

Arzet Libnan - The Tree of Culture

A symbol of the creative movements of Lebanon.

The cultural roots of Lebanon are strong and reach far back in history to the cradle of modern society. Today the art and culture scene in Lebanon is as vibrant and the creative movement as strong as ever, just like a Lebanese Arz - the Cedar tree, that raises from the rich mould of its cultural inheritance.

We imagine the House of Art and Culture as a strong tree growing and spreading its fresh leaves of creativity, nourished by the roots of the Lebanese art scene.

The House of Arts and Culture will accommodate this vibrant scene, and become the new heart of the area, a gathering point for the people of Beirut.

Like the Cedar trees in the mountains of Barouk and Bsharri the house will offer shelter and a place to exchange visions and ideas, the people will gather by its foot, the roots will reach deep into the nourishing underground of the Lebanese art and culture scene. And its fruits can be enjoyed in the shape of music, art exhibitions and theatre.

A tree like this needs the openness of a garden or a public plaza from which it can grow and explore new areas and levels of creativity.

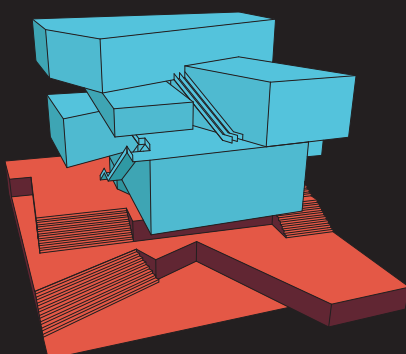
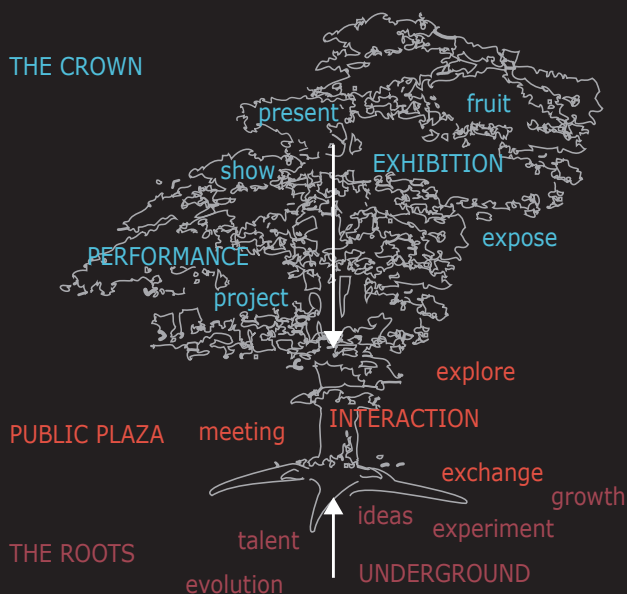
Positively the house will act as a catalyst and become a new urban attractor for the city and the art and culture scene worldwide. In Beirut a new public space is formed, a new venue for the informal meeting between people, their arts and culture.

Idea

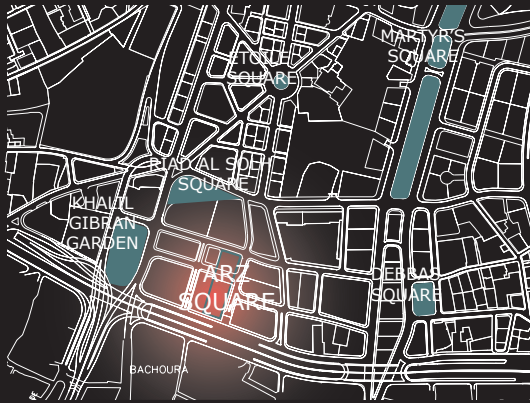
The house is a large sculptural form rising from a base, and like a tree it is wrapped in a thin shading leaf-like structure that allows light and air to pass, and through which you see the building rising. The surface of the base is a public plaza that in one floating movement connects the different levels of the surroundings. To the east side where a constant stream of people float in and out of the building, the Plaza is an outdoor space, only shaded by the façade structure. To the west side it is closed off with glass, so the books of the reading lounge and the artist foyers are protected. This building envelope is a flexible structure and its openness is adjusted to the movement of the sun.

The organization of the house consist of three principal elements: the Tree, the Plaza and the Plinth.

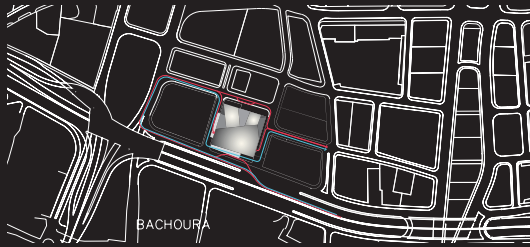
- The Plinth is where the arts and crafts are developed, learned, tested, studied, and stored.
- The crown of the Tree is where the finished results are performed, exposed and displayed. In between is the Plaza, a great public space.
- The Plaza is a forum for exchange of ideas, a space for the free lecture, concert, dance, play, exhibition, storytelling, poetry slam, fashion show, the free initiatives, etc. This is an informal communal meeting area for the people of Beirut and an attractor for international visitors.



