

## ARCHITECTURAL BRIEF

### PREMISES

Wishing to explore and propose a kind of architecture that could enhance exchange and interaction, not conventional neither monumental, the development of the concept design for this competition has been carried on with great interest, being fully aware of the complexity the idea of realising an innovative incubator for Arts and Cultures (MAC- the Lebanese-Omani centre) holds, both in terms of contents and for the indispensable comparison with the always transforming urban context.

The adopted design attitude gathers the prescriptions contained in the competition bid and in its annexes, both for the proposals and the functional organigram, that has been translated in architectural forms. A further notation regards the normative prescriptions (volumetries, heights and elevations) contained in the master plan of reference and the BCD regulations.

Finally, some “guide-concepts” are listed in order to trace a general design portrait:

- **Relationship with the context**, both the physical one, intended as the urban surroundings in which the building is inserted, and the more enlarged historical and social context;
- **Visibility and accessibility**, determined by a clear, usable, and comprehensible planimetric disposition of the volumes;
- Attention at the project **scale**;
- **Higher moments alternated to pauses**, in order to elaborate a recognisable and representative architecture, able of creating a new identity for the city;
- Sharp use of the “**joint motif**”, that is expressed in the articulation of the plans;
- **Antinomy horizontality - verticality**.

### CONTEXT, PLANIMETRIC CHOICES AND URBAN DIMENSION

The design plot is situated along a highway, that constitutes the boundary of the sector of the city that is under reconstruction and valorisation that preserves a certain uniformity of the urban structure, characterised by a kind of edification in blocks or courtyards with continuous elevations and some higher buildings (the landmark project and the other two towers that symbolises the entrance to the historical centre).

On the contextualization perspective, the project research a coherent insertion in the plan of urban reconfiguration: the project, according to the volumetric prescriptions and the planning regulations, previews an element characterised by a prevalent horizontal layout, that lays on the surface of the plot, exploiting the natural configuration of the ground (the existing difference in level between Ghalgohoul street and the General Fouad Chehab service road is preserved and characterises the building) and another element characterised by a vertical light development, that sustains a second horizontal plate (with the elevation of +33,8 m), that flying in the void, grants the perception and the identification of the project also from faraway and from who drives on the Ring.

The high building dialogues with the closer surroundings, both with the blocks and the towers - with whom it is not competing -, maintaining its own identity and a certain structural audacity, and represents the highest peak of the new settlement that is endowed with recognisability and visibility without being monumental. It is the landmark that refers to an hypogeous building.

The horizontal ground element, represents a moment of pause in the project, is characterised by compact elevations (for three sides) in the attempt of being in continuity with the typology of the existing buildings. Its roof is, on the contrary, particularly articulated and is integrated in the system of open spaces of the city, being a very true "urban terrace", permeable and welcoming, accessible from the South-West side by a large tier, usable by the city-centre users and the other citizens. The terrace can also be used as open space for sculpture temporary exhibitions.

As for the materials, there is an alternation of paved areas and grass and tree-planted areas.

Moreover, the shed skylights that light the space for exhibition that is situated below the terrace, are integrated organically with the roof through an undulated green carpet. The presence of an open courtyard and of some glass patios, interrupts the continuity of the covering involucres, favouring the entrance of natural light in the inner spaces and creating a sort of permeability between inside spaces and external environment.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The complexity of the articulation of the internal functions do not compromises the clearness of the planimetry, favouring an easy usage of the building.

More in general, analysing the distributive system that organises the building, as for the pedestrian access, it has been decided to favour the side on Ghalgohoul street, in correspondence of the existing garden, while for the car access to the underground parking it has been chosen the connection street between the Ghalgohoul street and the General Fouad Chahab. This solution appeared as the most rational with respect to the traffic fluxes.

Despite the diversification of the functions hosted, from the performance halls to the research, documentation and studying rooms, the unitary of the intervention has been privileged, in order to preserve the global configuration of the House of Arts and Cultures. This attitude is not translated into a of the undifferentiated treatment of the surfaces and the involucres of the building.

The *horizontal ground element* is composed by four sides that, despite having the same cladding, are characterised by plastic elements, that define them according to a precise hierarchy. The North-East elevation, constituted by a curve wall that favours the North-West car access to the parking, contains the principle entrance to the complex, constituted by a glass wall and by a cantilever roof. The South-West elevation is identified by the access tier to the garden-roof; the South-East side is characterised by a glass court, that lights the entrance hall and the performance halls' foyers and can be used, if necessary, as independent access to the performance halls themselves.

