

## THE HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE- HOUSE VIS À VIS CITY ARTS AND CULTURE AS INFRASTRUCTURE FROM CITY TO HIGHWAY TO CITY

This competition is a great opportunity for Lebanese art to act as the interface between urban life and cultural activities...We have looked at the building as an incubator facilitating this interface, a cultural infrastructure as powerful as the ring road forming the spine of our building.

The site offers two orientations that are in contact with **General Fouad Shehab Avenue** flanked between the Bachura and the Ghalghoul neighbourhoods...

As an infrastructure building, the House of arts and culture allows the public to access the "House" both from the highway and also through a public space, which we have named "**Fairouz**" Maidan situated at the foot of the building.

Every cultural centre needs to be flexible and open to the public, a place the public frequents on a daily basis. This is why we have conceived the building as thoroughfare.

The Bacri Hotel and its garden extend through our site to create a continuity of open space in front of the building, forming a sculpture garden and external maidan. The house of arts and culture is a jewel sitting in the site, allowing for the programmes to wind around a circulation and ascend the building to its rooftop.

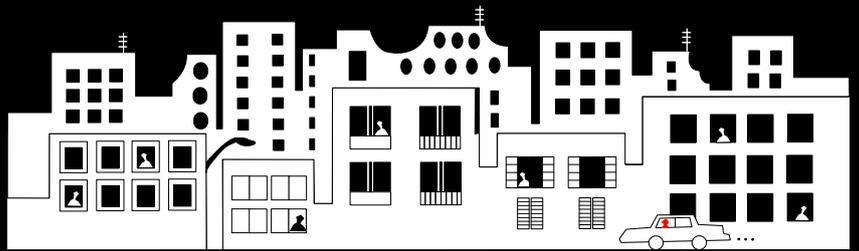
### THREE GARDENS

We have conceived the building with three main open spaces in mind: one in front which acts as a filter through which we enter the building- **Fairouz Maidan**-, one linked through a walkway under the ring road on the Bachura side which can act as an extension for the

future - the sculpture garden- and one on top of the building to provide a beautiful panorama of the city of Beirut.

### THE CARVED DIAMOND

The building sits on the site like a diamond on a ring, acting as a mass with cavities for the arts and all other programmes. With the Library as its main thrust, we have put the books on the west side of the base to act both as an exhibition and also an easily accessible research centre. We enter the building from either the **Fairouz Maidan or General Fouad Shehab Avenue**



along a grand staircase carrying us up or down to the mid level to buy tickets, read/buy a book, have a cup of tea or sit in the web bar and send an e-mail to a friend.

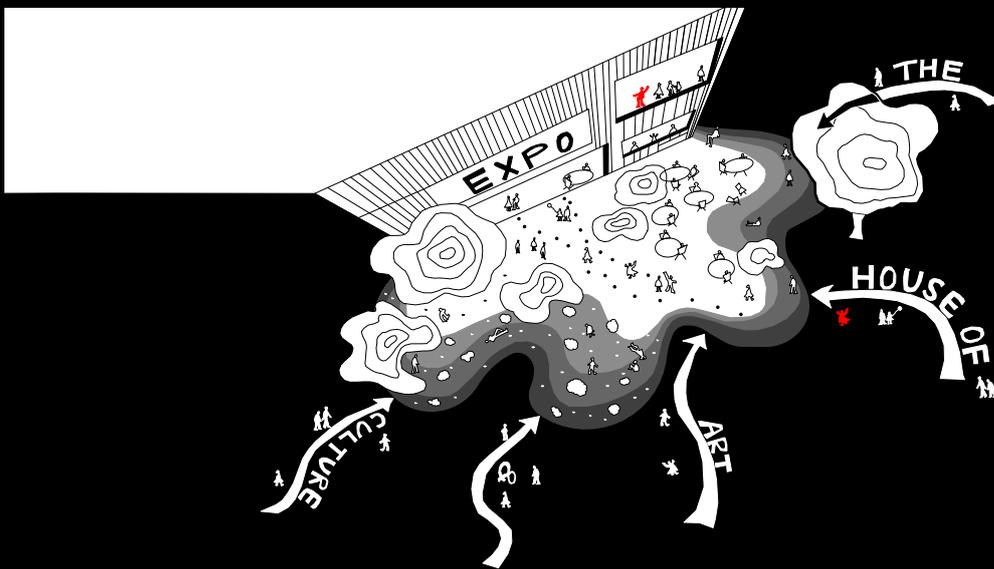
### THREE SPACES - A JOURNEY TO THE SKY...