THE CROWN THE PLAZA THE PLINTH



A NEW SQUARE - THE ARZ SQUARE



TRAFIC BY CAR & DELIVERY

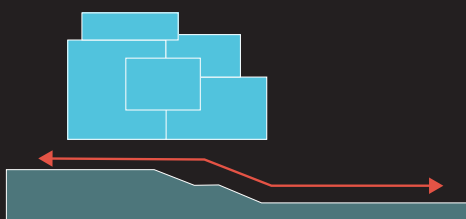
The vitality of the program and the exposure of changing use of spaces puts the house in constant transition. Like a living plant it continues to produce and generate cultural offers. The flexibility of functions shapes the spaces and organization of the house. With the help from modern technologies the house can transform and become an open platform for the future scene of arts and culture.

Site specifics

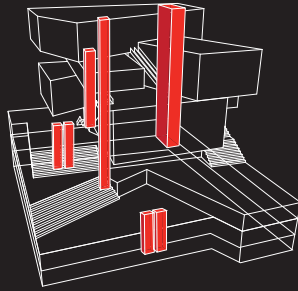
The location of the site being a part of Downtown Beirut, and at the same time directly connected to the 'Ring' Road, makes the house visible and easily accessible for the entire city. The façade is used to expose the dynamic inside of the house. From Downtown Beirut the site is reached from the Riad el Solh Square, which connects to The Arz Plaza of the house. From the 'Ring' Road the house function as a billboard catching a moment of attention from the traffic passing by.

Visitor Walk through

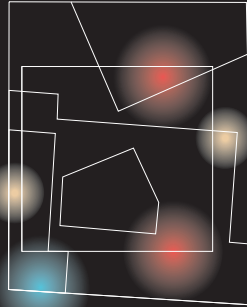
Like no other plaza in Beirut, The Arz Plaza encourage you to interact. From the first step you are already a part of the play that takes place under the shades of the Culture Tree. 'Under the shades' is where people meet, as it has always been. Under the shades is where the house, it's users and visitors interact. Entering the main entrance you find the information desk and access to the Cinematheque, workshop and training rooms. From the main entrance a grand stair leads you to the next level of the plaza. Here you can step off the grand stair and enter the Documentation Centre or read a book in the reading lounge on this level of the plaza. In the background a poetry slammer gives his version of a story to a small crowd that sits on the steps creating an informal auditorium by the window. From the Documentation level the grand stairs continues to the ticket, shop and cafeteria level. A contemporary art installation is reorganizing the cafeteria area. Behind the shops and restrooms towards the 'Ring' Road a school class is setting up a photo exhibition. Their teacher is having a break and coffee in the cafeteria. Outside by the 'Ring' Road is a drop off zone. From here you enter the Plaza and have a nice overview down the grand stair towards the opposite entrance and downtown Beirut. In the open space above the Plaza a huge art installation is hanging down moving slightly in the breeze, the space impresses by being so high. To the left the large sculptural building form rises. Like a tree it climbs all the way to the roof with thick branches sticking out here and there. A delicate and long escalator takes you up the tree. But to climb the tree a ticket is necessary. This is where the public Plaza ends.



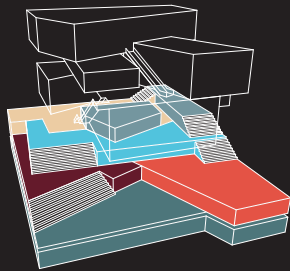
THE ARZ PLAZA RUNNING THROUGH BUILDING



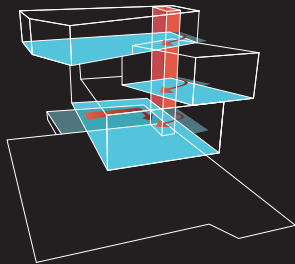
VERTICAL CIRCULATION BY LIFTS
UNDERGROUND PARKING



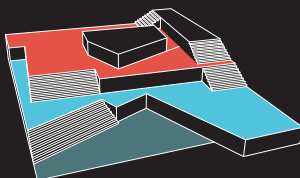
PUBLIC ENTRY DELIVERY STAFF ENTRY



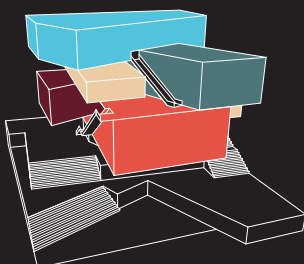
SHOPS & CAFETERIA STORAGE
DOCUMENTATION CENTRE CINEMATHEQUE
WORK & TRAINING ROOMS UNDER-
GROUND PARKING



LIFT STAGE/EXHIBITION LOADINGDOCK



CAFETERIA/SHOPS DOCUMENTATION
CENTRE INFORMATION



EXHIBITION BLACKBOX CINEMA
ADMINISTRATION BIG HALL

The first stop on the escalator is the entrance platform to the big performance hall. There is also an entrance platform at the opposite side of the hall which is reached by stairs from the Plaza.

