

– Introductory Text –

**THE BEIRUT HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE (LEBANESE-OMANI CENTRE):
AN ANCIENT BUILDING OF THE FUTURE**

Between Ring and Square

The site of the future House of Arts and Culture is situated in the Ghalguoul District at the foothill of the Serail. It forms the boundary between the streetscape of the Ring Road and the cityscape of the old and future city centre.

The new House of Arts and Culture is designed to mediate between two speeds, the „car speed“ of the ring road and the „pedestrian speed“ of Riad el Solh Square and its surrounding city district.

The mediating elements are:

- an urban plaza on an oblique square surface that goes all the way down from the ring road level to Riad el Solh Square level. The urban plaza is supposed to integrate and display potential archaeological excavations at their originally found positions;
- a sculptural volume („pedestal“) that forms a minimum footprint for the building in order to open up as much space as possible for the urban plaza and its potential archaeological excavations. This volume also reacts to Rue Ghalghoul.

Small Footprint (Visual Arts/Exhibition Space)

The sculptural volume on the urban plaza houses mainly the exhibition spaces but also the restaurant, the shops and the entrance – all income-generating activities. It is a pedestal for a building and at the same time the building itself.

Hovering Block (Performing Arts/Cinema)

The „hovering“ volume houses mainly the biggest spaces like performance halls and the cinema. It signals to the public: „cultural building“.

Ring (Documentation center, offices, studios, workshops)

In between the two main volumes – the footprint block and the hovering block – a ring is proposed which accommodates all serving spaces like offices, studios and workshops. The ring is the activator, the production element between the two „display“ volumes. In between the ring and the two volumes all circulation spaces are organized in a very efficient way. The result is a building with easy orientation. On top of the lower volume, there is the library. On top of the ring a roof garden is proposed which is accessible for the audiences and the artists. The garden provides a breathtaking view over the streetscape and the roofscape around the building.

Electromagnetic space

All three volumes – the visual arts block, the performing arts block and the ring – are enwrapped by an electromagnetic space which turns the building in an incubator. This electromagnetic space (Hertzian space) transforms itself from top to bottom: On the top, via photovoltaics, solar energy is collected. On the bottom, towards the urban square, this energy is spent. The covered space around the visual arts block is designed to become an electrosphere infiltrated by radio waves, infrared- and ultraviolet waves which can be used for media art installations etc. This space is the primary area where contents of the centre can be disseminated within the urban public. It also contrasts the potential archaeological excavations displayed on the urban square.