

The HOUSE OF ARTS & CULTURE

The Lebanese-Omani Centre

The Cultural Centre is enveloped by a membrane within which the actual building rests, intersecting it at various places, thus propped as though it were a delicately set gem around and through which light penetrates, defining relationships between the membrane's surfaces and the building's "suspended" volume. Entrance to the Centre is gained via a hidden plaza that is directly accessible from Avenue du General Fouad Cheab (at the 3.5 m level), and from Rue du Ghalghoul, using a slightly sloping ramp.

The external skin is both perforated and decorated with text, the deploying the grand tradition in Islamic culture of the beautiful script where every character is a singular work of art. We have chosen a passage about beauty as a universally appreciable and valued concept, from Kahlil Gibran's "The Prophet":

All these things have you said of beauty.

Yet in truth you spoke not of her needs unsatisfied,

And beauty is not a need but an ecstasy.

It is not a mouth thirsting nor an empty hand stretched forth,

But rather a heart enflamed and a soul enchanted.

*It is not the image you would see nor the song you would hear,
But rather an image you see though you close your eyes and a song you hear though you shut
your ears.*

*It is not the sap within the furrowed bark, nor a wing attached to a claw,
But rather a garden forever in bloom and a flock of angels for ever in flight.*

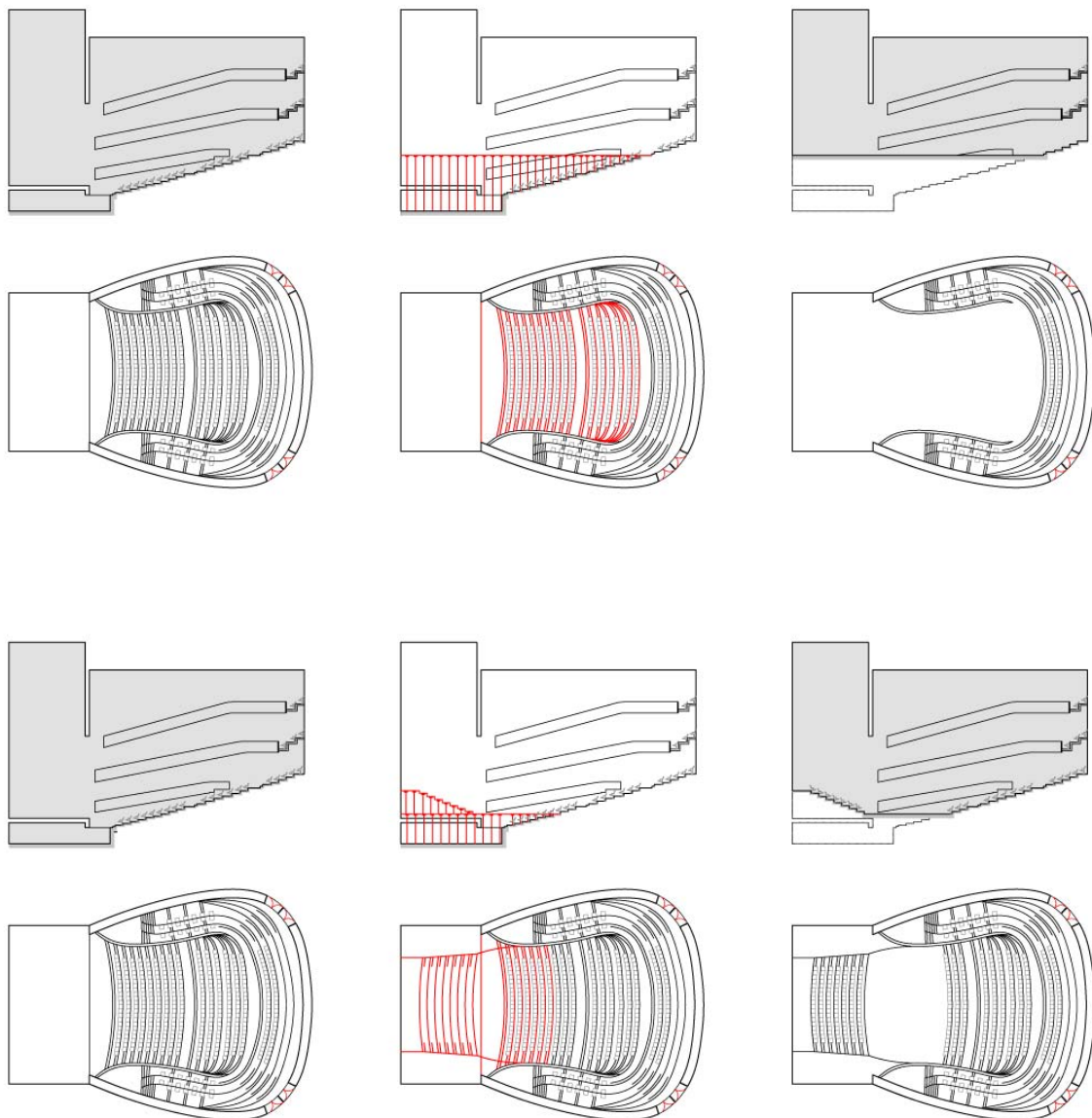
We would clearly welcome and defer to the Commission's thoughts on alternative selections.

