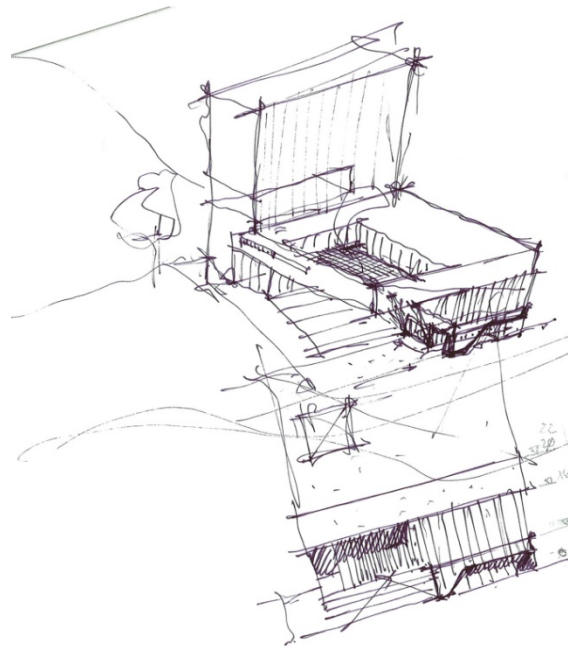


BUILDING BEIRUT

An open house it should become, the House of Arts and Culture: a vibrant inner urban space, opening towards the city, inviting passers-by to enter and enjoy its built landscape.

This is the leading idea which guides our project. It is a simple vision requiring a reduced urban and architectural appearance which is not entering into competition with the surrounding new projects to be erected.



The first sketch

URBANISM

The site itself is situated at a cross section of various urban spaces which are extremely diverse. There is of course the Avenue du Général Fouad Chehab, a fast-running, large motorway separating the growing new harbor site from the inner parts of the urban agglomeration. Then there's the ancient part of the harbor site, in form of a star reminding very much Paris "Place Etoile". And there is last but not least and certainly not indifferently discussed the new urban development with its leading high-rise projects in direct neighborhood to our site.

We think of the House of Arts and Culture as a peasant stone in the breaking urban waves. This is why we decided to form a solitary form consisting of a large pedestal with a rising slim volume towards the Avenue, reacting as a theater plays screen towards the passing cars. The entrance to the house is carved into the volume on the northern side, opening with the solemn gesture of a grand landscape stair towards the small open square between Rue de Ghalgoul and Rue Emir Amine. It seems appropriate to enter into a diagonal contact with the project of the Grand Theater nevertheless declaring the intellectual independence of the House of Arts and Culture.

The service entrance is located on the western side of the building with direct access to the whole stage complex, while the delivery is made by the parking entrance via Rue de Ghalghoul.

All volumes of the building are in relation to their respective environment reacting in height and form towards the different urban situation. It seems crucial to respect overall the human scale, especially regarding the dimensions of the planned high-rise buildings in the direct neighborhood. Respecting human dimensions was an attitude of the older part of the harbor development, an attitude we would like to reinstall with the House of Arts and Culture.

FUNCTION

So we do develop the entrance as a spectacle in itself by its mere dimensions. A short shopping passage along the Rue de Ghalghoul placing the shops on the street level is leading towards a covered public square. This square being the prelude of the House of Arts and Culture is bordering the street as well as extending the existing square towards the reception hall. The landscape stairs are leading into the reception hall alongside a water cascade dropping down and being treated and recycled within the adjoining technical area inside the basement.

The volume of the small performance hall covers the information and ticket desk as well as the restaurant which opens also towards a terrace being on a lower level than the motorway on the south side of the building. The downfall of natural light and vast open spaces is leading the visitor or towards the performance hall on the entrance level or towards the first level with the small performance hall, the balcony of the great hall as well as the meeting rooms within the junction. The vast main stair is also rising towards the second level, where the exhibition hall as well as the movie theater is located around an open roof garden. This garden platform is providing a landscape which can be used for festivities as well as for open-air exhibition or movie projection or simply as a recreational space.

Half a level under the reception hall continues the artists hall, an open space in between the supporting functions like the dressing rooms and the back of the great performance hall. This hall may be used as a pure functional space as well as an extension of the reception hall, floating around the main performance hall.

The performance hall itself carries all the functional requirements of an Italian-style theater but may be transformed into a huge experimental black-box as well as opened for large new performances like modern dance theatre. Its floor can be leveled completely as well as stay inclined, giving space for the orchestra pit and a traditional arrangement for different kinds of performances.

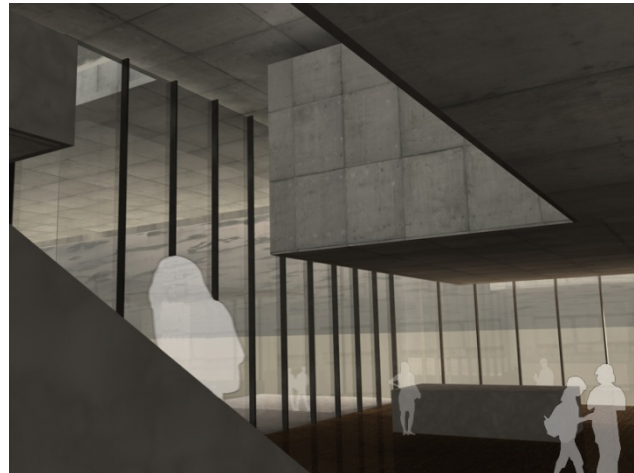
All further parts of the program like the National Cinémathèque or the library as well as the workshop spaces follow the inner logic of the functional development of the public spaces. The Cinémathèque is bordering the movie theater, being itself covered by the documentation center on the next level. The workshops are situated above the library, being superposed by

the last floor with the administration of the House of Arts and Culture. All those functions are related via a circular space with different voids leading natural light into the back of the volume. These circulation are not regarded as a merely functional part of the building but as a place of steady exchange and communication, a vibrant zone of up and down of all people using the building.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The House of Arts and Culture being in our mind a kind of “inhabitated sculpture” we propose a simple construction in sand-colored concrete with white interior walls.

The facade towards the Avenue du Général Fouad Chehab is a huge solar media wall, producing energy in respect of the requirements of a sustainable construction and showing the content of the house in different artistic forms of



medial expression towards the motorized public. The inner materials are thought as dark and mat vernished wooden and ceramic floors depending on the use of the respective rooms.

The buildings technical equipment should explore the highest energy-reducing standard available using technologies like cooling walls activating the concrete structure for heating as well as cooling. Radiant walls and ceilings can be activated by cool night air to distribute the freshness during the beginning of the day, later being supported by low-dimensioned cooling machines in the building basement. Also the water cascade at the entrance has a technical function cooling down the air entering the building via the reception hall during hot periods.

We consider the building having to be free of any architectural ornament being simply the sculpture it is and thus proposing a very singular identity by its proper content.

It should give space to the artistic and intellectual expression and thus not superposing any proper theory onto the very different users and visitor.

It should accompany the artistic production and permit everybody to feel comfortable and well accommodated during the work period. It should also be solemnly representative when housing great spectacles and plays, when offering festivities to show the result of the extensive work in its body.

It will be an open House of Arts and Culture helping build Beirut.