



THE HOUSE OF ARTS AND CULTURE

The Lebanese-Omani Centre

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This proposal for the future House of Arts and Culture in Beirut presents itself as the motor of the arts and cultural life of Beirut with its dynamic form, external / internal spatial composition, functionality and use of low-energy technology. Its form as well as its functions clearly distinguish it from the rest of the structures around it and thus serve to make it an attractive focal point of the city.

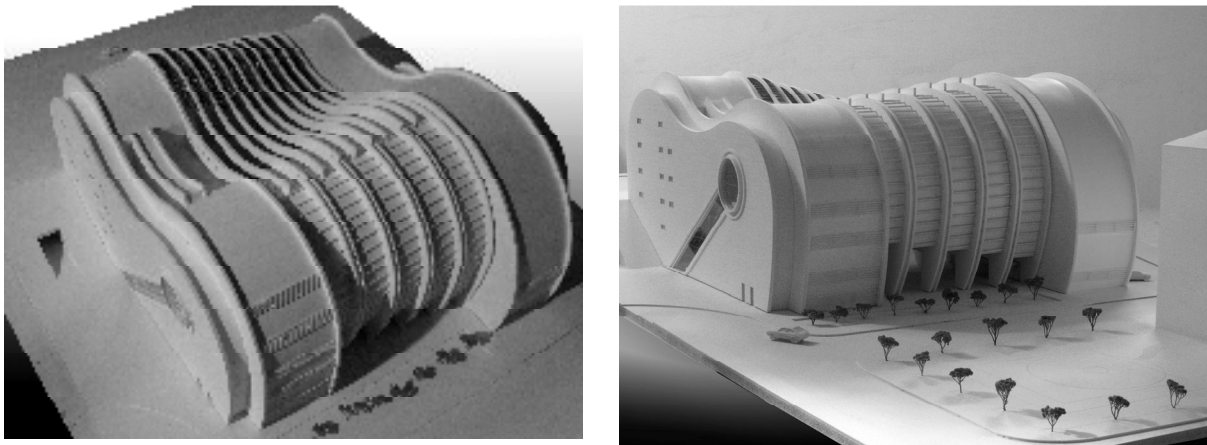


Figure 1: Northern facade – Left: Aerial view; Right: View from Bacri House Square.

The spatial composition of the House above grade is made up of an eastern and a western wing. The Large Performance Hall, resembling a turbine poised to rotate and generate artistic energy, stretches over a passage between the two wings of the building. Its segmented tubular form produces a curvilinear structural system which reaches out to enclose the flow of many activities taking place in the House. The passage absorbs the public realm from the northern sectors of the city south-westwards onto an atrium through the colonnade supporting the Hall.

The building structure is a combination of poured-in-place concrete and structural steel. The basement levels as well as the east and west wings above grade are of post-and-beam concrete construction while the Large Performance Hall and the shade-providing canopy over the central public space are of structural steel clad in coloured stainless steel panels. Being a crucial climactic necessity, shade over the entire public zone is provided by strips of stainless steel wire mesh stretched along vertically sinuous steel trusses which span between the Large Performance Hall roof and the edge of the Ring Road. The facades of the two stone-clad wings of the House follow the same wavy pattern of the trusses. The roof

cladding on the wings is provided by stainless steel panels electrolytically coloured in a tone of copper. Photovoltaic layers integrated into the metal cladding in alternating strips contribute to the electrical energy production for the building.

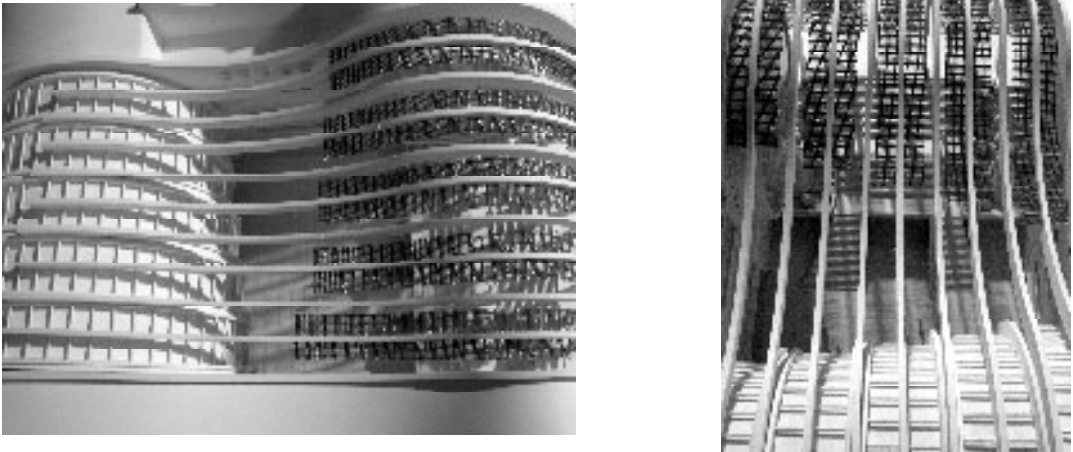


Figure 2: Top view details.

The facades surrounding the public zone allow glimpses of the activities taking place behind them through generously glazed surfaces such as the circular cut-out on the east interior facade and the glass front under the first set of steps along the southern edge of the Atrium which also provides favourable northern daylight into the Exhibition Room. Once upon the Atrium, both visitors and other users of the House orient themselves toward different activities taking place around them. The public zone continues through the Atrium and is then connected via a system of public stairs and platforms to a drop-off zone eight meters above along the Ring Road exit. The casual pedestrian has the option of either joining an activity or continuing on a stimulating walk up toward other neighbouring parts of the city in the South.

