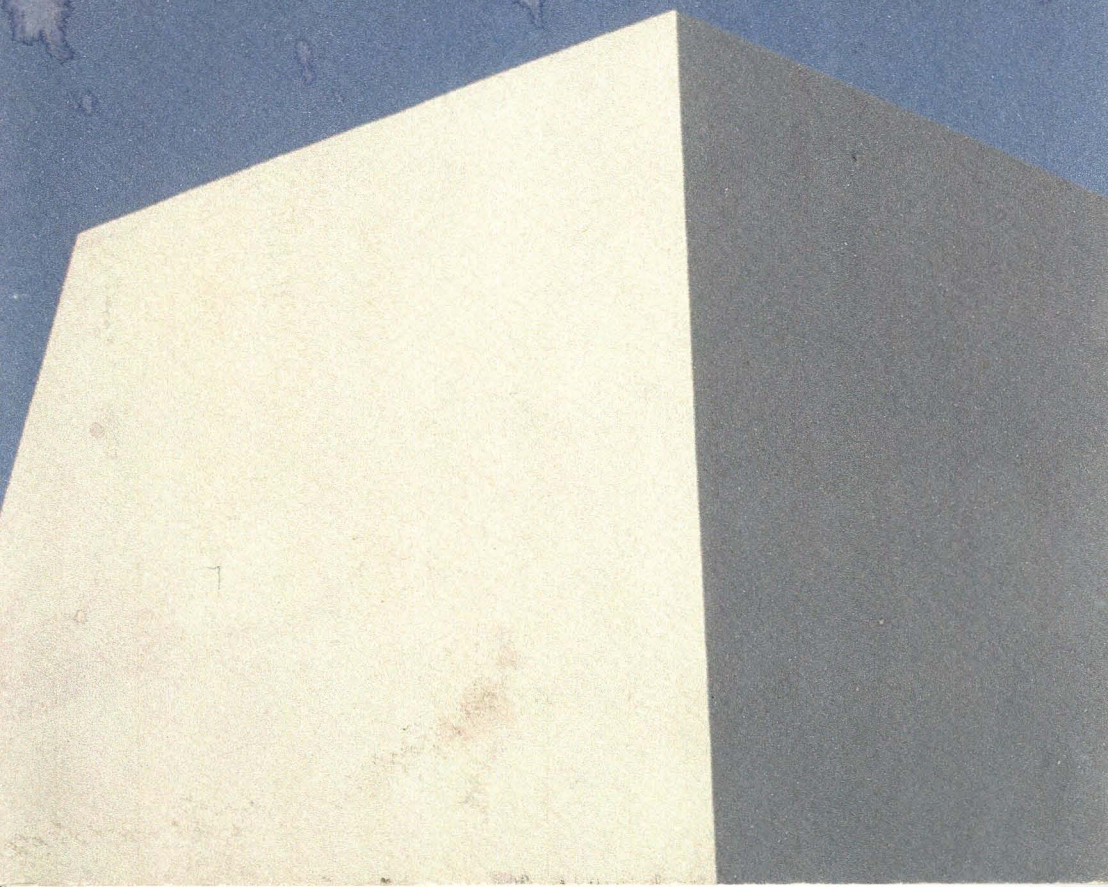


A De-Stressing Place for Generation Y

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A De-stressing Place for Generation Y

Farah Budeiri

A De-stressing Place for Generation Y

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I dedicate this book to my parents and my friends, who believed in me and constantly pushed me when I needed it most.

I also dedicate this book to my advisor, Mona Harb, whose guidance and patience made the most challenging things possible.

I would especially like to thank Yasmine Aboud, Rouslan Rabah, and Sarah Farhat for their moral support and help through out this difficult journey.

Generation Y is a term which alludes to a succession from Generation X, popularized by the Canadian fiction writer Douglas Coupland in his 1991 book *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* to describe twenty some things (Coupland 1991). It refers to youth ranging from the age or 17 and until the age of 24, categorized mainly as University student.

Abstract

ISSUE 2

This thesis book investigates the relation between Beirut's youth and stress, and tries to provide an architectural solution by studying the practices of this group in the city, and the spaces that provide them with a de-stressing atmosphere. Architecture can contribute to the problem of stress by minimizing environmental stressors, and creating spaces that are appealing in their diversity to lure Generation Y in, and in proposing rules that guide them to reach a stress free state. Generation Y looks forward to different spaces in the city as outlets of stress. How can architecture promote or package de-stressing for that particular age group? What are the spaces they look forward to being in, and that can provide them with de-stressing?

In order to provide spaces that fit into the daily lives of Generation Y, and allow them to de-stress, a certain understanding of their health and psychological needs is required. My intervention will provide them with a homey, warm relaxing environment that caters for their specific needs, and gives them a sense of belonging. The essence of this project is to propose an environment in the city, that is comfortable, that gets them hooked to a particular mood, providing them with an escape, a fresh breath, an outlet. *inner relief / peace of mind*

site The site I chose for my intervention is located in Ras Beirut. An urban environment is crucial to break the barriers of entry and social taboos in order to integrate de-stressing spaces into the lives of Generation Y. This site provides a calm and serene get away far away from the

the site by itself is de-stressing → new experience with the city

noise of the cars and the enclosing buildings. It is at an edge giving its back towards the city and opening up to the endless views of the Mediterranean Sea. The location of the site makes it accessible at a number of different levels, allowing almost anyone to enter and enjoy its densely vegetated landscape.

Program The program is based on different activities that range from straight forward de-stressing activities like massage therapies, to channeling the stress into different types of activities; creative outlets, such as theatre and arts, and empowering outlets that give a sense of belonging to the community, such as kitchens, NGO offices and exhibition spaces. The lounge which is the main core of the project will include the activities that are part of the daily lives of youth, such as eating, hanging out, studying, and socializing. The program is based on three different categories of de-stressing; the first operates at a social and public level and is materialized in the lounge; the second acts at a semi social/private level and includes the arts space, the theatre, the kitchen and the studios, and the third level functions at an individual and private level through spaces of isolation.

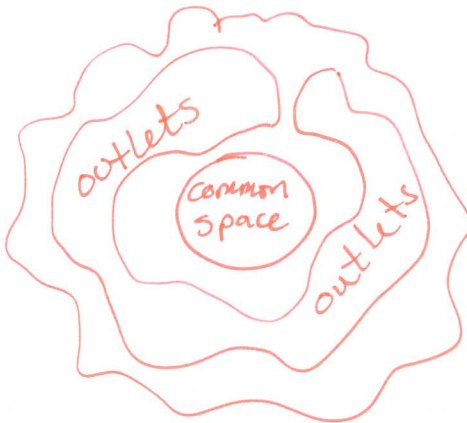


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Introduction

In Lebanon, spaces dedicated to de-stressing have not yet been established. Ideologies of social taboo have refrained the emergence of a space devoted to acknowledge the diversity of Generation Y's health problems and tackling them directly. Generation Y doesn't want to admit to their stress at a social scale, and refrain from seeking help, due to issues of identity, peer pressure, and social conformity. They would rather place themselves in a bubble of political and religious battles, rather than channel these instincts of belonging and de-stressing in a more challenging and creative way. Dancing, singing, even gardening can help with this constant in our lives. Creating programs that are directly tackling issues of stress, such as spas or relaxation retreats, are not the answer since most of Generation Y doesn't have the time or the money to even consider them as a possibility. Entertainment centers, gyms, clubs cafes are all spaces that Generation Y go to in order to de-stress, but yet the problem doesn't get solved. If these spaces are supposed to contribute to Generation Y's entertainment and leisure and in a way allow them to de-stress, why is stress still a common and constant factor in their lives?

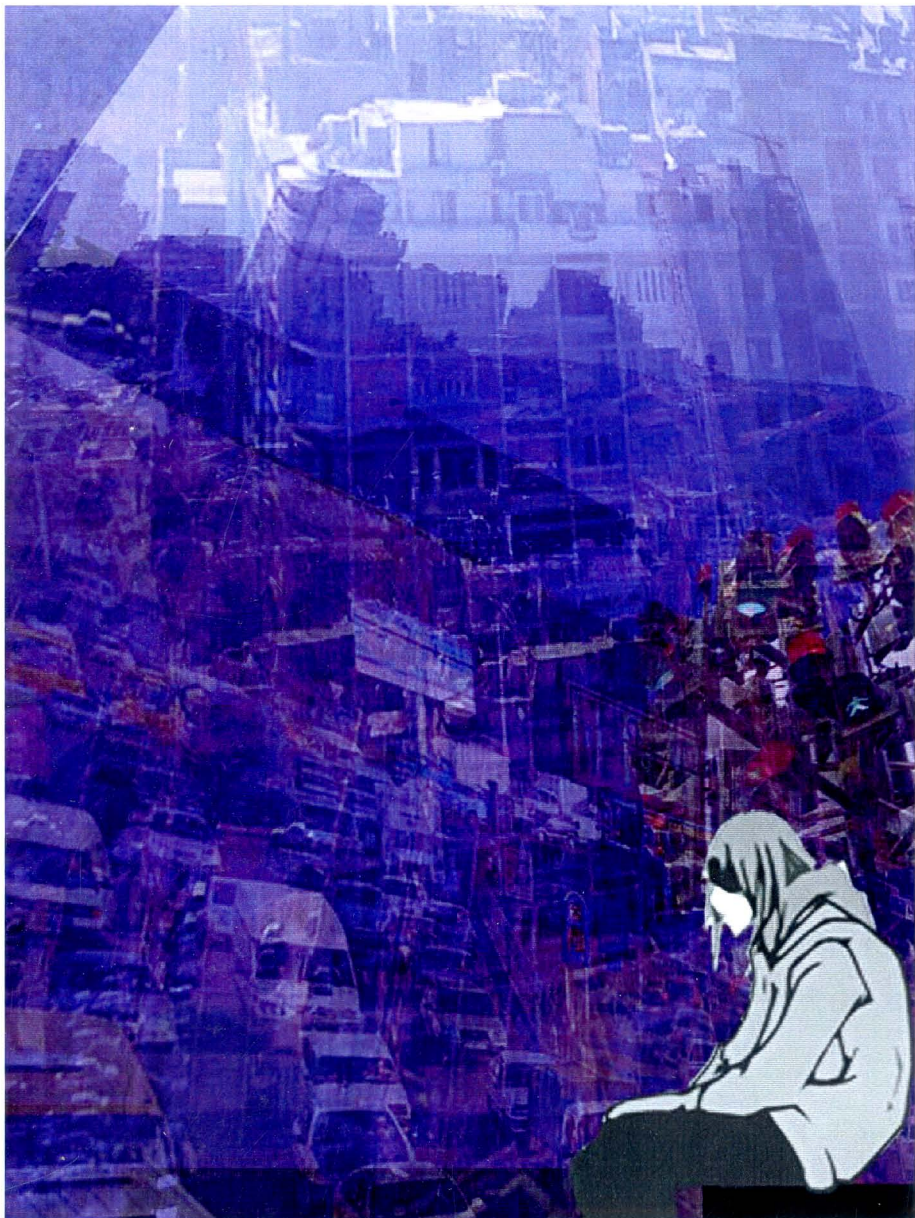
Architecture can provoke certain feelings and emotions, and can contribute, in some ways and depending on the person, in making one feel comfortable and at ease, a feeling of serenity. The question is how. How can architecture enhance or promote this idea of de-stressing to Generation Y in particular. The Aim of this thesis is to provide Generation

Y with appropriate spaces and a diverse program that in a way links to their daily practices, which will in turn give them a space to de-stress. Integrating spatial elements such as architectural transparency, accessibility, legibility and even stimulation into the youth culture and their daily lives, will exposure them to a certain life style which they all hope to achieve.

Methodology

The research for this thesis started with a literature review of health, well-being, healing environments, as well as stress. A better understanding of the relation of these issues with the lives of Beirut's youth required a number of different interviews with a number of different educational and medical personnel. Doctors were interviewed to try and understand the psychological needs of this particular user group, and how medicine offers them the solution. From family doctor Ramez Rabah, to Nutritionist Dr. Suzan Nashashibi, to the AUB psychologist Dr. Antione Khabbaz, even to voice therapist Dr. Hafez Al- Ashi, all of them provided a better framing of the health problems of youth ranging from the ages of 17 till 23. Specialists working in the field of bettering and empowering youth in the city were also interviewed, Mrs. Rindala Abdel Baki, currently working in IC provided an overall review of the situation of youth in Beirut with her report written in 2003, as well as information concerning the different NGOs working for youth in Beirut. Different NGOs working for youth provided substantial information on how certain programs are being offered to provide outlets for Beirut's youth, Zico, the founder of "Zico House" provided a very interesting case study of flexible and changing environments that suit the needs of youth.

Further interviews with university students in the Hamra area were taken on issues of stress, and coping mechanisms, case studies of the spaces they look forward to in the city as outlets of stress were also considered. A better architectural understanding of the relation between stress and spaces was done through different articles proposing ideas that relate to the psychological mood different spaces may offer.



I- Beirut's Youth and Stress

That was shocking, all that from stress! Muscle pains, eyesight decline, headaches, indigestion... but where from? Could it be the street? These streets are adding to my pain, They're public, I get it. So it's supposed to have three rows of cars, one slightly mobile while the surrounding two are static, all steaming and screaming with overheated brakes and exhaust rumble; with a sprinkle of scooters all over the pavement and buzzing their way through my ears in both directions of course. It all makes me wonder what I actually breathe... is it the cars' exhaust or the scooters'? Or maybe it's the steams from the fast food chains. In any case the air rarely flows down here between the buildings; we are enclosed and even entrapped with ultimately a deteriorated sense of privacy. I feel like I'm the intruder here, let the monster cars take over the city, I'd climb on my rooftop, plant a palm and sit in its shade. Where is the joy of strolling down an alley, or meeting an acquaintance in the street, that common home to us citizens of this country? The Raging cars, twirling motorcycles, and screaming drivers, are those the users that claim this place's name, no spaces for us, any of us students. Maybe I should leave this place, and take refuge in the supermarket with its beeping and scratching, its bumping carts and impatient customers? Or better yet, maybe I'll go shopping, lose myself in the endless mind control of the retail business, spend some money and feel good about myself!

The students are ever new to such loads of work, which is obviously crammed till the last minute. That translates in endless gatherings in strategic corners over coffee and a cigarette making it impossible for the passerby to walk their way unnoticed, how could I just make my way peacefully to class without saying the usual hello? For one, I look hideous; I'm tired and hadn't had much sleep the last two nights. I wouldn't want to admit to that under the scrutinizing eyes of the judges. Because in my world pain is a taboo and showing it is degrading. But I can't even make my way through the parks even the greenery which is a blessing for citizens of Beirut is taken over by the lovers' community that would make it awkward for one bench to be occupied by a single head. We are ever new to attitudes of professors, never knowing when they want us to speak our minds and when we should repeat after them. And we are definitely ever new to the extracurricular activity of becoming one's own Mr. and Ms. Here starts the real problem with the endless possibilities. One could be stuck with a project or could be stuck with a needy landlord, one could be even stuck with parents if he/she is not living alone, bulimia, drug abuse and other types of compulsive consumption disorders are all a reality to us students, where it is impossible to share with any authority being it the parents or the university administration. The only solution left is the college psychologist which offers a tabooed way of dealing with stress and its symptoms; for I would be the odd one out.

