

The House of Arts and Culture- The Lebanese/Omani Centre  
Final Jury Report

The House of Arts and Culture (the Lebanese-Omani Centre)

International Architecture Competition

Final Jury Report

**1. INTRODUCTION:**

The House of Arts and Culture- the Lebanese Omani Centre- is a single stage and anonymous project competition launched under the auspices of the International Union of Architects (UIA) and organized by the Lebanese Ministry of Culture.

An agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Lebanon was reached in 2006 for the construction in Beirut of an arts and culture centre that would be funded by the Sultanate of Oman. This generous grant of twenty million US dollars enabled the Ministry of Culture to create the first centre of this kind in Lebanon, addressing thus an important need of the country.

Artistic creativity has always been a major component of life in Beirut. A buoyant city sitting on the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, Beirut is at the same time an Arab city and a European one. In this sense, it is similar to many other Mediterranean harbors that have served as links between countries and cultures. It is in Beirut that the Nahda (awakening) of the Arab literature and thought took place in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it is at the same period that the Arab theatre was born. Since then, Beirut has never ceased to be a place of creation and of freedom of thought.

This House of Arts and Culture comes at the right time to boost the already very active creativity that is taking place in Beirut since the end of the period of violence that rocked Lebanon between 1975 and 1990.

Freedom of thought, of expression and of creation, a multicultural place such as Lebanon requires a special arts and culture centre. It has to be exceptional in its contents, its functioning and its architecture. Though its presence must be felt and recognized, it should remain unobtrusive of all the efforts that have taken place, that continue to take place and that deserve to be supported.

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR. TAREK MITRI – MINISTER OF CULTURE**

The House of Arts and Culture (the Lebanese-Omani Centre) will be a space for cultural and artistic production, for exchange and interaction between the largest number of Lebanese and especially the youth. It will be an independent space with the aim to contribute to social communication and cultural expansion and to promote creativity in different fields of art and culture.

Therefore, the House should attract a large number of Lebanese every day of the year. Its public should be diverse and go beyond the few "regulars" that attend theatre halls, exhibitions or other cultural centers spread in Beirut and the country.

To achieve this goal, the House should be a free space of artistic expression with no boundaries. Its functions and agenda, multiple but equilibrated, should be open to all kinds of Art, including those that encourage interactivity between artists and their public, conferences, workshops, free initiatives, etc.

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2. THE JURY AND SUPPORT TEAM

The Jury of this International Architectural Competition was held from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2009 at the Forum de Beirut (Beirut-Lebanon). Those in attendance included the following groups- the jury members, the technical and professional consultants (GAIA Heritage), GAIA Heritage consultants, and the Technical Committee. All jury members as well as both deputies and GAIA Heritage representatives were present throughout all of the jury deliberations and discussions. Technical consultants were accessible throughout. The technical committee representative joined the jury on the first day, 16/03/2009, to present their report, and then again on 20/03/2009.

THE JURY MEMBERS

The Jury of the international architectural competition is composed of nine members. Two deputy jury members also attended the meetings.

**Mr. Frederic Husseini:** Representative of His Excellency the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lebanon / Director of the Lebanese Directorate of Antiquities

**Mr. Said El Barashdi:** Representative of the Sultanate of Oman / Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman (The Republic of Lebanon-Beirut)

**Mr. Assem Salam:** Representative of the Orders of Engineers and Architects of Lebanon / Architect

**Mr. Angus Gavin:** Representative of the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District (SOLIDERE) / Urban Development Division Head

**Mr. Suha Ozkan:** Architect, Historian and Theorist (Turkey)

**Ms. Magda Mostafa:** Representative of the International Union of Architects (UIA) / Architect (Egypt)

**Ms. Momoyo Kaijima:** Architect / Atelier Bow Wow (Japan)

**Ms. Izaskun Chinchilla:** Architect (Spain)

**Mr. Okwui Enwezor:** Curator / Dean of Academic Affairs and Senior Vice President at San Francisco Art Institute (USA - Nigeria)

