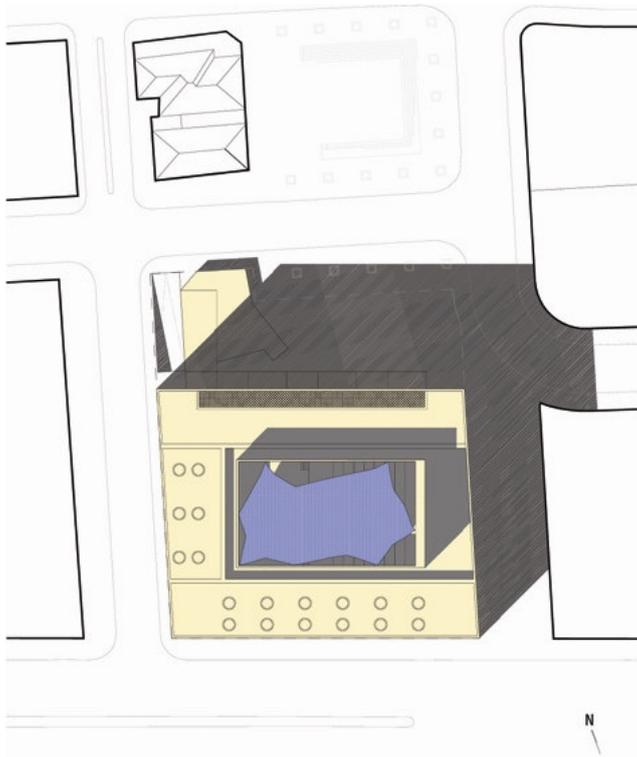


HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN BEIRUT

1 - ARCHITECTURAL OBJECTIVES

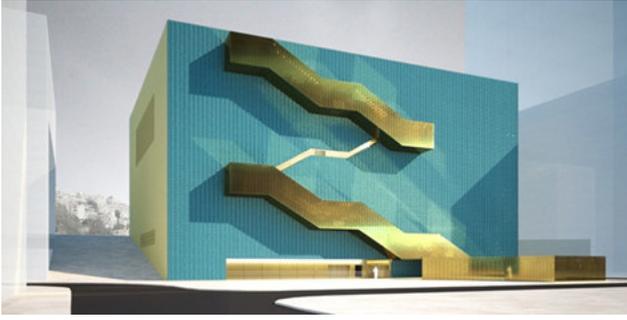


The site for the future “House of Arts and Culture in Beirut” is unique (f.1). On the one hand, most of the pre-existing buildings have been destroyed during the civil war, leaving the area almost without references; on the other hand, the new plan/projects proposed by the local authorities are still being developed, and so important elements are in some way unpredictable. Enhancing the complexity of the task, the nearby existing construction – the Bacri House- presents a scale difficult to connect both with the proposed buildings (“Landmark” project, etc.) and with the nearby high-speed road raised above street level.



Despite the lack of references, we envisage a relationship with the essential elements of the Lebanese construction tradition: simple, rational forms, corresponding to a clear spatial organization, construction system and image.

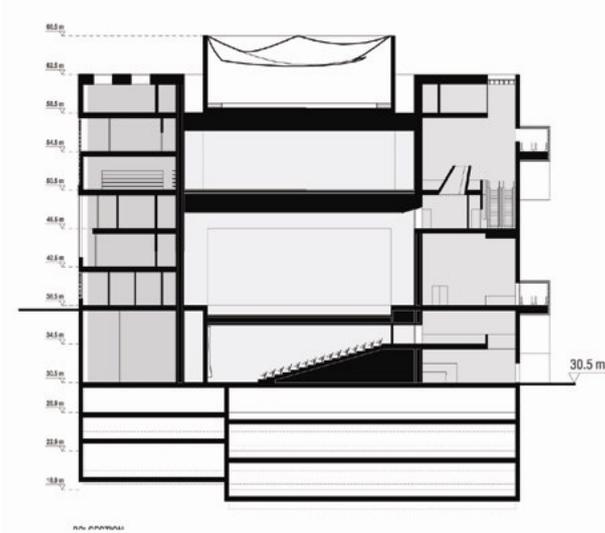
Due to the above mentioned site conditions, as well as the ones defined by the competition-program, we propose a 32m high construction, which is the maximal height defined by the plan, and also the height of the planned adjacent buildings (f.2). The building interacts with the surroundings in various ways. While it is mainly closed to the highway, its main façade faces the adjacent square, making it seem larger (f.3) . A small volume at street level helps to define the



square, introducing another scale and reacting to the existing Bacri-house.

The building is conceived as a “cultural box” providing a space for diverse publics.

It is planned as an architectural “promenade”. The main public stair is placed inside as well as outside the main façade, until it reaches the public courtyard on the roof.



2 - SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

In designing the project our aim is clarity (f.4).

All public halls are linked with the main entrance hall (facing the square) both visually and physically (by the façade stair), forming a unique large-scale interior space.

