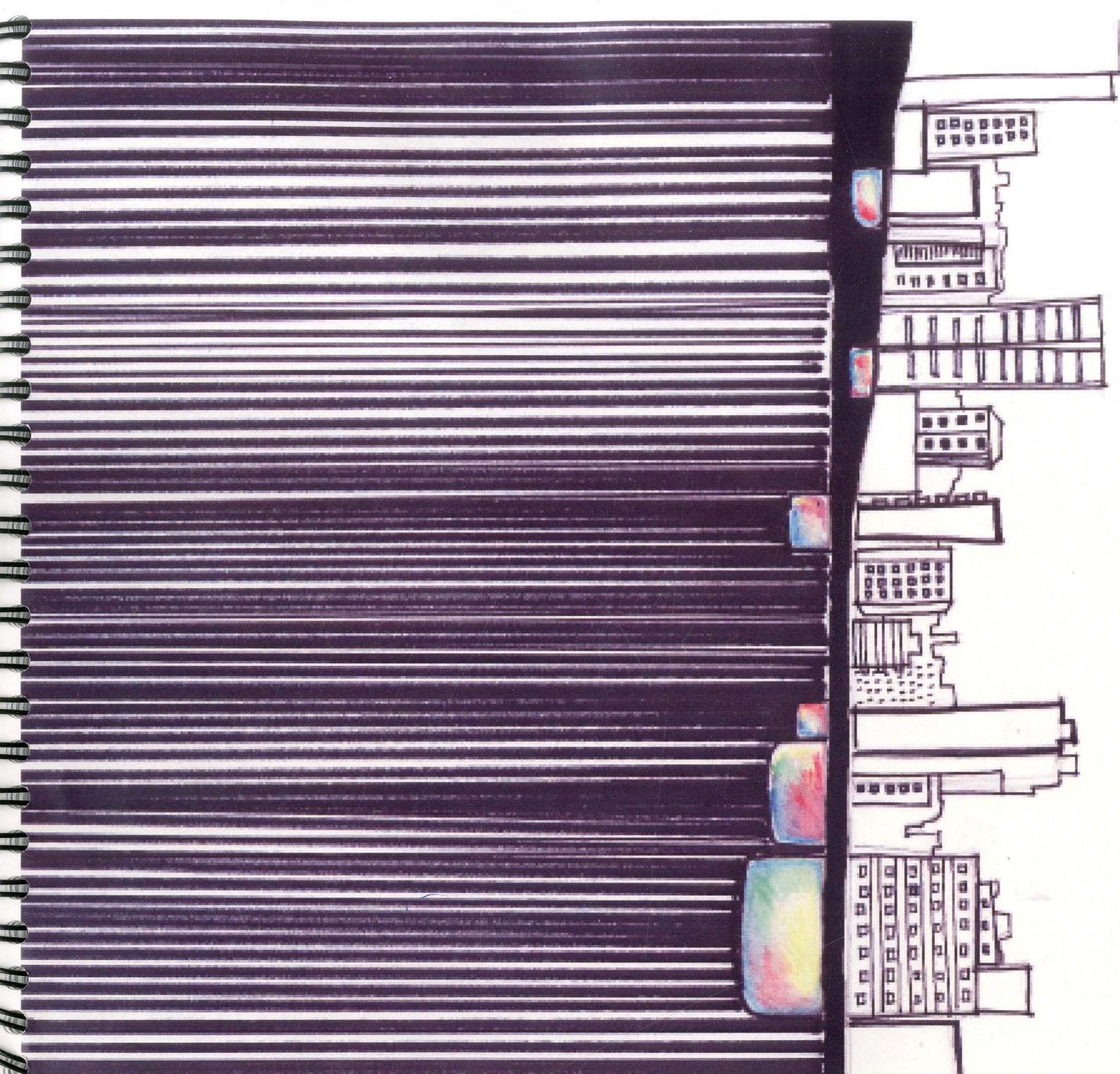


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Bubbles

by Anoud Al Zaben

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Abstract

. Introduction

III. Brief History of Hamra/Ras Beirut and its Cultural Life

- The Role of AUB
- Population Movements
- The Multiplication of Cinema-Theaters and Cafes
- Cosmopolitanism

