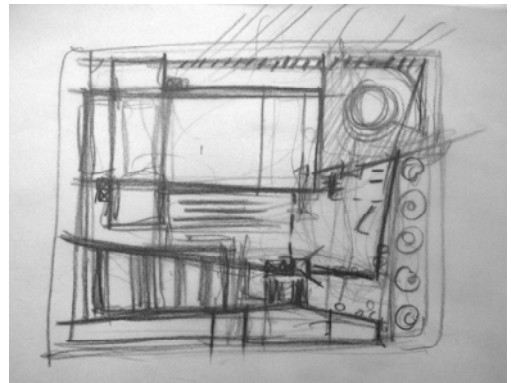


The Arts Platform, a Beirut urban piece

The project is an opportunity to offer green public space. A North South, a stepped street corridor that will receive plantings, pierces through the building and ties the existing garden with the main entrance of the center (level 0), the elevated exhibition entrance (level 3.2), up to the sidewalk adjoining the Ring road (level 6.9). From



there, the journey is uninterrupted up to the roof, passing by the upper exhibition terrace and sculpture garden, the upper piazza adjoining the workshops mezzanine (level 13.5) to finally reach the open-air theatre culminating at 16.4m.

Stairs Culture

Several itineraries are made possible as the design accommodates the slope and the adjoining streets. This is not uncommon in Beirut, a city that develops on hills and nurtures the stairs culture.

Pedestrian Access and Security

As one cannot fully predict how a center like this will actually live until it reaches its full potential, the versatile design offers several scenarios of use, namely with entrances from many sides and levels. Those entrances will not necessarily be open all the time. The life of the center will determine which entrances and exits will be used and which would be temporarily or permanently closed.

Cars access, vehicular service and parking

Passing the VIP entrance on the Northwestern side, the parking ramp serves all underground levels, starting with a side access to the kitchen and other technical spaces on one side, and to the reception of sets and accessories on the other. Below is located the backstage access on the side, and further down the public parking spread on 3 floors.

On the ring road, a **drop off zone** (level 6.9) allows for quick access to several parts: the 2nd exhibition level, the documentation center and the administration (level 6.9), and the lobby leading to the workshops (level 10.2 and mezzanine at 13.5). A service elevator allows also for a secondary connection to the main level (level 0) and to the back stages of the two performance halls below (level -4 and level -7).

Location and orientation of the various components of the center

The double height **main reception hall** overlooks the garden. It is reached with a ramp elevating it 70cm from the sidewalk. It distributes all parts of the program. It is also served by a VIP entrance on its Western side.

The Performance Halls and Movie Theatre

At entrance level (level 0) one can access the small performance hall and the balcony of the large performance hall.

At lower lobby level (level-5), one can access the movie theatre and the lower level of the large performance hall.

In the large performance hall, tiers can rise to serve various configurations, from the conventional ones to the centered one with rising tiers on 4 sides of a central stage.

The **meeting rooms** are reached from the lower performance hall lobby by a ramp and stairs.

Located at the tip of the building, the **cafeteria** faces the garden and enjoys a terrace at ground level. Its mezzanine is also reached from the middle piazza and from the side street to the East (level 3.2). That arrangement allows also for a convenient service of the first exhibition level should the need occur.

The exhibition areas unfold on 3 levels that can be accessed independently, can be coupled, or become one to house a large venue. A variety of ceiling heights (from 3.4m to 7m) ensure flexibility of display and allow for large art works.

The exhibition sequence starts from the main hall of the center where one is driven by the ascending ramp lit from above. Large tapestries or reliefs can be displayed on the wall of the large performance hall as one reaches the first exhibition level (3.2m).

There, the exhibition lounge, bar and waiting room are at the same level as the upper cafeteria and plaza (3.2m). In other words, one can reach that level from inside (from the main hall) and from outside (from the stepped street and intermediary piazza).

From that level, one can ascend to the 2nd and 3rd exhibition levels, and continue the journey to the roof, then to the roof piazza at (13.5m) where the workshops mezzanine is located, and continue further up to the open air theatre.

One can also access the 3rd exhibition level (10.6m) and its outdoor sculptures and installations extension from the roof. This is actually overlooking the intermediary exhibition level (6.9m) that can be either isolated or reached through the spiral stairs and accompanying elevator. The result is an intermediary exhibition level offering 2 ceiling heights: 7m and 3.7m.

Natural light is provided to certain exhibition areas: from the skylight covering the ramp, or filtered by vertical sun breakers from the Western glass wall and Eastern glass wall at roof level, or from the indirect clerestory light on the Western side, or finally from the light cylinder at the highest level.

The documentation center is provided with appropriate seclusion conducive to reading and research, isolated from noise. Located at 6.9m, and extended with a mezzanine, it is accessed either from the upper street or from inside the center.

All the reading spaces of the public and of researchers benefit from the Northwestern natural light. The book shelves are located on two floors, the upper row being accessible with a balcony surrounding the central space. On that upper space, one finds a reading lounge and the offices that take their light from the Eastern side above the public ramp.

On the West side, **street shops** (level 3.2) can be leased also for exhibition (with storage or extension at level 0).

The cinémathèque is accessed from 2 levels: from the main hall and from the middle piazza at 3.2m. Extra storage space can be provided in the basement.

Facing the high-speed ring road south, the elevated **workshops** showcase the creative life taking place in the building. By day and night, they display the long hours of hard and joyful work. However, the artists are not isolated: the folding roof on the northern side provides them with the beneficial encounter with visitors invited to the sculpture garden and the upper terrace that plunges into the arts workshops.

Structure

The structural system is concrete posts, beams and slabs, a technique that is mastered quite well in the country. The large performance hall, the spaces surmounting it and the roof above are carried by the bearing walls. Lines of structure (80 cm for the large hall, 60cm for the small hall) encompass the bearing walls and the acoustic panels.

Enough height is secured where long spans require drop beams.

Green roofs

The design can accommodate a more detailed green roof solution in extending the green areas along the offered public space. The development would address the use of such answers for the insulation of the building envelop, while being an appropriate solution for water collection.