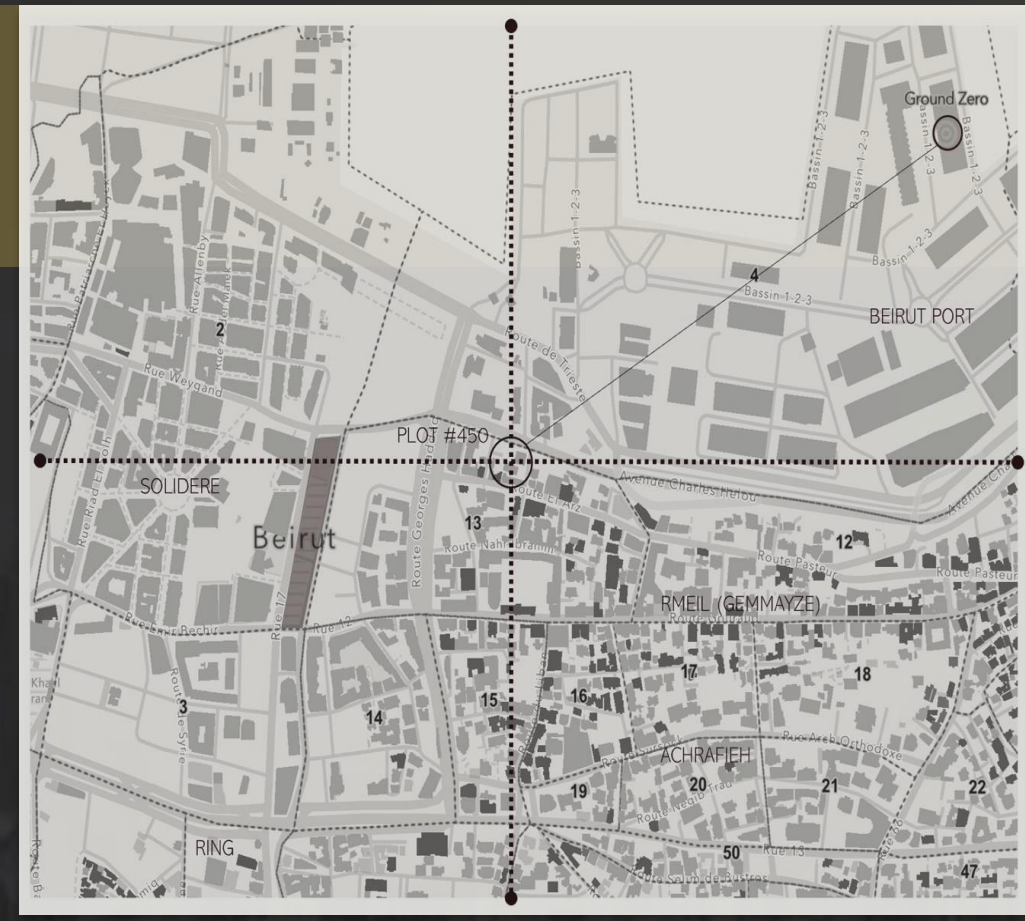


QUASAR TOWER SAIFI #450



"...it is the product of the desired regional and cultural radicalism"...Metaphor of "resistance"

Mixed-Use
Built 2020
Built-up area: 18,370 m2
Height: 146 m
Number of floors: 38

Situated at the northwestern edge of the BCD, the project overlooks the city's port, a prominent player in the history, development and economy of the city (BK DW5), especially after the dreadful 4th of August blast.

It is also positioned on the only main artery leading to Martyr's Square, at the gate of the city's center.



Today perhaps it's even more emblematic since it is less than 700m away from the epicenter of the explosion of the port, which has once more, led to the change and transformation of our fascinating but tormented city.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

Location:
Positioned at the interface between radically different areas.

Typology:
A very specific typology, a signature of the Architect Bernard Khoury.

Hybrid surrounding urban fabric and social tissue:
Beirut's urbanism is a complex of conflicting patches separated through aesthetically similar landscapes.

Bernard Khoury



"No one is going to hold you accountable for whatever you're saying therefore you can say whatever you want to say. Beirut forced me to practice architecture as a political act."

PRE-BLAST

Its location at the "interface" says it all: there are points of dichotomies, stark differences from one neighborhood to the other, which makes it all more interesting.

IMPACT/PROBLEMS

Architectural: Parasite
-"Monster Monument" (Exacerbation of the chaos).
360 Glazed elevations.
Discrepancies between the developers and the architect.
Programmatic and functional problems (high vacancy rates)

Economic: Obnoxious Luxury
-Exorbitant price tag, inaccessible to 95% of the locals.
Expensive & imported materials: justification of the "exorbitant" price tag?

Social: Exclusivity
-Alienating the population, targeting a specific market, people.
Intimidating and unapproachable design, in a highly active area.
-Encouraging social injustice.

POST-BLAST

Picture courtesy of Ram Rizk

POST-BLAST

DAMAGE REPORT

Even through Quasar tower is a fully glazed building and it was severely damaged from the outside, however its structure wasn't, thanks to the monolith (grain silos) that shielded it from the blast.

Synthesis

Exterior
Severe
-Sun shield/Louvers system.
-Floor to Ceiling Glazed Windows/Curtain Walls.