IV. Hamra after the Civil War, Hamra Today

- Population Change
- Functional Change

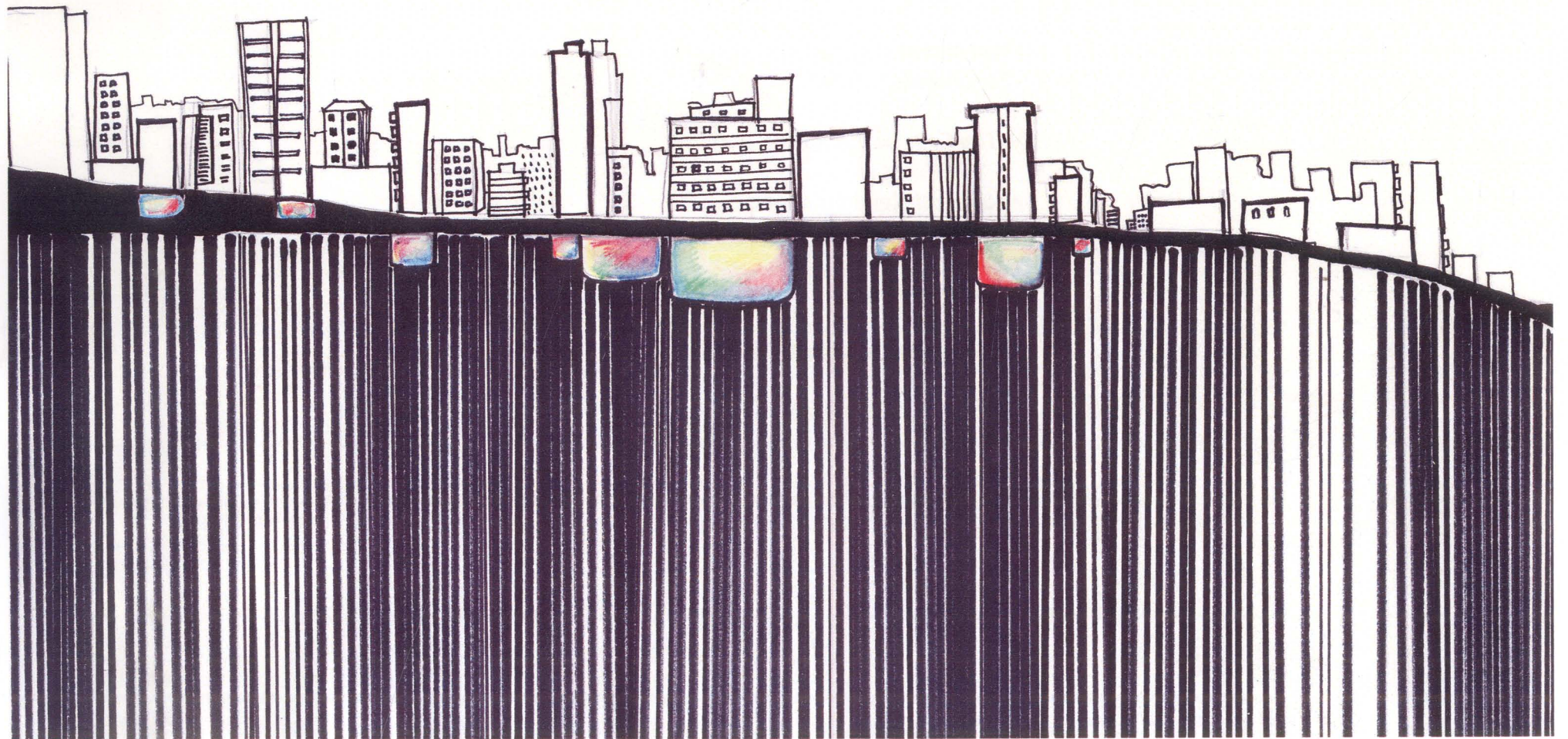
V. The Case of the Edison Building

Analysis of Neighbourhood
Building and Structure Analysis
Social Analysis
Economic Analysis

