

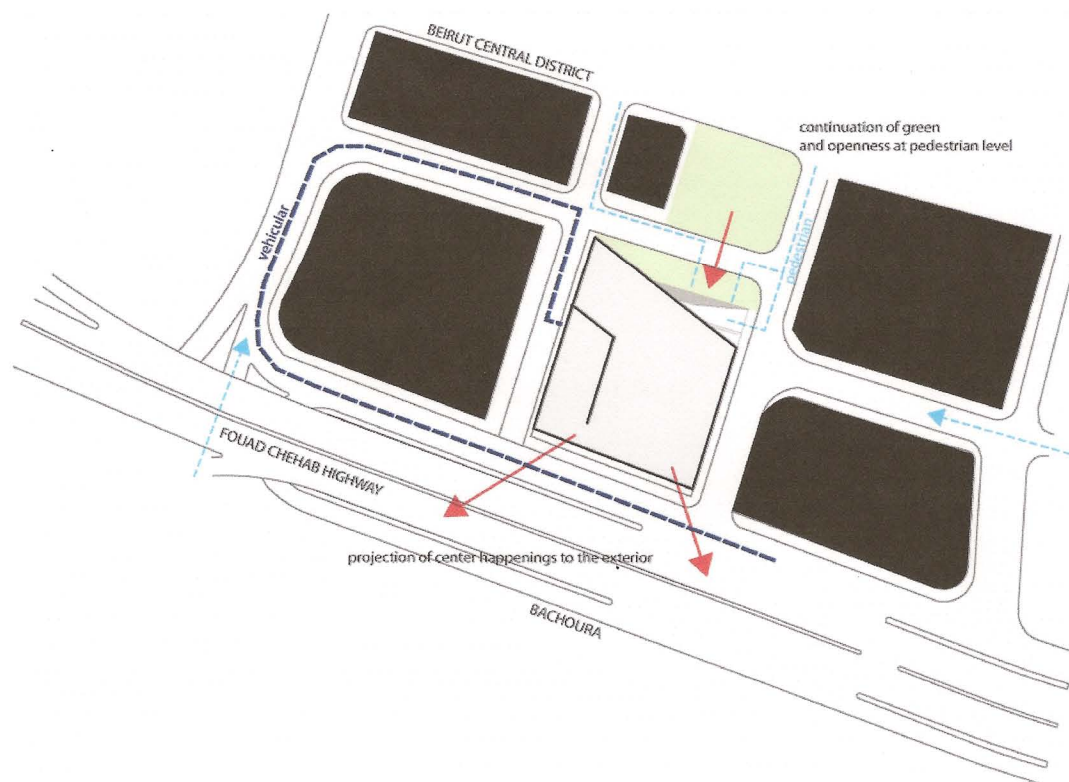
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Urban condition

The House, located on Lot 128-4 in Beirut Central District, is situated at a peripheral condition, at the edge of BCD. In this location, the project would have one main façade on the Fouad Chehab highway and another façade of lower elevation on Ghalghoul Street at the downtown side. The highway creates a peripheral divide around the area of the House between the central district and the residential neighborhoods of Bachoura and Achrafieh. The project will be adjacent in the future to architectural projects of significant height. The flow of pedestrians coming to the house would possibly happen directly from the BCD, as well as across the lower part of the Fouad Chehab highway from the surrounding neighborhoods. Such conditions create a specific context that directly affects the design approach. The project therefore tries to act as a connection at these peripheral conditions while responding to the various scales at the highway and downtown city levels. It tries to optimize openness and continue the green clearing in front of it, creating at the downtown scale an inviting architecture. In response to the tailoring building heights around it, the project tries to stay modest by responding to the lower pedestrian scale at the downtown level, while reclaiming its full height at the highway level.

Urban qualities

The project therefore becomes a direct reflection of these conditions. It characteristically evokes a sense of openness and a continual spatial connection between lower and upper levels of the site. The green expanse at the lot behind the site is continued further into the project. At Ghalghoul Street, the building keeps a low profile, and takes a one floor façade height, a scale that would be more appropriate for the pedestrian flow scale. On the level of the highway, the project rises up to the height of 32m, thus creating a major presence that projects to the vehicular speed and the edge neighborhoods around. This façade becomes an inviting display of House events and happenings, engaging users from the urban inner parts of Beirut. From the side street at the west façade, vehicular access is provided for both delivery and public flows. The main public and pedestrian access happens at the North Ghalghoul façade.