Three main spaces in the programme hold the entire building together:

**The Theatre**, the largest cavity in the heart of the building. All spaces are organised around this space.

**The Exhibition space** placed above and on the





side of the theatre.

**The Cinema** placed under the theatre and accessed via a staircase at the entrance level. All other spaces dance around these three main spaces.

Due to little space on the panels we show only three main plans at 1/250 as required and all other plans at 1/500.

As we ascend the building, the programmes unfold themselves; here is the story that we are told by Scheherazade!!!

### **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN BEIRUT**

Ameena and Fadia are two close friends living in two different parts of the city, one in the south and the other in the north. They are to meet at 10.00 AM at the House of arts and Culture, nicknamed **HOAAC**, to attend a symposium on video art and cinema in the large multi purpose theatre. They will see a performance of Othello three nights after their first visit today in the same theatre.

**9.30 AM, 21ST OF MARCH:** It is a beautiful spring day, Ameena decides to walk through the city centre, passing by the martyr's square and arriving on the corner of **Ahmad el Jabbouri**

**street.** Arriving half an hour early, she goes directly to the juice bar at the **maidan** level and then sits on the ramp under the shade of the building to gaze at the beautiful turquoise sky of Beirut on "Fairouz Maidan" looking across at the lime trees of the Bacri Garden.

**10.00 AM:** Fadia arrives by taxi from the General

Fouad Shehab avenue known as the Ring Road and enters the HOAAC from the upper level, discovering below a very open and colourful lobby, full of seating areas, paintings, posters, sofas... and shops. Descending the steps she recognises Ameena in the distance entering from the lower level called the "city entrance". The two friends meet on the intermediate level at the ticket office. At this point they stop to admire the landscape: they are surrounded by the city centre, the flow of the cars on Ring Road, the ramp that links the two levels of the city, books of the library through windows carved in the thick mosaic wall.

**10.30 AM:** the two friends rush up to go to the large theatre where the symposium takes place, crossing a bright glazed space, which winds through a cave-like sombre area. On their way up, they discover the library entrance arriving at the volume of the large theatre they realise the grandeur of the volume and this only through a very narrow void space above.

When they enter the "Grande salle" the cosiness of the space surprises them as they discover that there are many alcoves and balconies allowing for various seating configurations.

**12.30 PM:** Ameena suggests to Fadia that they go and have lunch at the “city snack bar” in the lobby facing North towards the sea and across from the Bacri Garden, a space surrounded by skyscrapers designed by “starchitects”.

**1.30 PM:** Activities start again. The attendees of the symposium are divided into several smaller groups. Some leave to discover the “ateliers”, others, go to the library. Fadia and Ameena start to go toward the exhibition spaces that are situated on the edge of the grand theatre.

Voids, glazing and transparencies allow them to not only see the expo but also the public using the building as a promenade. As they continue and walk through a penumbra they arrive at a vast terrace, open on three sides to the city, with a floating ceiling framing beautiful views of the surroundings. It is here that the guide presents the contents of the video display accompanying the lecture from that morning. Carved from the mass of the exposition walls, the gallery space sits between the ceilings of two objects: that of the large theatre and that of the edifice.

**3.30 PM:** tea break on the protected Grande Terrace, with couches, magazines and catalogues of the exhibition allowing a short peaceful reading time. At the same time, however, one can see the city and some of the art work.



