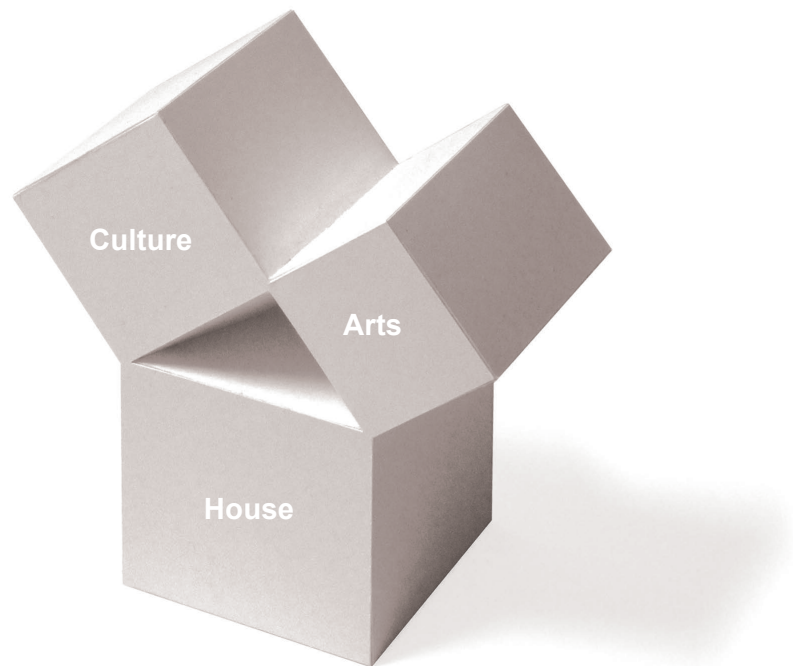


Beirut House of Arts and Culture Competition

# MAISON

Introduction text

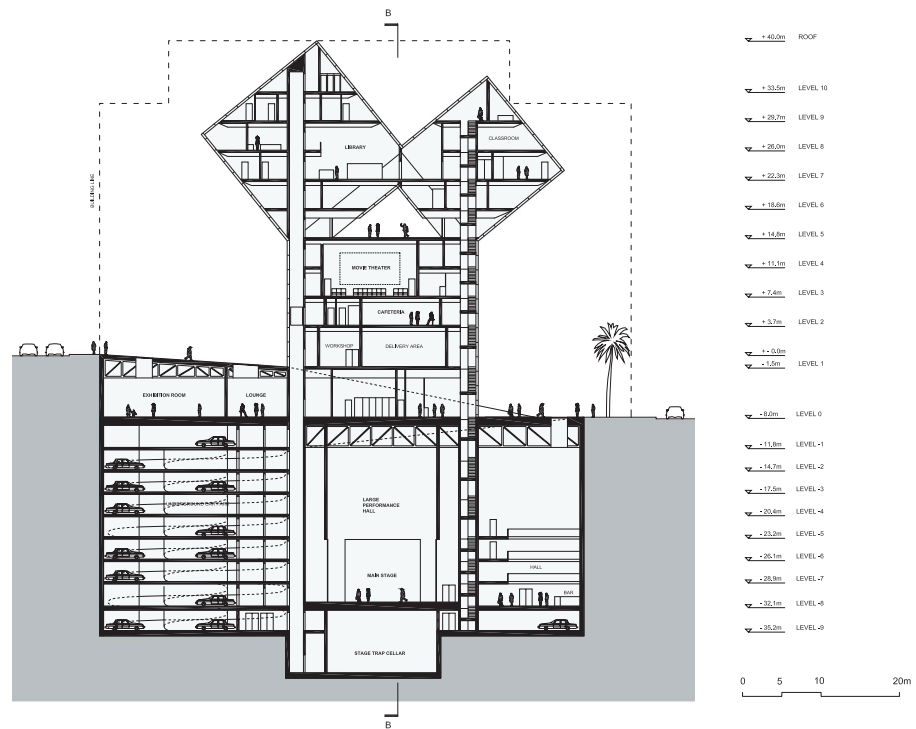


The project re-uses the symbolic morphology of the archetypal House (or “Maison” in French), as a way to organize this major cultural venue in a coherent way regarding program, light, and public space. The upper part of the building is composed of three main volumes that respectively contain Artistic, Cultural, and House-related amenities, and which are linked by a large, pitch roof-like, triangular void. In order to symbolize the dissemination of Art and Culture as the main purpose of the structure, the void is conceived as an incubator that fosters transdisciplinary exchanges by physically connecting the various programmatic elements. As an observatory of the city of Beirut for the visitors of the House, this void becomes not only a well-shaded outdoor exhibition space, but also an allegory of the key to the future that the House of Arts and Culture represents for Beirut.