VI. Thesis Statement & Objectives

User Groups & Program
Vision
Governance

Appendices
References cited



Preface

The buildings of Hamra sit atop voids that were once filled with color, noise and spirit. Today, these bubbles lie dormant, vacant and lifeless. In exploring these spaces, I intend to revive them with an architectural vision that depends on the existing structure, space, and void. My vision is one of peeling away the veneer that covers and hides these spaces and extruding them outwards and upwards into the street and upwards into upper floors.

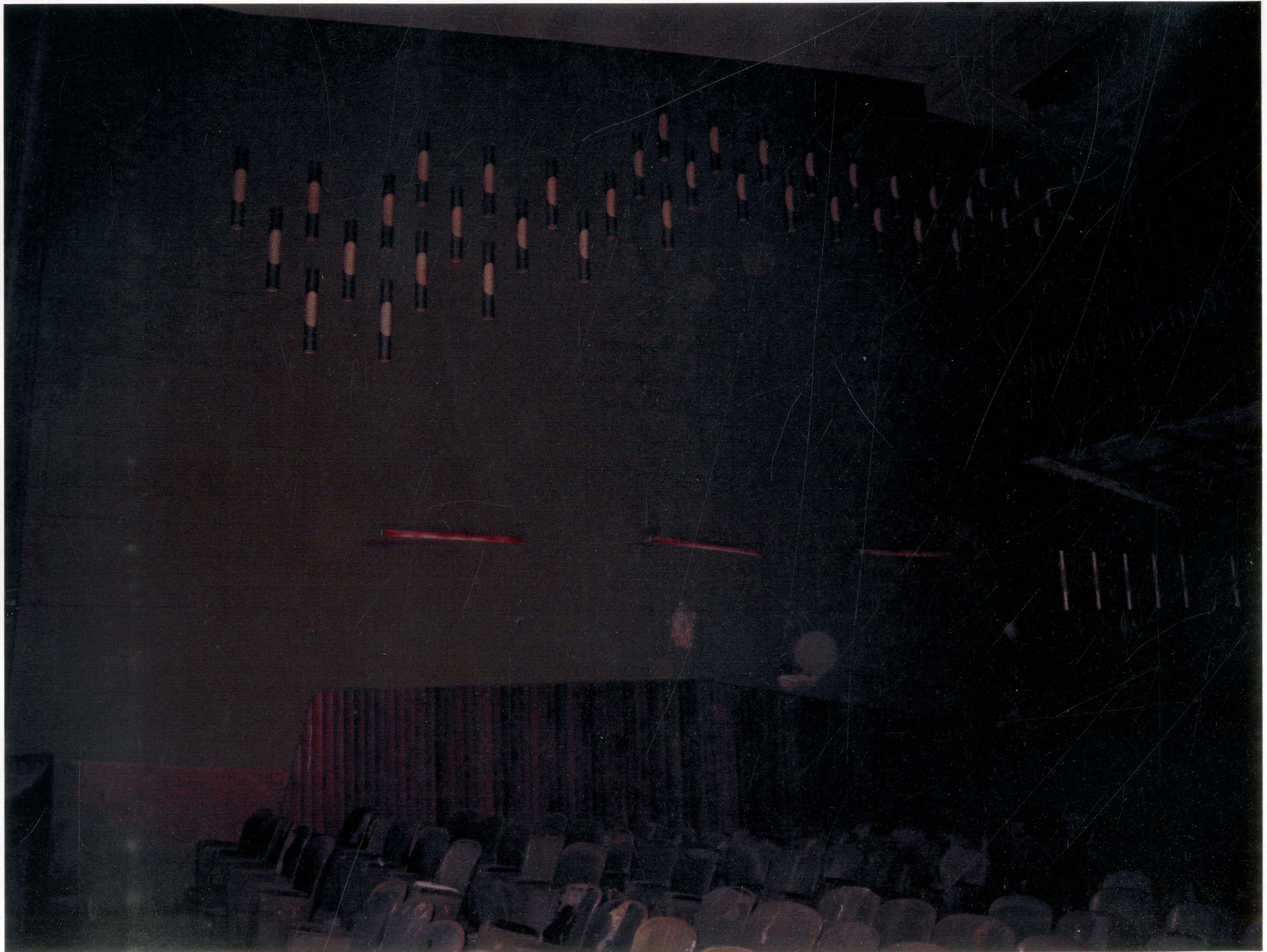
Abstract

My research topic centers on developing a methodology for reviving a 1960's building, the Edison Building and its cinema. This building is about to be demolished and supplanted by a luxury residential tower. The Edison Building, located on Bliss Street in Hamra is one out of about forty-two buildings with dilapidated and out-of-service theaters that were built in the period spanning the years 1930's until the late 1960's in the area.

My architectural methodology is to use the existing structure of the building as a base to develop a new structure. Inspired by the building's original cultural program, and the existing site and area, the new program will be a reinterpretation that fulfills today's cultural needs.

AUB and Hamra have had a very strong interdependent relationship that has coincided with significant historic moments of both Lebanon and the Arab region. This relationship and the significant history resulted in a very heterogeneous populace in the neighbourhood with many sects, religions, income groups as well as migrant refugees from Arab countries. Along with the economic stability and influx of capital from the gulf, Hamra became a very cosmopolitan area that allowed cultural activities to grow and flourish in the form of numerous cinemas and cafes. Such places created possibilities for conversations and interactions that were eventually lost along the years, and my program will be inspired by these possibilities in attempting to create an interactive space housing mixed media, plastic arts, theater and live music in one space. The project will contain temporary residential, a book store, a café, office spaces, reading spaces and workshops, the mixed-use program will bring a be a unique mixed use mixed-use program that brings together these elements in such a central location.