**Mr. Laszlo Foldes:** Deputy Representative of the International Union of Architects (UIA) / Architect (Hungary)

**Mr. Mozart Chahine:** Deputy Jury member / Member of the Executive Committee and Cultural Advisor – Cultural Council of the City of Beirut

THE TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT/ Gaia-Heritage

**Mr. Georges Zouain:** CEO Gaia-Heritage

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**Ms. Rhea Hennaoui:** Gaia-Heritage

**Mr. Ralph Tufenkji:** Gaia-Heritage

**Ms. Rana Yazigi:** Gaia-Heritage

Gaia-Heritage CONSULTANTS

For the concept, artistic program and functioning of the House:

**Mr. Sherif Khaznadar:** President, Maison de la Culture des Mondes (Paris-France)

**Ms. Beral Madra:** Art critic and curator (Turkey)

For the architectural aspects:

**Mr. Jad Tabet:** Gaia-Heritage consultant's team / Architect (Lebanon-France)

**Mr. Marwan Zouain:** Gaia-Heritage consultant's team / Architect (Spain)

**Ms. Laeticia Lopez:** Gaia-Heritage consultant's team / Architect (Spain)

THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

**Mr. Sany Jamal:** Orders of Engineers and Architects of Lebanon – President Architecture Division

3. JURY DELIBERATIONS AND PROCEDURES:

**Day 1, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2009**

The jury convened on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2009 after a kind welcome from **His Excellency Tammam Salam**, Lebanese Minister of Culture. The Technical Consultant Representative, **Mr. George Zouain** of GAIA Heritage, then briefed the jury on the competition. He noted that 63 countries were represented in the registration to the competition and 388 projects were ultimately received for consideration by the jury. The jury commenced to elect a Chairman, **Mr. Suha Ozkan**, upon a motion by **Mr. Assem Salam** which was seconded by **Mr. Laszlo Foldes** and **Ms. Magda Mostafa**. **Mr. Ozkan** then moved to elect **Ms. Magda Mostafa** as Jury Rapporteur (Secretary) which was seconded and approved by members of the jury.

**Mr. Ozkan** proceeded to begin deliberations with a request to all members of the jury to introduce themselves and the institutions they represent, if this so applies. The jury was noted to be comprised of 4 institutions- the Ministry of Culture of Lebanon, the Sultanate of Oman, the Lebanese Order of Engineers and Architects and the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction

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of Beirut Central District- SOLIDERE- and 5 individuals, one who also represents an institution- **Ms. Magda Mostafa** as the representative from the International Union of Architects- UIA, **Mr. Suha Ozkan** an architect, theorist and historian from Turkey, **Ms. Momoyo Kajjima** of Atelier Bow Wow from Japan, **Ms. Izaskun Chinchilla** an architect from Spain and Mr. Okwui Enwezor, Dean of Academic Affairs and Senior Vice President at San Francisco Art Institute in the USA. Also in attendance were two alternate members of the jury **Mr. Laszlo Foldes** (alternate representative from the UIA) and **Mr. Mozart Chahine** (member of the executive Committee of the Cultural Council of Beirut). The members of the technical committee in attendance were **Mr. George Zouain** (GAIA Heritage), **Mr. Sherif Khaznadar**, **Mr. Ralph Tufenkji** (GAIA-Heritage), **Ms. Beral Madra** (Istanbul) and **Ms. Rana Tigziri** (GAIA Heritage).

The Head of the Technical Committee, **Mr. Sany Jamal** presented the Technical Committee's Report to the Jury. This presentation outlined the technical considerations in the disqualification process of projects- primarily timely dispatch and receipt of projects, anonymity regulations and conformity with the competition rules and guidelines regarding compliance to BCD regulations. The conclusions of the Technical Committee were clearly outlined in their report for each project, and displayed along with the submitted panels. These conclusions were taken under advisement by the jury, and any ultimate disqualifications were in reference to the Technical Committee's Report and in compliance with UIA guidelines.