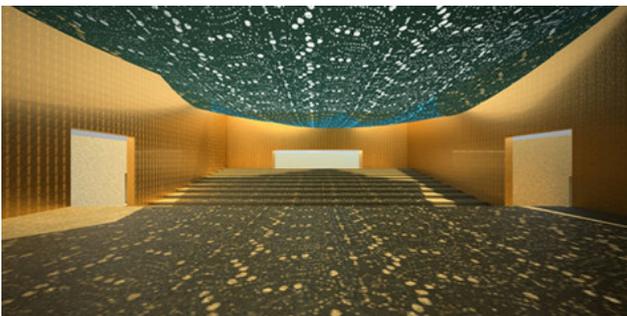
The reception, commercial spaces, cafeteria (which can be used separately), etc., have direct access from the entrance hall on the ground floor.

Performance and conference halls, exhibition spaces, the movie-theatre and function-free terrace courtyard form the heart of the building.

They are centrally placed on top of each other. These spaces are designed to enable various uses.

The exhibition spaces can be divided and have different functions (f.5).

The two performance and conference halls are linked by the stage: a sliding wall unifies them (f.6). The large performance hall can be used in several lay-outs. Its floor can be levelled and the





telescopic tribune can close, providing alternative shapes.

The terrace has no particular function. It is conceived as a covered courtyard and can be used as a theatre, a cinema, an exhibition space, etc (f.7). A direct access from the outside is provided. The workshops are connected to the public terrace so as to allow the public with performers.

Administrative and management offices, restrooms, documentation centre, etc. are placed on several floors facing the southern part of the building.

Storage, delivery and technical areas are placed on lower levels close to entrances.

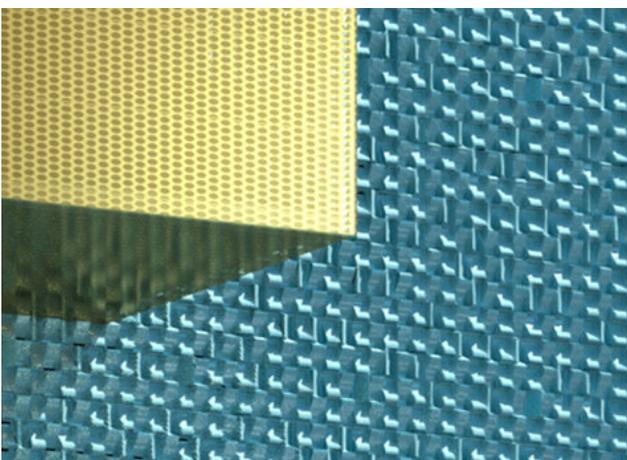
Below ground level, the parking for 280 spaces is conceived as a single ramp.



3 - BUILDING SOLUTIONS AND MATERIALS

Materials are used to enhance the fusion between the house and the outside world.

Construction solutions as well as the material's options are based on our ideas about the major influences on Lebanese culture and architecture.



The building is conceived as a yellow ochre (the natural earth pigment) concrete volume. Openings are protected from direct sunlight with a modular pre-cast concrete grid drawn according to Arabic motifs. The exception is the big opening facing the highway, protected by

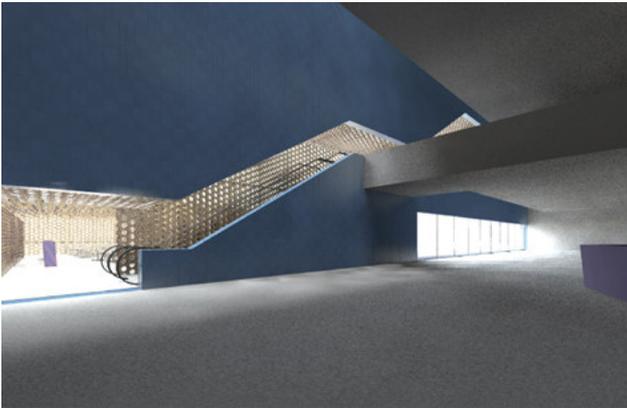


translucent fabric, where events occurring in the house are to be announced (f.8).

The main façade is covered with traditional blue ceramic tiles mixed with coloured glass tiles of the same size (these are supported by an invisible steel structure) (f.9). Its reflections and glossy effects contrast with the roughness of the concrete facades that face the highway.

A similar contrast is achieved inside the entrance halls.

Both the public stairs and the cafeteria on the ground floor are covered with a gold-painted steel “mashrabya” (f.10).



The walls of the open-air terrace courtyard are also to be painted gold. This space is partially covered with a traditional Arabic blue fabric, providing shade.

Walls inside the building are also painted yellow ochre. The only exceptions are the performance and conference halls and the movie-theatre, which will have a wooden cladding.

Environmental concerns are evident in the buildings conception.

As in ancient Arabic architecture, the option for thick facades with small-scale openings is consequence of the hot and humid Beirut climate and the Mediterranean particular.