The target user group consists primarily ^{of} with area residents who are seeking cultural activities and public space, but also aims to attract expatriates, tourists, students and those interested in culture. The program I propose aims to be an inclusive one and as such there is no socioeconomic profile to the target group.



Introduction

Entering the closed Edison Cinema was one exciting experience, there was always something to discover; a shiny color, a velvet cloth, a red carpet and the forgotten film canisters.

When I entered the space it was dark, frightening, humid and overwhelming. Simply stepping from Bliss Street into the Edison cinema made me feel like I was miles away from the bustling streets surrounding it. The sound drops of water dripping from the ceiling sent a shiver down my spine. It was not until I turned on my flash light, when I was taken by the green colour of the surrounding walls, and the modern wooden fixtures ornamenting the walls.

This experience brought about many questions; I wondered what might have led to the closing of such a space. All these details and care for colour and material just lay there today in the dark, forgotten and empty with a large white wall and a stage. You could almost hear the last echoes of the people who filled up these spaces.

I became interested in the challenge of reviving such a space that had a cultural significance, as well as understanding the evolution of it's usage. This venue attracted numerous people and affected their lives at a certain period of time. Going to the cinema in the fifties and sixties was one of the most desirable things to do; it meant freedom and liberty, going with a friend or a lover. These spaces were multi-functioned, as they were used for places of discourse as well as

I have noticed a clearly repetitive pattern of recurring closed cinemas in Hamra, which made me more interested in more than just one closed Edison. What about all these space? Why were they all next to each other on Bliss Street?

