

THE HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE



ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

2912AM

PREFACE

A magic, “wooden box” for Fine Arts in Beirut city.

A city of long history and past that goes back centuries. A city which having overcome past passions, is now trying to rebuild its lost splendor.

The building is situated in the centre of Beirut city, close to major urban restorations and new modern building constructions.

The building project requirements, as well as the building restrictions in Beirut city, the location of the plot, its accessibility thereof and finally, its topography have been seriously considered in the solution proposed.

GENERAL BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The building consists of the Ground Floor and six stories, with its visitor entrance located on Rue Ghalghoul. Each storey includes one up to three functional blocks, as described in the design competition data.

The building layout in the plot forms a subsidence of 9.90 m from Rue Ghalghour and 8.30 m on average on the side of Du General Fouad Chehab Avenue, whereas it leaves a 2.85 m wide open space on both of the remaining sides.

The building comprises mainly of public performance halls as well as workshops. These spaces require sound and visual isolation from surrounding spaces; therefore, certain halls have been constructed without openings at the surrounding areas (theaters, concert halls and movie theaters, as well as other areas that have been laid out in the interior section of the building (theatrical workshops, etc).

Exhibition halls, as well as office and coffee bar areas have been laid out on the perimeter of the building so as to enjoy natural lighting and view of the surrounding space.

The above layout of building functions led to the dealing with of outer building shells with the use of facade covering, with full lining elements, as well as with metallic louver lining on the facade sections that required natural lighting.

The building morphology has been based upon the principle of plain, geometrical lines, thus creating a box-like shell. The building elevations are covered with wooden panels creating a second protecting shell against sun and heat radiation. The building glass panes on each floor as well as wherever required, have free height from floor to roof. They are shadowed by means of aluminium louvers, fitted with an automated rotating system, depending on sun movement.

The building roof in the form of a hyperbolic shelter is covered with titanium-zinc panels. The roof offers passive sun protection to the building, creating a second protective shell against sun radiation.

The materials utilized for the shell building are wooden panel surfaces of a light brown color, aluminium louvers in oxidized copper color and the roof is from titanium-zinc paneled in oxidized copper color.

DESCRIPTION OF EACH LEVEL

The ground floor allows visitors free space for movement under the building, whereas it includes closed spaces such as the reception Hall, Ticket Offices and horizontal and vertical circulation spaces (staircases and elevators). On the perimeter of the ground floor, panels laid out at different gradients are located, with the building bearing supports functioning as axes thereof. This layout creates the impression of a panel welcoming motion to the visitors approaching the building. Throughout the ground floor perimeter, the half-closed or half-open panel layouts leave clearances for the natural illumination of the area, which may be used for semi open-air exhibitions as well.

The visitor entering the building is surprised by its structure, since from the outside the building resembles a box-like building, whereas when entering it they find themselves in a circular layout of spaces, which can be visited through following a respective circular route. A circle in a box; or a cylinder in a cube.



Vertical communication within the building is effected by two staircases, four person elevators and one cargo elevator.

The entire vertical communication is laid out around a circular patio with a peripheral balcony on each floor. The balcony with the glass peripheral parapet gives the impression of more empty space. The circular balcony distributes visitor traffic radially to all floor spaces. The patio runs along the entire height of the building in cylindrical form, from the ground floor to the last floor. The cylindrical patio is interrupted only by the interference of the glass floor on the first floor, which creates an expansion area to the two performance halls. The glass floor shall be semi-

transparent so it may allow the visual continuance of the patio from the ground floor to the first floor and vice versa.

The first floor includes two performance halls. The big performance hall orchestra has a 674 seat capacity and the balconies have a 130 seating capacity. The orchestra is equipped with movable seat tiers so seats may be adjusted. Such tiers may be adjusted so as to be encased into the floor, thus creating a final plane surface in the orchestra, whenever so required. All supporting spaces (Projection Room, Sound Control Room and Lighting Control Room) are situated at balcony level. The stage dimensions are 16.20 m x 8.00 m with a free height of 20.00 m. The small performance hall capacity is for 250 seats. In this hall, the orchestra area may also be converted from a multi-level space into a single plane space depending on the needs arising each time. The stage dimensions are 8.00 m x 5.50 m. The Projection Room, Sound Control Room, Lighting Control Room and Recording Room are at balcony level, as well.

The external noise insulation of halls is achieved by two ways: by special materials, which shall be applied to the entire outer building shell as well by the creation of peripheral auxiliary traffic corridors for actors from their dressing rooms to the stage, as well as for stage scenery transportation. These corridors shall isolate and absorb any noise originating from external sources. The hall expansion area shall be the patio, where apart from the peripheral corridor its empty space is covered with glass floor made from special structural crystal.

At the same level, we encounter the two Meetings Rooms the capacity of which is 50 and 30 persons respectively, along with their required interpolation booths and projection rooms.

The Mezzanine includes the adjoining rooms (individual, double and collective dressing rooms, the foyer for artists) as well as the remaining control rooms and spectators' balconies.

The second floor includes the Movie Theater and the Exhibition Room. The Movie Theater capacity is for 206 persons. It includes the Projection Room and has its own, autonomous hall.

The Exhibition Room extends to the remaining floor area. In the reception, we encounter the Lounge as well as a commercial use section directly relation to the reception. The Workshop is also included. The natural illumination of the Exhibition Room is effected through glass panes of free height from the floor to the roof, whereas the temperature and lighting control is achieved by using external sunshades, moving automatically and/or manually.

The third floor includes the Workshops and Training Rooms, the National Cinematheque as well as the Documentation Center.

In the workshop section, the layout of the individual halls has been carried out based on the audio-visual isolation requirements as well as on those of natural illumination and respective shading and/or on wholly restricted light usage.

The National Cinematheque has been likewise dealt with since its space requirements are specific and particular in this area, as well.

Special emphasis has been given to the natural illumination of all the Documentation Center spaces as well as to the good soundproof acoustics of the Reading Room, through the selection of appropriate lining materials on both the walls and the roof.

The fourth floor includes the Administration spaces.

The floor is recessed from the building outline and has the possibility of utilizing rooftop for open-air events. The rooftop has been covered with a wooden deck, which functions as a double protecting shell towards building heat-insulation.

The fifth floor includes the Cafeteria and Shops section. The Cafeteria has an outdoor space located on the rooftop of the fourth floor.

The integration of the internal serving area with the external veranda, when weather permits, doubles the Cafeteria capacity.



The basement spaces consist of (5) five levels and are used as parking facilities for 284 vehicles. On the first level, traffic and temporary placing of exhibits for maintenance purposes takes place. On the second level, the building mechanical equipment shall be installed. On the fourth and fifth levels, two reservoirs are also included, apart from the parking areas, of 1,000 m³ capacity each for the storage of water.

With regard to the building air conditioning, it has been proposed that this may be achieved by utilizing geothermal energy and the possibility of storing water in the reservoirs situated in the building basements.

In addition, the collection of pluvial water from the roof has been proposed, with subsequent storage in the basement reservoirs.