Our lives in general are a series of experiences, reactions to spaces, and feelings. Our emotions are directly translated into our bodies, where the physiological responses of coping with the environment can damage our health.

“The definition of stress refers to the wear and tear on the body from its attempts to cope with the environmental stressors...Hormones released during stress participate in the development of many non endocrine degenerative diseases...measurable and highly predictable physiological changes take place in the body as a reaction to psychological and environmental stresses.” (Selye, 1956)

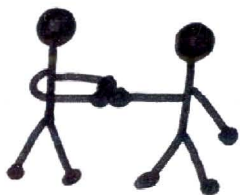
Every person perceives their environment from a different point of view, thus their experiences of the space can vary, from a warm and welcoming feeling, to a cold and rejecting one. An environment can contribute to stress when a lack or presence of certain elements prevails. Physical threats such as filth, heat, cold, or even an actual threatening object, like caterpillar construction machines all eminent in our city, produce stress. Add to that problems like illogical pathways or maze like structures, where one gets lost in the long monotonous corridors filled with signs, like hospitals for example. At the same time environments can give out certain vibes, where one feels they are coded with messages that convey feelings of social worth, security, identity, and self esteem . These mainly stem out of a lack of empowerment, with feelings of self worth, security, identity, and acknowledgment by the social pool. When a person enters a space they might have this impulsive feeling that they are the small person and everybody else is bigger. And finally, the demandingness of a place that enforces conditions, such as money for hospitalization, can seem to a person subject to that demand the cause of unease, thus certain environments might be associated with stress. (Malkin, 1992)

“After the age of 16, most students start dealing with issues of identity, peer pressure, physical standards, the need to fit in, academic pressure, and figuring out who they are. These become ma-

job issues that affect their health. Psychological diseases are the most common ones for that age group in particular, where they derive from the stress of having to cope with all these elements. This can manifest itself in a number of different ways, from physical problems to depression, to psychological diseases” Dr. Ramez Rabah

This sensitive and formative stage is a period of questioning. Psychological problems range from depression, to anxiety, drug abuse, adjustment disorders, eating disorders and maybe even psychotic problems. From exercising to helping others, there are a number of different ways one is able to de-stress. These are usually ways by which this stress is channeled into more productive activities, that at some extent distract the mind from its stressors, and allows for a dilution of the symptoms.

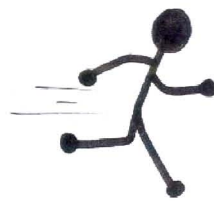
“The key to coping with stress is to determine your personal tolerance levels for stressful situations. You must learn to accept or change stressful or tense situations whenever possible. If your stress is constant, it may require more attention or even lifestyle changes.”(Factsheet: Coping With Stress Checklist, 2006)



Connecting with others



Relax your mind



Exercise



Get enough sleep



Help others

Stories



Raja, is a 22 years old medicine student, who likes to take some time off from the hectic schedule of studying for his courses, and likes to sit by himself and relax, instead of joining his friends in social gatherings that require energy and effort.

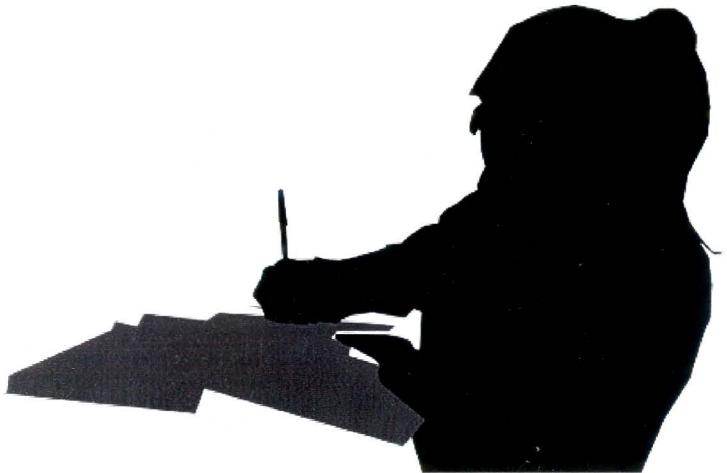


Ann is an 18 year old freshman, who feels like she is constantly being judged by her peers due to her weight issue, this adds a stressful factor on to her life, where the only way she feels comfortable is when she binge eats her way through her problems.



Omar, is a 20 year old business student, who is away from his parents and came to study in Lebanon, he started smoking when he met a new group of friends that introduced him to cigarettes. Now he feels like he cannot function throughout the day without smoking. He feels like it calms him down when he's stressed.

Nadine is 21 years old and she is currently studying psychology, she feels like she manages her time well between studying and having fun, but still the stress of exams gets to her, that's when she goes shopping with her friends and buys bags or shoes to make herself feel better and diverts her focus from her exam and stress.





Tina is 22 years old, she is studying nutrition, she loves to sing in her free time, and she was thinking of taking voice lessons to express herself and feel better. Singing makes her feel good and allows her to forget any problems or issues that are bothering her.

Rami is 23 years old, he is studying PSPA, and even though it's his 5th year in AUB, he still feels stressed when he studies for exams or works on papers. It's his last semester in AUB and he started looking for jobs, he finds this the most stressful aspect of his life. On the weekends he enjoys hiking in the mountains where it's just him and nature.



Yasmeen is 23 years old, and is studying architecture, she loves to party and drink to forget the stress of her major, stress is something that is constant in her life, from dues to juries, dancing, music and being around her friends is a something she looks forward to.

Her friends love to drink and free themselves from the rules of this society.



This is the age where the move from one stage in life to another becomes critical. Moving from school, to university and finally to the real world calls for an adjustment period. After the age of 16, a certain level of independence is obligatory. Students become responsible for their homework, what they eat, where they go, and how they manage their time. This adjustment period is accompanied by stress, by uncertainty, and by anxiety. This is usually when students start looking for spaces to de-stress, they start going to clubs and pubs, hanging out with friends, drinking and dancing all night long, even ditching classes to sit in cafes over a cigarette and coffee.

3rd spaces



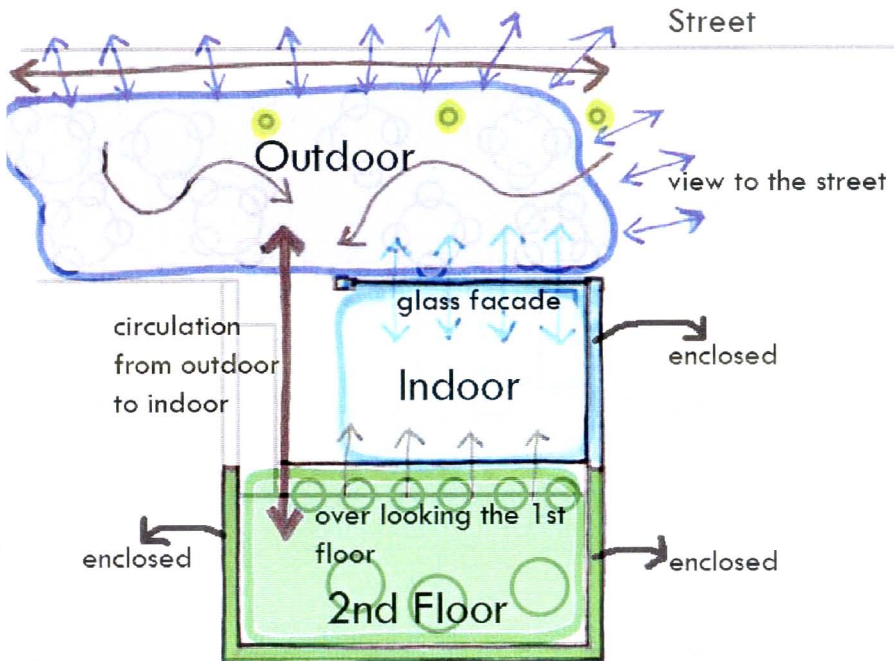
The third place is a term used in the concept of community building to refer to social surroundings separate from the two usual social environments of home and the workplace. In his influential book *The Great Good Place*, Ray Oldenburg (1989, 1991) argues that third places are important for civil society, democracy, civic engagement, and establishing feelings of a sense of place. Such spaces in the city do lend a hand in the de-stressing of Generation Y, from location, to connection to the street, to flexibility, they all offer some comfort to a number of different people, but the problem still persists. These places are usually consumer based, they offer their users certain privileges of using the space, but consuming something is a must.

“If bars, lounges, and clubs are escapist environment, then it is only natural that design often attempts to create surrealistic and intriguing interiors to transport inhabitants out of their prosaic reality.” (Abdulla, 2002)

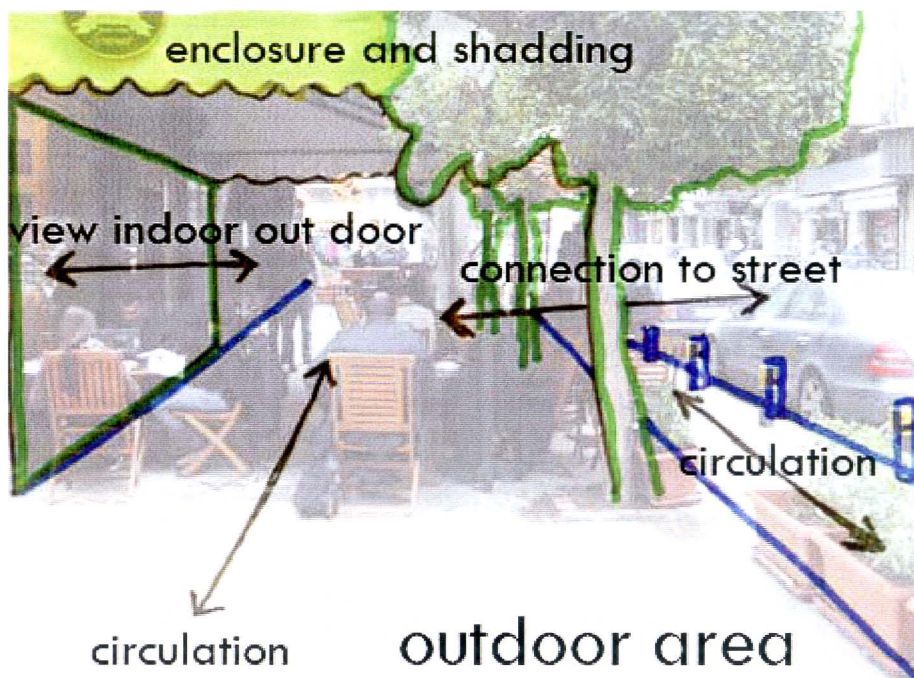
Generation Y look forward to different spaces in the city as outlets of stress. These range from the small cafes right around the corner, to clubs, pubs, and to the Corniche with its magnificent views of an endless sea. Some even go to abandoned buildings or sites to seek isolation from the hectic stress of the city. Their practices in the city, as a means of de-stressing, vary tremendously, some are healthy; others are based on concepts of consumption. These include eating, drinking, smoking, doing drugs, shopping, beauty care, walking in the city, running on the Corniche, hiking in nature, cycling outdoors, exercising, cleaning/organizing, socializing, and meditating, dancing, singing, art work, volunteering, sitting alone, yoga, massages, sleeping and the list goes on. Generation Y spend almost half of their time socializing with their peers, gossiping, commenting, learning from each other, but the one main activity they seem to prefer is gazing at other people.

They could be in groups, in pairs, and most successfully as individuals, where the wandering of the brain as people are passing seems to give a sense of relief. Socializing often occurs in cafés where the most comfortable ones provide spaces that give out this feel of coziness, and warmth. Practices in cafes range from meetings, to taking breaks for coffee and a cigarette, to studying, to just enjoying the atmosphere. Good examples of such cafés and even cafés/ pubs in Hamra, where most of the student activity can be seen, are Younis Café, T-marbouta, and De-Prague.

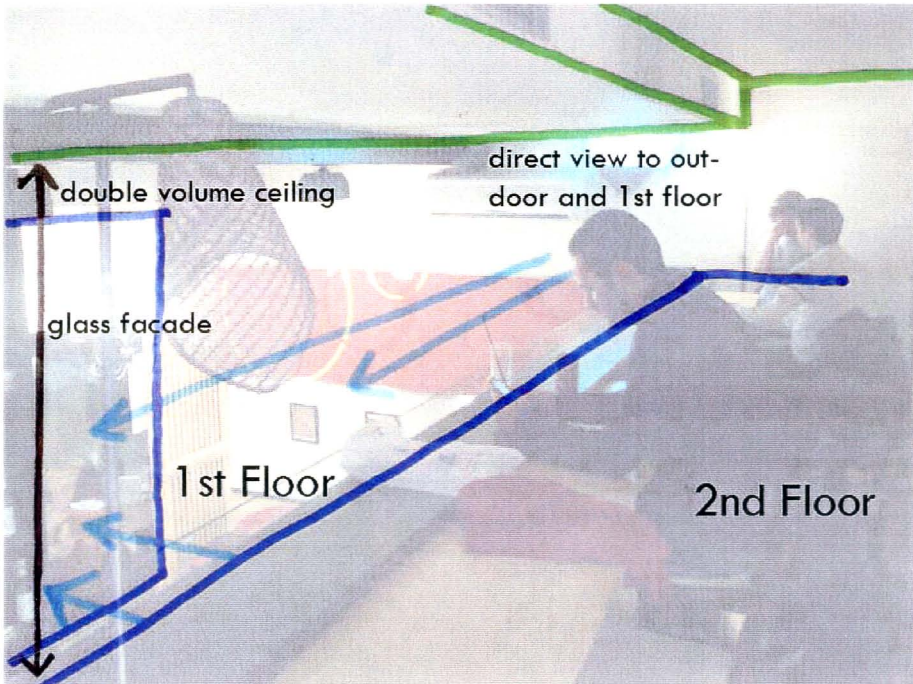
Café Younis



Café Younis is located on Nehme Yafet St., a secondary street connecting to the main Hamra street. The café has three different seating areas that shift from a public to a more private space. The first is an outdoor extension of the café where the extended pavement becomes a seating area by itself and directly overlooks the street, this allows for maximum visibility and accessibility for more spontaneous social encounters. The second is an indoor seating area connecting to the outdoor area by a glass façade, where visibility between the two spaces is achieved, yet a sense of enclosure gives a more relaxing feel. The third seating area is on a second floor overlooking the indoor and outdoor spaces through a double volume void with a glass facade, this allows for a more isolated and private feel from the outside street. The direct circulation between indoor and outdoor gives an opportunity for privacy and for movement between interaction and solitude as desired.

