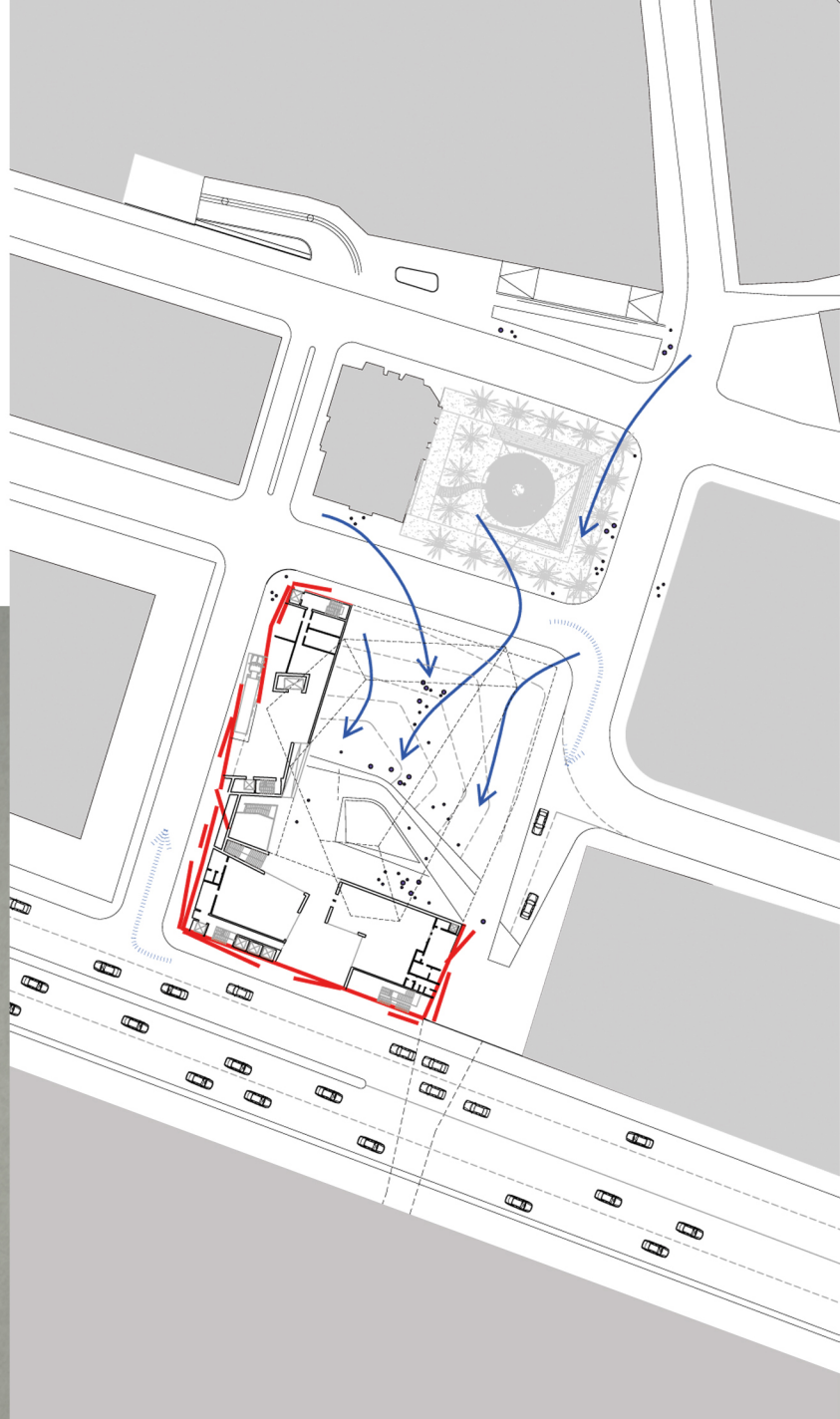
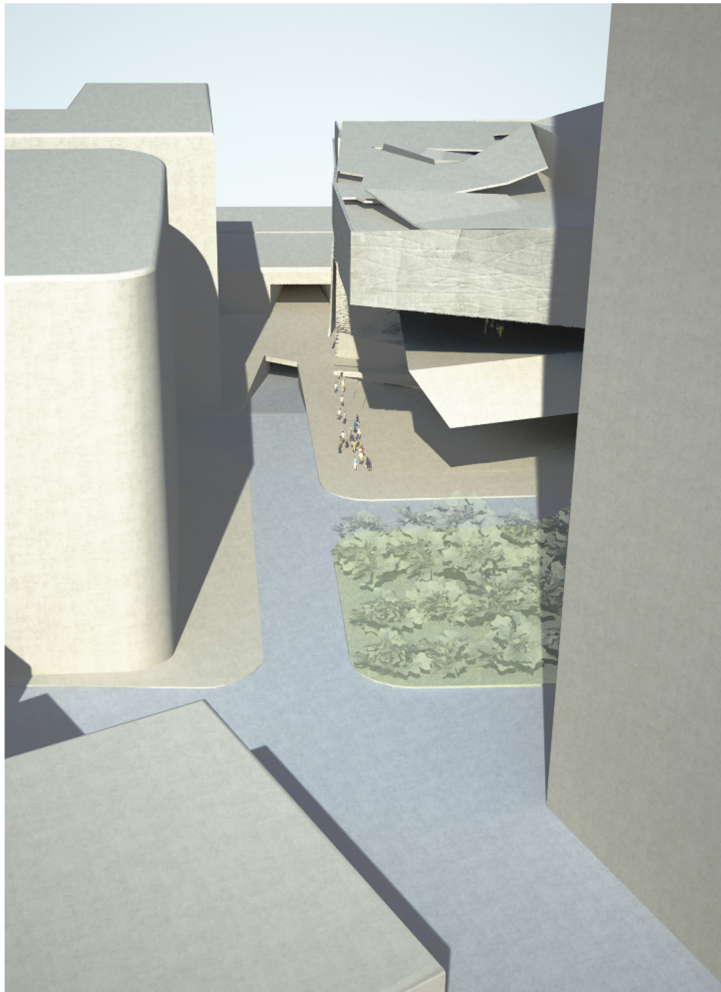


