, and retail mingle with the café's clients creating an energized space that is an exciting respite from the urban context.

CULTURESCRAPER

The Metropolitan Art House is an entity composed of 6 major public programs stacked on top of each other. This stacking creates a sequence of individual experiences which coalesce to form a unified whole. The building is a skyscraper of culture, a *CULTURESCRAPER* that efficiently services its varied programs with a unifying core. The main cultural programs reside in the sky to liberate the ground. Administration is on the 2nd floor to keep a close relationship to visitors.

CORE

The center of the building is a massive elevator platform that extends the lobby into the 3rd dimension. The elevator is large enough to accommodate 100 people and can be outfitted as anything from a bar or disco to a lecture space and projection room; departures are calibrated with events. Patrons mingle in the lobby and plaza to await their departure time. This activates the ground floor public space as a social mixer where one will encounter a dynamic group of people partaking in the various services of the Metropolitan Art House. The elevator is also responsible for transporting stage equipment to Floor 7 and gallery artifacts to the floor below in the off hours.

SKY STAIR to the THEATER LOBBY

Gallery and Theater Lobby are connected via the SKY STAIR. The stair creates a secondary amphitheater within the gallery for performance pieces or lectures. On the theater level the two performance halls and cinema are unified by a commodious sky lobby that overlooks the roofs of Beirut.

FAÇADE

The building is designed to exude mystery when seen from afar and to welcome visitors that encounter it close-up. The façade is a sequence of bands that reveal interior activities with a programmatic specificity. At ground level the building is its most revealing to usher the public inside. The solid mass of theaters that sits atop the building is meant provoke questions in those who pass by on the Ring Road, 'what's in there?' and 'what is that?'. Intrigue will provoke a new crop of visitors to the Metropolitan Art House.

MATERIALITY

The building's sculptural presence is calmed and integrated into the urban context through the strategic use of limestone cladding. The effect is to blend with the colors and feel of the city without denying contemporary roots. The cladding is striated to reveal and conceal programs behind.

STRUCTURE

Although the building looks magical in its massing, the system employed is a simple one derived from skyscrapers. A solid core carries the load of the building by using floor to ceiling trusses in the gallery, library, and administration floors to transfer the load of its program and the floor above to the center. A ring truss in the façade counter balances the building. By using large trusses the floorplates can be kept free of obstructions for ultimate flexibility in layout.

BUILDING SYSTEMS

The building systems operate on a floor to floor basis, with individual cooling strategies that serve the program best. Where possible, automated night cooling systems, and operable curtain wall components exploit a smart energy strategy. The stepping façade acts as natural shading device for the floors below, reducing the heat gain in the window portion of the facade. The green roof and green plaza reduce the heat gain in the city and contribute to a positive ecological balance sheet.