The surface treatment of this envelope, and the occasional perforations in line with the script, create a tremendous play of light and shadows within the Centre's complex.

The function requiring the largest surface is placed at the centre of the complex, thus defining the distribution of the spaces, and the circulation around it. In fact, the main theatre, at the centre, is a suspended mass above the Hall (or Lobby); the stairs are articulated around it, at its contours. The two smaller theatres are placed below ground, beneath the main Hall. This prevents our building from becoming exceedingly tall and domeneering; but, rather, makes it more proportioned to the surrounding context. The Exhibition Hall, positioned at the top, is a completely glassed-in volume

that can be entirely shaded, if required. In fact, the external skin at this level folds inwards, thus creating a covered terrace that surrounds the Exhibition Hall, and which can be conveniently used as an events venue “al fresco”.

The main Theatre is circular in form, and is composed of the main floor, and two galleries above it. By use of moveable hydraulic platforms, this space can be transformed from a traditional theatre into an auditorium or a conference hall, all at the same, even level – thus becoming a multi-purpose space.



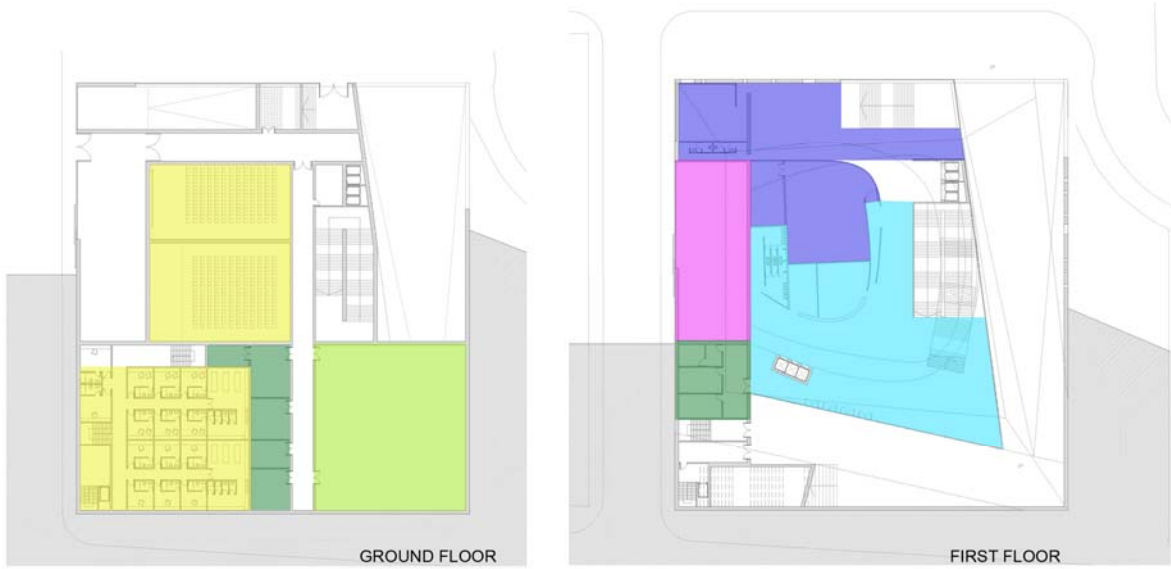
DIFFERENT SCHEMES FOR THE THEATRE SPACE

The restaurant and bookshop are placed along the Rue du Ghalghoul, and can be directly accessed from this street.