**Day 2, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2009**

The Jury reconvened and proceeded with a series of 7 cycles of voting over the following days, beginning with a preliminary review of all 388 projects, and a selection of 30 entries by each jury member for serious consideration by the jury. It was noted by the Chairman that no projects would be categorically disqualified out of hand, and no project would be discarded from consideration until the final jury decision was reached and signed by all jury members. At the close of this first day of project review it was noted that no members of the jury were familiar with any of the projects presented. Each jury member submitted their preliminary short list of projects to the secretariat for compilation.

**Day 3, Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2009**

This preliminary review was compiled by the secretariat of GAIA heritage and produced a short list of 170 projects with the following **1<sup>st</sup> cycle** breakdown:

- 2 projects had a concurrence of 5 votes (the majority of the jury)
- 3 projects had a concurrence of 4 votes

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- 10 projects had a concurrence of 3 votes
- 39 projects had a concurrence of 2 votes
- 116 projects had a single vote (1 vote)

After this the jury members were invited to revise their single vote projects, where only their one vote was cast. They then had 3 options- to drop their project from serious consideration, to achieve a concurrence of vote from another jury member and therefore move the project to the 2 or more vote category, or to retain and insist on this vote with a maximum of 5 retained single votes.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle was compiled by the secretariat and resulted in a selection of 81 projects, with the following breakdown:

- 3 projects with a concurrence of 5 votes
- 4 projects with a concurrence of 4 votes
- 9 projects with a concurrence of 3 votes
- 39 projects with a concurrence of 2 votes
- 26 projects with 1 vote

The third cycle of voting involved a similar reconsideration of single vote as well as 2-vote projects, in order to reach a short list of projects to be discussed in conference format by all members of the jury. In this manner some projects would be dropped from the first round of serious consideration in conference format if they failed to receive 3 votes, while others could have votes added and move from 1 or 2 votes up to 3 votes.

**Day 4, Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2009**

This 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle short list was comprised of 31 projects receiving and retaining 3 or more votes after the previous 2 cycles. The **3<sup>rd</sup> cycle** breakdown was as follows:

- 3 projects with a concurrence of 5 votes
- 10 projects with a concurrence of 4 votes
- 18 projects with a concurrence of 3 votes

These projects were presented in digital format to the jury, and a discussion commenced regarding the merits of the various projects, their disadvantages, qualification status and adherence to competition guidelines. It was decided that the first review would be of the projects deemed “acceptable (A)” by the technical committee, followed by those deemed “accepted with reservations”

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(AR). These projects were reviewed in accordance to the following criteria as developed by the jury members:

- The symbolic, iconic quality of the building- its dynamism vs. its static quality
- The technical fulfillment of the spatial requirements- theatre (functionality vs. flexibility), exhibition (circulation and flexibility).
- The issue of public space- its relationship to surrounding urban spaces, orientation, relationship to the northern square, accessibility and intimacy with the public vs. its monumentality
- The issue of access and approach- north vs. south
- Levels of sustainability: climatic, maintenance of material, socio-economic, functional
- The avoidance of kitsch, stylistic, superficial approaches, particularly naively influenced by contemporary movements- yet with an awareness of the timeliness of the project and its expression of current movements and ideologies. This needs to be understood in the context of the current search for identity that is going on in the region today- **between** progressiveness and tradition and the creation of a vernacular, and the issue of confrontation architecture as a vehicle for progress.

After completion of this first review of the “Accepted” (A) and “Accepted with Reservations” (AR) projects, those projects suggested to be reconsidered by some of the jurors were presented prior to a technical review of the projects deemed “disqualified” by the technical committee. These constituted one project with 2 votes that was deemed “accepted with reservation” (AR), two projects with 2 votes deemed “disqualified” (D), two projects with 1 vote deemed “accepted with reservation” (AR), and 2 projects with 1 vote deemed “disqualified” (D).

Those projects deemed “disqualified (D)” by the technical committee were reviewed in the presence of **Mr. Sany Jamal** and in light of his committee’s technical report, based on the following criteria:

- Any project sent after the final date for dispatch was disqualified.
- Any project received after the final date for receipt and lacking any proof of date of dispatch were disqualified. Projects received after the final receipt date yet proven to be sent on time were accepted given the fact that they may have been made late for unforeseen circumstances, yet sent on time.