# THE HOUSE OF ARTS & CULTURE / BEIRUT

Towards the city center:

the House of Culture completely opens to reveal its pulsing core: a great void into which the near big square lined with trees is extended and dilated. The big covered place slopes into the hall which is intended as the organizational and technological center of all the House of Culture's activities.



Looking at the Avenue Chehab:

To the quick perception of a mainly car traffic, the House of Culture performs as a great-scale design. Such vertiginous movements of the walls - for the most part closed - make envisage without totally revealing the complexity of the inner structure - a shielding screen designed by light. In day-time, like a sort of astronomic tool, it registers the movements of the sun by means of shadow plays, while in night-time it becomes a big set which can be read as light design interventions (led, optical fibers..).



The spatial organization of the House of Culture:

If we pay attention to the main flows resulting from the multiple activities in a House of Culture, we can outline 4 modalities of use to which correspond the same number of levels.

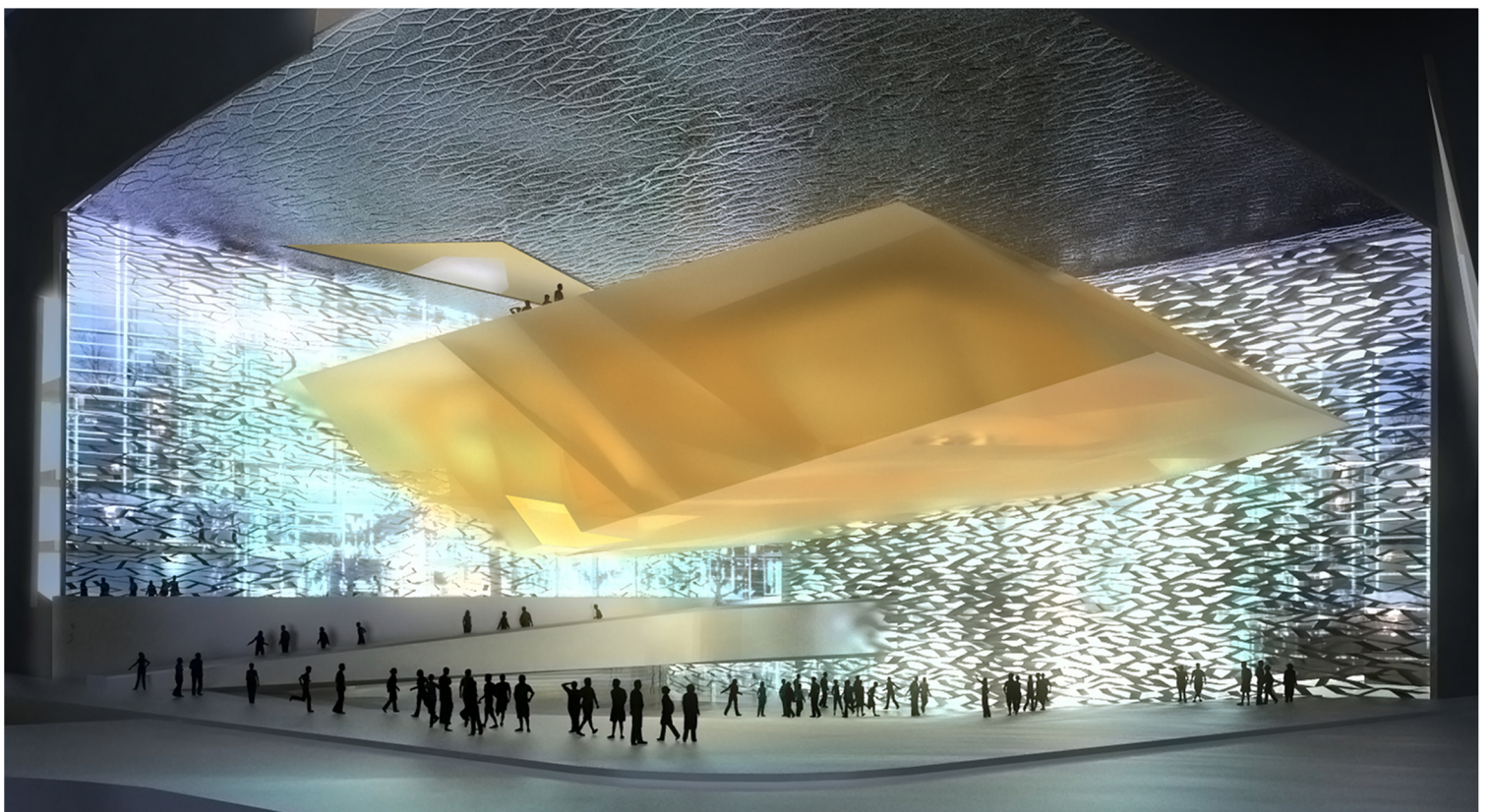
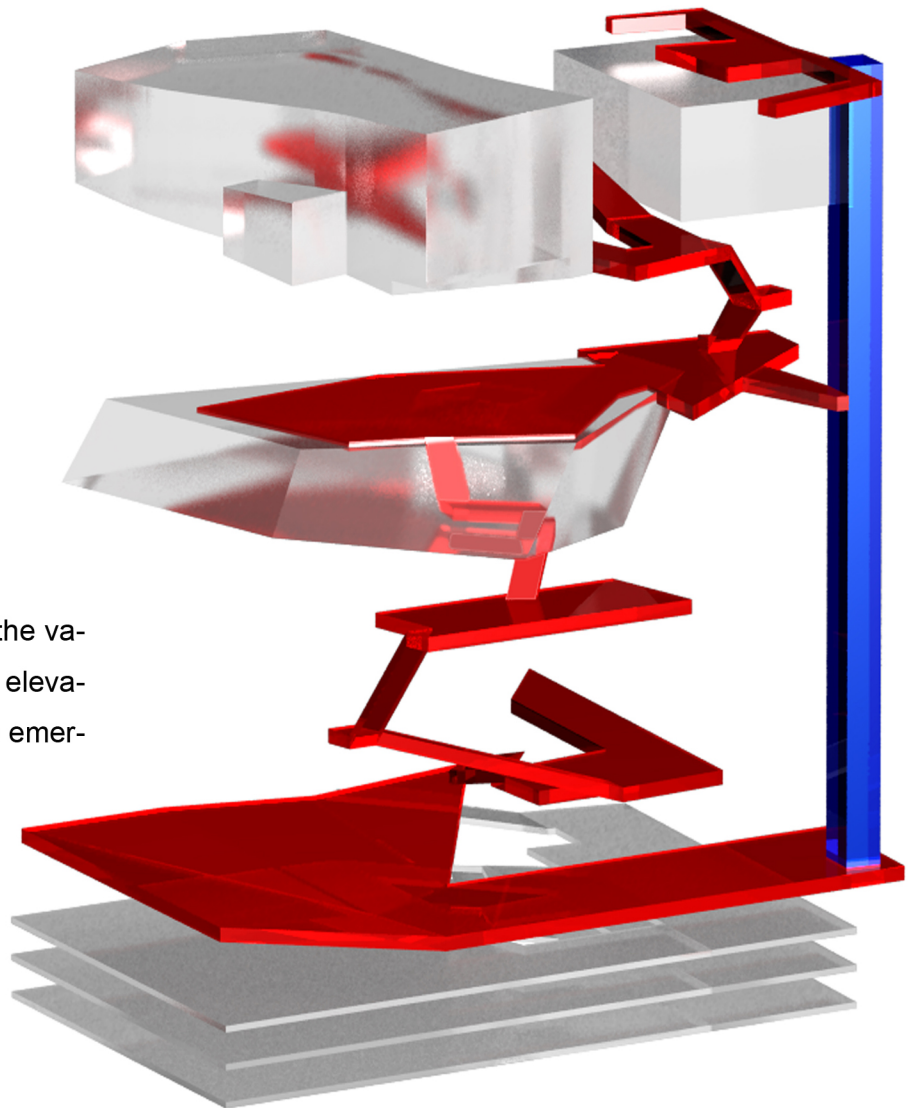
Top-down:

