

The new House of Arts and Culture is situated at the border between the old heart of Beirut, the Central Business District, and the high congested rest of this megatown. On the one hand there is the small, new build, privatised, high commercial town full of hotels and offices and on the other hand there is the huge conglomerate of fast grown, partially unplanned quarters, settlements and suburbs. These “two parts” are divided by the General Fouad Chehab Avenue, the House of Arts and Culture shall connect them. But how to connect an inner clashed city in one house?

We designed the building as a solitaire. The facade is plain, monolithic walls made of concrete, pigmented with the gravel of the country and relieved by fine dummy joints keep the hot weather outside and give concentration to the inner of the building. Behind this surface, public space continues from the outside to the inmost parts of the building. Just a few openings enable contact to the outside. A large loggia in the south facade spends light during daytime and opens the building to the larger part of the town. Pedestrians can enter the building at two sides. In the north, where it widens the square at Ghalghoul Street into the inner yard and in the east, where it leads the people coming from the passage through cuts in the facade into the inner of the building.

The house is horizontal divided into two parts. A lower part for use in the evening containing the performance areas and an upper part for use during daytime containing the exhibition and documentation areas and the workshops. People reaching the upper floors by two open stairs. Water basins in the stair wells air-condition the stairways. Its public space which connects the different parts of the building. All these stairways, the foyers and the pergolas are open for everyone, all day.

