

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The main objective set by the authors in this project was to create a simple, open, and accessible facility, understandable for citizens and attractive from various points of view, which would be dynamic, modern and free, with a developed interior space, offering the opportunity to organize activities and events specified in the program of the competition.

The building of the Center of Culture and Art occupies 100% of the allotted plot allowed for building . The setting of the building has taken into account: the difficult surface pattern of the plot; specific challenges arising from the perception of the building from the nearby ring road; pedestrian crossings and zones; the urban planning context of buildings on adjoining sites; and the capacities of the existing transport network of the area.

The difference in height between the level of the ring road and the northern boundary of the site is about 8 meters. Considering the need in the future for creating a pedestrian passage under the ring road, in the project the building area is set on the level of Ghalghoul Street, and a supporting wall is constructed along the turn-off of the ring road. Thus, the pedestrian zone, which is located on the eastern border of the site is logically continued on this same level in the form of a pedestrian passage under the ring road.

In other words, there emerges an accessible and strongly needed pedestrian flow through the walkway space in front of the building of the Cultural Center which is very important for buildings of this type.

Accordingly, the main entrances to the building are oriented toward this area, a large multimedia screen is designed for the façade of the building, and the interior space of the halls, exhibition, library, restaurant, shop, etc. opens up for the viewer through a large area covered with glass. It should be noted that the northern part of the building is designed similar to the eastern side, and the perception of the architectural volume of the facility from the local neighborhood will be predominantly north-eastern.

The southern part of the facility, overlooking the ring road, is designed for a particular perception of the building predominantly from moving vehicles. The volume of the building from the ring road is seen as a whole, without excessive details, and large three dimensional letters located on the level of the road clearly define the building. At the same time, for a passing car the eastern façade of the building opens up over the pedestrian area where one can see the developed inner space of the facility and even information about the upcoming events in the Cultural Center on the multimedia screen on the façade.

It is important to note that the grid structure of the façade (in the horizontal direction) makes it possible to block out most of the direct rays of day-time (high) sun, and still maintain sufficiently intense scattered light, which, in turn, most effectively fits the majority of functions located in the facility.

The western part of the building faces the service road which is intended primarily for

operational purposes; the façade is designed in a most compact manner.

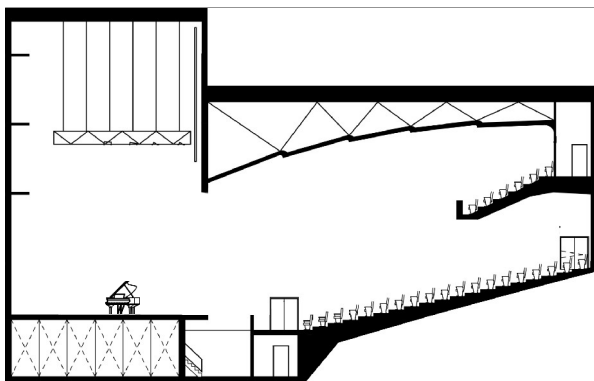
The entrance to the underground parking is provided on the north-western part of the site from Ghalghoul Street – this is the best place to enter the parking lot taking into consideration the relief of the service road, the presence of a preserved area of greenery, and the layout of the entrances to the building, pedestrian zones, and transit traffic on the site.

The loading takes place on the south side of the building in the blind technical yard, which, due to the leveled land in the area, is submerged with respect to the ring road and is not visible from any of the main points of object perception. The access to the technical yard for loading is provided on hard surfacing through the pedestrian area at night. In the case of a need for unloading large-sized trucks there can be used a vertical connection (an open staircase and elevator) from the technical yard and sidewalk of the service road, where a large truck can park for unloading.

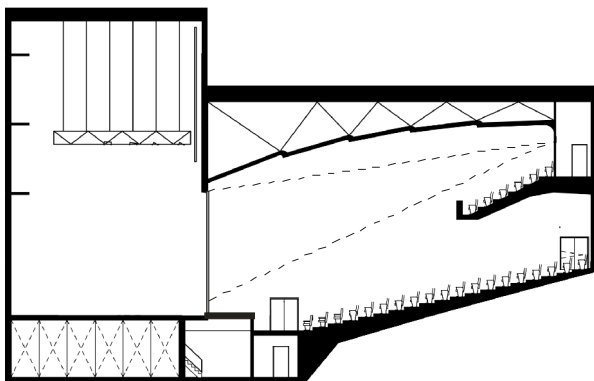
The functional idea of the project is based on a hierarchy of accessible functions.

