

## ORGANIZATION OF THE HOUSE

### **The house**

In the cityscape the building is a cube with large openings. While having a monumental presence in the city, it can also be interpreted as a small house with small windows, thus breaking down the scale of the building and strengthening the idea of the building as a 'house' for the citizens to use.

### **The very large space and the very small spaces**

The grand hall forms a void inside this 'house' so huge that the rest of the program becomes only 'walls' and 'roof'. The grand hall has no balconies, which means that spaces around the grand hall have views down into the grand hall.

The dancers in the dancing studios and painters in the arts studios; the readers in the library and managers in the offices - they all become spectators to whatever is going on in the grand hall, and spectators to each other, like a huge muppet show. This overwhelmingly large interior void becomes part of the collective memory of the building, and contains the identity of the building like Pantheon in Rome or the interior of the Hagia Sofia in Istanbul.

There is something exciting about incredibly large spaces, but there is also something exciting about those spaces compromised by the large spaces. The narrow stairs of tall medieval towers, the upper hidden corridors of Medieval cathedrals, light bridges above theaters and narrow spaces in modern machine rooms. The 'walls' of the house have this atmosphere, and their narrowness refer to the wideness of the grand hall.

### **The wide spaces**

At ground level the public plaza to the north of the building continues into the building, tilts down and becomes the floor of the grand hall. As well as conceptually connecting the inside of the house with the outside of the house, the audience can easily walk outside and populate the public plaza outside before and after performances.

This public space is repeated in the rooftop terrace and the restaurant that surrounds it. Outwards it is a penthouse restaurant whereas inwards it is a one-story restaurant

surrounding an urban square.

### **The grand promenade**

The ground level and the rooftop are connected by a promenade architectural which spins around the grand hall passing through various lobbies and terraces on the way up. It is like a vertical street where visitors can drop by the public parts of the program, like library, small hall, exhibition hall, etc.

Two public elevators, one artists' elevator and one goods elevator secures optimal connections across the sections united by the grand promenade.

### **MATERIALITY AND ATMOSPHERE**

The main structure is a steel skeleton clad with metal finishes in various contradicting qualities. Outer walls are covered with shiny, but thin and dented, steel plates. Inner walls in the grand hall are clad with textile-like, woven wire mesh that allows for both acoustic adjustment as well as uninterrupted air flow to rooms in the periphery of the building.

Slabs are corrugated steel plates topped with concrete in the main public spaces and wooden flooring in all studios and offices. Corridors in office spaces and in the studios have steel grill flooring to allow for views up and down between floors. Inner walls are welded steel plates when fixed and shutter-like bars when flexible.

Important references for atmospheres are garage studios, factories and machine rooms, oil rigs and scaffoldings, theater backstages and light bridges.

Like a warehouse converted to a studio the house seeks hospitality through having material and spatial qualities that can easily be interpreted and given meaning by the user. A certain roughness and temporality supports creativity more than does optimal, perfect functionality.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

The Mediterranean climate of Beirut allows for natural or hybrid ventilation much of the year. The building is designed to allow for hybrid ventilation, where large fans in the roof blow air into the grand hall and creates a positive pressure throughout the building which can be utilized for individualized ventilation in all the small rooms of the house.

Remaining air pressure is let in to the cooler underground spaces and then out on the outside plaza via ducts. This creates a comfortable climate around the building also in summer.

Rooms without windows are mainly located on the hot western facade whereas the majority of the large openings are located on the cooler northern facade. The technical room of the house is the ceiling of the grand hall, allowing also for air to be cooled or heated before it continues into the large hall.

As well as being economically and environmentally beneficial, this system also recalls the technical and practical simplicity of factories and warehouse reinhabited as studios.

## FLEXIBILITY

The building is kept within the approximately 43 x 43 meter smaller square defined in the masterplan, yet still within the lowest of the buildings height of 32 meters. Thus the building can be expanded vertically or horizontally and still be within the regulations of the masterplan.

The rectilinear layout of the plans and good connections between plans allow for easy rearrangement of the plans both during the post-competition design phase as well as in the future.

## COMMENTS TO AREAS EXCEEDING THE PROGRAM

A1 reception hall                    + 152 m<sup>2</sup>

Including stage, backstage, below stage and orchestra pit areas, the 1000 m<sup>2</sup> in the program have been considered insufficient.

B1 Hall                                    + 161 m<sup>2</sup>

B4 Large hall                         + 180 m<sup>2</sup>

Circulation                            + 847 m<sup>2</sup>

The concept of the project – one large room with the program spread over the outside of this room – naturally requires more floor area for circulation and lobbies.

However, other aspects of this concept outweigh this:

1. A compact and rectilinear building allows for an efficient and simple structure.
2. A compact building volume demands significantly less energy for heating and cooling than a combination of volumes of different sizes and shapes.
3. With almost all of the rooms of the building facing the façade, conditions are optimal for using natural daylight and hybrid ventilation, and thus save energy.