My thesis went about how these vacant cinema-theatres are closed, and during this process I realized it wasn't just an outing, it was a way of life and this eventually led me a bigger question... Who are the users of today and what is culture today.



Brief History of Hamra/Ras Beirut and its Cultural life

The Role of AUB

AUB and Ras Beirut have an interdependent relationship; therefore one has to understand the history and context of developing both together.

AUB, which was established in 1866 as the Syrian Protestant College (Khalaf, Samir), defines and sustains the Ras Beirut neighborhood. It has always acted as the area's largest employer, economic entity, cultural hub, and educational institution.

With the presence of AUB, Hamra began a transition from an agrarian land into an urban form through the migration patterns of people seeking education, cultural facilities, and possible employment provided by the university. In this way, the university was the main driving force behind the area's initial urbanization hence the area became one of the most vibrant cosmopolitan urban centers in the Arab world.

Beginning with the university's establishment until the civil war, the area was continuously evolving into a more advanced development reaching an economic and cultural peak in the late sixties and early seventies. Many of the cafes, cinemas, and other cultural spaces were created during these booming times, including the building under study in this report.

By the turn of the century the college evolved into an almost full-fledged campus, having a wall gate about 73 acres. The college campus stood out as a land mark within, back then, the suburban, unplanned area of west Beirut. (Khalaf, Samir)

Population Movements

The college's growth was paralleled with Ras Beirut's directly and correlated change. The large suburban area initially had no more than 30 households (Khalaf, Samir) They were a population of mixed religious backgrounds, mostly Sunni Muslims, Greek orthodox and Druze. Despite their sectarian differences, they emerged as a homogeneous group whom had a strong sense of loyalty and attachment to their neighborhood

and community. Initially, residents refused what they perceived to be the western secular incursions of the college. By the turn of the century, however the presence of the college dramatically altered the demographic growth patterns of the local neighborhood and residents had to adopt.

Newly migrated families, although arriving from disparate regions and having different backgrounds, shared much in common; most were Protestant from rural areas who had come seeking the cultural amenities and economic opportunities afforded by the college. The college's related religious mission with its many activities and programs targeting this religious minority were also a major draw. (Khalaf, Samir)

In the early stages, the influence of these migrants was not noticeable because of their small numbers, but by the end of World War I, there was an acceleration in the migration rate and when the college was renamed the American University of Beirut in 1920, these families had become landowners in the area. (Khalaf, Samir)

These newcomers emerged as a social force because they were cohesive, hard working and had a strong sense of allegiance towards their community. New residents quickly became involved in the community. With time, their work ethic resulted in raising standards of living, which was accompanied by wealth accumulation which was invested in real estate in the form of land and construction of large manor houses in Ras Beirut.

The intra war covering 1920- 1940, witnessed an increase in the urban development of the area. Affordable land values encouraged construction, especially along the main streets branching from AUB. Suburban, red tiled roof villas with walled gardens and patios emerged as hallmarks that characterized the urban character of the community. Although the area went through major social and spatial changes over the years, Ras Beirut managed to retain its communal character. (ibid)

At the time, the cultural awakening was heightened by the political transformations in the region. It was a period of struggle and had a revolutionary character, emerging from the cruelties of the two world wars, paralleled by hatred to any occupying and



colonial forces, such as the "Ottomans, French, British and Zionists". This period in general was a period of search for political identity and cultural heritage, hence of being Arab yet with different state.