**5.00 PM:** Fadia and Ameena continue their ascension. Now they are going to see some video artists in the studios designed for artists in residence. They will talk to them about editing techniques and why this is so important in their



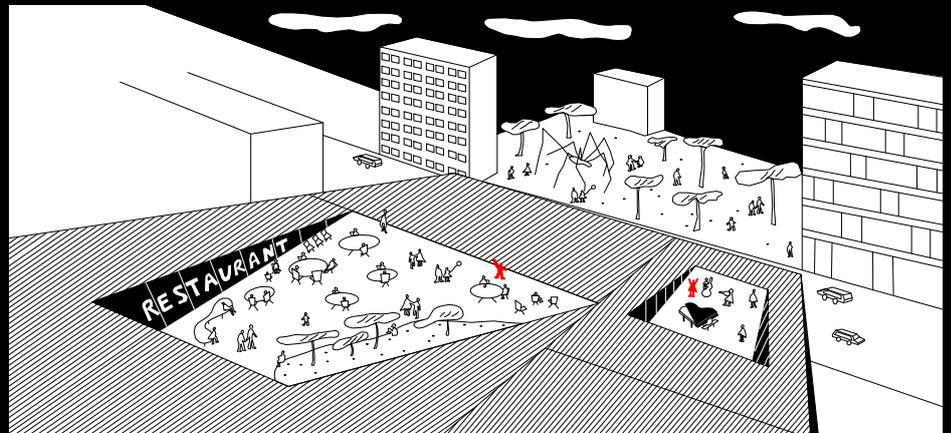
work.

At the threshold of the studios, the last spaces before arriving on the terrace, they realise how these spaces are only lit through skylights, leaving the walls free of windows and good for projection or even other forms of painting and drawings. The spaces are unusually cool and comfortable even on a hot afternoon. Ameena to Fadia; “it seems that the architects have looked at traditional ways of cooling a building, there seems to be no air conditioning except in the exhibition area for controlling the humidity and protecting the art works.” They also realise that the videos are being screened in real time in the exhibition hall.

**7.00 PM:** after all this excitement the only thing that remains for them to do is to go up one more flight of stairs and have dinner at the terrace garden restaurant, with its beautiful views towards the city centre over and beyond the old theatre building of Beirut. They enjoy their dinner under the half blue half red sky before the spring sun sets in the company of bright lights from the Jean Nouvel tower just next door.

**9.00 PM:** Fadia and Ameena take the elevator down to the cinema situated in the basement of the building. They recognise that there are other people that use the same elevator to access the two levels of parking under the cinema. “This building is tall, except we don’t really see it from the outside”, says Ameena with a very surprised look on her face...

**11.00 PM:** Fadia and Ameena leave the cinema, go up to catch their taxi on the upper entrance of the HOAAC where there is special taxi lounge for waiting.



They cannot stop talking about this new edifice that has both the comfort of a house, the beauty of an art work and the complexity of culture.

Levels	Program
-13.00	parking (110 parking spaces)
-10.00	parking (110 parking spaces)
-7.00	small multimedia performance hall / lounge / dressing rooms / movie theater / parking (60 parking spaces)
-1.20	terrace / city centre entrance hall / juice bar / parking ramp / delivery / storage / technical rooms
4.00	reception / information / shops / storage / administration
8.00	Ring Road entrance hall / shops / documentation centre
12.00	large performance and conference hall* (lower orchestra) / lounges / dressing rooms / documentation centre
16.00	large performance and conference hall* (upper orchestra) / meeting rooms / lounge / national cinematheque
20.00	large performance and conference hall* (upper first balcony) / exhibition lounge / exhibition room
22.00	large performance and conference hall (lower second balcony) / control rooms
25.00	exhibition room / workshops and training rooms
29.00	workshop and training rooms mezzanine / workshop terrace / exhibition workshop
32.00	restaurant / terrace

\* capacity of large performance and conference hall: 800 seats maximum. 230 fixed seats on two balcony levels.