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- Any project failing to send the sealed white envelope with the competitor's identity and code was disqualified.
- A discussion ensued regarding what constituted adherence to Beirut Central District (BCD) "as much as possible" as mentioned in the questions and answers section of the competition documents. There was concern that the question of "amendable non-conformity with BCD regulations" was overly subjective to be considered categorically, and was therefore left to the discretion of the jury.

Based on this the jury proceeded to a 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of voting, where each jury member was invited to cast a "Yes" or "No" vote on the projects being considered. No limitations were made to the number of "Yes" votes each jury member would be allowed.

**Day 5, Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2009**

This 4<sup>th</sup> cycle of voting produced 29 projects with the following breakdown of the 3rd cycle short list of 31 projects:

- 2 projects with no support
- 4 projects with 1 vote
- 6 projects with 2 votes
- 8 projects with 3 votes
- 6 projects with 4 votes
- 4 projects with 5 votes
- 1 projects with 6 votes

Members of the jury quickly reviewed this list with a request from the Chairman for indication of any additional support for the projects. The technical consultants, represented by **Mr. Sherif Khaznadar** and the technical committee representative, **Mr. Sany Jamal**, were asked to review the top 5 projects receiving the votes from the jury, according to their technical performance and conformity. Of all the finalists, **Mr. Khaznadar** had reservations for only one project, which were duly noted by the jury. The technical committee reviewed the top projects, all of which were deemed "acceptable with reservations", and didn't have any serious concerns with the top 5. Regarding the 4th cycle 28 projects the technical committee representative upheld the original technical report and concurred with the disqualification of 5 projects on the grounds of the following criteria:

- Receipt of project after the approved date

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- Lack of area program to confirm conformity with programmatic requirements
- Non-conformity with build-to-line regulations
- Non- conformity with the setback required on the north façade
- Appropriation of public spaces (roads) for infrastructure, construction or access for services- namely a parking access ramp taken from the public street
- Excessive increase in permissible areas- in excess of 40% in some cases and even more if outdoor covered spaces are included in the calculation as required by BCD regulations

After this presentation jury members were invited by the Chairman to revisit any previously reviewed projects from the entire group of entries. Presentations of such projects were made. **Mr. Angus Gavin** and **Ms. Izaskun Chinchilla** requested the jury revisited one project. This went on to get the support of 3 jury members. The 11 projects emerging from this disqualification and reconsideration process were compiled by the secretariat. This resulted in a short list of 11 projects, comprising the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of voting with the following breakdown:

- 2 projects with 6 votes
- 3 projects with 5 votes
- 6 projects with 4 votes

In conclusion there was a suggestion that:

- A- the two newly supported projects join the top 5 for consideration for first prize to have 7 top projects
- B- to allow the two new projects to replace the lowest supported from the original top 5 and retain 5 projects for consideration
- C- to retain the original top 5 projects

This was voted on by the jury and given the majority of the support to option A -having 7 projects, a motion led by **Mr. Frederic Husseini, Mr. Suha Ozkan, Ms. Magda Mostafa** and supported by the remainder of the jury.

It was then decided that there would be a cycle of scoring for these 7 projects, with 5 points awarded by each juror to his first prize selection, 4 points for his second and so on, until 0 points. This would allow 2 zero scores for each juror.

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These votes were cast by secret ballot and tabulated under the supervision of the UIA representative and the secretariat. This process gave the results of the **6<sup>th</sup> cycle** of voting with the following breakdown:

- 36 points to the first ranked project
- 30 points to the second ranked project
- 24 points to the third ranked project
- 15 points to the fourth ranked project
- 11 points to the fifth ranked project
- 10 points to the sixth ranked project
- 9 points to the seventh ranked project

It was proposed that the jury first hear the opinion of the consultants in light of this result and present a discussion of the top 3 projects. It was proposed by the chairman that the jury then moves to cast a final vote on the top three projects to determine the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> prizes.