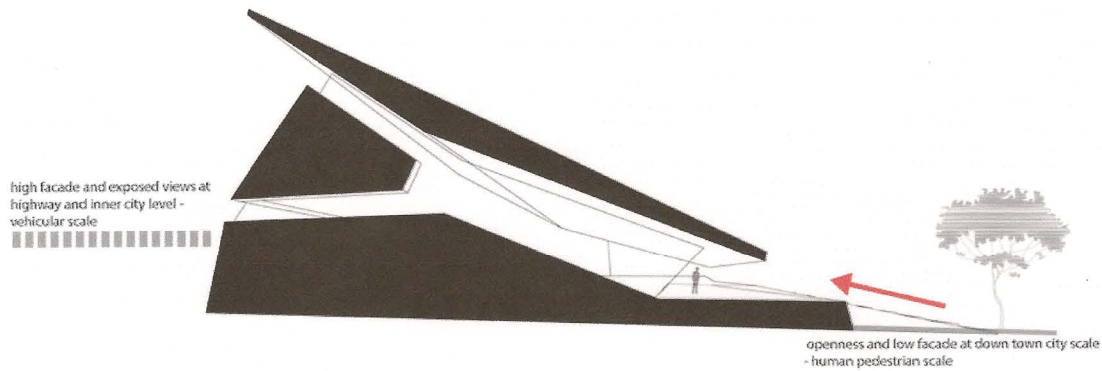


Formal relations

The project attempts to move away from the exuberant form. The House is for the people, it must not simulate a greater aesthetic purpose, nor over do its existence. Its form must therefore act as a direct reflection of site conditions and program specificities, rather than impose on the site an overly designed object. The project sits on the site as an icon, a cut and shift in site to provoke openness and continuity. It slopes down towards the city center, and pushes down to the human scale, minimizing the high façade effect at the pedestrian level. The volume is cut between roof and interior, where the roof slopes up, from a low height at the pedestrian level, to the 32m height at the highway level. The roof's shape allows for a direct and continual openness between the house and its two lateral adjacencies – the city and the highway/periphery. The roof stays lifted from the side walls, with glazing surface in between.

On the interior, the project is composed of multi-levels, which open up to one another and reflect the simultaneous happenings within the House. The result is an interior open space with programs concentrated around a central open hall that attains full interior height.

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Spatial organization

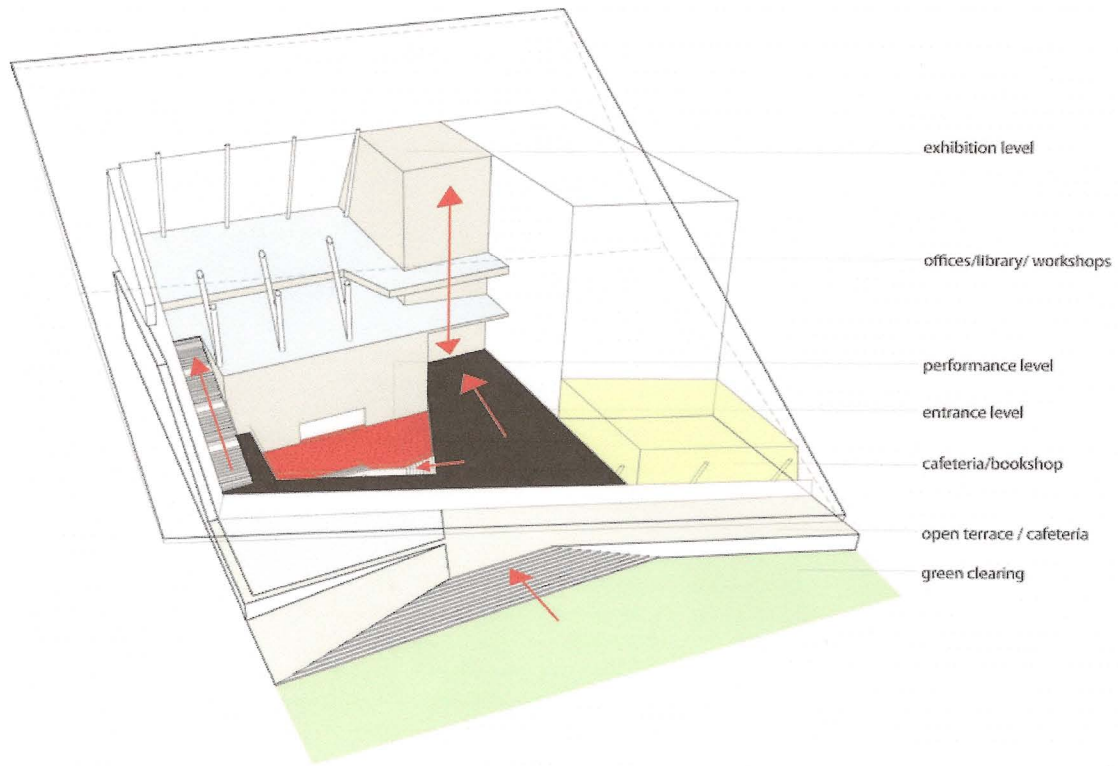
At Ghalghoul Street, the building opens up to a front terrace whose level is 1.9 m higher than the street level. This terrace acts as a front public space, with a “communal” wide staircase and smooth ramp connection. It features a water surface pond and an outer cafeteria extension. This space continues towards the interior as the entrance level hall which overlooks several other activities of the House. This level includes, in addition to information and ticketing, a bookshop and cafeteria that connects directly to the open terrace outside.

The entry level opens up and connects to a central lower lobby associated with performance events. At this performance level, the two theater programs and cinema halls are located, with direct loading dock and delivery connections. Delivery route happens from the side road, which also provides direct vehicular access to lower parking levels.

The exhibition space is an important feature as it opens up to activities in and out of the House, by proposing the space as a “free” space accessible to all. The exhibition area is directly accessed from the entrance level through grand stairs, and is clearly visible from the highway level, giving art happenings a public urban presence in the city.

At the west side of the project, programs of library, administration and workshops are located within a lofty volume, directly accessible through a vertical circulation core, from all three levels of performance, entrance and exhibition.

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