

inter-Change

Designing the new Beirut House of Arts and Culture (The Lebanese-Omani Centre)

The design for the new House of Arts and Culture in Beirut is one that requires in depth thought and consideration for the context, site, and program. These elements are very unique and inspiring, require a new and innovative building to reflect what is truly Lebanon's culture.

4 Challenges -

Disciplinary Restrictions

The disciplinary boundaries that traditionally define the Arts have been overcome with new means of thinking, technology, and techniques. The exhibitions and of performances have the opportunity to become interchangeable. The proposal for the House of Arts and Culture must address this new perspective of Art and create a fusion of traditional processes with contemporary processes.

Bifurcation of Artistic Process

The division between spectator and maker defies the notion of culture. Conventional buildings bifurcate the artistic process, strictly differentiating between Production and Reception through spatial and material segregation. Spectators are denied interaction with behind-the-scenes processes and the makers of art. This is addressed in allowing the spectator to cohabit the building with the creators. Thus, the spectator and maker create and respond to enhance the cultural experiences of the house.

Urban Definition

The interior and exterior space is too often considered two separate environments, producing barriers between public and private space. As this is a public amenity adjacent to a public plaza, the House seeks to extend the public space, producing an interface between landscape and architecture.

Environment

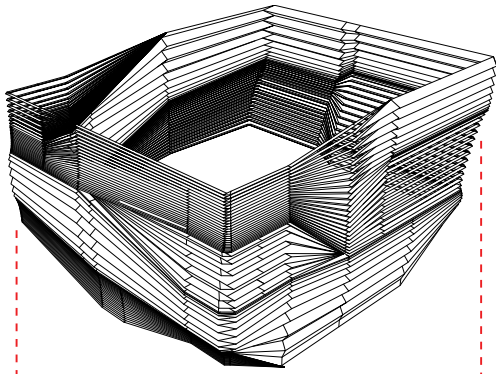
In response to a climate with 300+ days of sun exposure, the House should control but utilize its natural resource. Allowing a tempered porosity of daylight and sea breezes, the building reduces its environmental impact.

Taking into consideration these four issues, the inter-Change proposal is able to analyze, understand, and apply these concerns into the design execution process. The concept of "inter-" as a notion of communication between systems reflects the ideas of culture as a manifestation of dialogue between people, art, ideas, and environments.

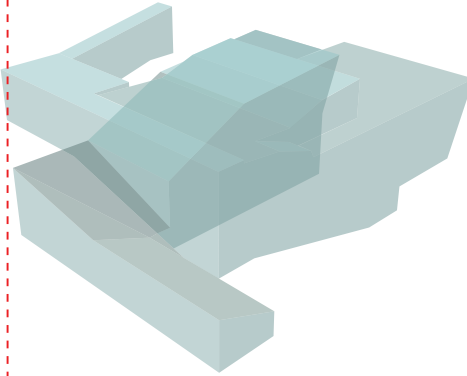
4 Responses -

The inter-Disciplinary

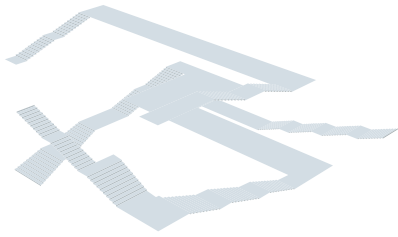
The interconnectivity of Beirut's diversity is exemplified in the history, immediate history, and future. A seam of Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Arab nations, Beirut has interwoven several societies and cultures while maintaining the uniqueness of each. The result is a dense, impacted city. Reflectively, the House of Arts and Culture should manifest this language through cross disciplinary motives. This is first addressed in the four primary gathering spaces of the House: Large Performance Hall, Small Performance Hall, Cinema, and Exhibition Hall. These spaces are defined generally as performance or exhibit. However, given the cross pollination of media in contemporary artistic expression, such specifically defined programmatic spaces are replaced with transformable and adaptable spaces. The Small Performance Hall opens to the Exhibition Room. The Large Performance Hall extends to the lobby and street. The new understanding of these programs as interchangeably one unit suggests a new form of artistic presentation. The architectural response unites these four programs, manifesting a continuous system of performances that emerges from the ground and connects to the sky. These spaces become "stepping stones" for the project. The performances twist and wrap, addressing the volume of the site while allowing views toward all directions of the city.