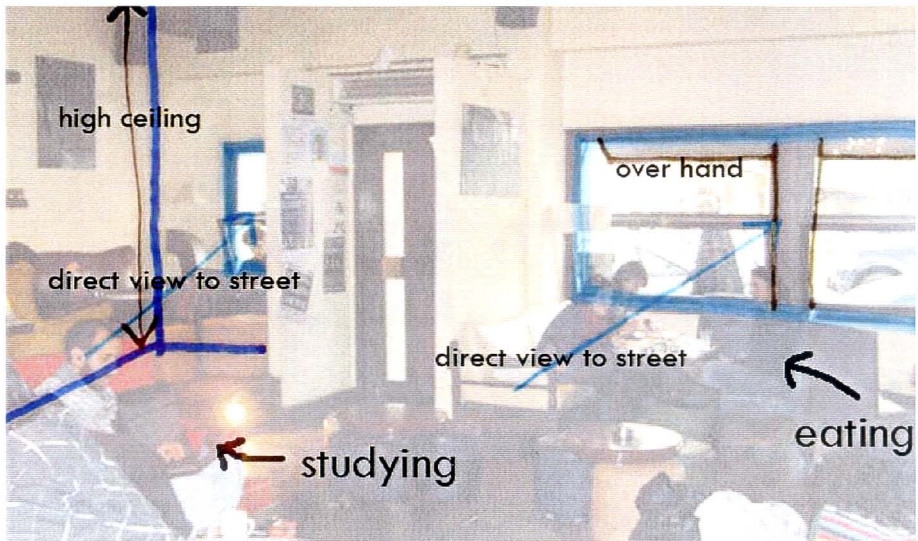


Visual Stimulation in the space is achieved through the contrast between the neutral walls and floors that give a homelike feel to the space, and the colorful furniture and art works placed on the walls. The diversity between the 3 spaces can also be seen from the different heights. The outdoor space is open to the outside yet a canopy is added as well as trees to give a natural sense of enclosure. The Indoor spaces, on the other hand, have two different ceiling heights, where the second floor with its low ceiling gives a sense of coziness. Architecturally, Café Younis is providing a comfortable environment to the users of the space, **focusing on different levels of enclosure** as well as social interaction, thus acknowledging the diversity of Generation Y's needs. ✓



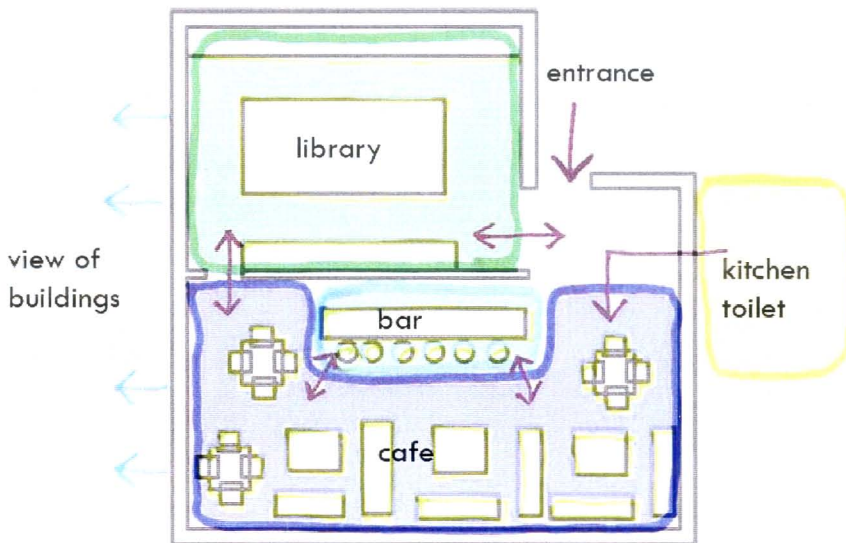
De Prague

De Prague is a café/pub on Makdissi St., a street parallel to the main Hamra street. De-Prague is a good example of how flexible spaces can become. In the morning, it serves as a breakfast place, at noon it serves as a lunch place and at night it becomes a pub. All through the day people can also go to De Prague for coffee, socializing with friends, studying, meeting up with people and at night to have a drink, listen to some music and have a good time. De Prague's small scale space gives a warm and comfortable feeling where people are close to each other, yet each maintaining a certain level of personal space. The high ceilings give a sense of enclosure yet they are still able to give a sense of openness with the help of the huge windows overlooking the street. People like to sit next to the windows in order to gaze at passersby; this gives them a relaxed yet lively atmosphere. Over hangs and light shelves were used to provide the space with natural daylight, since the orientation of the windows is to the north.



T-marbouta

T-Marbouta could be considered as a new generation of cafés, where the juxtapositioning of different activities with their usual building typologies was included into the usual “café” environment.

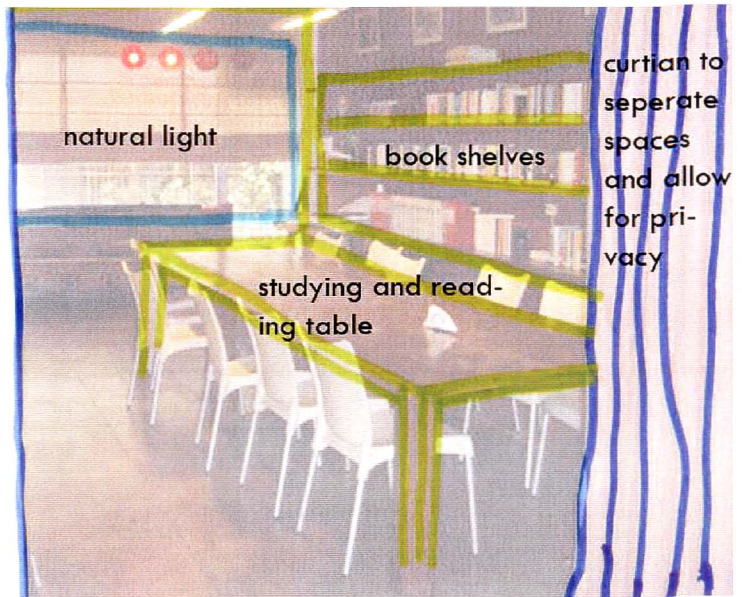
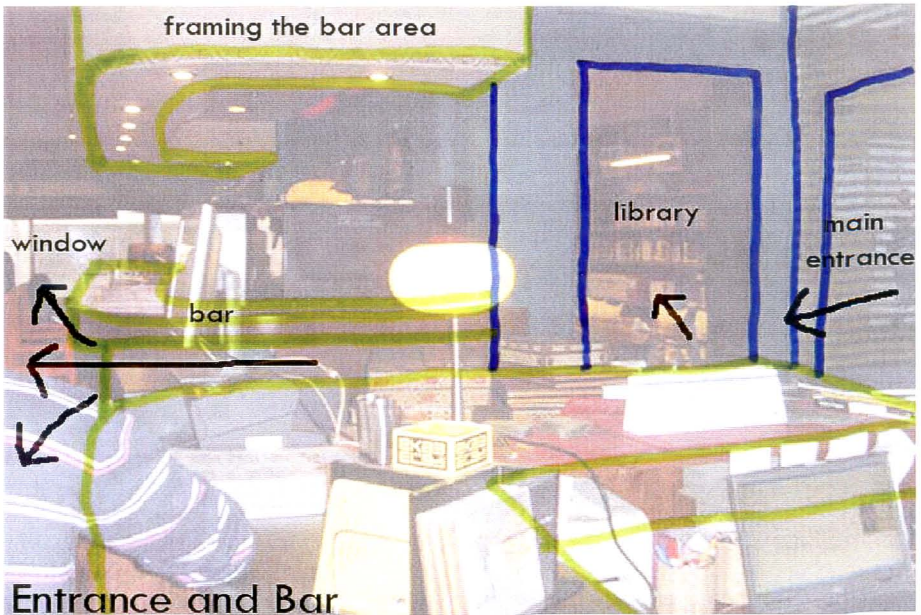


T-marbouta

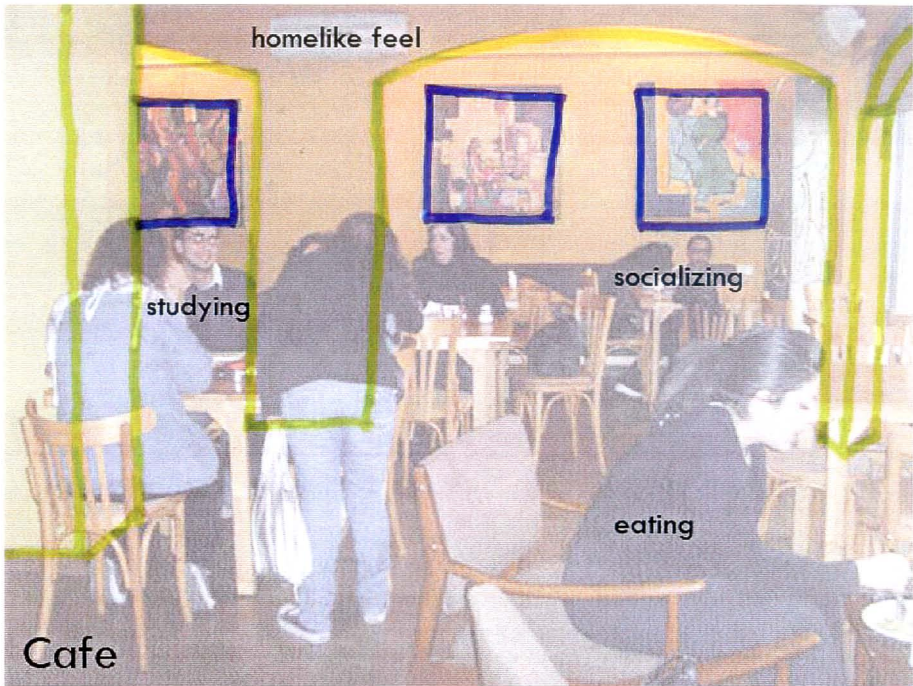
It is located on Ibrahim Abdel-Al St. another secondary street connecting to the main Hamra Street. Its location is quite a discrete one, where the entrance to the space is up a flight of stairs and into a small plaza on the first floor of a building. This gives the place a sense of escape from the chaos of the city, where it is not directly connected to the street, as opposed to Younis Café. The atmosphere in the place is one that is very homely, from the entrance to the simple and clear

layout; the place is an outlet for many people wishing to take a break from the city. Although the place does not have a direct view to the outdoors the colors and furniture give a real feel of a home, just like sitting with your friends in your own living room. The program is diverse, and includes a bar, a café, a restaurant, and a library all in one place. One can be studying in the library or even reading a book, take a break, have coffee or a meal with some friends, and then go back to studying or reading. This place is a very common and needed outlet for Generation Y in the city.





Library



Other outlets for Generation Y in the city are spaces provided by organizations who are working for youth. These are more freelance based organizations wanting to make a difference, and trying to empower youth and give them opportunities to express themselves. Such NGOs include Indyact, which started as a group of activists attracting young people as volunteers in their community, their projects included a recycling project, green spaces, anything that allows people to give back to their community be it the environment, the cultural aspect or helping other families cope with certain problems. Zico house is an excellent example of creative empowerment. It is an old house adaptively re-used as a place where young artists can meet and express themselves. From cafés, to exhibitions spaces, even to the kitchen, all aspects of this space can be flexibly used for free expression.

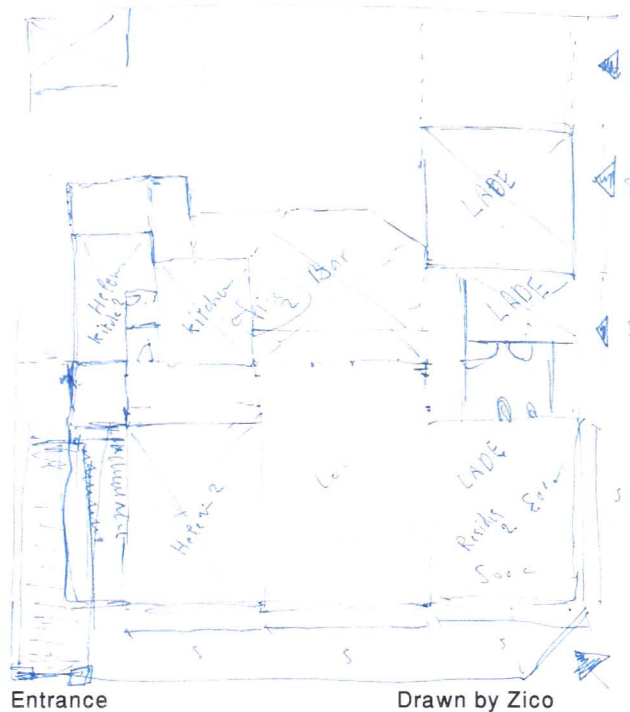
Zico House

1st floor
cafe/exhibition
bar
kitchen
offices

2nd floor
artists' rooms
kitchen
lounge
offices

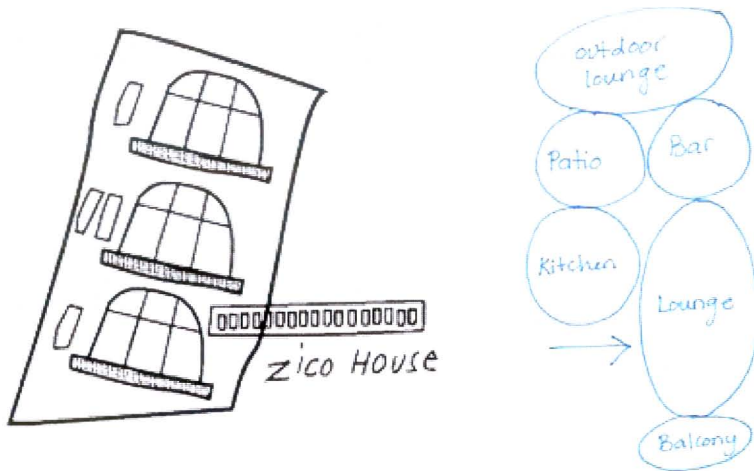
3rd floor
common lounge
studio

4th floor
rehearsal room



Zico House is a building located on Spears St. It is considered as an entertainment and arts performing center, a space for cultural development and freedom of expression. Zico, the owner of this house, has dedicated the spaces for the empowerment of youth in the city of Lebanon. He started this foundation when he was in university, and watched it flourish into an organization. This typical Lebanese residence used to be his home at one point in time, but now it houses a number of different NGOs working for youth and their rights. The adaptively re-used building is four floors high, and accommodates for a very diverse

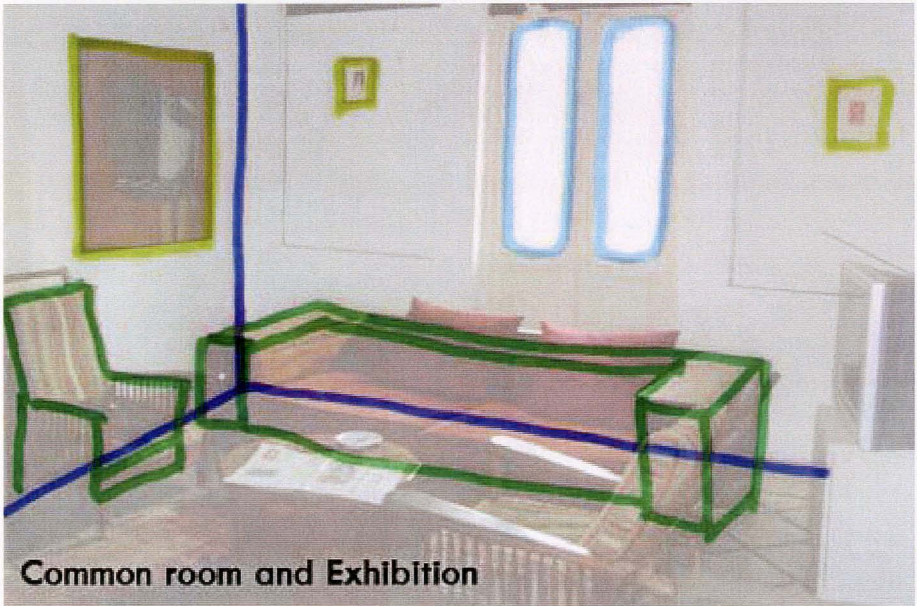
program; a café which houses exhibitions by young artists, offices for NGOs that are constantly being shifted and renewed to bring in new ideas, a bar, dorms for artists from other counties, and rehearsal rooms for young people who wish to practice. This space is very attractive to young artists, where Zico has dedicated the entire house to cultural projects, social initiatives and mingling, each contributing in its own way, to the Generation Y.