- the level of study and documentation
- the level of performance
- the level of exhibitions
- the level of reception and information

The main links (horizontal and vertical circulation), beside the emergency paths, are basically of two types.

The quick ones – allowing a direct access to the various functions - are mechanized: the double elevators and the escalators are connected to the emergency stairs.

The slow ones are real “architectural” paths: they link the rest areas and reveals inner gardens, they grant a comprehensive architectural experience inside the House of Culture, offering unexpected points of view and glimpses.



## study

library  
audiovisual Service  
workshops  
training room

## performance

cafeteria  
performance hall  
conference hall  
adjoining room  
meeting room

## exhibition

exhibition room  
workshop  
cinematheque

## reception

reception hall  
ticket offices  
cafeteria  
commercial spaces



The level of study and documentation.

The type of functions planned for this level, from the library to the work and training rooms, establishes a continuous functioning that nonetheless involves but limited numbers of users, who require quietness and sometimes privacy. It naturally follows its location on the upper and most exclusive floor.

The level of performance.

The different forms of performance, be it experimental or traditional, have the typical

characteristic of generating movements in precise moments, which are therefore

easy to be arranged - also considering that the space capacity is already established. The movements through the theatres and performance halls are annulled or minimized when the rooms are closed and during the shows, with the exception of the technical times of entering and exiting the stage. During the rehearsals or stage set-ups, the transits are reserved to the insiders who make use of restricted accesses.