The administrative offices, the Document Centre, the film library, and the working and training spaces are located along the north and south perimeter; whereas the tower for scenic props, the changing rooms and the access to the garage and technical areas are located along the western facade.

It should be noted that the building, protected as it is by this external “envelope”, is an environmentally-sensitive plan. In fact, the southern and western exposures are completely shielded – the former, by the envelope’s skin which protects the glass facade immediately behind it both from the intensity of the sun as well as the noise of the street; the latter, by the natural solidness of volume given the theatre’s rear and the prop tower (the only opening on this western facade is the huge portal for delivery access of the large scenic props).

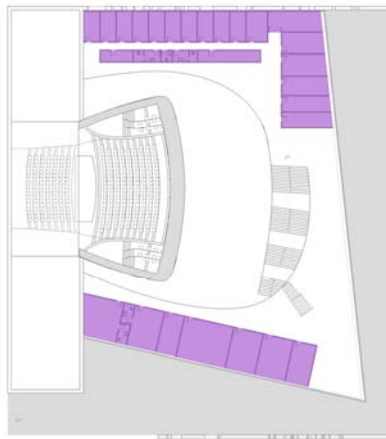
In fact, the overall massive, almost inert, composition of the austere exteriors, decorated only with script from a poem by Lebanon’s preferred poet, actually lend protection to what are surprisingly light and airy interiors, as though these have somehow been dematerialized by hidden yet constant forces of movement represented by the major traffic artery nearby.



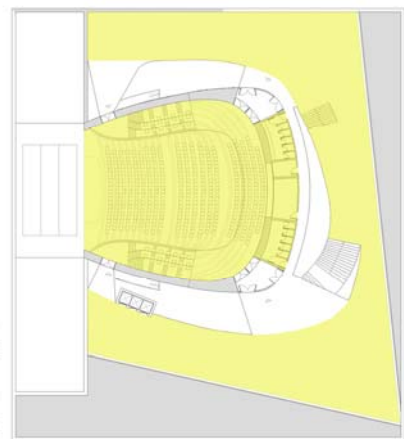
GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR

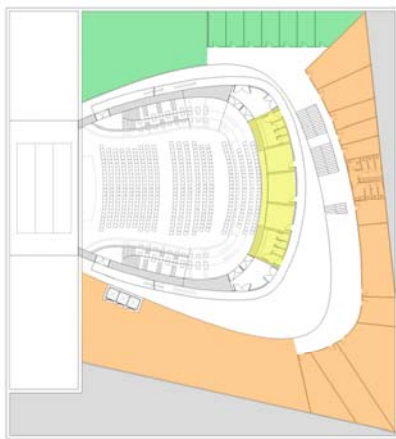
- A** Reception, information
- B** Performance and Conference hall
- C** Exhibition spaces
- D** Work and training rooms
- E** Documentation centre
- F** Cinematheque
- G** Cafeteria and commercial spaces
- H** Administration
- I** Miscellaneous spaces
- J** Technical rooms
- K** Parking and delivery



SECOND FLOOR



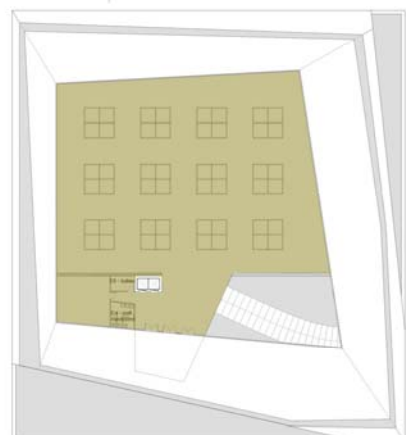
THIRD FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR



FIFTH FLOOR



SIXTH FLOOR

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