“Spaces specifically designed for Youth that tackle the diversity of their stress are not present in our city, although we can see the emergence of such spaces, like zico house, that try to be a tool for expression, yet they only respond to a minority.” Rindala Abdel Baki



Cafe and Exhibition



Common room and Exhibition

A healthy life style on the other hand, is one that most of Generation Y yearns to achieve. They are aware of the path leading to a healthier life style, from exercising to eating health, not smoking, not drinking, relaxing their body and mind, but most of them don't seem to put an effort into taking care of their health. Why? Are they just lazy? On the contrary, they would rather go clubbing, dance and drink all night long, than exercise. What is it that pushes them to neglect their health, and thus get even more stressed? How can architecture promote or package de-stressing for that particular age group? What are the spaces they look forward to?

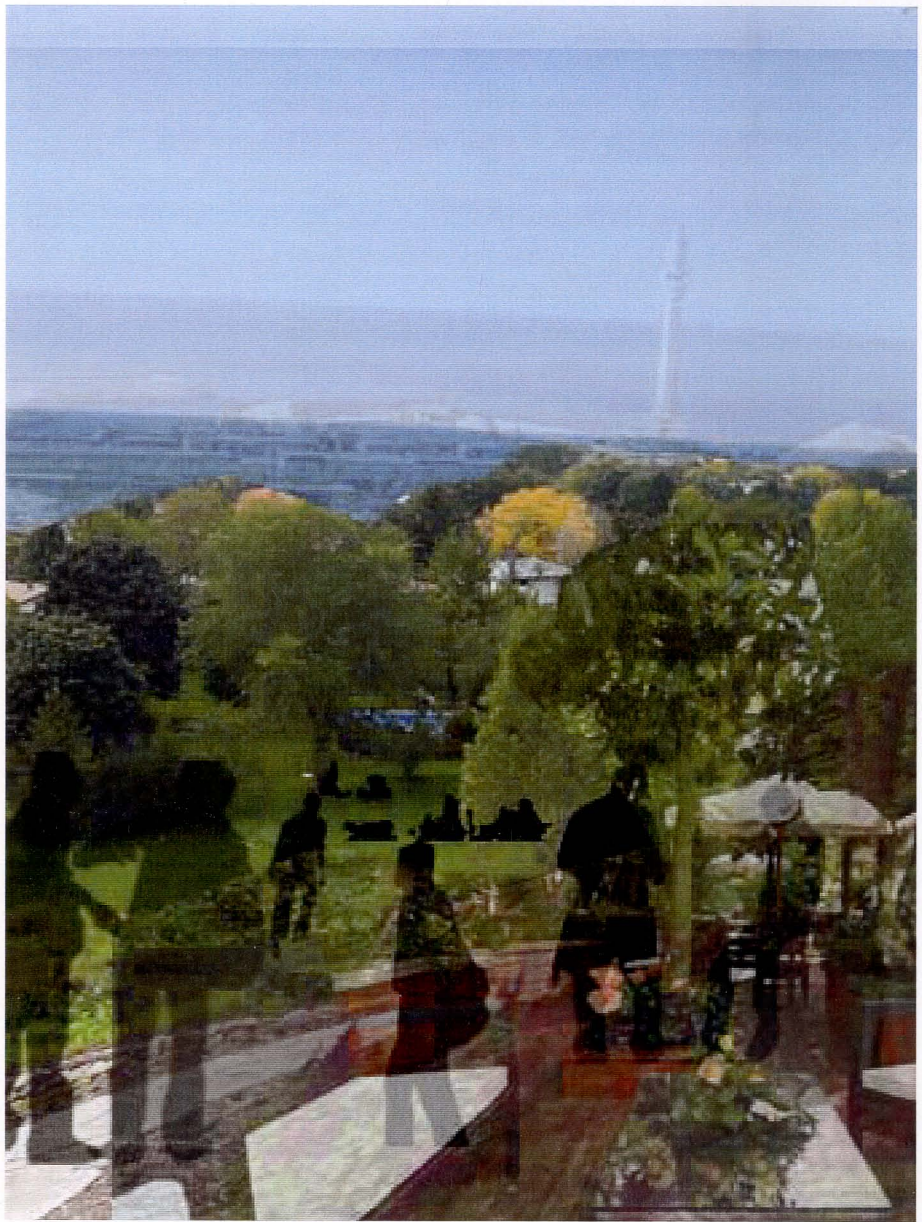
“In Beirut, youth don't have adequate health related spaces that are able to bridge the gap between health and university students. Introducing health into the daily lives of these students is very crucial. There are students who do take care of their health by eating healthy and exercising, maybe even doing yoga, but they are few.” Rindala Abdel Baki

Many people have tried to bridge that gap, where advertisements, lectures, leaflets, programs have all been made available for Generation Y to use. Centers that cook healthy meals for you, programs that will help you step by step quit smoking, awareness campaigns that promote wellbeing in all its different aspects. Again these have failed to push Generation Y into becoming healthier individuals, or at least feel comfortable in seeking the appropriate help when needed.

“Students need to learn how to balance their lives, this balance is crucial in this stage, the need to balance having fun and growing up into responsible adults is not an easy task.” Dr. Antoine Khabbaz



According to the Dr. Antoine Khabbaz, most students turn to drugs and alcohol or even smoking for an answer, a sort of refuge, where they are running away from their problems. Stress is something that they are constantly faced with, and removing that stress is related to certain stages and activities they are faced with. Fixing this problem is something which requires a certain inner power. The best way to provoke students to face their problems is by setting a good example.

“Most of the students that come to see me hear about me from their friends, basically word of mouth is a way to encourage students to solve their problems and face them. Students are not interested in lectures about how to deal with their problems, they don't want to listen they feel like it's a waste of time. The reputation of a person or a space, and obviously word of mouth can be a source of channeling peer pressure to our advantage.” Dr. Antoine Khabbaz



II-De-Stressing

I finally regain the jungle named bliss. I am alone again. I wonder where I could go, meet some friends and share some peaceful moments. Some place where I could feel welcome, at ease, yet interested and alert, I need containment, of the kind to make me feel secure, restful, some place where I could have a view over a calm sea, or just a wide horizon, some place with a high ceiling to relieve me from entrapment. There I could join my friends over a cheap drink, where the action would be between us, not between me as a consumer and the retailer. I don't want to go to a café, or a pub, it is not what I seek. I don't want to be guided: in – drink – out. Just a place where I could stretch my feet on a table without being looked at awkwardly, where I could see easy interactions free from pervasive specifications, rules and expectations, somewhere where I could feel as much a part of the place as the people working there, a home perhaps for me and anyone who wishes to join me. I could take a break, walk around, and at the right moment, I could find myself alone. Not secluded, but empowered to be on my own. I could join the crowd later on for a freeing dance, or a bunch of sculptors, I could ruin their art and not feel guilty. Supported, in what I truly am, accepted for the present moment that is in me; not pushed and shoved to one end or the other. That is the place I want to see, a haven for the self, a jubilation of the undecided present, I wish, I wish, I wish.



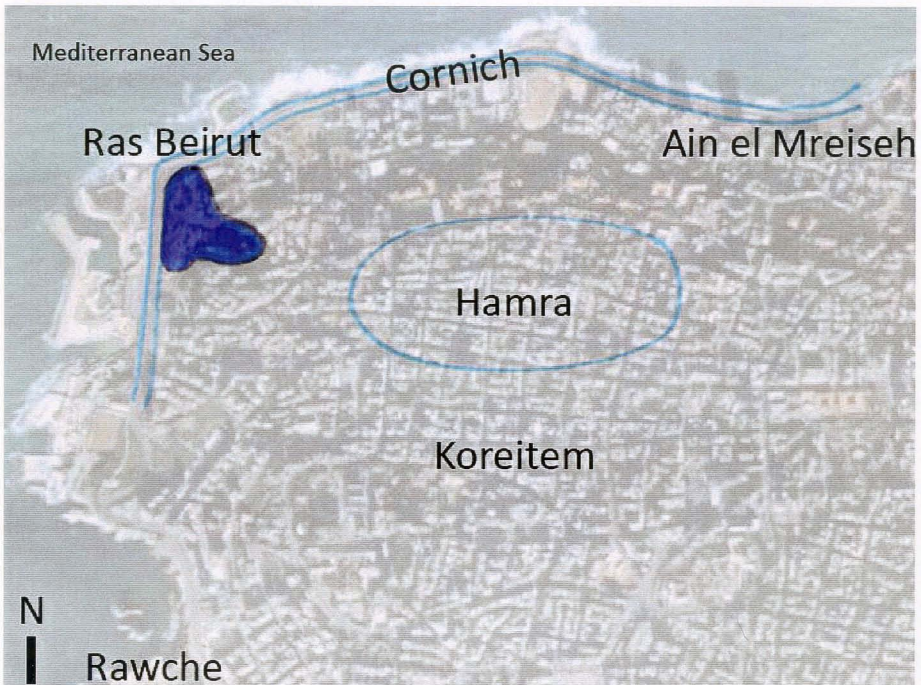
I'm at the entrance now. Stepping into my expectations, what would I see? What would I hear? Oh but I smell the pines already. Fresh! And here are the first passersby. Hmm, smiling... next is a group of young men, who seem to be joined in a heated conversation. Cheerful, they don't seem to notice the attraction they've created. Behind them, the main space, a very wide hall with glass panes, the daylight passing right in. but away from that, drifting on the secondary paths , here the roses enveloping the air with their smell, I'd say I'm out in the country; even the soil is ambient, the Gardner must have worked it well. I'm swinging by the main hall again, but now, from the other side, the sea side; here the painters are at work, their colors splashing in the beam of sun radiating through the glass, their canvas almost reflecting it. On the inside I can distinguish people lunching they occupy the middle section of the hall. But I head strain on, and here is where I get comfortable, in this patch of grass overlooking the sea, under that tree...

A de-stressing place in the city: Site choice and analysis

In Ras-Beirut you can only seek help as a student or as youth, if you are stressed, when you go behind closed doors and you get your medication. That by itself is a source of stress. Accessibility and transparency become vital issues in trying to break the barriers of entry and socially integrating a de-stressing space into the lives of Generation Y. An urban environment becomes crucial when dealing with such issues. "Come see, we are all stressed", you go to this space, you see your friends there, you enter and you see the possibilities of de-stress. You leave this space feeling better; it's a place of meditation, a place of health, a place of empowerment. A public space brings people together, a sort of park maybe, allowing people to come in and relax, enjoy a particular view, far away from the noise of the cars and the enclosing buildings.



The spaces reflect Generation Y as a community, and Ras Beirut as a neighborhood. The wellness of youth is socially reflected in the wellness of the city as a whole. At an edge, its back towards the city, and the endless open view of the sea will bring a sense of serenity, nature, a breeze, the shade of a tree. All qualities seem to lead us to think that such a space needs to be in the mountains, where pollution is reduced and nature is eminent, but then how are we solving the problem, and how can we introduce de-stressing into the hectic fast pace lives of Generation Y in Ras Beirut?



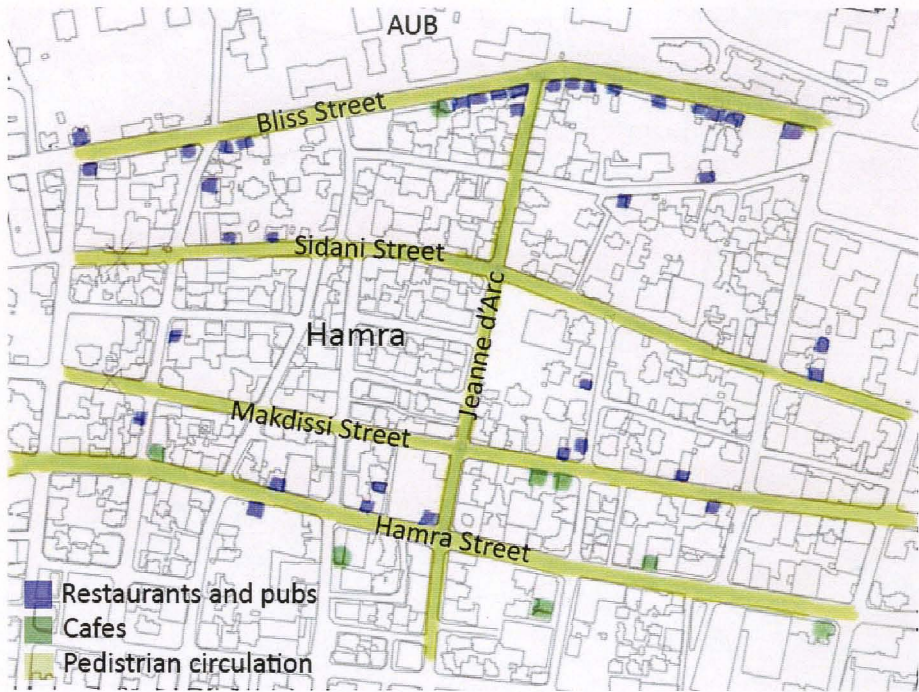
Site Map

The site is located in a residential area of a dense urban context, where high rise buildings are becoming more and more common, replacing old Lebanese style houses filled with architectural heritage. The site links the Hamra area to the Corniche, although a difference in activity levels can be seen. Hamra is usually buzzed with students roaming around. It has been rich in cultural institutions for over 100 years with the presence of the American University of Beirut, the Goethe Institute and all of the schools around. This is highlighted by the fact that there used to exist a railroad to bring people to these places.