The results of this conclusive **7<sup>th</sup> cycle** of voting for the top 3 projects were as follows:

- 20 points to the first ranked project
- 18 points to the second ranked project
- 16 points to the third ranked project

**Day 6, Friday 21st March, 2009**

This result was upheld by the jury and an award announcement was drafted and signed by all jury members in concurrence with this result. It was concurred that honorable mentions would be awarded to the other 8 projects that were retained up to the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of voting. This was presented to **His Excellency Tammam Salam**, by Jury Chairman, **Mr. Suha Ozkan** at which point the identities of the award winning projects and honorable mentions were revealed by **His Excellency Tammam Salam** with the assistance of UIA Representative **Ms. Magda Mostafa**.

4. FINAL AWARDS AND MENTIONS

**First Prize :**

**Team leader:** Alberto Catalano

**Team members:** Giulia Iurcotta, Barbarangelo Licheri, Daniel Piludu, Celestine Sanna, Mariangela Murgia, Emanuela Forcolini, Souraya Frem

**Milano, Italy**

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This project was notable for its subtle approach of the building as a plaza, with a sensitive understanding of, and integration with, the urban tissue surrounding the site. The building as a channel to engage the public was apparent and commendable. More detailed descriptions of specific jury recommendations in the development of this project for implementation will follow, in the “jury recommendations” section of this report.

**Second Prize:**

**Team leader:** Beatriz Ramo López de Angulo

**Team members:** Simone de Iacobis, Iñigo Paniego de la Cuesta, Jean-Vianney Deleersnyder  
**Rotterdam, The Netherlands**

Although understated, this building’s non-iconic approach was refreshing to the jury, particularly coupled with its excellent functionality and technical awareness of the program requirements. Its theatre space was particularly well conceived and presented an important subtle balance between flexibility and functionality. Its elevated plaza also attempted to engage the public realm and integrate it with the interior workings of the building.

**Third Prize:**

**Architectural bureau** “Project Meganom”

**Team:** Yuri Grigorian, Natalia Tatunashvili, Tatiana Kornienko, Yuri Kuznezov, Elena Uglovskaya, Irina Livieva, Artem Staborovskiy, Ruben Grigoryan

**Moscow, Russia**

The appeal of this project concerns two aspects; its playful engaging image, and its attempt to respond to the climatic elements and illumination requirements of the interior spaces in a dynamic manner, through the façade. The jury felt however that this response was not fully developed, particularly concerning climatic aspects, and the functional performance of the theatre and exhibit spaces required more development. The entry’s originality however was well received.

**B – Honourable Mentions (8): there is no ranking in the honorable mentions**

1. **Architectural bureau:** DORELL GHOTMEH TANE, Architects

**Team representative:** Lina Ghotmeh

**Paris, France**

The friendly brutalism of this building, along with its dynamic articulation, created an intriguing and appropriate aesthetic. Its analogy of the building as a gentle container of the glow of culture was of interest.

2. **Architects:** Spiridon Kakavas, Dimitris Giannisis, Eleni Klonizaki

**Associate Architects:** Kostanti Stamataki, Georgia Nikolakopoulou

**Athens, Greece**

One of the more successful approaches to the “screen” archetype of entries, this building showed an interesting dynamism to its façade treatment. Its technical treatment of program requirements was insufficiently developed.

**3. Architectural Bureau:** Polymur Ltd,

**Architect:** Chris Yoo  
**London, United Kingdom**

This project exhibited a clear sense of openness both with its transparency and integrative possibilities of indoor and outdoor spaces. Particularly of interest, although not sufficiently developed technically, was its flexible approach to the main theatre space.

**4. Architectural bureau:** Format 21

**Architect:** Gerd Röschke  
**Frankfurt, Germany**

This project presented a very interesting and appropriate massing and aesthetic approach but was found to be slightly too institutional. Its integration of indoor and outdoor space was interesting via the covered plaza that drew the public through the building.

**5. Architectural bureau:** Atelier 2/3/4

**Architects:** Jean François Patte, Emilie Sopena, Sylvain Rety, Elie Marçais  
**Paris, France**

The most commendable aspect of this project was its “secret garden” at the top of the building, a space removed from the hustle and bustle of the city that could provide a cultural respite.

**6. Architect:** Bernd Upmeyer

**Rotterdam, The Netherlands**

This building caught the attention of the jury with its playful, engaging, if slightly literal, imagery. It was easily imagined full of life and encouraging cultural engagement of all sectors of society with its approachability.