The level of exhibitions.

Easily recognizable for its shape, this "recipient for art" floats on the entrance place. Inside, we may find all the exhibition spaces: "void spaces – spaces for art". The internal arrangement is not structured in order for the curators to organize any kind of exhibition, from the video performance to the spatial installation. The commercial spaces and services areas, like bookshops and cafeterias, are located at the lower floor and are directly accessible from the street and square. The big (covered) hanging and overtopping square is the natural expansion of the exhibition space into the outside space.

The level of reception and information.

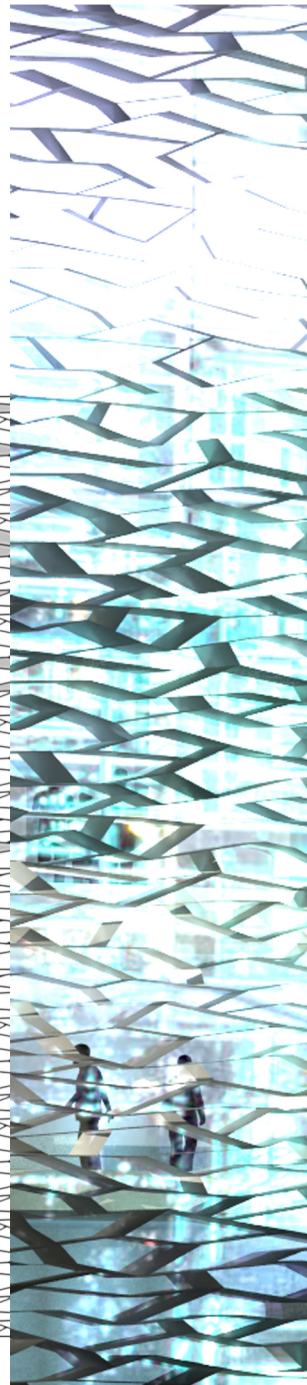
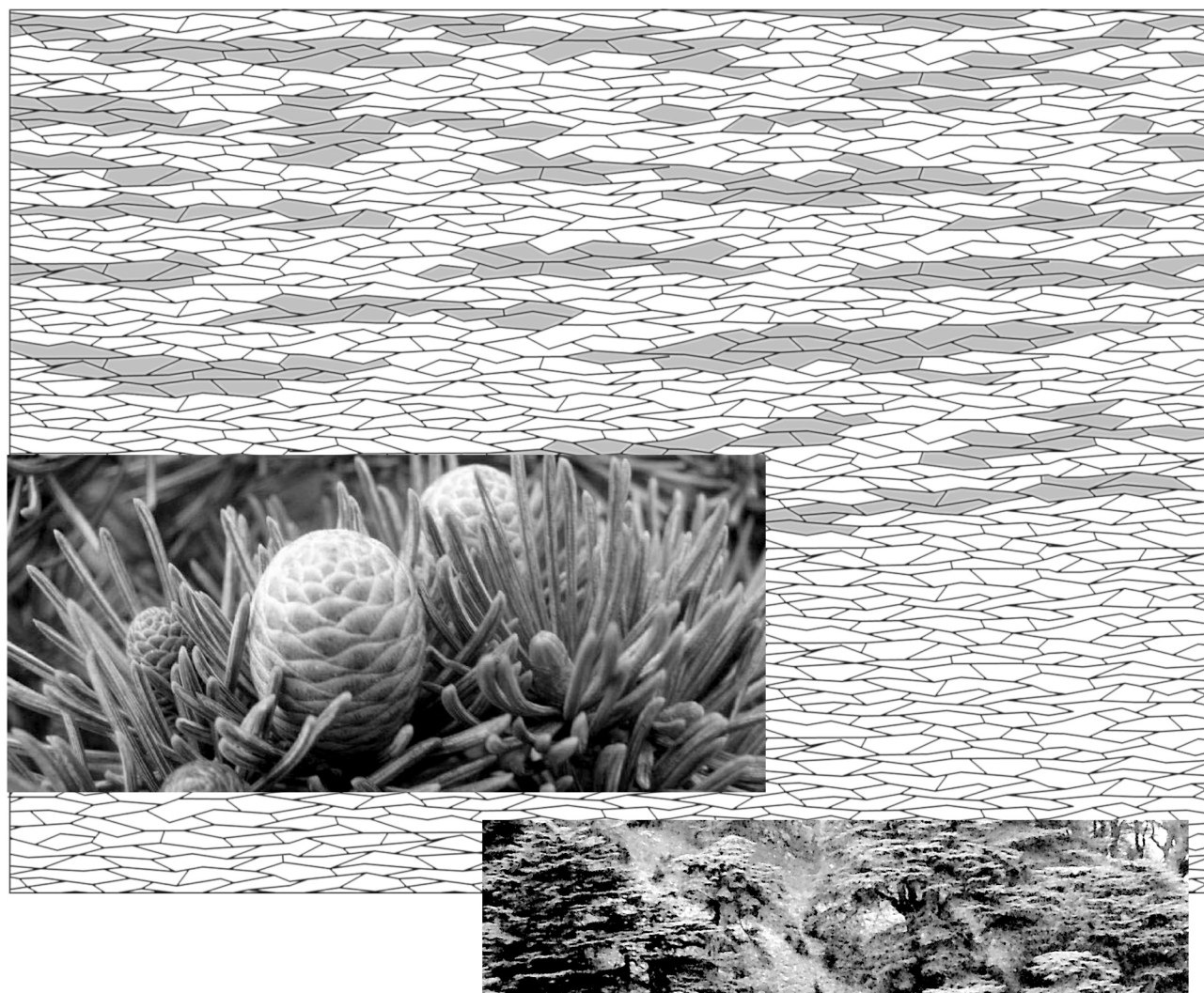
The ground floor takes the shape of a covered square which slopes softly into the hall, which is the place of reception and information on the programmed activities and shows taking place. Strictly connected to the core of the information are the commercial spaces located at the two over ground floors, while the parking areas occupy the three underground floors. It is in the basement as well that the technical rooms and the delivery areas are located. From this level all the vertical circulation departs: either quick paths - which allow to access the most specialized functions – either slow "architectural" promenades enriched with rest areas and secret gardens. It is on this level that the fullest liveliness of the House of Culture takes place, even when the other activities are totally or in part at rest.