The *horizontal sky element* is characterised by more hermetic and linear facades on the North-East side, because of their specific functions (sound-proofing rooms); and by glass and more articulated facades on the South-West and South-East sides, along the Ring. These elevations are characterised by wooden brise-soleil in order to fragment shadows and light the volumes, together with inner micro-climatic comfort.

Finally, the *vertical element* is defined by a system of two parting walls, that contains the elevators and brings the stairs, surrounded by a glass involucres. These parting walls are the structure of the horizontal sky element, as shown in the tridimensional views.

As for the functional distribution of the plans, it is necessary a more detailed description.

In general, the horizontal ground element and its underground plans, contains the performance halls and the conferences rooms, the exposition and commercial spaces, the national cinemateque, the administration, the parking and the technical rooms into the underground plans.

On the other side, the horizontal sky element, hold the documentation centre and the studying and formation rooms. These two parts of the building are physically linked by the vertical element that contains elevators, goods lifts and stairs: it constitutes the connection point, the distribution element to the inner spaces and the access to the roof garden.

In particular, the principal entrance to the building is collocated on the Ghalgohoul street side and it is constituted by a double height hall, which contains all reception services (tickets and information spaces) and intermediate floors with the a restoration room and the bookshop. The entrance hall permits also the access to the restaurant (with a second access by the Ghalgohoul street ), to the parking control room and to the large and small performances halls foyers. Both the performances halls are flexible and modular spaces. In particular, the large performance hall, with an height of 20 m, is partially underground and presents a second access at -16.40 mt. This disposition permits also a easy accessibility to the delivery area for the transport of the theatre equipments and sets.

This hall, with a capacity of 800 seats, is characterised by an absolute flexibility that make it transformable and adaptable to all spectacles typology. In fact its inner configuration is constituted from 8 mobile plates that divide the performance hall surface: these plates function through a mechanism that occupy the 5 underground floor below the performance hall, and permits each plate to go up and down according the different spettacles. So, the stage can have different positions and dimensions. It can be in the centre or at the side of the hall and, at the same time, it can change elevations according to different needs. Moreover, also the tiers of seats are moveable, in order to free the plates, if necessary. The seats are endowed with a pivot pin that allows the different members of the audience to assume a orientation according to the stage position, on the side or at the centre of the performance hall. Finally there are also two lateral platforms at different elevations, to favour the view of the performances, if the stage is in the centre.

The first floor contains commercial spaces and the administration offices, while at the second floor it is possible to find the cinema and Lebanese cinemateque in which the conservation and the restorations activities take place, and the different exhibition spaces linked through a common foyers.

In particular, the hall for the temporary exhibition is an neutral, unitary and divisible space, 5 mt. high, that can be configured in different ways according to the various expositions. The natural lighting is granted by the presents of a shed skylight roof, properly oriented to the North.

The six underground floors contain technical rooms, the deliveries for the performance halls equipments, services spaces and parking with a total surface of 7800 sqm.

At -4.10 mt. level, close to the large performance hall and under the small performance hall, the changing rooms for the actors, with a reserved foyer, are collocated.

As for the horizontal sky element, there can be found, at the first level the laboratories of formation and audio-video production, while at the second level, there is a centre of documentation of the contemporary arts, with its stockage, conservation, consultation and studies rooms.

This plate can be accessible also independently through the garden roof.

## CONSTRUCTING TECHNICS AND MATERIALS

The design choices, as the correct orientation and the building shape, has been verified in order to get advance from a correct bioclimatic setting, based on the analysis of the physical features of the place. A particular attention has been given to the performances of the involucre.

As for the materials, all the choices has been oriented towards the sustainability of the whole complex, like a low emissivity double glass for the glass walls, the anti-crash coat with finishing in plaster for the external walls, and zincum-titanium finishing for the structural walls.

The reduction of the thermal load that depends from the external overheating is also granted by the use of green roofs (for both the ground and the sky element), that favour the natural cooling through vaporized-transpiration.

As for the transparent involucre it is previewed the utilization of natural systems (the green) and through external artificial system (brise soleil and curtains )for controlling solar radiation.