Louvered Facade System



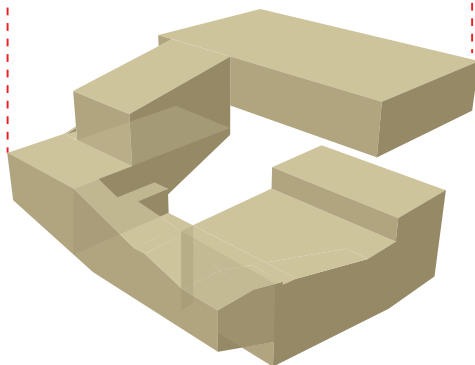
Embracing Programs



Continuous Circulation



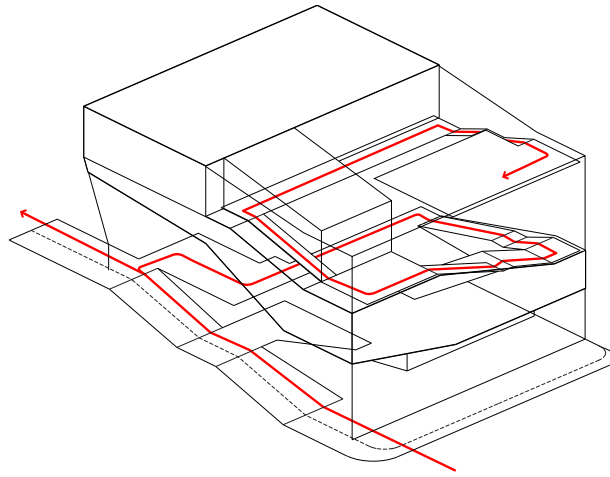
Extended & Elevated Plazas



Performance & Exhibition Mass

DESIGN COMPONENTS DIAGRAM

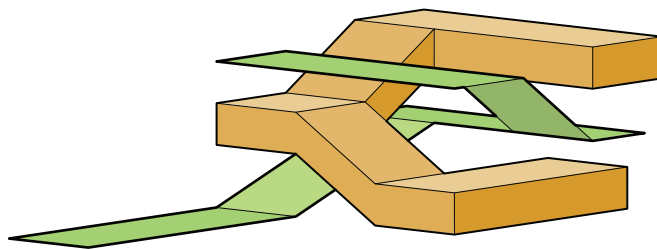
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CIRCULATION DIAGRAM

The inter-Communication

The erecting of the performance/exhibit spaces simultaneously establishes a series of open terrace program as a new opportunistic element. These terraces act as an extension of the external plaza across the street from the site. The dichotomy of gathering within and gathering atop of this mass reflects the urban streetscape and the diverse occupation of the building, street, and the layers between. The street is always active. It is the walk-ability of the city in terms of climate and neighborhood vicinities that contributes to Beirut's desirability for interaction between people. The street life reflects the intermingling of what occurs separately inside buildings. The street is the network connecting individual programs and what occurs from one program to the next is an itinerary in itself. Sidewalk cafes, large and narrow streets, diversely paved roads, art streets, bar streets, markets, destroyed buildings, arcades... they all build the layers of culture on the streets of Beirut. In the House of Arts and Culture, the occupation atop of the mass is not only for circulation, but for an informal connection between spectator and maker. This is where a spectator of film passes an intellectual conversation between landscape painters and musicians, where actors share a space with documenters. There is the duality of watching and doing, and the blending of viewing possibility.

