

THE HOUSE OF ARTS & CULTURE



AA0809

URBAN CONCEPT: TRANSITION

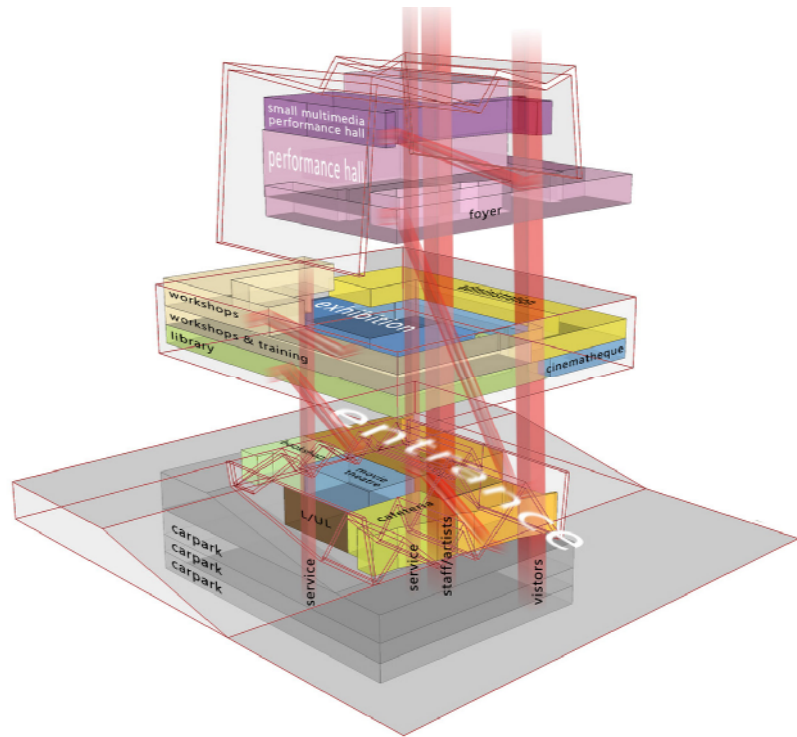
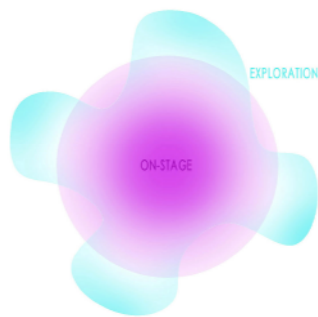
The site is itself at a transition point in the city, being at a juncture of the wider BCD and the wide city proper. It is at the transition of two different scales and two different functional zones of the city. And literally enough, the site is also at the transition of two altitudes, with an approximate 8M level difference from south to north. In wider perspective, transition also characterizes Beirut in the geographical and cultural spectra.

The House has a floating fringe on four sides, generating a transition zone at ground level between the urban space and what is normally conceived as a building proper. These fringe spaces allow interactions of people in a free mood, not unlike the atmosphere of the traditional loggia found throughout the city. The core zone, which sits on ground, has entrances from both Rue Ghalghoul and Avenue du General Fouad Chehab. These entrances can reach the main reception hall which is a tunnel-like volume fronting both streets. Visitors or even pedestrians can cross the House using this hall, and in between they are surrounded by the world of cultural and arts events. The roof of the fringe zone is an open activity deck, mediating between the building and the surrounding high-rises to come. The House becomes a transition itself connecting the different urban fabrics north and south of the site, and symbolically the established and private undertakings of arts of the city, in both context and content.

ORGANIZATION CONCEPT: EXPLORATION AND ON-STAGE ZONES

The major facilities are conceived as having two different specifications of space and activities. The performance halls, cinema and exhibition space have relatively standard, large single interior volumes subject to audio-visual basics or flexibility of functional divisions. Workshops, training rooms, documentation centre, national cinematheque and administration area, on the other hand, have small units and can allow more flexibility in spatial planning. The former group puts arts events on-stage while the latter is for exploration and support.

The on-stage zone (core zone) shall be surrounded by the exploration zone (fringe zone). The core zone is grounded while the fringe zone is cantilevered from the core zone at higher level (Level 3). The two zones are intimately connected for related activities and functioning. They are partially separated at the north side via an open mid-air court. From the fringe zone at the court, all floors of the core zone are visible. The core zone symbolically highlights the House as a centre of arts and culture while the fringe zone welcomes participation in physical terms.



The core zone has 5 levels. It shall have the café and foyer at Level 1 which is accessible from Rue Ghalghoul and enjoys the park view towards the north. The rest of the core zone at Level 1 shall house the loading bays and services, taking up the semi-basement formed by the different site levels. The main reception hall is on Level 2 and is accessible from both Avenue du General Fouad Chehab and the foyer at Level 1. From the southern and northern ends of the reception hall, there are escalators connecting the exhibition space above it at Level 3 and the performance hall at Level 4 respectively. From the hall foyer at Level 4, there are escalators connecting the small performance hall at Level 5. Three visitors' lifts shall connect all the floors as alternative means of access.

The fringe zone starts at Level 3 and can be accessed from Level 2 reception hall, via the escalators at the southern end or via the three visitors' lifts at the northern end. The fringe zone has 3 levels. Its west wing is for the supportive functions of cinemathèque, administration and dressing rooms in respectively ascending levels. The other three wings shall basically have the public functions of workshops, training rooms and documentation centre and the floors are also connected by an open staircase. Users are encouraged to loop around and interact with the core zone. The roof of the fringe zone shall be an outdoor deck.

Staff and performing artists can access via a lift lobby linked to the Level 1 foyer. Services access and connection to all floors shall be at the west side of the core zone. There are three basement floors for parking, accessed at ground level from the north-west corner of the site.

ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT: DATUM AND JUMPS

The floating rim takes roughly the shape of the site and forms a box profile. Its façade shall have glass or solid wall on the inner side as appropriate to the functions, and skinned over by porous white aluminum mesh. The core zone is trapezium on plan and reaches a maximum of 40M height. Its roof is folded in an east-west run, with the north and south elevations shed in yellow color glazing. The fold is also adopted at the lower portions of the same elevations. In effect, an animated and energetic core zone appears to jerk up and down from the calm-looking fringe zone. Creativity is always found in the shift crossing intellectual and emotional, silent and loud, joy and suffering, and above all, in the will to jump free.

The east and west elevations of the core zone are solid. At the lower portion, they are fitted with multimedia screens, encouraging stays over the stair-steps created underneath the cantilevers of the fringe zone. The core zone and the House at large, as a dissemination centre is functionally set.

The pleated roof brings interest to the views from the higher floors of the surrounding skyscrapers to come. It also addresses its presence well from the Avenue du General Fouad Chehab and the city to the south of it. Symbolically, it also simulates the drags in the rhythms of music up and down from the datum line.

STRUCTURAL CONCEPT

Cantilevered trusses and reinforced concrete structural system are used in the fringe zone (floating rim) and the core zone respectively.