**7. Architectural bureau:** INCH

**Principal:** Roberto Otero Arbide  
**Team:** Carlota Muniain, Mariana Ramirez, Vincenzo van de Pneu, Toyo Verdosó  
**Mexico DF, Mexico & Madrid, Spain**

The heightened sensitivity of this project was most apparent, and it presented one of the few serious and applicable strategies for the building’s climatic sustainability.

**8. Architecture bureau:** KAPUTT!

**Architectural Coordination:** Rita Ferreira, Kirill de Lancastre Jedenov  
**Architects:** Sérgio Antunes, Irene Bonacchi, Ana Brütt, Sofia Reis Couto, Filipe Moreira, Manuel Ribeiro  
**External Consultants:** Filipe Alves, Luca Martinucci, Mário Rui Marques Ferreira, Luís Andrada, Rodrigo Tomaz, Isabel do Carmo, Roger Claustre, Flavio Tirone, Alexandra Lucas Coelho, Eloísa Cepinha  
**Lisbon, Portugal**

One of the more successful “icon-” archetypes presented to the competition, this building also presented a level of intimacy with its internal “crevice” streets, a sense of cultural contextual understanding with its introverted organization and an understanding of climatic demands with the

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screen type façade used on the introverted walls of the buildings internal spaces. Its fragmented plan also helped provide functional organization for the program requirements.

#### 5. JURY COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The jury would like to outline the following recommendations for the winning project. These recommendations were compiled as a result of the discussions during deliberations, as well as written reports by the jury members to the Jury Secretary, which are included in full as an appendix to this report.

#### **First Prize Project: Alberto Catalano, Milan Italy**

The most prominent and commendable aspect of this project was its sensitive approach to the integration with the surrounding urban fabric, as represented in the concept of the building as a public plaza. This allowed for one of the important objectives of the project to be achieved- namely the engagement of the public realm. With its axial extension across the square to the high-rise Landmark tower, this modest cultural project establishes a direct relationship and seems to place itself on an equal footing with the intense commercial realities of the re-emerging downtown. This symbolic statement of alternative priorities did not go unnoticed by the jury.

This link however needs to be emphasized and enhanced, with more points of entrance and connection established from the stepped public plaza to the interior exhibition and performance spaces. In developing the project, reference could be made to the traditional “daraj el fann” (“steps of art” in Arabic) in the Jemeyzeh district, where annual art fairs are conducted on the historic steps leading up to Sursuk. Similar outdoor fairs and activities should be encouraged and integrated into the design development of the project.

The subtle almost “non-building” approach of this project, paralleled with the highly functional concentration of administrative and workshop spaces in the adjacent tower, was also an asset to this project’s conception. It was noted, however, that the high east-west exposure of this tower block was far from optimal and serious climatic consideration should be given the façade treatments in the design development phase. A more responsive, climatically sustainable solution should be presented, without sacrificing the subtlety and unobtrusiveness of the block. Consideration should also be given to incorporating a media wall in the design of the eastern elevation of this building. This is directly visible to passing traffic on the Fouad Chehab Ring, presenting an opportunity to communicate to a city-wide audience the Center’s program of events.

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Issues of access, fire escape, circulation and gathering space need to be developed. This is particularly with respect to the performance space level, where pre-function spaces are inadequate, though amendable, and access from the outside public space is not sufficiently direct. Situating the main bulk of the built-up area underground however, particularly while preserving natural lighting to circulation and exhibition spaces, was commended by both the technical consultants as well as in accordance to BCD regulations.

6. CLOSING REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it should be noted that the jury deliberations, which spanned 6 full days, were conducted with full adherence to the UNESCO/ UIA Standard Regulations for International Competitions in Architecture and Town Planning, creating a fair and impartial judgment by the jury. The jury is confident that the award winning proposal has the potential to fulfill the vision of the project. The exhaustive process, with which this proposal was selected, coupled with the diverse representation of philosophies, approaches, interests and concerns of the jury, confirms the project's ability to realize this vision.