The escalator continues to the upper performance foyer. From here you overlook the Riad el Solh Square towards the Mediterranean. The foyer is like an intimate terrace in the large Tree of Culture. From here you enter the small performance hall, the movie theatre and the balcony of the big performance hall. The upper performance foyer is directly connected to the exhibition and lounge area on top by an escalator. Standing in the exhibition lounge you are on the top of the sculptural Tree of Culture, from here you have the perfect view of the city to the mountains facing south and towards the sea to the north.

Artist Walk through

Staff and artists have their own entrance on the Westside of the building. As an artist you enter the base by the staff entrance to the west of the building. From here you take the elevator or staircase directly to the artist areas above. The dressing rooms are located to the west side of the hall in two levels spanning between the two performance halls. Above the dressing rooms is a flexible space where the artists can meet or warm up before entering the stage.

Principal elements of the building

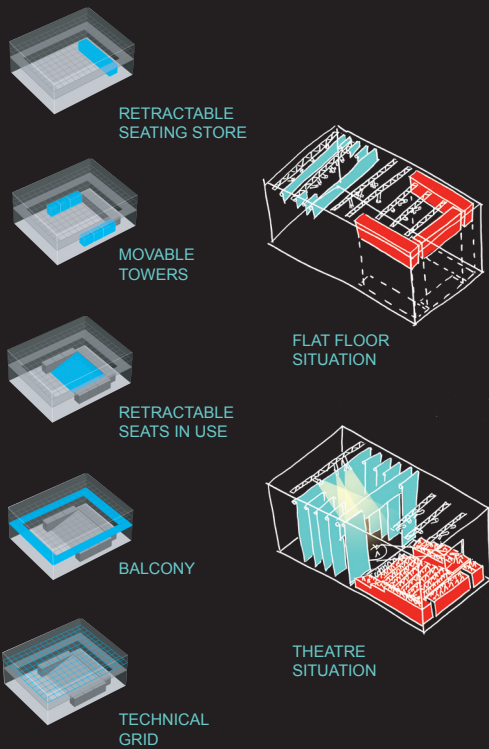
The Plinth is the base of the building and consists of the workshop and training rooms, the National Cinematheque, staff area, storage and delivery. This part of the building has its own entries and can function independently of the rest of the house. The workshop and training rooms are directly connected to the reception hall and reached by passing the information desk.

At the back of the Plinth under the entrance level from the 'Ring' road is the loading dock and delivery area. Directly connected to the loading dock is the storage and the great equipment lift that service the performance halls and exhibition.

The Plaza is a great public space. The Arz Plaza is a forum for exchange of ideas and where the house interacts. The Plaza is split into three levels, a level of information, a level of documentation center and a level of cafeteria, shops and tickets. At all three levels the free surfaces and stairs can be used for creativity of all kinds.

The Tree is a gathering of boxes, inside the boxes the different program takes place. Outside on the surfaces people meet in foyer, lounge and meeting areas.

The Tree is formed by the performance halls, upper foyer, the movie theatre, the exhibition and administration area.



The performance halls

The multi-functional performance halls is conceived as rectangular spaces. The big performance hall has a fly tower and mobile floor, the small performance hall is a black box. Both halls are equipped with a number of mobile components as mobile platform towers, mobile stepped podia and retractable theatre seats which will create very flexible performance halls, allowing for a number of stage and audience layouts.

The Exhibition area is a modular space where light walls fit in a grid that allow them to shuffle and adjust to different shows. The exhibition space has the possibility of skylight and exclusive view to the city, but can also become a space of complete darkness for video art etc.

The Administration is an open glass structure, reached directly from the staff entrance by stairs or elevator or from the public plaza below. The office of the director is overlooking the cultural plaza in front of the main entrance.

Technical solutions

The number of different spaces which each have specific environmental requirements and varying energy demands a solution for each. A key part of that, is staging the environmental treatment. The outer façade will create a shaded area which, thanks to the materials and the water features, shall be cooler than the surrounding temperatures in summer. On entering the building, the circulation spaces will be maintained at a cooler, more comfortable temperature still so that there are two layers of buffer between outside and each space. Finally, the rooms themselves will be controlled to the required conditions. In addition to ensuring that energy is not wasted in use, it is important that heat and cold are generated as efficiently as possible. For much of the year, night cooling will work very effectively and, during the summer it could be used to reduce peak demands.

Low and zero carbon technologies will be applied. Solar thermal heat generation will be used to supply the high hot water demands. Ground source cooling will be investigated in line with the ground conditions and foundation solution. Although rainfall is not heavy in Beirut, over the year, there is enough to consider rainwater harvesting. This could be used in irrigation or WC flushing. Due to the high number of visitors, water demand will be high at peak periods and it will be sensible to consider a grey-water recycling system for WC flushing.

- Lightweight 'canopy' of structural steel elements to frame the complete volume and provide a surface to support the cladding.
- Above ground accommodation contained within a series of 'branch' box elements, cantilevering from the cores. Deep beams of reinforced concrete balanced by back spans, transferring shear to the supports.
- Reinforced Concrete 'Trunk' cores providing primary support and lateral stability for the superstructure. Loads balanced on a symmetrical placement of cores.