Interior
Severe
-Electricity.
-Water systems/plumbing.
-Tiling.
-Gypsum Boards.

Structure
Minimal
-No visible damage

TOWER ANALYSIS

The large glazed facades, fixed or movable, are made with aluminum fixtures and are shielded with an aluminum grilled system.

Composition
The louvers system is made of deep vertical sunshades and includes horizontal sunscreens slightly shallower, to give greater emphasis to the tension upwards of the tower.

Function
This system, in addition to act as a solar shielding, becomes a second skin for the building, punctuating and drawing facades and volumes and on the entirely opaque closures.

The articulation and juxtaposition of the different grills in volume and facade.

The large glazed facades, fixed or movable, are made with aluminum fixtures and are shielded with an aluminum grided system.

Composition
The louvers system is made of deep vertical sunshades and includes horizontal sunscreens slightly shallower, to give greater emphasis to the tension upwards of the tower.

Function
This system, in addition to act as a solar shielding, becomes a second skin for the building, punctuating and drawing facades and volumes.

Analysis

RESIDENTIAL 210m2
MIXED USE 75m2
MIXED USE 300m2
MIXED USE 147m2

Access: The building is only accessible from the highway or from a secondary street served by Pasteur street.

Mass: The composition is the almost literal translation of the Gabarit (volume which can be effectively built over these planning plots).

Structure: The structure is concentrated only in the nucleus and on the perimeter.

Plan: The apartments are usually arranged on two levels, with articulated and flexible plans, thanks to the positioning of the structural elements.

Surroundings: It is surrounded by empty plots and few mixed-use buildings with low activity.

ANALYSIS OF THE SURROUNDINGS

QUASAR TOWER: BUILDING HEIGHT/FLOORS

- Quasar tower is well connected to its neighbors, the main artery through its secondary roads.
- Its access is highly exclusive and restricted from the surrounding.
- It is not directly accessible from Al Ar street even though it is possible.

QUASAR TOWER: VACANCY

- The neighborhood mostly consists of medium-density residential blocks.
- The main cluster around it is one mile away.
- The neighborhood area comprises a low-density housing blocks.
- The three main mixed-use buildings containing gym, local restaurants, bars, supermarkets, shops.

QUASAR TOWER: ROAD NETWORK

- Quasar tower is well connected to its neighbors, the main artery through its secondary roads.
- Its access is highly exclusive and restricted from the surrounding.
- It is not directly accessible from Al Ar street even though it is possible.

QUASAR TOWER: DAMAGE GRADIENT

- Most of the surrounding urban fabric has been severely damaged due to its proximity to the port area blast.
- The tower building, which was highly damaged, was protected by its own mass.

QUASAR TOWER: VACANCY

- There is a high rate of abandonment especially in the buildings near the port, which were affected by the 2020 explosion.
- There is not a high vacancy rate among apartments in residential buildings towers. Some have a small vacancy, as it was heavily damaged when the explosion hit.

QUASAR TOWER: BUILDING TYPOLOGY

- The classified heritage buildings are concentrated around the Lopei Cour school which is a heritage building dating back to 1910.
- The main typology of the building in the area is residential. It was severely damaged in the blast.

QUASAR TOWER: UNBUILT PARCELS

- There is a substantial number of vacant plots around the area.
- The surrounding urban fabric is mostly residential, with some commercial plots.
- These plots have a huge potential for the urban regeneration of the area.

QUASAR TOWER: VACANCY

- The surrounding urban fabric consists of a mix of building dating between 1930 and 1980.
- The neighborhood has undergone a huge phenomenon of gentrification and is characterized by high-end residential and commercial buildings where abandoned.

TVCC – Rem Koolhaas (OMA) – Beijing, China

Mixed-Use
Built 2009

The Television Cultural Center (TVCC), is a 34-story skyscraper on Guanghua Road in the Beijing Central Business District (CBD). It was due to open in mid-May 2009 containing a hotel, a theater, and several studios.

Flames up to 30H high leapt from the building, which was yet to open, lighting up the Beijing skyline.

Today
Three years later, in 2012, the building was completely repaired and opened its doors to the public. However, with a very bad public image, the building was let down by the owners. Today after the catastrophe it doesn't seem like the hotel company is willing to open it any time soon.

However, Rem Koolhaas said that "they are simply rebuilding it as it was, because there was no structural damage."

AFTERMATH
The initial images of the blaze suggested that the tower might be nearly destroyed.
The complex's main building, the doughnut-shaped structure, was not damaged.
The building, which was originally scheduled to open in 2009, did not see any progress towards opening or being visibly repaired by the end of that year.

MURRAY TOWER HOTEL – FOSTER AND PARTNERS – HONG KONG

This major transformation of the listed building aims to reinvent this abandoned urban quarter – stitching together the urban fabric by linking the large green spaces flanking the site to the east and west.

The architecture of the original building is in direct response to the climate of Hong Kong. The design retains the facade while upgrading other aspects of the building.
The design extends the life of the building by introducing a new function – giving it a sustainable legacy for years to come.

The Murray is a luxury 336-room, 28-storey hotel refurbished by Norman Foster. The building is a modern heritage tower, built by Ron Phillips, that served as governmental HQ offices since 1969.

PRECEDENT CASES