Land Use Map

Hamra has become a home for a number of different students living there on their own, and attending the nearby universities. As a neighborhood Hamra tries to respond to the many needs of Generation Y, from restaurants, to fast food chains, to laundry shops, to small pubs offering a break from university life. Based on my research of a sample of students attending AUB, and how they practice Hamra, I have found that when students are walking in Hamra they are usually concentrated in a number of different streets that they use to move within the area, these include Bliss Street, Hamra Street, Jeanne D Arc Street, Makdissi Street as well as Sidani Street.



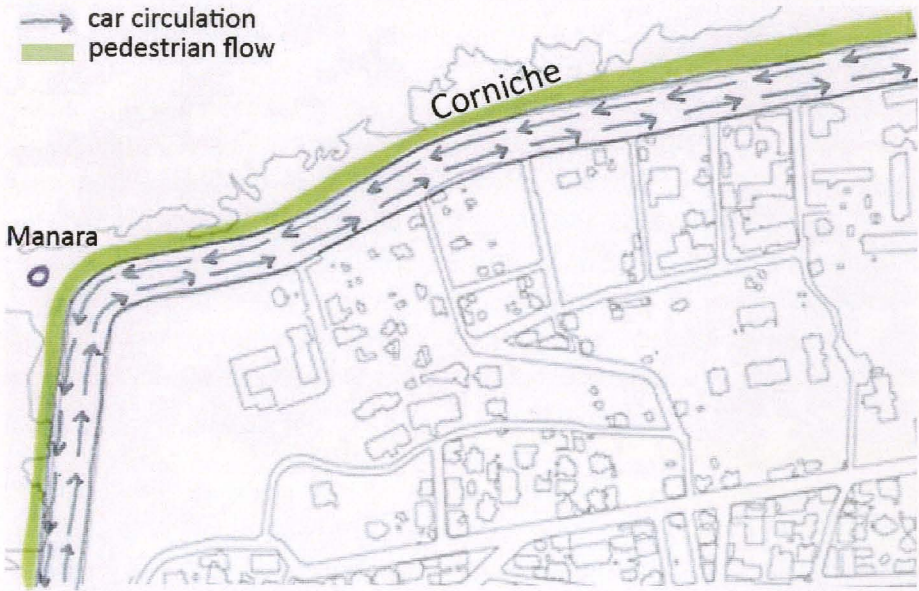
Circulation of University Students in Hamra Map

Each of these streets connected the students to different consumption practices. Bliss Street mainly providing a chain of restaurants, where they usually have their meals on their way to university or between classes; these places include Burger king, McDonalds, Saj, Sub Station along with a number of other fast food restaurants. Hamra Street also provided a number of restaurants for students, as well as other facilities such as a gym and shops for clothing. Jeanne D Arc Street was the main street that connected them to all the other streets. Makdissi Street, as well as Sidani Street are the streets where most of the services provided for the students in Hamra were located. From shopping for food to laundry services, as well as internet places. AUB was also a major space where these students hang out; they usually spend most of their day there due to their classes, as well as night time where they are usually using the library. Other places where these students like to hang out are De Prague and Graffiti, which are pubs, located on Makdissi Street where they go there to have a few drinks and hang out with their friends.

Since most of these students don't have cars, their mobility within the area of Hamra is restricted to pedestrian activity. The students have appropriated the streets and the sidewalks as areas where they can stand with their friends and hang out. My findings suggest that the presence of these students in Hamra has attracted large amounts of capital that was pumped into the area in order to satisfy their needs. This change is evident in the space of Hamra where a number of businesses have opened to accommodate for these students, from housing projects to mini markets.

The problem here is that most of these spaces provided are directly linked to notions of consumerism, which do not accommodate a stress free environment. Eating unhealthy food, drinking alcohol, shopping, all these practices seem so far away from the healthy stress free life style these students seek.

The Corniche on the other hand, is one that is a meeting place for people from different social strata's, a mixture of cultures. The presence of all the functions on the waterfront shows how in reality the waterfront narrates the city; therefore a direct connection to the Corniche will add a new layer to the whole of the project. The Corniche has been in constant state of evolution while retaining its unique character of a lively and energetic public space that allows for a diversity of people to express themselves and enjoy a certain freedom. From exercising to walking to eating and even sitting and watching people pass by, this culture has proven that placing different people of different backgrounds in a space will allow for it to flourish and answer to a number of their needs. The Corniche has a constant pedestrian flow and it can prove to be a vital access point to my site considering that it is located on the corner, which in turn increases its exposure.



Corniche Activity Map

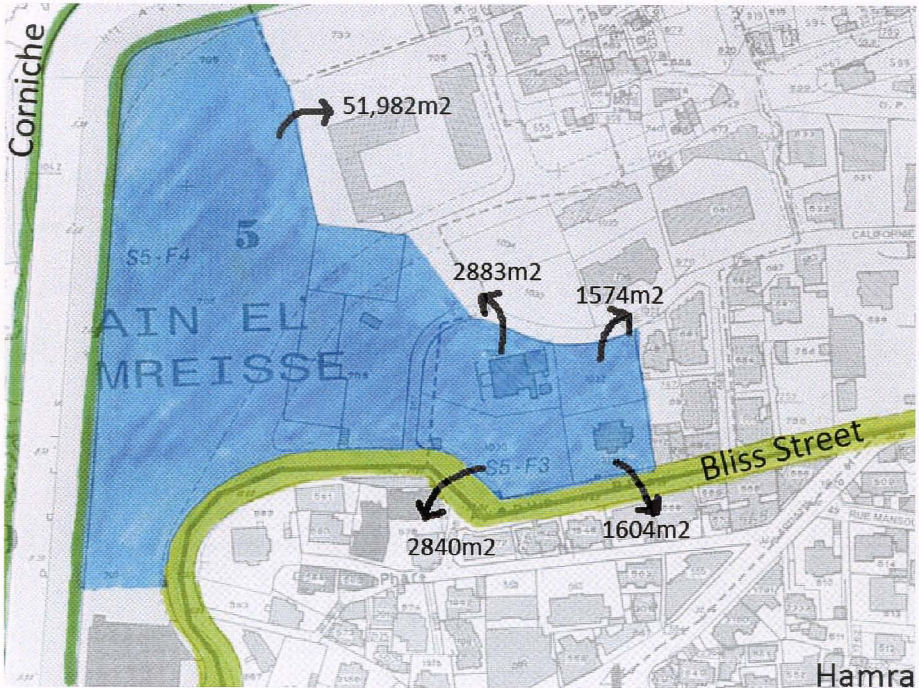


Image of Corniche



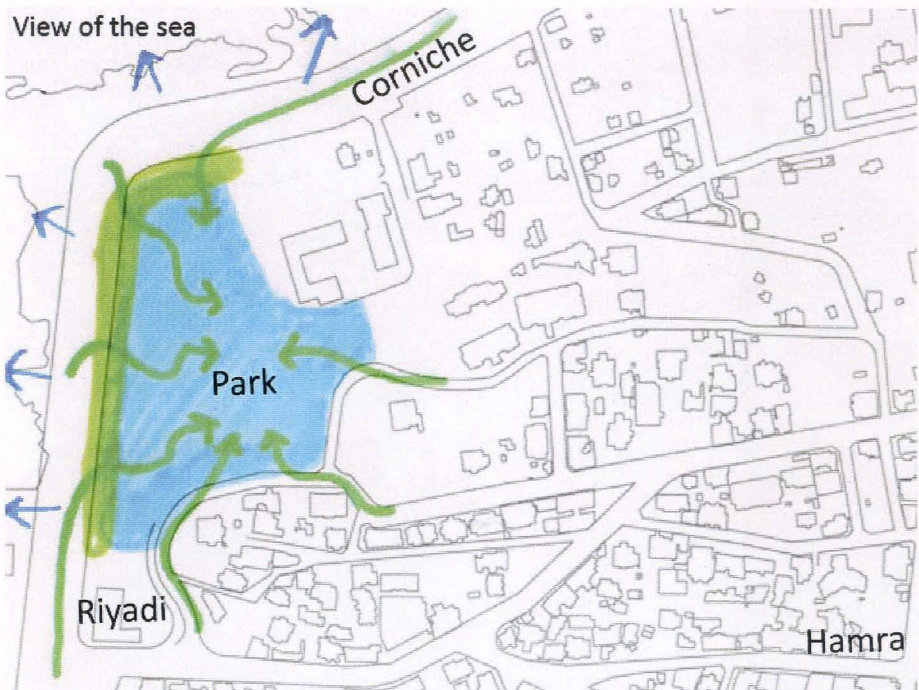
Image of Corniche

The site consists of 5 lots, one large lot owned by the government, with a total area of 51,982m², is directly linked to the Corniche. The 4 other lots are ones that are further away from the Corniche and closer to Hamra. One is owned by the Manara Company, the others are privately owned by the family of Daouq and al Jaroudy. The two privately owned lots are abandoned sites, where one of them contains an old house that is in deteriorating conditions, and the other was recently demolished.



Cadastral Map

For my intervention I am proposing to use the 4 lots closer to the Hamra Neighborhood, adding to a total area of 8891m². While also proposing to use the 51,982m² site as a public park donated by the government to the public and the users of the Corniche. This will bring all types of people together, where the public aspect of it will allow for maximum accessibility. This will give athletes, or even people that wish to take a break from their hectic lives the opportunity to enjoy the natural settings of the park, thus will provide an invigorating component to reviving or vitalizing other people, by setting a good example.



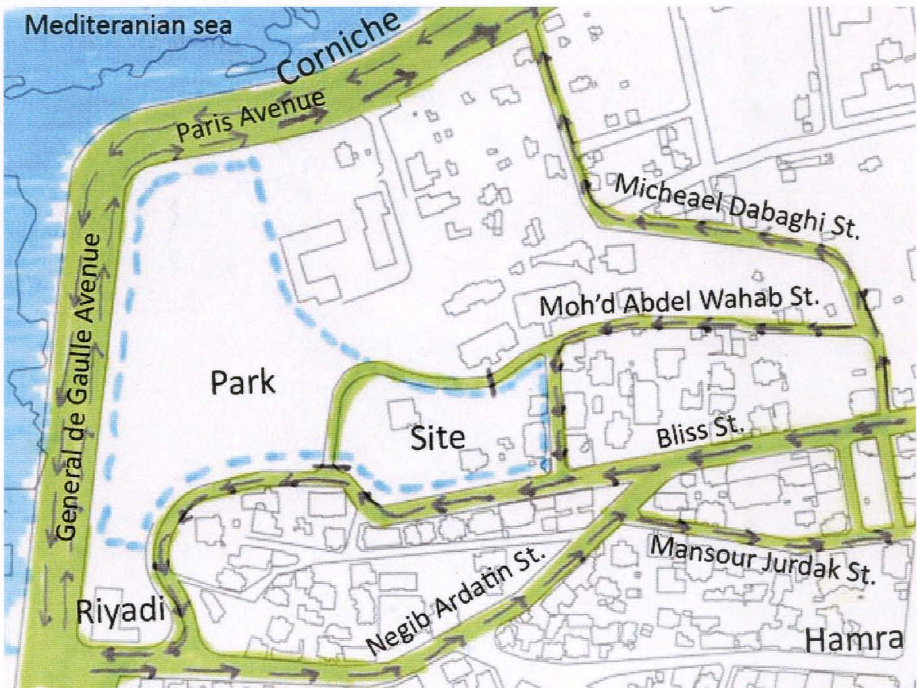
Park Connections Map

The parks endless potential of becoming a natural green space in the city that is dense with its urban fabric will include a number of different activities connecting it to the Corniche and to my intervention. Certain cafes, bicycle rentals, food stalls, will all revive the cornice and its activities. The park itself is a public space, open for everyone, bringing in all types of people. Not only is the park a space of relaxation, but it will also be a connection to the different activities within the area. For example the Riyady Club is located next to the park; certain paths leading from and to the park can be attained, thus creating a catalyst within the city, one that projects de-stressing at a larger scale.



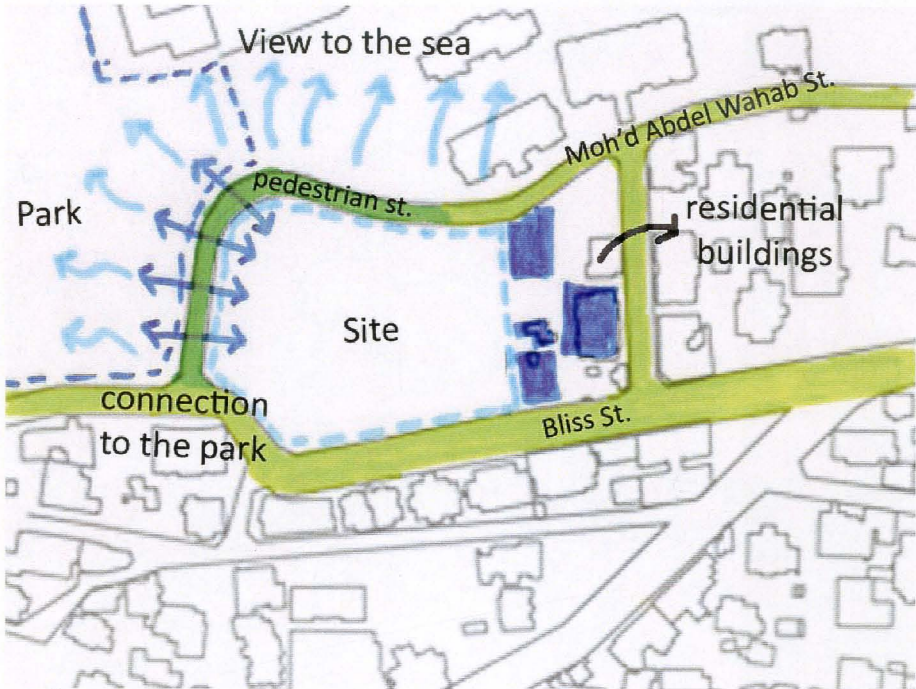
Image of Park on site

The duality of the site, where it has its back towards the city yet it is open to the views of nature and the sea, will project the idea of de-stressing at a social scale, or at least provoke it. The site is a walking distance from the surrounding universities and urban life, yet the qualities the site provides and the views of the sea will be able to provide the dichotomy people are usually looking for. Generation Y are a large chunk of this society and this community, their infiltration in the city is critical, that's where the investment should be, a space dedicated to their well being, and a park, will give them a sense of empowerment.

