الجامعة اللبنانية الأميركية
LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Architecture
Design & Built Environment

ARCH546 - GRADUATION PROJECT
Spring Semester 2025-2026

CRITICAL REGIONALISM FOR HERITAGE RECLAMATION

CULTURAL ACADEMY AND PERFORMANCE CENTER FOR LEBANESE ZAJAL

LOCATION: MTEIN, LEBANON

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بيت الزجل

THIS PROJECT PROPOSES A CULTURAL ACADEMY AND PERFORMANCE CENTER FOR LEBANESE ZAJAL,LOCATED IN THE HISTORIC VILLAGE OF MTEIN.THE PROGRAM IS CONCEIVED AS A DEDICATED SANCTUARY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND EVOLUTION OF THIS UNESCO-RECOGNIZED INTANGIBLE HERITAGE. ROOTED IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF CRITICAL REGIONALISM, THE DESIGN SEEKS TO RECLAIM THE SITE'S LAYERED HISTORY BY ESTABLISHING A DIALOGUE OF "HERITAGE WORTHINESS" BETWEEN THE 17TH-CENTURY ABILLAMA PALACES AND A MODERN ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION. BY EXHUMING THE TIMELINE OF ZAJAL THROUGH A MATERIAL TRANSITION FROM REFLECTIVE TO TRANSPARENT GLASS, THE PROJECT ARTICULATES THE TENSION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL ROOTS AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

PROJECT AIMS

PRESERVE AND EVOLVE LEBANESE ZAJAL: MTEIN AS A DEDICATED SANCTUARY FOR THE UNESCO-RECOGNIZED INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

BRIDGE TRADITION AND THE FUTURE: FRAMED BY THE EMBLEM OF ZAJAL:ODES A NATIONAL TRADITION YEAR ANTICIPATE "A CHAMBER" ZAJAL TO CONNECT TRADITIONAL ROOTS WITH FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

REVITALIZE THE HISTORIC MIDAN: NARROW THE GAP FROM A VEHICULAR ,PLACE BACK INTO A VIBRANT, COMMUNAL PUBLIC SPACE

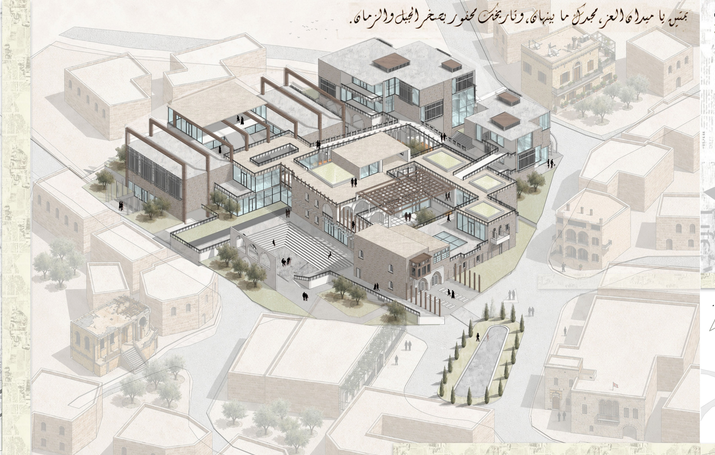
FOSTER CONTINUOUS CULTURAL EXCHANGE: CREATE A LOOP OF MAKING AND PERFORMANCE ZONES THAT ENCOURAGES STRONG INTERACTION AND LEARNING BETWEEN MASTER POETS, STUDENTS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

PROCESS

01

02

03



بحبيبي يا ميداي العز، محرمش ما بينهاي، وتار عمرت كمور بعتر الجبل والرماي.

CONCEPT

ZAJAL IN A LOOP OF TIME

ZAJAL IS A LOOP OF TIME: TRANSLATED THE RHYTHMIC CADENCE AND ORAL HERITAGE OF LEBANESE POETRY INTO A ,CONTINUOUS SPATIAL EXPERIENCE

BY WEAVING A MODERN CIRCULATION LOOP THROUGH THE 17TH-CENTURY ABILLAMA PALACE, THE DESIGN CREATES A PHYSICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE SITE'S HISTORIC STONE ,MASONRY AND CONTEMPORARY GLASS INTERVENTIONS

THIS 'LOOP' ACTS AS A TEMPORAL BRIDGE, WHERE THE USER MOVES THROUGH THE ARCHITECTURE LIKE A VERSE THROUGH A STANZA. IT ENCOURAGES ECHOES OF THE PAST TO RESONATE WITH THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE FUTURE—ENSURING THAT THE ART OF ZAJAL IS *NOT JUST* REMEMBERED, BUT ACTIVELY LIVED.

EXISTING PALACE

الزمان نعيم ومردوق يا عالمي عليه، والحكاية اتلمس لزامة نبان عليه عليه.

GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1/400

FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1/400

THE PALACE WAS BUILT BY THE ABILLAMA EMIRS OF MTEIN IN THE EARLY 17TH CENTURY SPECIFICALLY THE 1600S

MASHRABIYA OR MASH ELEVATION

ROAD MATERIALS USED: LOCAL LIMESTONE AND CEDARS WOOD FOR DETAILING

120CM MODULAR OPENINGS

TRADITIONAL LEBANESE ARCHITECTURE: STONE MASONRY, ARCHED OPENINGS, AND VAULT-AS CEILINGS THAT FORM A 'HERITAGE CLUSTER' AROUND A CENTRAL COURTYARD

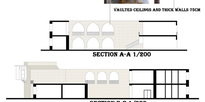
WHY CHOSEN FOR THIS PROJECT: NEXT TO MIDANE HISTORIC SQUARE WHERE THE FIRST ZAJAL DUAL IS LEBANON OCCURED

INSULATION PURPOSES

VAULTED CEILING AND THICK WALLS TSCH

SOUTHERN ELEVATION 1/200

NORTHERN ELEVATION 1/200



SECTION A-A 1/200

EASTERN ELEVATION 1/200

WESTERN ELEVATION 1/200

SECTION B-B 1/200

SITE GOOGLE EARTH SHOT

EXISTING PALACE 1,800 M2
SITE AREA 8,000
BUILT UP AREA 3 SIDES
HEIGHT:17M MAX
THREE FLOORS MAX
SURFACE EXP: 63%
BUILT UP AREA 5000 M2
SURFACE EXP: 63%
TOTAL EXP: X.%
BALCONIES 936 M2
TOTAL AREA: 6835 M2

SITE STUDIES

TOPOGRAPHY

CLIMATE

BUILDING AGES

LAND USE

CIRCULATION

S
Strengths
Cultural richness: Centuries-old history and a powerful historical anchor.
Natural beauty: Its location overlooking the sea may support high-value programming.
Cultural continuity: Could revive spaces for "salon" gatherings and open-air performances.

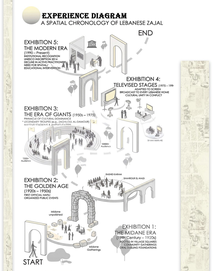
W
Accessibility: Its location may limit easy access for a broad audience.
Infrastructure: Outdated utilities may require significant investment for electronic recording/streaming.

O
Public venue: Could host open events for Mteiny and visitors, boosting tourism and local economy.
Intergenerational link: Can connect elders and younger literary circles.
Historical value: Restoration as a "home of Zajal" can provide unique cultural branding.

T
Visual conflict: Contemporary stage vision for the historic palace "shocking" to some locals.
Noise pollution: Amplified performances may disturb residents.
Structural risks: Old stone walls may not withstand heavy vibrations from speakers.

EXPERIENCE DIAGRAM

A SPATIAL CHRONOLOGY OF LEBANESE ZAJAL



END

EXHIBITION 5: THE MODERN ERA (1960s – Present)

EXHIBITION 4: TELEVISED STAGES (1970s – 90s)

EXHIBITION 3: THE ERA OF GIANTS (1930s – 1950s)

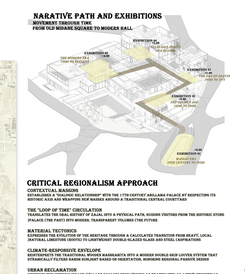
EXHIBITION 2: THE GOLDEN AGE (1920s – 1930s)

EXHIBITION 1: MIDANE ERA

START

NARATIVE PATH AND EXHIBITIONS

MOVEMENT THROUGH TIME
FROM OLD MIDANE SQUARE TO MODERN HALL



CRITICAL REGIONALISM APPROACH

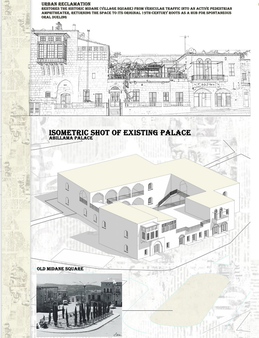
CONTEXTUAL MASSING
SPATIAL DIALOGUE: "RELATIONSHIP" BETW THE 17TH CENTURY ABILLAMA PALACE BY RESPECTING ITS HISTORIC AXIS AND WEAVING NEW MASSES AROUND A TRADITIONAL CENTRAL COURTYARD

THE 'LOOP OF TIME' CIRCULATION
TRANSLATED THE REAL HISTORY OF ZAJAL INTO A PHYSICAL PATH, GUIDING VISITORS FROM THE HISTORIC STORE ,PALACE, THE FACULTY INTO MODERN, TRANSPARENT VOLUMES (THE FUTURE

