

## **Explanatory Report**

### **Task**

Situated at a prime location near the main south entrance to the central district, bordered by the Avenue du General Fouad Chehab in the south, two new building blocks to the east and to the west and facing the new Landmark Project by Ateliers Jean Nouvel in the north, the new House of Arts and Culture establishes its physical presence.

### **Architectural Approach**

The new building design is determined by the following key elements:

- > The creation of a unique icon while operating in the perimeters of the urban regulations, without neglecting the urban context.
- > A clear concept for the public areas of the house that allows for a dynamisation of the house while also offering space for quieter and more concentrated areas.
- > A vertical organisation of the public and the internal program around the main performance spaces to allow a lively and open character to all sides of the building.
- > Optimization of the functional and logistical operation of the house
- > The creation of multiple area related atmospheres in the building
- > The creation of a creative environment that acts as a cultural catalyst

To reach the formulated aims we propose a solitaire building block with inclined facades. The amount of inclination is defined by the urban regulations beginning in the 32 m height part of the site, running straight to the 40m height zone, having a height of 32 m at the zone borders. By means of this simple operation the new house gets a geometrical significance in comparison to the surrounding blocks with their normal set back facades and produces spatial generosity in a close environment. Another effect of widening the street profiles is the allowance of better light conditions between the buildings.

The north western corner of the building is pushed slightly upwards so a clearly visible generous entrance situation is created, which is protected from the noise of the Avenue du General Fouad Chehab.

In the south eastern part the access for cars, the delivery area and the staff entrance is situated.

### **Functional Organisation**

The new House of Arts and Culture consists of 10 levels above and three levels below ground. The three levels below ground contain the 278 parking spaces as well as various

technical areas. Level 0, which is 1,20 m above the northern terrain is reached by a wide stair or, barrier free, from the inclining street in the west. From the entrance plateau one reaches the reception hall and the public restaurant. On this level the visitors can inform themselves about the house, find lockers for their stuff or go directly to the movie theatre. In the south eastern part of the house there are the delivery area and storage spaces. Level 01 is the ground floor level of the large performance hall. On this level you can also find the ticket offices, the shops and in the internal part the dressing rooms for artists, directly connected to the large performance hall. The following levels 02 and 03 house the cinematheque, the meeting rooms and the main part of the administration. On level 04 the large hall's last rank and the small hall's ground floor can be accessed. Level 05 gives access to the upper seats of the small theatre, if the temporary tribune is in use. In Level 06 and 07 you'll find the work and training rooms.

The exhibition area occupies most of level 08. The main part of it is a central 6m high hall which is provided with natural light from roof sheds and bordered by lower rooms with direct contact to the outer facades. From these areas you have several view opportunities into the different parts of the surrounding city of Beirut before descent into the exhibition.

With a width of approximately 20m and a length of almost 30m the large exhibition hall can easily be divided into smaller rooms, resulting in high flexibility, and can therefore react on different exhibition concepts. The last level, level 09 is characterised by the Documentation Centre which offers optimal conditions for concentrated working and studying, situated a little apart from the livelier parts of the house.

### **Vertical circulations**

The main vertical circulation is realised by the use of escalators connecting all public levels from Level 0 to Level 09. Due to the escalators a fast connection in the vertical organized house is possible while the visitors move through changing spatial configurations. Additional to the escalators an elevator group connects all levels including the parking area, so barrier free access of all areas is a matter of course. The internal vertical circulation is provided by two elevators for persons, staircases, as well as a stage elevator and an elevator connecting the exhibition spaces and the documentation centre with the delivery area.

### **The façade**

Designing the façade of the new House of Arts and Culture the main interest is twofold. On the one hand we want to create a significant sculptural object with a high recognition value. On the other hand the house should have an open character as well from the inside as from

the outside. Based on the analysis of the different requirements concerning natural light, acoustics, view connections etc. a perforation matrix was developed. Using the rectangle as basic element the opening varies in size (five different formats) and in density. While the public vertical circulation space in the north-west for example is the most perforated, applying the largest sizes of the rectangle formats, due to reasons of light infiltration and of generous view connections into the city, and from the city into the house, the south façade is more closed in the lower parts to prevent from noise pollution by the Avenue General Fouad Chehab. This system is carefully used and differentiated in all parts of the house. From the outside one can literally comprehend the inner structure of the house following the gradient stream of light on the facades surface. From the inside the openings function as frames for the city. In the open public spaces the walls work like those of a picture gallery. Here the pictures are not paintings or alike but extracts of the surrounding city constantly changing while moving through the house.

The new House of Arts and Culture will be a first class venue for the people, boosting the cultural production and representation on the local as well as on the international level. It will be an open contemporary house grounded in the history of its cultural environment while always looking for the new.

### **The Large performance Hall of the House of arts and culture (HOAC)**

Among many other rooms there are planned a movie theatre, a small and a big hall for the HOAC.

All areas have to be connected with a specific communication, command and media system. Furthermore all areas have to be fitted with facilities and equipment which are necessary for high quality and professional performances and events.

The big hall forms the central point of the HOAC, it is a multifunctional room and has to be fitted with modern technical equipment.

Different acoustical criteria and conditions shall be achieved by a variable ceiling structure.

The cover of the auditorium has a plane surface from which acoustical ceilings, flies and lighting bridges can be dropped.

Furthermore different reverberation areas can be offered in this way.

The auditorium can be changed from a classical theatre or concert situation with seated spectators to a dance hall or an open hall for banquets or pop concerts with standing audience.

The seating for the parquet floor is located on specific wagons. These can be lifted to a rising

stand with scissors lifts.

To create the flat dance hall situation the wagons will be lowered and the seating is transported with the orchestra lifts to the store level (+1,20m).

The orchestra lifts can be raised from stage level (+7,43m) to transporting level (+1,20m).

Above the orchestra position in the pre-stage area there are located different flies to carry decoration and lighting equipment.

Behind the rear wall of the auditorium there are booths located for the direction of light and sound plus audio visual systems. Beside this there also spaces for projectors and following spots.

The stage has a square area of 30 metres wide and 18 metres depth. The fly tower is 23 metres high.

The stage and rear stage are equipped with stage lifts which can be raised from hall level to stage level. The lifts have a width of 18 metres and a depth of 4 metres.

Including the auditorium it is possible to build an open area with a total depth of 49 metres and a width of 18 metres.

The stage area has to be divided from the auditorium and the rear stage with steel fire curtains (safety-curtains).

At the side wall of the stage there are three working and lighting galleries mounted. At the rear wall of the stage above the fire curtain there are three additional connecting catwalks mounted.

Above the stage there is a grid which carries the technical overhead machinery. It consists of mechanised flies for the clothing of the scenery, point hoists and lighting pulleys. The drives and control cabinets are located in the area of the side galleries.

For the cover of the rear stage different flies and two crane runways are planned.

These shall enable the transportation and erection of the different set parts at the rear stage zone. A special transportation lift connects the stage area (+7,43m ) with the transportation level (+1,20m ).