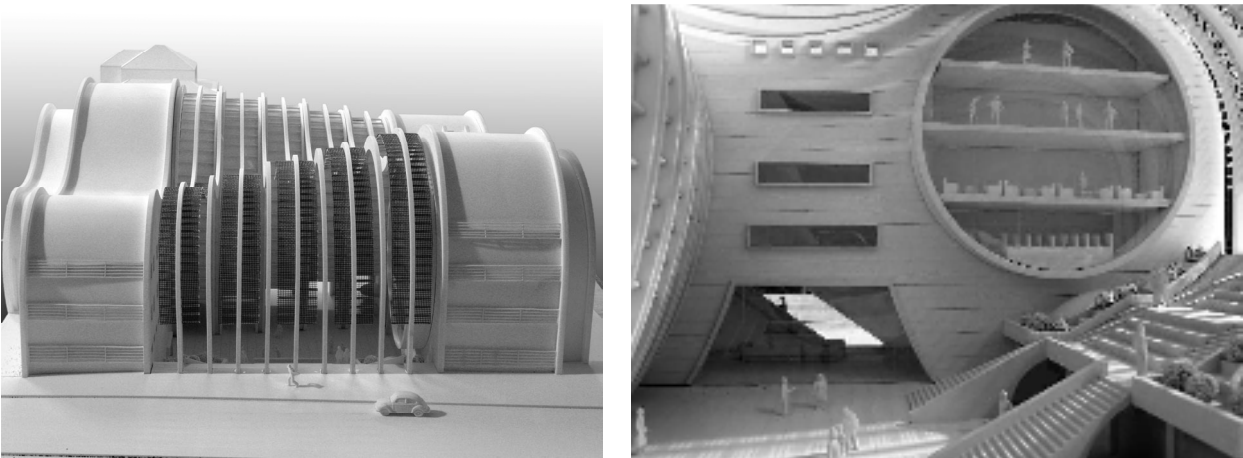


Figure 3: (Left) South facade; (Right) Atrium and the entrance of the Reception Hall.

The Reception Hall is on the Atrium level (Ground Level) within the east wing. It performs its horizontal and vertical distribution task to the performance and conference hall foyers, exhibition spaces, the National Cinemateque, the Documentation Centre and workshops or training rooms. Escalators provide direct transport of audiences to the foyers on second basement, third and fourth levels. The interaction between the art performer and the spectator is encouraged through the sharing of all other vertical means of access – stairs and elevators - by the disciplines and their visitors accommodated on different levels of the east wing.

The artistic activities of the House are concentrated on the east wing and supportive functions such as the theatre backstage, delivery to the building as well as the Administration occupy the west wing. The west wing runs along the planned street on the western edge of the plot. It will function mostly as a service road. The two wings are tied together by the Large Performance Hall on the upper levels to the North and the Exhibition Room areas on and below grade to the South. Parking and technical levels span the entire width of the plot on basement levels.

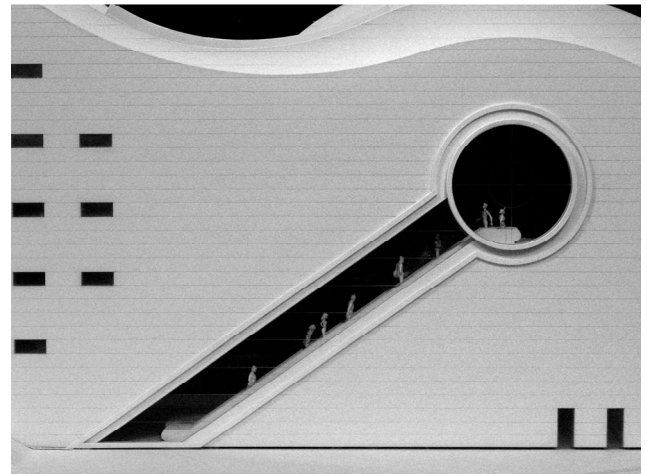
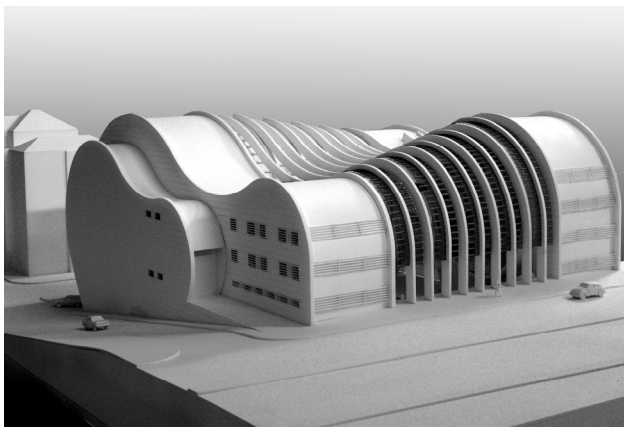


Figure 4: (Left) South-west facade; (Right) The escalator leading to Performance Hall as seen on the east facade.

The west wing displays practical, clear and direct relationships between support areas. Its northern part is dedicated to the stage of the Large Performance Hall. The orchestra pit and the stage are both accessed directly from the dressing rooms further south. Entrance to the dressing areas and the office spaces above them is from the Atrium on Ground Level through a common elevator lobby and stairs. A large freight elevator next to the elevator lobby opens directly upon the loading dock and serves both the backstage of the Large Performance Hall and the Exhibition Room.