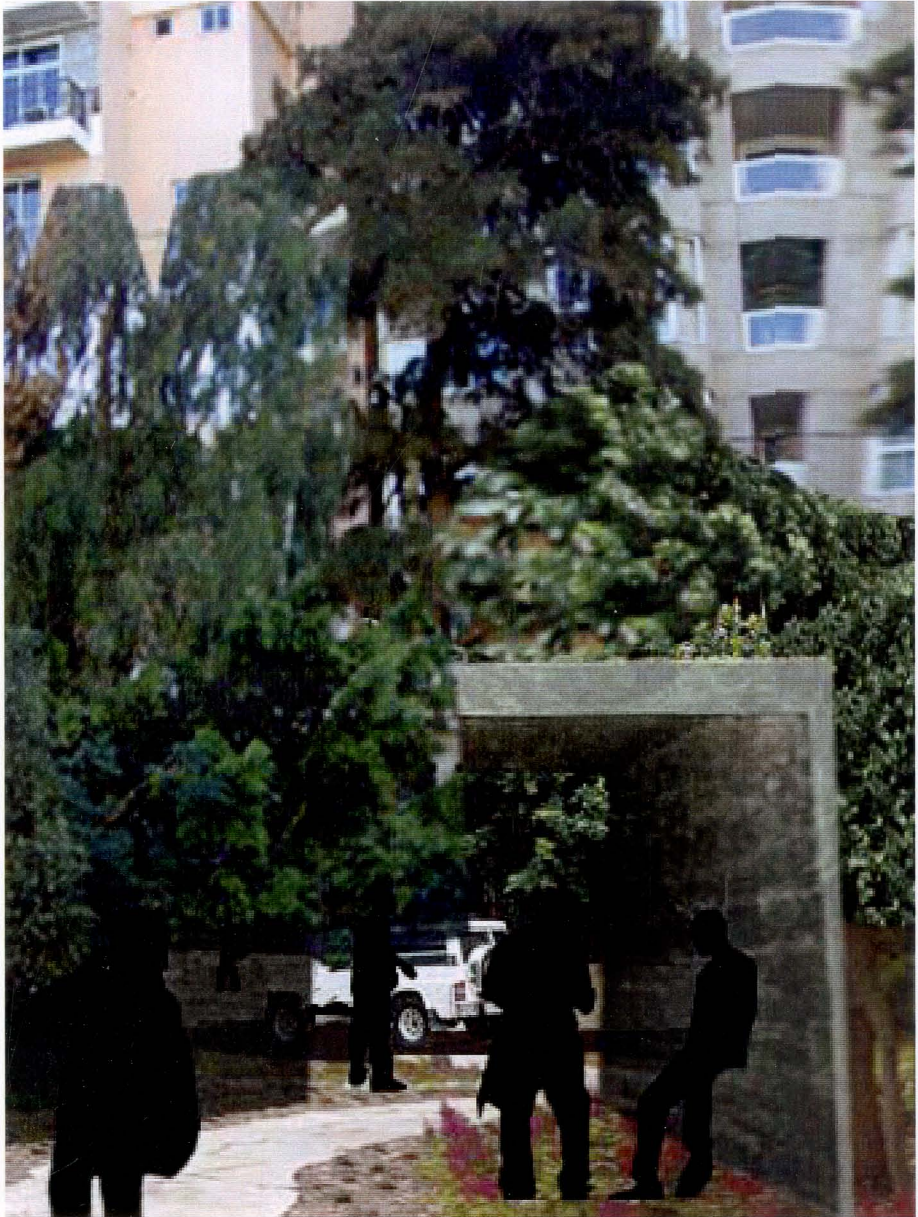


Circulation Map

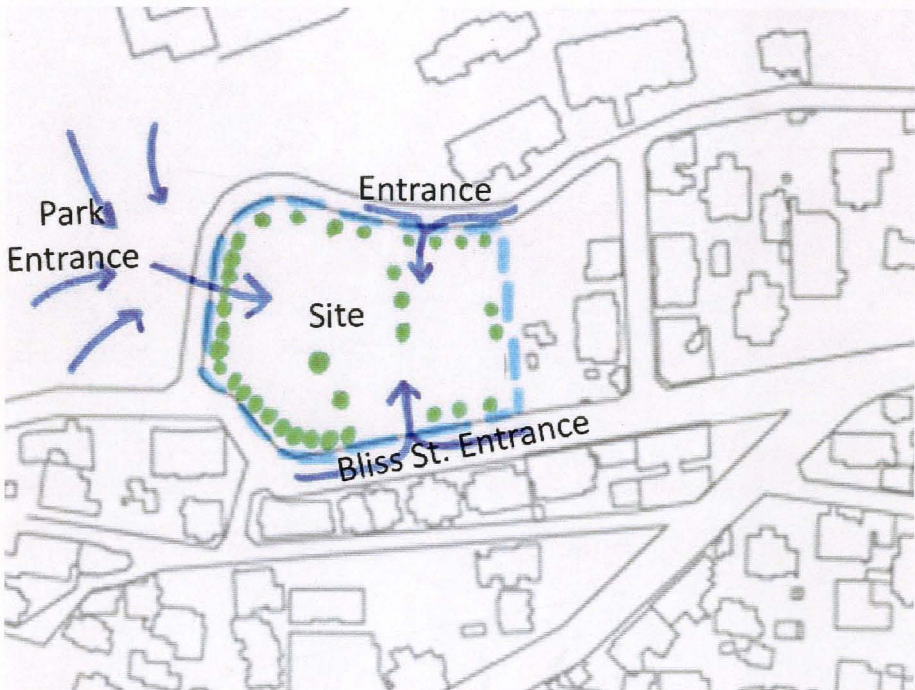
Entry points become a critical issue when dealing with accessibility. Three main entrances to the intervention will be located at different points in the site; one of which connects the project to the proposed park and is blocked from either side. This street will be opened up to pedestrian use only. The site is bounded by three streets, with a view to the sea from almost anywhere on the site. One of the sides is blocked by residential buildings ranging in height from 4 to 5 floors. The intervention will be based on the different qualities this site offers, from sea view, to vegetation, boundaries, noise levels and connection with the park.



Site Boundaries Map



The site contains a dense vegetation of trees and flowers, pathways and open spaces shaded with rows of trees on either side. This helps in providing a serene and relaxing atmosphere to the users of the space. Nature is an important part in the act of de-stressing, therefore preserving these trees gives the project an added value of de-stressing. Research by Roger Ulrich shows that passive viewing of nature through windows or even surrogate contact (such as posters or videos) promotes positive moods and reduces stress. Thus coordinating the entrances with the vegetation on the site will help in visually understanding the boundaries and circulation on the site.



Vegetation and Entrances Map



A de-stressing program in the city: Program analysis

Universities, homes, streets, even certain coffee shops can be associated with certain ideologies of stress. Generation Y have this constant stress between university obligation and their demanding lives that require a sense of responsibility, thus spaces that have anything to do with such activities are automatically associated with work. An intervention is needed which will provide them with a homey, warm, relaxing environment that caters for their needs, and gives them a sense of belonging. The essence of this project is to propose an environment that is comfortable, gets them hooked to that particular mood, providing them with an escape, a fresh breath within the city.



When researching the different ways Generation Y opt for in order to de-stress, certain categories can be seen. The first category is more focused on the type of activity, whether it's based on the idea of consumption or not. My research shows that a majority of students opt for consumer based de-stressing mechanisms that are not healthy, over eating, drugs, smoking, shopping; all these activities can be abused if they are not controlled, while other can be harmful to the body. My program focuses on alternative outlets to consumption, which include arts, music, sports, a connection to nature, and community work. Other categories include whether the activities are grouped or singular, indoor or outdoor, in an urban setting or in a non urban setting, all these categories are taken into consideration while choosing a program and its translation onto the site.

Catagories:

Consumption

Sports

Community Work

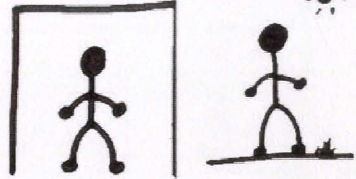
Artistic outlets

Meditation

Nature

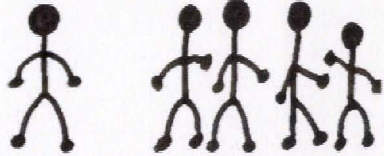
Outdoor

Indoor



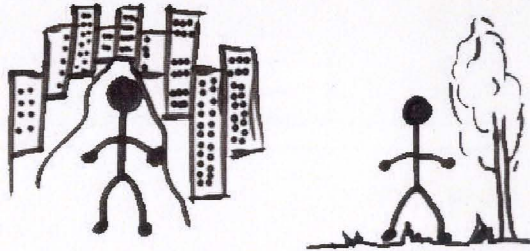
Isolation

Groups



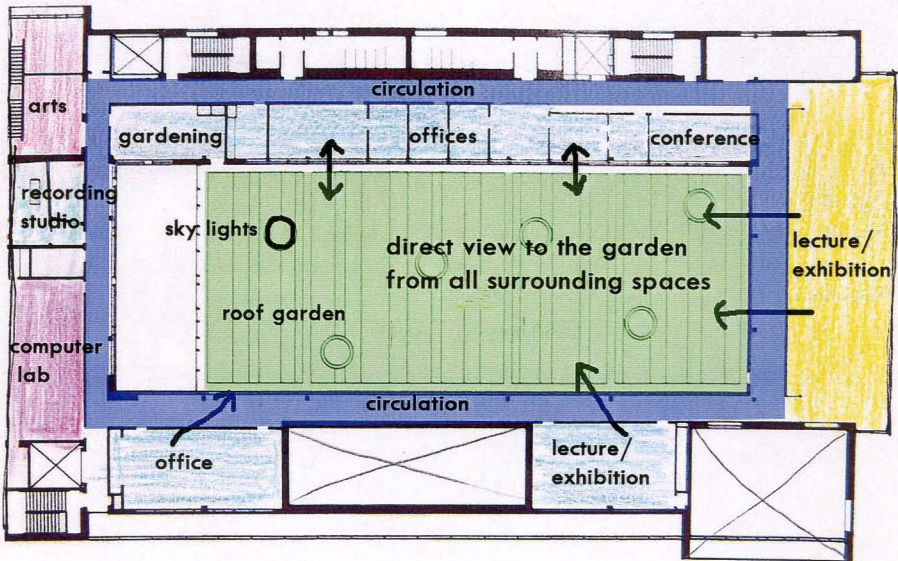
Urban

Non urban



Gary Comer Youth Center

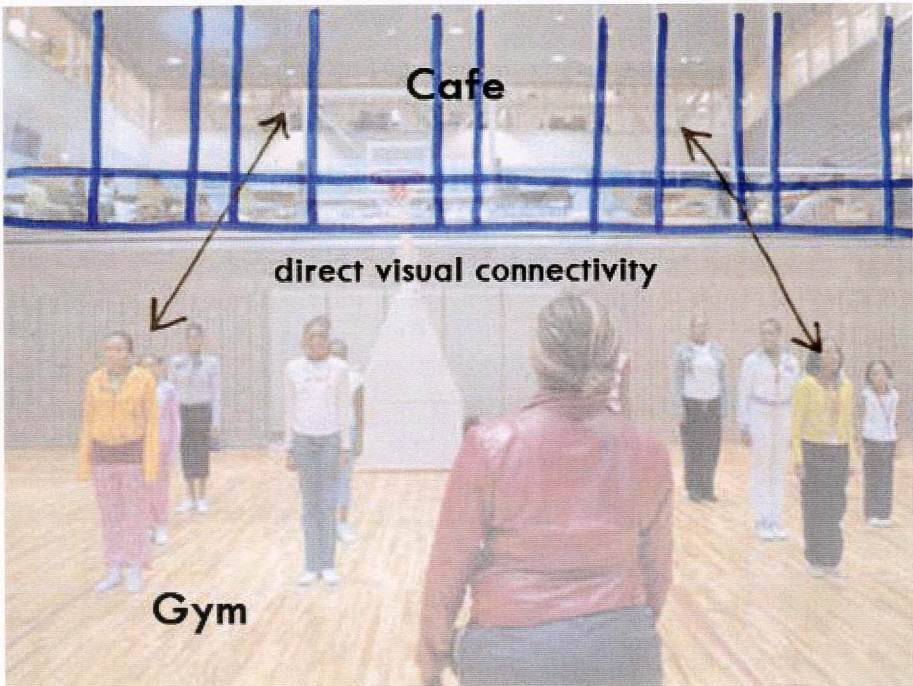
The Gary Comer Youth Center is home to the South Shore Drill Team, a 300-member performance group for children 8 to 18 that performs in parades and on stage. The three-story, 6900 m2 building is located in Chicago and houses a gymnasium/theater, cafeteria, and many additional spaces such as a computer lab, dance room, and a recording studio. The Center was designed by John Ronan Architects and is a good example of programmatic sustainability as well as transparency.

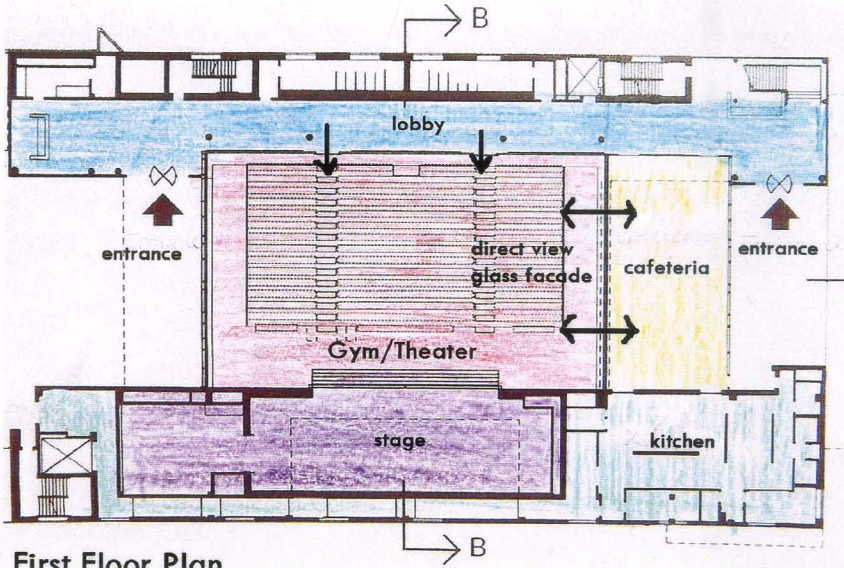


Third Floor Plan

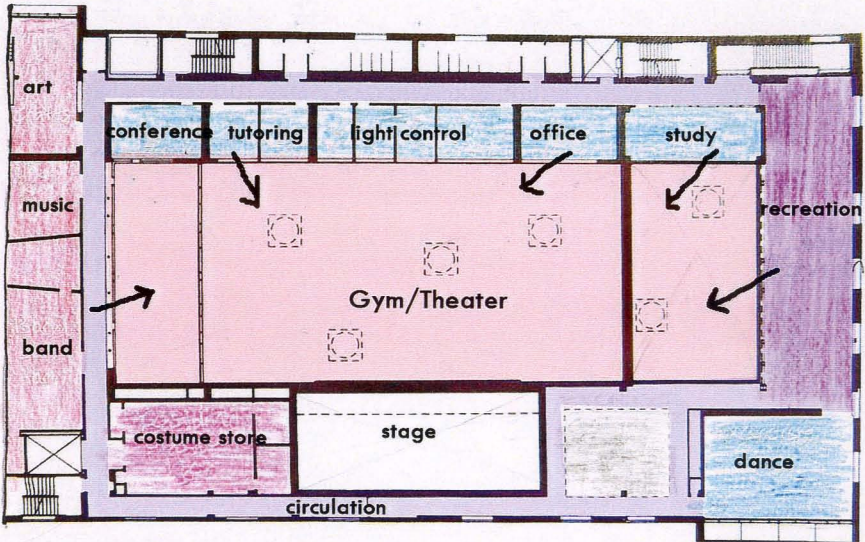
Site Plan

The gymnasium, with the push of a button, converts into a 600-seat theater with seating, stage, and lighting. Spaces surrounding the gymnasium are also designed to be adaptable as the center's needs change over time. These spaces are all overlooking the gymnasium with glass facades, which allows for natural daylight to flood to all the spaces within. The level of transparency in the project has added a warm and lovely atmosphere of work and play.