The lower floors contain the area for performances and conferences, then follows an exhibition space, library, restaurant, cinematheque; additional functions are housed on the top floor where the administration is located. All areas, their functional structure and sizes, are made according to the assignment.

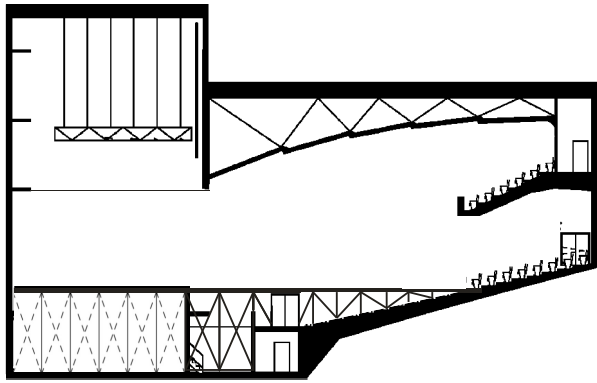
The distinctive feature of a big performance hall is its adaptability for different types of performances. The ability to lift and pull-out the floor planes for the viewers' seats, as well as the special construction of the trap room and orchestra pit allow for several options:



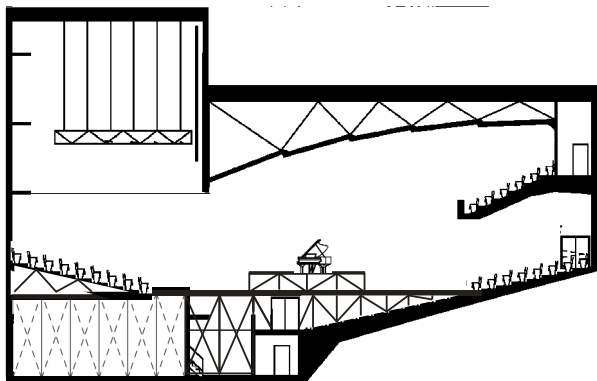
- normal position



- a hidden orchestra pit figure



- a leveled floor for most of the hall figure



- a circular theater figure

A special feature of the open part of the exhibition is that slideways are mounted onto the ceiling making it possible to move the segments of the walls and if desired to isolate and shade most of the exhibition.

The underlying idea for the three-dimensional organization of the internal space is that all public areas of each of the major functions are linked by the same space. Visually the outdoor space connects with the information hall through the glass façade at the entrance to the building, then the space flows smoothly into the elevated lobby of the main halls, further vertical space freely connects the open part of the exhibition, the balcony of the restaurant opens to the same space, and even higher it is joined with the glass walls of the main premises of the administration. The same space unites all the main horizontal connections of the areas. The glass part of the roof logically completes the movement of space in the building visually releasing it into the sky. Moreover, the glass part of the roof is supplied with a regulated system of sunlight protection that prevents the overheating of the interior. From the panoramic area on the multifunctional operational roof of the building, where various events will be held, the viewer can see the glass part of the roof as well as a panorama of the city and the horizon on the sea.

Vertical connections are provided by several (4) public elevators, two service elevators and a loading elevator, as well as by several stairs for public access, services and emergency exit.

The underground part of the building contains technical rooms, archives, the entrance to the underground mechanized parking lot with a large waiting area for visitors, as well as several

floors of storage with fully mechanized parking for 300 cars. Therefore solutions of underground floors are roughly made and needs to be detail develop according specific technical documentation and assignments.

The essence of the constructive solution of the building is a monolithic reinforced concrete nucleus in the form of a large hall the entire height of the building starting from the bottom of the underground part, and a monolithic service elevator and stair unit. The underground parking has its own frame structure in accordance with technological features. The system of full glass of the façades and partial glass of the roof has independent metal frames whose main load-bearing elements form the interior space of the whole building, as well as being perceived from the exterior.

Thus, the authors of the project in a general way have resolved all the assigned objectives to make this Center of Culture and Art an integral part of the urban environment, actively participating in the life of the inhabitants of Beirut and citizens of the country, being simultaneously an attractor and translator of available and so much needed cultural values.