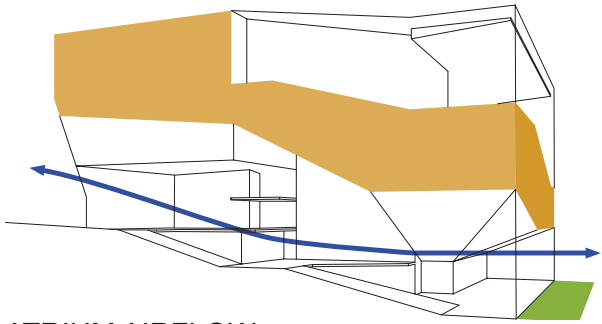


MASS AND VERTICAL PROMMENADE

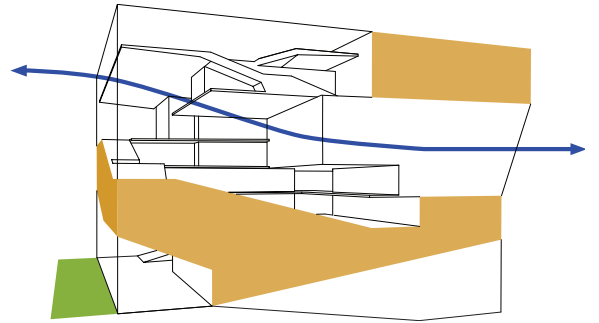
The Interlocking

With the primary gathering spaces addressed, the workshops, administration, and production spaces are added as a secondary system, interlocking and embracing the performance/exhibition spaces. The embracing of these two systems – production & display – is what makes the House of Arts and Culture complete, as they simultaneously support one another. Spaces that are traditionally opaque are made transparent to give the spectator a glimpse of the process of making, an art in itself. The result is a juxtaposition of transparent production spaces with the opaque performance and exhibition spaces. It becomes a performance of systems.

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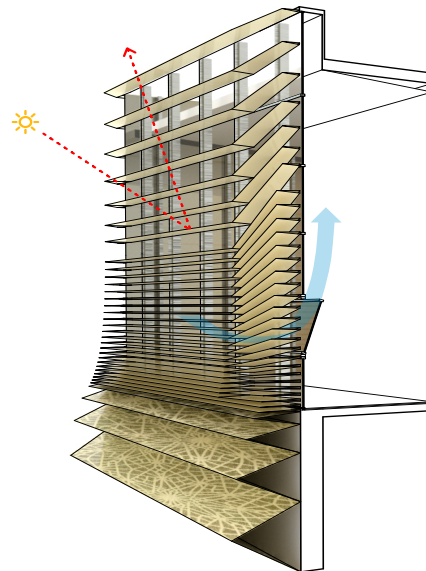
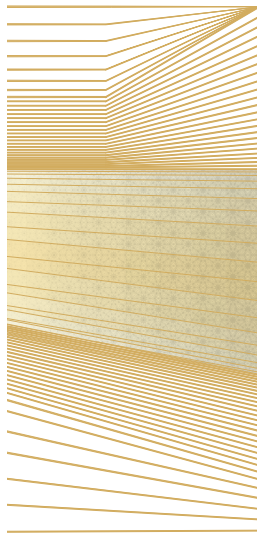


ATRIUM AIRFLOW



The Interface

The House addresses techniques in terms of considering the architectural context and sustainable façade decisions. Encasing the volumes is a continuous system of louvers and patterned surface. The façade louver system provides generous levels of indirect sunlight as well as allowing natural air circulation through operable windows. The density of louvers indicates internal program, such that open plaza atrium spaces have less dense louvers while the pinching of louvers suggests more desire for light control. Thus the programs within are displayed for the pedestrian and vehicle, activating and responding to street life. Functioning as sunscreens, the decorative encasement immediately suggests a place of art and of culture. The undulating pattern of façade blends into geometric patterns that hide the opaque performance spaces. Smooth transitions between different systems indicate that each program has seamless connections while maintaining its own identity.



FACADE DETAIL