

The concept

The “House of Arts and Culture” is a monument dedicated to all the Lebanese Artists whether dead or alive. Every artist that has passed away will be allocated a square on the outer skin of the building in which his name will appear in Arabic and in English carved through the material of the square so as to create an effect of “moucharabieh” the famous perforated wooden screen that used to adorn the facades of all Arab cities.

Every performer in the “House of Arts and Culture” will be given a square, or more if needed, on the outer skin of the building in which his performance name and dates will be advertised during the event. This way the performer will feel he belongs to the community of all Lebanese Artists.

The building outer skin will therefore be interactive and more there will be events and more the façade will glow differently because at night the “events” squares will be lit differently and the names will appear.

In case a tribute is made to a dead artist, one of his play or movie is run or a posthumous exhibition etc..... His square will glitter all during the event in a special color.

At the death of an artist, a ceremony will be organized to install his square: No Lebanese artist will ever be mistreated, forgotten,... He will be always remembered, because present on the “House”.

The “House of Arts and Culture” is a monument dedicated to all the intellectuals in Lebanon and the Arab World. Their pride – the men who built up their body of culture, or a part of it, will be for ever on the “billboard” of the “House of Arts and Culture”. It will be at last recognized as such, a culture that counts within World culture.

The “House of Arts and Culture” is a monument dedicated to all the Lebanese citizens as the artists of all the communities will be represented and will share the same walls, the four walls constituting the façade of the building.

The “House of Arts and Culture” will not be an extravagant architectural building in the Solidere area: It will be a very simple cube that will become more and more transparent following the increase in number of the artistic community and following the number of events running the building.

The administration running the “House of Arts and Culture” can not stay inactive: it will show on the façade of the building (!) as its glow will stay unchanged: The building will be the torch of a transparent administration.

If the building stops glowing it will mean the death of Lebanon: The people of Lebanon will understand that through culture they can make the “concept of Lebanon” survive. I believe this was the aim of the Omani sponsors of the building.

The Building

1. The building as seen by the user

The Building as seen by the user will sense a feel of awe while entering the building. He will try to deepen his culture and get closer to the artistic community which names appear all around him. He will be able to read the names and enlarge his knowledge and his curiosity by researching some names he had forgotten or overlooked.

On the ground floor, he can get all sorts of information through the billboard or the information desk.

Facing him are the three exhibition halls that can become one hall. As the back of the building is still underground due to the topography the three halls will be artificially illuminated. There will be skylights that could let natural light come in if the exhibitor requires natural lighting.

Going out of the exhibition halls, he will see the escalators leading to the Large Performance Hall and the cafeteria/restaurant overlooking the entrance hall. The main performance hall can be reached at three levels to dilute the crowds and fill all floors of the building and thus penetrating deeper and deeper in the "Culture" of the building from the external openings the user will have a view to the outer skin of the building with the names of the artists. All internal walls will be adorned with cultural objects: texts, paintings, continuous projection, etc....

At first floor, the user can go out under the amphitheater to the screened terrace overlooking the back garden and punctured by the skylights illuminating the exhibition on halls through the southern light filtered by the screen. This terrace can be used as a semi external sculpture garden.

Around the transparent public stairs, there will be a restaurant/bar to service the Large Performance Hall at intermissions. The main restaurant is at this floor because when the main performance hall is not in use, this floor will be animated by the restaurant and the sculpture garden.

In case of a major tribute diner, the restaurant could extend on the whole floor.

On second floor, the user can enter the middle level of the performance hall or the two small meeting rooms also serviced by a bar that will open only during performances and when meeting rooms are used.

First, second and third floor a boutique of 30m² will be placed behind the elevators. The boutique will open during performances of the Large Performance Hall to permit the user to buy related objects to the performance and to the House of Arts & Culture.

On third floor, the user will reach the up most level of the Large Performance Hall. On this floor, he will find all the major workshops: the three theater workshops and the dance workshop.

On fourth floor, the user can reach the library on the northern side of the building, the movie theater and all the activities related to cinema: the audio-visual service, the national cinemathèque administration and its storage rooms and the technical workshops and class rooms such as sound studios, cinema and video editing, photo labs, computer rooms ...

On fifth floor, the user will reach the Small Multimedia Hall and the Roof Restaurant. The general management will be overlooking the roof garden.

2. The Building as seen by the artist

On the northern façade, there is a vertical circulation shaft that leads to both performance halls and to the dressing rooms from the parking of the entrance level. When the performer enters the cube from his special elevator he will feel that he belongs to the Art community and that one day he could belong to the “House”.

3. The building services

- All restaurants, bars, etc... are all linked by a service elevator and a service stair down to the parking delivery area and up to the roof restaurant.
- A fire escape stair is available on the south west corner at all floors and will reach the ground at the sculpture terrace.

The “Square”

The building is all about the 1.40 x 1.40cm squares that form the façade.

a- The material

The material could be stone 5cm thick on which the artist’s name can be perforated in a calligraphic way or as his real signature etc... It could alternatively be 1cm perforated metal as well. The use of stone would be a tribute to the Lebanese masons who built Lebanon and are all autodidact sculptors. The use of metal will be a tribute as well to the Lebanese metal workers who are also in a way autodidact sculptor.

b- The writing on the square

1 – The writing on the square can be seen from outside and mirror image from inside. The external pedestrian or the driver on the Ring Road can read the words. The building user cannot read the words.

2 – The writing on the square can be seen from inside and mirror image from outside. The building user can read the words and see the city through the names of the artists as if he could understand the city and “inextenso” the world through the eyes of the artist.

3 – The squares are doubled: one written outside and one read from inside with special lights in between so that the readability works both ways.

This alternative is our choice: VISION OF CULTURE FROM WITHIN AND PRESENCE OF CULTURE IN THE CITY.

c- The number of squares

If we chose to have a module of 140 x 140cm we will have 2567 names (in case the number is deemed too small we could have a module of 70 x 70cm), and therefore 10268 names. Our preference is 140 x 140cm. When all the squares are full the House of Art and Culture would have proven to have been a successful endeavor.

d- The names on the squares

There will be a kind of referendum through internet, for example, all over Lebanon asking all people to fill the names of all the foregone artists they deem significant to the Lebanese culture. The artists who have been chosen by significant number of people will have his name on a square.

This choice will be certified by a committee named or elected by The “House of Arts and Culture” administration.

This way the people of Lebanon would have participated actively to the building of his “House of Arts and Culture”. Isn’t it the aim of this whole project? INTERACTIVE BUILDING AND RECOGNITION OF THE ARTS AND CULTURE IN LEBANON.

For the names that are to be added subsequently, the committee will meet and vote for every addition, thus creating an event and provoking discussions about Art and Culture across the country.

Isn’t it the aim of the whole project? INTERACTIVE CULTURE ACROSS LEBANON.