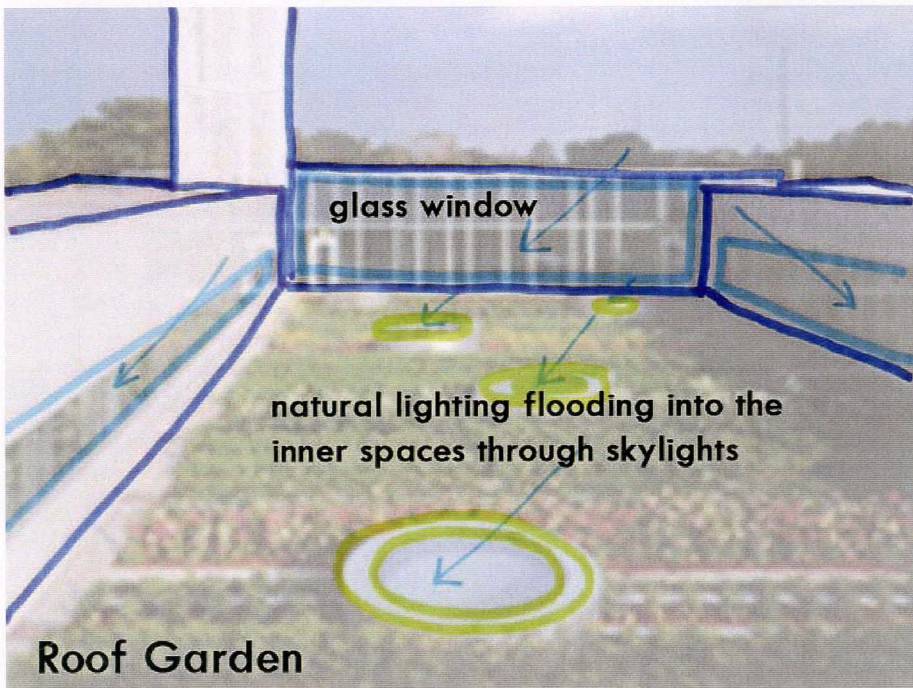


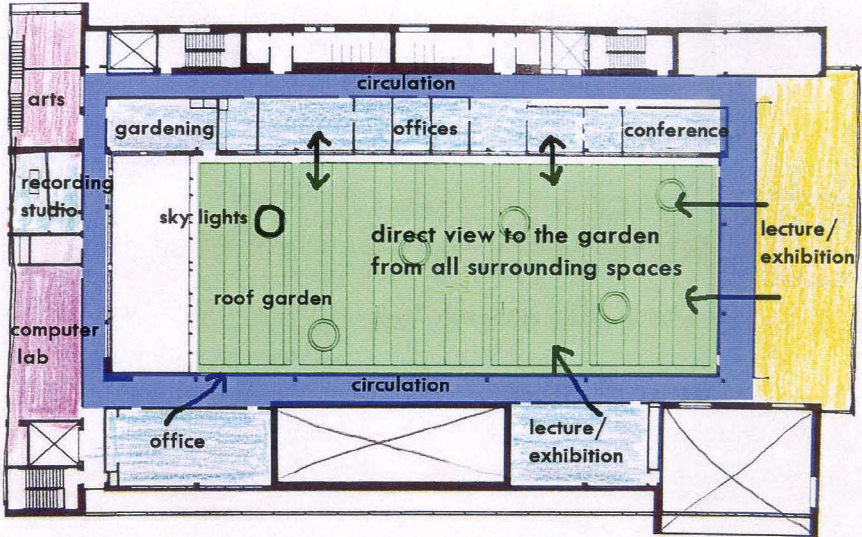
First Floor Plan



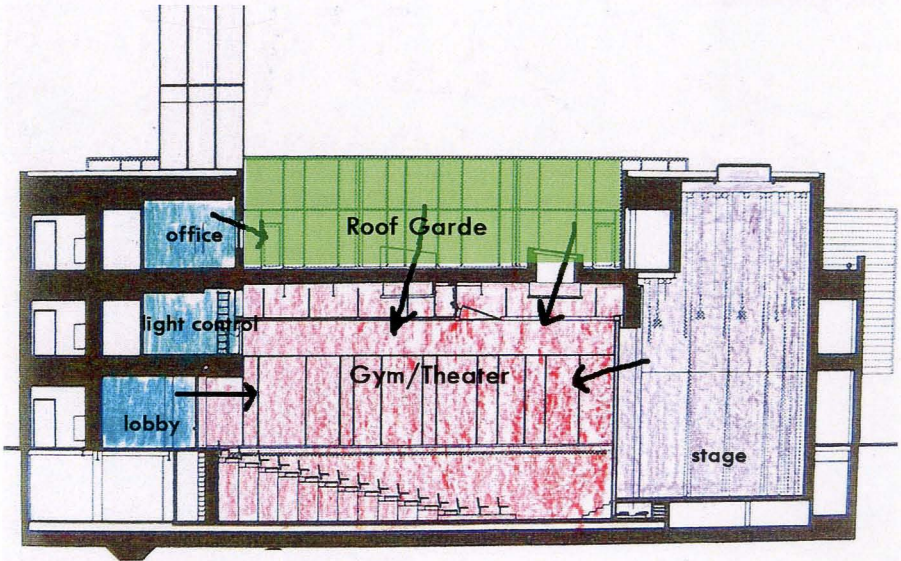
Second Floor Plan

One of the major features of the Center is the green roof garden. The garden is not only integrated into the building for visual stimulation and relaxation, but it is intended for children to grow and harvest vegetables, flowers, herbs, grasses. The visually striking planting design accommodates for skylights penetrating the roof garden, which provide daylight to the gymnasium and cafeteria. The projects program of interlocking volumes has accommodated for the diverse needs of its users.





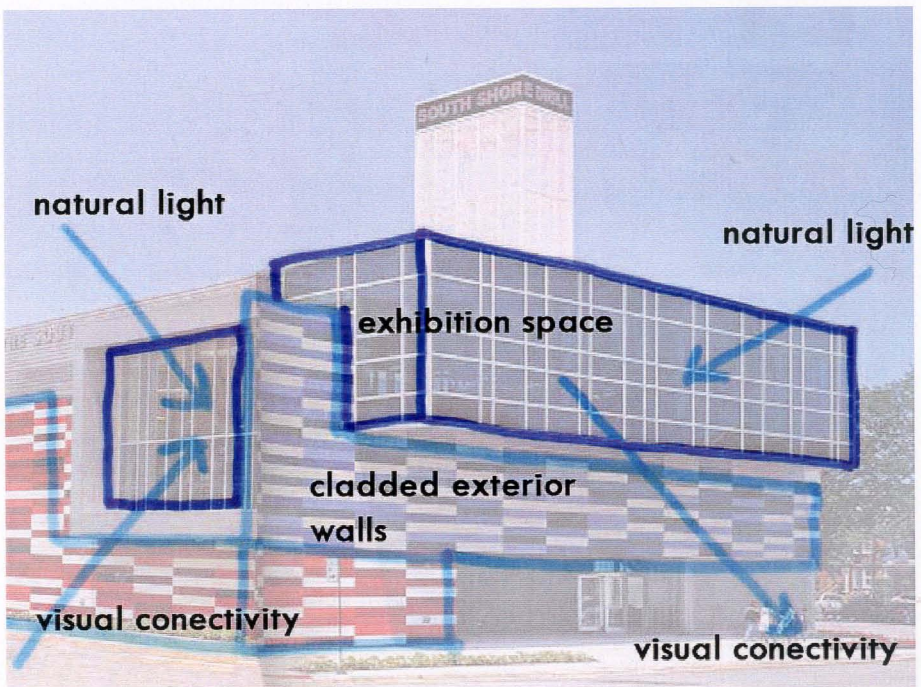
Third Floor Plan



Section B-B

From The outside the thick concrete walls with colored panels, keep the building from looking like a bunker, while its characteristic multicolored “mosaic” exterior wall, has a unique look that makes people ask about it as they pass or drive by. The concept behind the design was to sort of barricade the project from its dull and dangerous surroundings to allow for a safe and comfortable environment on the inside.

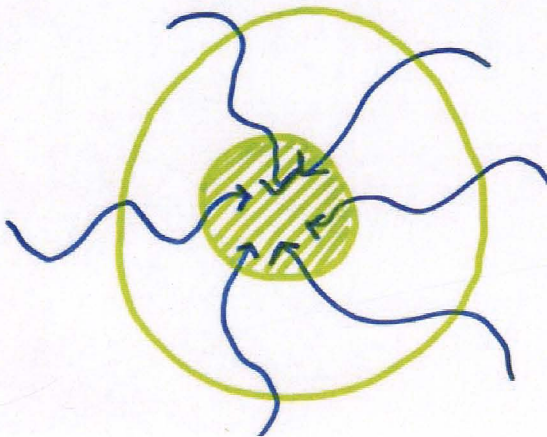
“The colorful exterior of the Gary Comer Youth Center enlivens an otherwise dreary landscape. It’s collection of boxlike volumes, including the glazed exhibition hall that projects to shelter the entrance below, gives just a hint of the spatial complexity found within.”(Gonchar, February 2008)



The Program

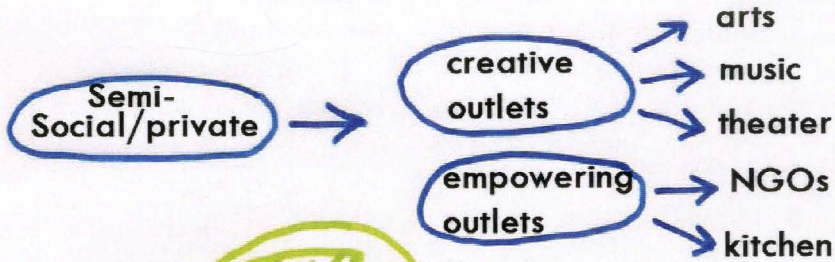
The program is based on three different categories of de-stress, the first being at a social and public level; a lounge, the second at a semi social/private level; arts, theatre, kitchen and dancing, and the final level at an individual and private level; spaces of isolation.

The social and public level will allow Generation Y to come in and enjoy a relaxing environment with their friends and peers, providing them with healthy meals and drinks. This will be the core of the project, capturing the attitude of Generation Y, where noticeable examples would be the grouping of students in AUB around Main Gate and West Hall. The core will bring in all types of students from different backgrounds and place them together in one space.



the lounge is the core of the project, bringing all types of students together in one place

The semi social/private spaces, where the regrouping of Generation Y will occur will respond to the different and diverse de-stressing and creative outlets of Generation Y, it will allow them to discover certain activities, other than unhealthy consumption, that they are interested in and wish to experience, such as dancing, singing, painting, and yoga. This will in turn help them find particular answers to some of the so many questions they have about themselves, it will help them discover who they are, what they like, and how they can become better people. The result will have a positive effect on Generation Y's mental and physical health. One needs to have a strong personality in order to be able to do things that seem odd to some people especially when they are of your own generation. This regrouping of Generation Y, will allow them to learn from each other, and set examples to one another.



These spaces will allow for the regrouping of students into activities they are interested in

The third and final stage will be the private space, creating an atmosphere for the one person who wishes to take a break from people and enjoy the magnificent views of the sea, the nature, and the serenity, providing spaces of solitude throughout the site, with different views and different atmospheres. The program seeks to use issues of peer pressure and social influences to provide a positive atmosphere, one that provides a sense of belonging, a sense of equality, and most importantly a feel of de-stress.



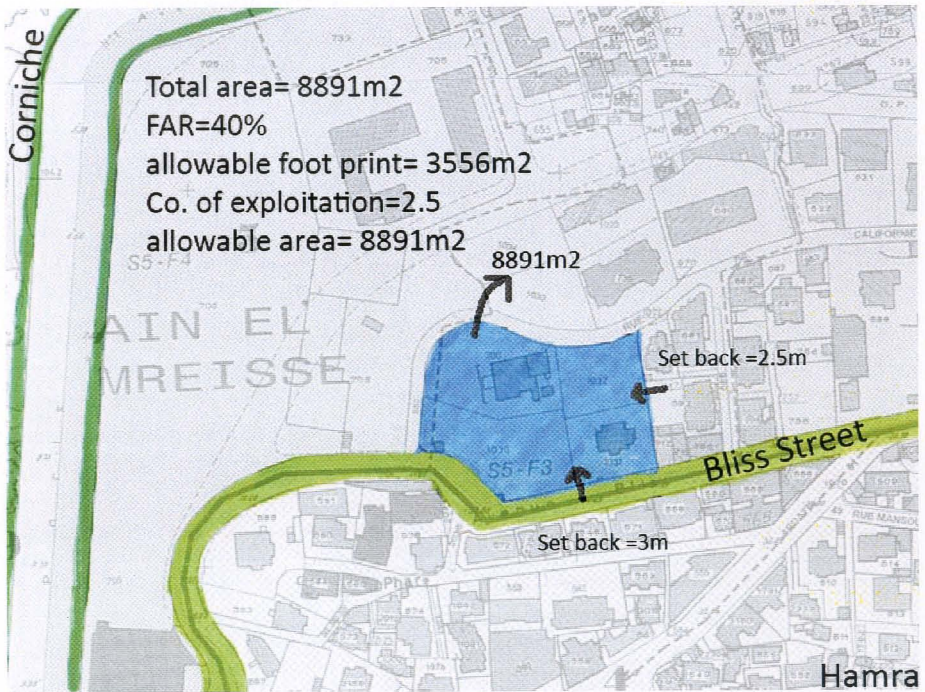
The private spaces will for spaces of isolation

The activities in the program range from straight forward de-stressing activities like massage therapies, to channeling the stress into different outlets. These can be categorized into creative outlets, where theatre and arts are introduced, and empowering outlets that give a sense of belonging to the community, these include kitchen, NGO offices and exhibitions. The lounge, which is the main core of the project, will include the activities that are part of the daily lives of students, from eating to studying, to socializing.