An absent solid crosses floor-to-ceiling the House of Culture. From all levels we can perceive its presence: a well from the sky.

When seen down to top, it is a well in the sky, both a physical and interior space. At the level of the lower parking it rather seems to evoke the “ancient city of wells”, where we might figure out the sky dome reflected in it. This sort of well becomes at the same time a natural air conditioning system granted by constant air streams, fresh in summer and mild in winter.

The great diaphragm - variable in depth, behind which the internal spaces overlook – is the graphic stylization of the cedar tree. The modular element is derived from the structure of the pinecone and the method of modulating the slots reflects the alternation of light and shadow of a cedar forest which can be seen in backlight.

This reprocessing might become also a graphic system of communication applicable to all House of Culture’s activities (headed paper, flyers, banners...)



Suggestions:

A responsible investment for the future

The constituting program of the house of art could be completed by designing some spaces to art workshop areas for children. The laboratory is to be intended as a place for creativity, knowledge, experimentation, discovery and self-learning through the playing: it is the privileged place of doing to understand, where to exercise “mental fitness” and build knowledge. It is as well an educational meeting place, where to be formed and learn to be collaborative. Finally, a space where to develop the capacity to observe with the eyes and with the hands, in order to learn to perceive reality with all the senses, a space where to encourage creativeness and develop a “projectual thought” since childhood.