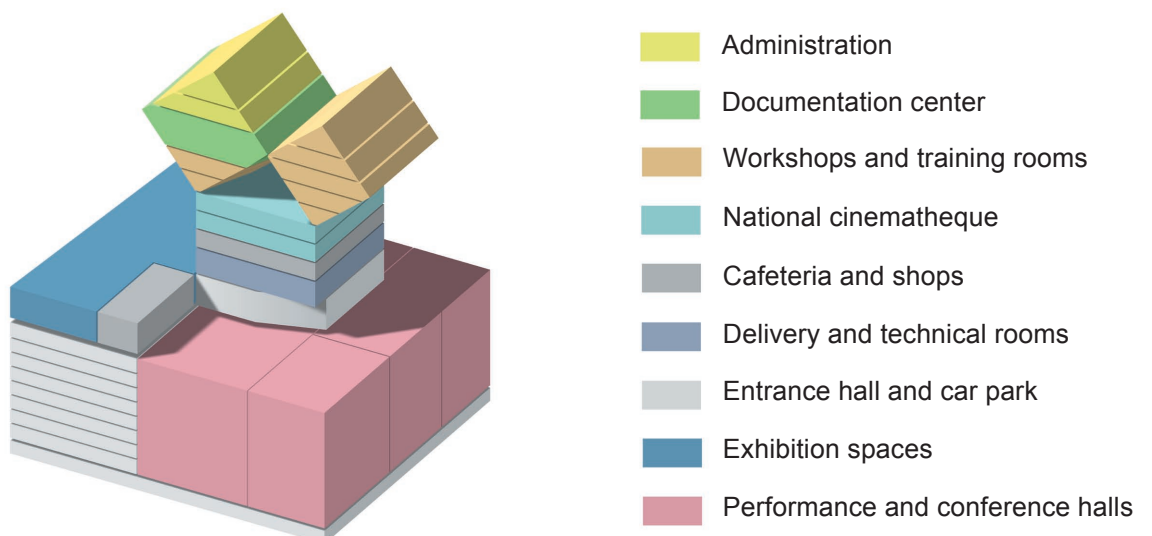
View of the House from the south-west

## Cross section



In addition, the proposed hollowed morphology presents functional and sustainable advantages. By increasing the facade area, it also increases the possibility for natural light to penetrate the building. And by creating a shaded hole through which air can freely flow, it induces a natural cooling system that optimizes the natural ventilation of the building, thus reducing its dependency on air conditioning. Moreover, the project takes into consideration the future settlement of relatively tall buildings on neighboring plots, and proposes to keep a fair distance from them by setting its main element in the very center of the plot, so as to guarantee the building sufficient sun light. This liberation of peripheral ground level space strengthens the “House” metaphor, and welcomes visitors with a generous public space all around it. Structurally, two continuous concrete circulation cores support the edifice and connect all the various disciplines from the bottom to the top.

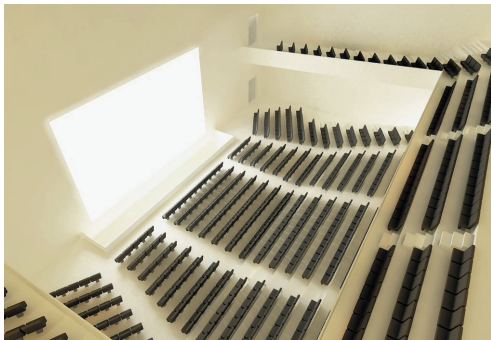
## Program distribution



Since the plot has no height limitation below the ground, the main performance halls are sunken into the depth of the plot, which liberates the ground level for public space and light. A simple rectangular shape is used for the plan of the large performance hall, so that its layout can easily be reconfigured into either a dance performance venue with an audience facing directly the main stage, a congress hall making full use of the space in a radial pattern, or a music concert hall where the main stage occupies a more central position within the hall, for a more intimate relationship with the audience. To allow for smooth transition between each setting, the seats are fixed onto removable steps which can be re-used for the various configurations. The large exhibition hall is designed as a step into the sloping topography of the site (East-West), so as to optimize the use of natural light to gently illuminate the art with a series of light wells on its roof.



Exhibition room



Large performance hall

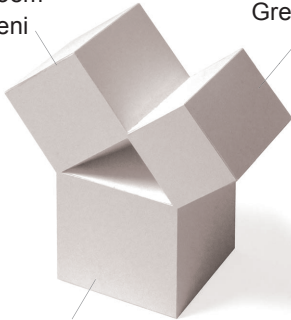
In terms of textures, each of the three main volumes is wrapped in glass, with a second metallic skin whose perforated pattern samples a poem in Arabic by Lebanese poet Elia Abu Madhi for the main House block, a poem in French by Lebanese poet Nadia Tueni for the Culture block, and a poem in ancient Greek by Greek poet Sappho for the Arts block (as a reference to the Greek foundation of Beirut and its nearby archeological sites). Thus the House becomes a symbol of unity and specificity, expressing both the regional and international character of the culture of Beirut.



Balcony view and building textures

**BEYROUGH**  
Lebanese Poem  
by Nadia Tueni

**Ἰμμες**  
Greek Poem by Sappho



**الحجر الصغير**  
Lebanese Poem by Elia Abu Madhi