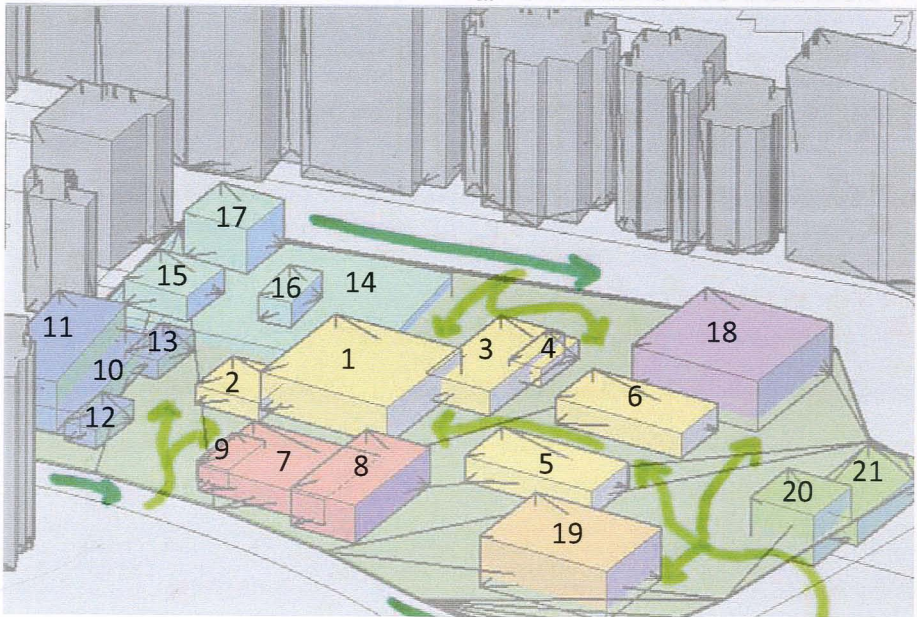
Program	Area
Lounge	The core of the project 400m ²
→ Café	For studying, relaxing with some friends 100m ²
→ Tea bar	A bar n seating in front 200m ²
→ Juice bar	A bar n seating in front 100m ²
→ Snack bar	A bar n seating in front 200m ²
→ Conference/ meeting room	Part of the café 50m ²
Administration	For the whole project 250m ²
→ Counseling offices (career center)	50m ²
→ Therapy (psychologist)	50m ²

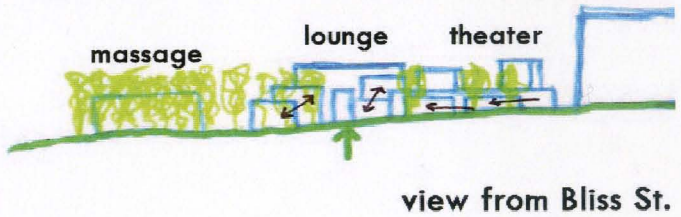
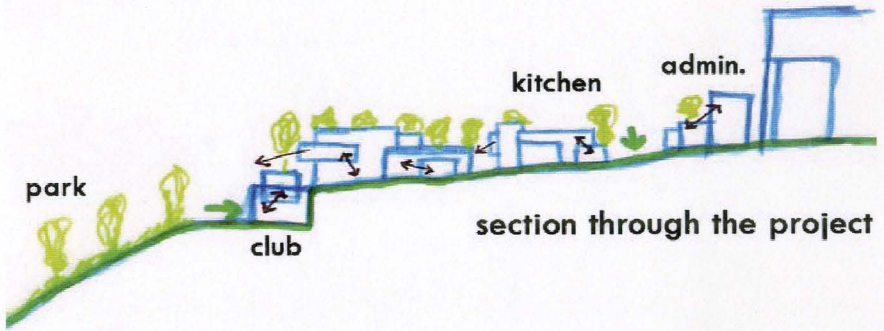
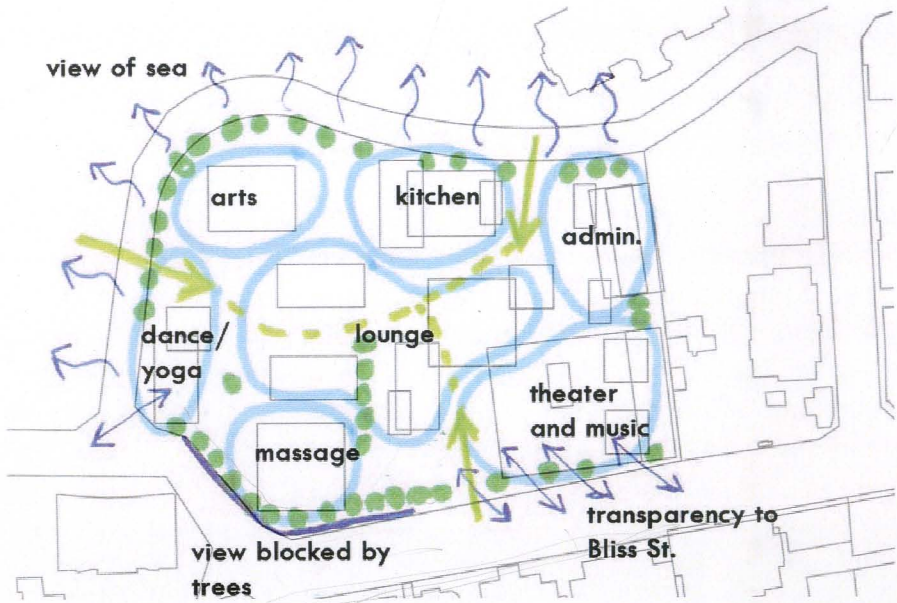
Program	Area
NGO offices	Renting or free for donors and Generation Y 250m ²
Kitchen	300m ²
Bakery	200m ²
Nutritionist office	50m ²
Theatre/ lecture hall	For 300 people 1300m ²
Stage	With theater 50m ²
Rehearsal room	With theater 50m ²
Voice therapy	100m ²
Recording studio	100m ²
Yoga studio/ Pilates/ aerobics	Continues to the park 100m ²
Disco club	No alcohol 200m ²
Arts and crafts	300m ²
Exhibition	200m ²
Massage therapy	400m ²

On site the project is divided into a series of interventions, each placed at a studied location in relation to accessibility, views, and privacy. The site provides 8891m² of allowable built area. Although the actual size of the projects area is around 6500msq where some areas are even underground and will not be part on the total area, the projects main goal is to provide a home like experience, with a small scale intervention.



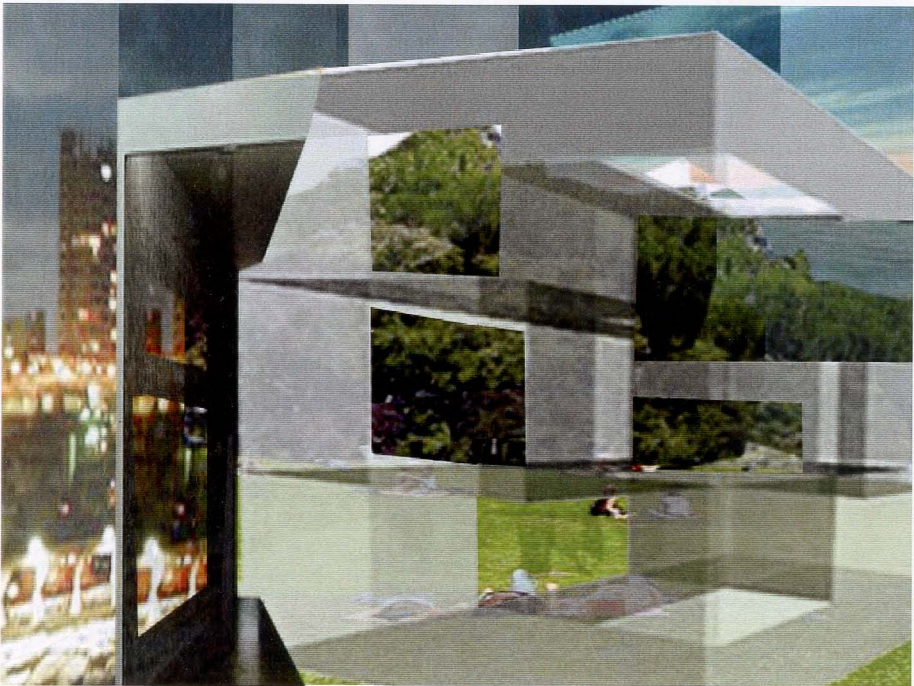
Building Law



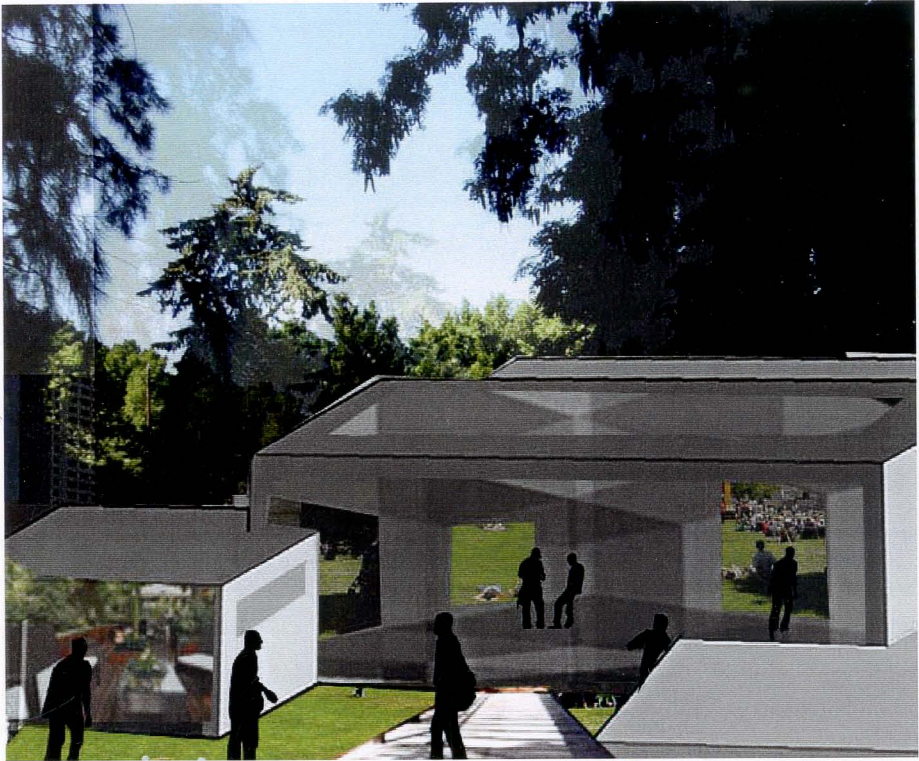


A de-stressing intervention in the city: Vision

Universities, homes, streets, even certain coffee shops can be associated with certain ideologies of stress. Generation Y have this constant stress between university obligation and their demanding lives that requires a sense of responsibility, thus spaces that have anything to do with such activities are automatically associated with work. An intervention is needed which will provide them with a homey, warm, relaxing environment that caters for their needs, and gives them a sense of belonging. The essence of this project is to propose an environment that is comfortable, gets them hooked to that particular mood, providing them with an escape, a fresh breath within the city.



The small scale of the project as a whole in relation to the surrounding buildings and the very residential character provided by the welcoming paths and lush vegetation will give a sense of harmony and comfort to its users, where spaces are never overwhelming to the eye or threatening a loss of visual delight. This non-institutional environment will be a catalyst in the area spreading its tentacles to the surrounding community.



The proposed project is located on two types of landowner ship lots. The first lots are privately owned with a small old house built on the premise, the second is owned by the government and used as a dump. Two gimmicks are used to purchase the privately owned lots of land by either providing the owners a share in the new built project verses the market value of their land or by getting donation from an NGO such as JAICA or US-AID as well as the Lebanese government. The project will be set in a way as a private company with shareholders who will manage the center during the construction phases and after inauguration. The Private Sector has proven better efficiency in running such leading projects rather than government officials. This private sector could be any NGO interested in providing the youth of the city with a space to de-stress

The funding will cover for the full construction of the project and will work on cost effective methods to make it a self-money generating positive cash flow venture at all times. The Tea Bar,Café, massage therapy, and the club will be the most feasible outlets for quick sustainable investment return, where as the art center, multi usage theatre, lecture halls and the outdoor activities will generate enough funding to maintain their running expenses. There are a number of different marketing tools that could be used to generate extra profits for the project such as sponsoring activities by big companies, advertisement boards and banners, NGO donations, Governmental activities, competitions and University donors. Another major income into the project are the renting spaces offered to the NGOS, these will constantly be changing, and will allow for a more diverse setting for the users.

As part of the derivative chains of the project, some prospects of it will extend to different dimensions, not accounted for by the normal architectural plan, nor through the program. For it is a part of the rebound of the project's implementation that such events take place. For instance, the NGOs which have offices set up in the project could use the actual space for their own endeavor. Moreover, they could rent a few of the other spaces for events that they could supervise on their own. The kitchen on the other hand is another attraction that elevates the purpose of itself to more than just servicing the youngsters. That can happen when the kitchen is set out for rental by an outside agent that would be chosen by the project's administration. The chosen party could cater a different type of food for the users, or could set up a competition of catering, where there would be an event (Arab nation's food day) that opposes different caterers to each other driving the price of the food down (which is a main point for young customers) and at the same time elects one winner who could host the catering for the next month, trimester, or season. In addition to such cultural competitions, the administration could simply, and by interaction with the neighboring community, allocate housewives to come and enjoy a day of easy and paid work for them, while the users enjoy a home cooked meal much missed during the years of college especially by expatriates. The park also adds a dimension to the project. Where the project is a distressing breath in the city, it could be a breath of active recreation for the park. Since it shares the serenity that the park provides but adds to it activities, it becomes sort of like the newsstand that sells coffee and gum, an agglomeration of kiosks that sell health (de-stress) through a series of proposed, always changing, set of activities. Finally the theater itself could also be rented out and used by a number of different people, from children, to different performers; it could be a space of creation and recreation.

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