MATERIAL TECTONICS
EXPRESSED THE EVOLUTION OF THE HERITAGE THROUGH A CALCULATED TRANSITION FROM HEAVY, LOCAL ,MATERIAL LIMESTONE (MTEIN) TO LIGHTWEIGHT DOUBLE-GLAZED GLASS AND STEEL (ASPIRATION)

CLIMATE-RESPONSIVE EXTLOPE
REINTERPRETED THE TRADITIONAL MASHRABIYA INTO A MODERN DOUBLE-SKIN LOUVER SYSTEM THAT STRATEGICALLY FILTERS HARSH SUNLIGHT BASED ON ORIENTATION, MINIMIZING SOLAR HEAT GAIN

URBAN RECLAMATION
TRANSFORMED THE CURRENT VEHICLE-DOMINATED FROM VEHICULAR TRAFFIC INTO AN ACTIVE PEDESTRIAN ,PROMENADE, RETURNING THE SPACE TO ITS ORIGINAL 17TH CENTURY SCOPE AS A HUB FOR SPONTANEOUS ORAL DUELING



ISOMETRIC SHOT OF EXISTING PALACE

ABILLAMA PALACE

OLD MIDANE SQUARE

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES

THERMAL MASS AND SELF-SHADING

The Strategy:
High-inertia limestone walls combined with a recommended courtyard layout.

How it Works:
Thick masonry absorbs daytime heat and releases it at night, while the stepped building form and deep courtyards create shaded outdoor spaces and courtyards to lower ambient ground temperatures.

OBJETATION-SPECIFIC DOUBLE-SKIN SHADING

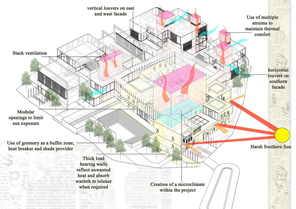
The Strategy:
A modern, performance-driven reinterpretation of the traditional Lebanese Mashrabiya.

How it Works:
Wooden louvers offset 30cm from the glass intercept heat before it hits the building. Operable panels allow for natural ventilation, and, while vertical louvers shield east and west facades from low-angle rays.

UPWARD-DRIVEN STACK VENTILATION

The Strategy:
Full-height central atriums and wind towers acting as passive thermal chimneys.

How it Works:
Hot air enters through modular openings at the ground level, absorbs internal heat, and rises naturally through the atriums, and escapes through the roof to pull a continuous fresh breeze through the deep floor plans.



vertical louvers on east and west facade

Use of multiple atriums to maximize natural comfort

Stack ventilation

horizontal louvers on southern facade

Modular openings to limit sun exposure

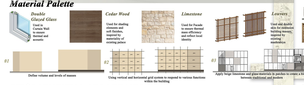
Use of greenery as a buffer zone, heat breaker and shade provider

Harsh Southern Sun

Thick load bearing walls reflect unwanted heat and absorb coolness at night when required

Creation of a microclimate within the project

Material Palette



Double Glazed Glass
Used in shading louvers and screens

Cedar Wood
Used for shading louvers and cladding, adding warmth and texture

Limestone
Used for facade cladding to create mass efficiency and thermal stability

Louvers
Uses adjustable wooden louvers to control light and heat

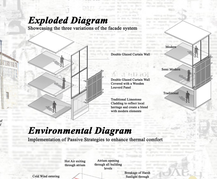
#1 Define volume and levels of masses

#2 Using vertical and horizontal grid system is required to various functions within the building

#3 Apply large limestone and glass materials in patches to create a blend between solid and void

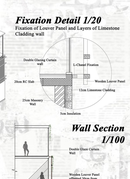
Exploded Diagram

Showcasing the three variations of the facade system



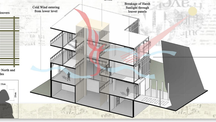
Fixation Detail 1/20

Fixation of Louver Panel and Layers of Limestone Cladding wall



Environmental Diagram

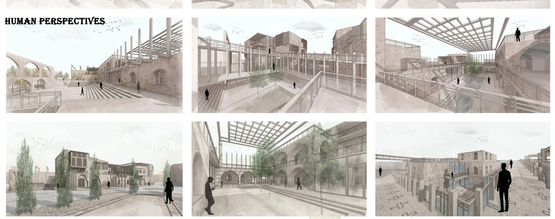
Implementation of Passive Strategies to enhance thermal comfort



Wall Section 1/100

3D SHOTS

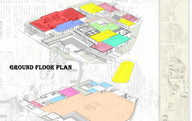
HUMAN PERSPECTIVES



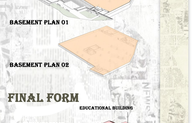
PROJECT PROGRAM

MAIN ZAJAL HALL 800 M2
ENTRANCE HALLS 500 M2
EXHIBITIONS 670 M2
EVENT HALL 300 M2
CAFE 250 M2
SOUVENIR 160 M2
WORKSHOPS 170 M2
HERITAGE ARCHIVE 160 M2
OFFICES 155 M2
CLASSROOMS 170 M2
LIBRARY 300 M2
DRESSING ROOMS 175 M2
REHEARSAL ROOMS 810 M2
PARKING
AMPHITHEATRE 500 M2

