

## The Lebanese-Omani House of Arts and Culture - Beirut

### Concept

Just by the ringroad through Beirut, at a fast moving, fast changing point of the city, the new Lebanese-Omani Center of Arts and Culture is located. This center will be a place for artists of the city, the country and from the rest of the world to show their work, to interact with each other and create new projects. A space where freedom of thought and creation will be a guiding line for all the possibilities of art to be important in the lives of people.

As a multicultural space in the artworld the Lebanese-Omani Center will not only be located in an exiting city full of life and activity but also in the world, closely connected through new media and constant exchange with other centers around the globe. The architecture of the center speaks of this location in history as well as the openness to the world. A Structure which lets all sides flow in and out equally but restricted, letting the different areas of its program be connected and still go their own way.

Where the center will come to stand there is not much consistency in the surrounding architecture. Therefore the center doesn't try to relate to the immediate surroundings but to the city as a whole. It grows out of a common base. Rising out of the ground it hints to a bigger structure below and extending its volume to the sky in three tower like constructions it tells of the diversity of it's content. It's façade is a simple grid stretched over all surfaces in the same language to all sides closing and opening itself according to the activity that goes takes place on the inside.

The center will have the purpose to work as an incubator. It is the first center of it's kind in the history of this city and one will have to leave it free to find it's own way of becoming this incubator according to the special needs of it's users. Lending its spaces to creative interaction just as well as individual contemplation. Lots of open free space spread over many different floors and in different zoning types of the programme as well as many closed off spaces, where sometimes even light and sound has been regulated, stand at the disposal of the visitors.

Important is to make space for all types of users and to open up new perspectives on art to the public without creating too many clear guidelines along which the experiences in the building will follow. A museum is part of the program but the importance of the insights in the work and life in art is to be present through the high visibility between the different spaces of the building.

To insure the possibility to let the work of the center be rooted in the history of the country and to still be a starting point of the work of today and the future it is important for the structure to be flexible in its uses. Therefore the base is a common space for the bigger activities of the city with high visitors frequency and from here there is a rough structure splitting the programme into the three parts of exhibiting, working and administration. Visibility between these three parts staying in focus as a connecting theme.

This building has to be a perfect container for this complex and ambitious programme. It is supposed to work as a machine that continuously produces a diversified offer for the many and so it has to be emphasised that the visit to the center speaks to many and gives a pleasure feeling upon entering, during the stay and in the memory afterwards. The architecture has to take part in inspiring the visitors.

The outside will be taken along inside and through the splitting tower structure the outside will show itself from new perspectives which didn't exist in this place before. The deep open façade gives shelter inside while leaving free sight of the city. The drawbacks in the façade changes the relations between the towers as well as creates possible areas to step out of the structure and experience the city from outside the façade. Many different types of terraces are created in this way, all the way from the first one dug into the ground, over the ones closed in between facades to the top ones very free and high up.

### Construction

The dominating theme of the building is its façade with a clear tight grid of pillars. These pillars carry the façade and the depth they create function as shades for the inside of the building.

The structure is made out of concrete, and the ceilings are extended out into the façade and there connect with the pillars. The ceiling is hollowed out in a grid, 1 x 1 x 0.5 m, giving the rooms more height and creating possibilities for fixtures of light. The main technical infrastructure is to be placed in the hollow floor on top.

A thin gap in the pillarstructure of the facade shows the splitting of the floors and the ceilings. The openings between the pillars are, responding to the use on the inside, either closed by a stone wall or open with windows. Metal framing holds the stone filling as well as the windows glass. The wall is built in one plane on the inside as well as the outside. To the outside on ground floor and partly out on the terraces the windows are traded for doors.

Inside the structure of the walls follow the ceiling grid. The walls always showing the gap from the façade which splits the floor structure from the ceiling structure and gives the ceiling a lighter feeling.



picture above: view between towers

### Materialization

The materialization is bright concrete slightly colored with a warmer red. The big surfaces need not be treated with too much care in the evenness of the material since the whole building in one material will already be spending the atmosphere a relaxing wholeness-feeling. Single rooms, such as offices and other private spaces, can be made more intimate according to use with other surface materials.

### Short walkthrough

There is lots of light and big open areas throughout the whole building. After entering through the entrance hall you reach the first lounge over a small stair. This lounge is emphasized by the big opening to a terrace which is dug into the ground showing the height difference of the plot from entryside to ringroad. The terrace is closed off on two sides by the building itself and on the other two sides of green planted walls, like a cut into the earth. This first lounge is the connecting point between the big halls, the meeting rooms and the rest of the center. For the visitors of the halls the stair through the light shaft leads downstairs and for the visitors of the exhibitionrooms, cinema, library etc. the stair leads upwards through the same

lightshaft. Each tower then has its own lightshaft which emphasizes the height of the building and gives a sign to where the staircase and elevator is to be found.

The cafeteria can be entered from the side street via a small stair or through the entrance hall and lounge.

This middle of the building is the most active and publicly open area, upwards and downwards the grade of privacy and working atmosphere grows. The final ending is the entry to the roof in one of the towers, which will lend a breathtaking view of the city.