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

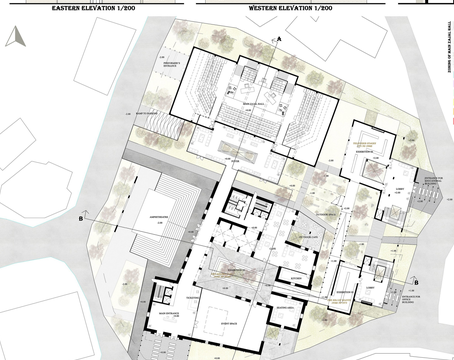
BASEMENT PLAN 01

BASEMENT PLAN 02

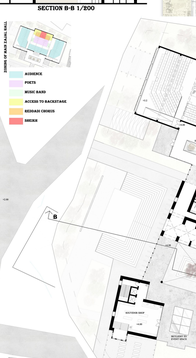
FINAL FORM

EDUCATIONAL BUILDING
PERFORMANCE SPACE
OFFICE BUILDING
CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY SPACE

SITE PLAN 1/400



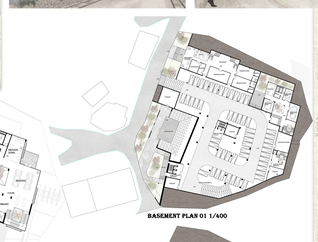
GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1/200



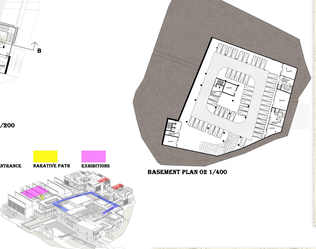
ZONES OF MAIN ZAJAL HALL
AUDIENCE
POETS
MUSIC BAND
ACCESS TO BACKSTAGE
SEEDBAR CHORUS
AISLES

FIRST FLOOR PLAN 1/200

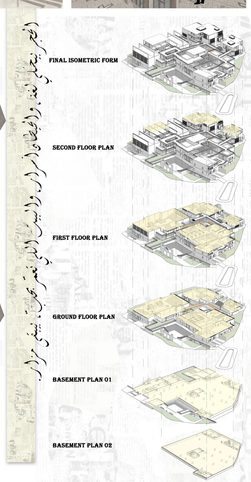
SECOND FLOOR PLAN 1/200



BASEMENT PLAN 01 1/400



BASEMENT PLAN 02 1/400



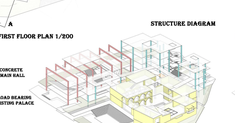
FINAL ISOMETRIC FORM
SECOND FLOOR PLAN
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
BASEMENT PLAN 01
BASEMENT PLAN 02

الرجل سيف اللسنة، ونبع الإبداع، يبقى بقلب البلد في صرخة وفرح وتراع

FORM GENERATION

01 EXISTING ABILLAMA PALACE
02 ADDITION OF EXTERNAL CIRCULATION AND MASSES
03 DEFINITION OF MASSES ACCORDING TO PROGRAM
04 FORM DEFINITION BASED ON EXISTING PALACE AXIS
05 ADDITION OF ATRIUMS FOR THERMAL COMFORT

STRUCTURE DIAGRAM

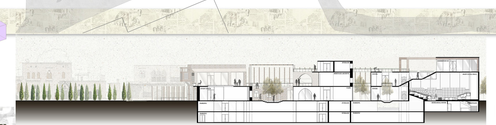


REINFORCED CONCRETE FRAMES FOR MAIN HALL
TSCH THICK LOAD BEARING WALLS OF EXISTING PALACE
REINFORCED CONCRETE COLUMNS FOR EXTENSION BUILDING SKELETAL SYSTEM

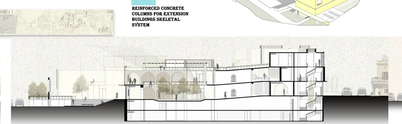
CIRCULATION DIAGRAM

VERTICAL CIRCULATION
VISITOR PATH
ENTRANCE TO OFFICE BUILDING
ENTRANCE TO EDUCATIONAL BUILDING
PERFORMER'S ENTRANCE
NARRATIVE PATH
EXHIBITIONS

GROUND FLOOR CIRCULATION
FIRST FLOOR CIRCULATION
SECOND FLOOR CIRCULATION



SECTION A-A 1/200



SECTION B-B 1/200

SOUTHERN ELEVATION 1/200

WESTERN ELEVATION 1/200