In that period the first generation of local, western trained scholars, who were mostly from Ras Beirut started to return to Lebanon. AUB advantaged from this, as a mass of critical resourceful scholars were employed in the university, eventually playing a prominent role in the intellectual life of the community. In the 1940's, as the number of scholars was increasing, the cultural life and status of AUB was elevating. They devoted their career life to the university, and in the community around it. They believed in their public roles and duties hence did not limit themselves to the defined walls of the campus. They organized public debates and services to negotiate and try to resolve critical problems facing the Arab world at that time. (ibid)

An important factor that resulted with Hamra's dynamic life, is the presence of different people in the same area. In 1914, after the Armenian massacres, Armenian refugees, "professional and semi professional groups", migrated to Ras Beirut from different parts of Lebanon. Starting the year 1948, large numbers of middle and upper class Palestinians migrated to Lebanon, taking residence in Ras Beirut. Political events in Syria and Egypt particularly after the Suez crisis of 1956 generated another wave of migrants. (Khalaf, Samir)

Migrants came from displaced groups all around the area yet they showed a certain readiness to be associated with Ras Beirut. They were another force that increased rapid change, influencing the cultural and economic vitality of the area. (Khalaf, Samir)

The Palestinians were mostly educated, professionals and university graduates. They added professional skills to the area and were visible in the "banking sector, insurance business services and retail". The migrant Palestinians, Egyptians and Syrians eventually ventured into profitable sectors of the economy as merchants and traders. Armenians, were also contribution al with their own "ethnic and occupational skills" such as "pharmacy, photography dentistry and electronics". (Khalaf, Samir.)



Another influence that helped speed change in the area was the inflow of capital from the gulf after the discovery of oil in the 1930's, and the ensuing speculation in real estate provided further employment opportunities.

As a result, during the period of the fifties and sixties, AUB and Ras Beirut witnessed a massive increase in urbanization and transformation in the sociocultural, political and commercial realms. The neighborhood was considered as an open and social area, more than any other community in Beirut, which allowed for the growth of urban space. "No ethnic group had complete control or dominance over the area and it became particularly receptive to the increasing influx of Anglo- Saxon groups". (ibid)

By the late 1950's, due to the increase in commercialization and rapid growth in Ras Beirut, urbanization increased significantly and in less than two decades the spatial character significantly changed, from red tiled villas in the suburban . The increasing invasion of commercial establishments and the sharp rise in land value and speculation in real estate resulted in large- scale construction and corporate financing. The red tiled villas that once spread in the suburban landscape were replaced by structures which were intensive in its utilization of land. High rise buildings began to emerge as part of the area's skyline and. Ras Beirut thus started to lose its cohesive and wholesome character as a residential neighborhood and became instead a ground for visitors, consumers, vacationers and other transient groups who sought refuge in the area's anonymity.(ibid)

The Rise and Fall of Cosmopolitanism

During the 1940's, public performances, music, art and theater increased, which allowed and encouraged individuals to let go of their "traditional ideologies" and become immersed within a "communal cosmopolitan subculture." By the 1960's, the "commercialization of popular culture, reinforced by a permissive political climate and free uncensored media, further encouraged the cultural life in Hamra which became characterized by eclecticism and sensationalism." (ibid)

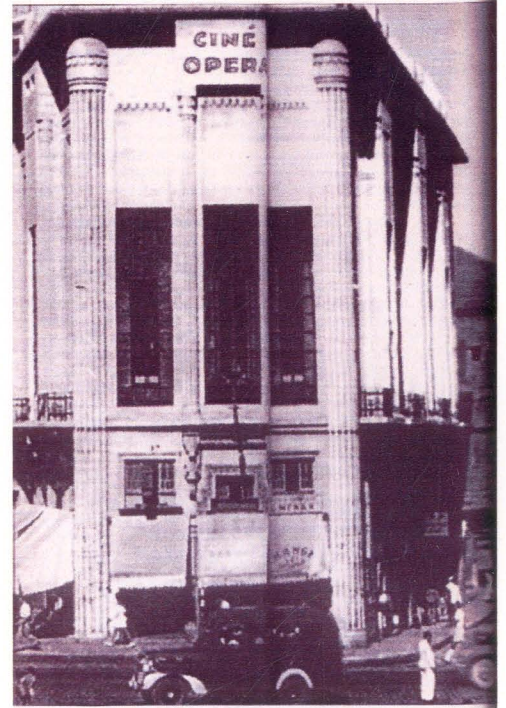
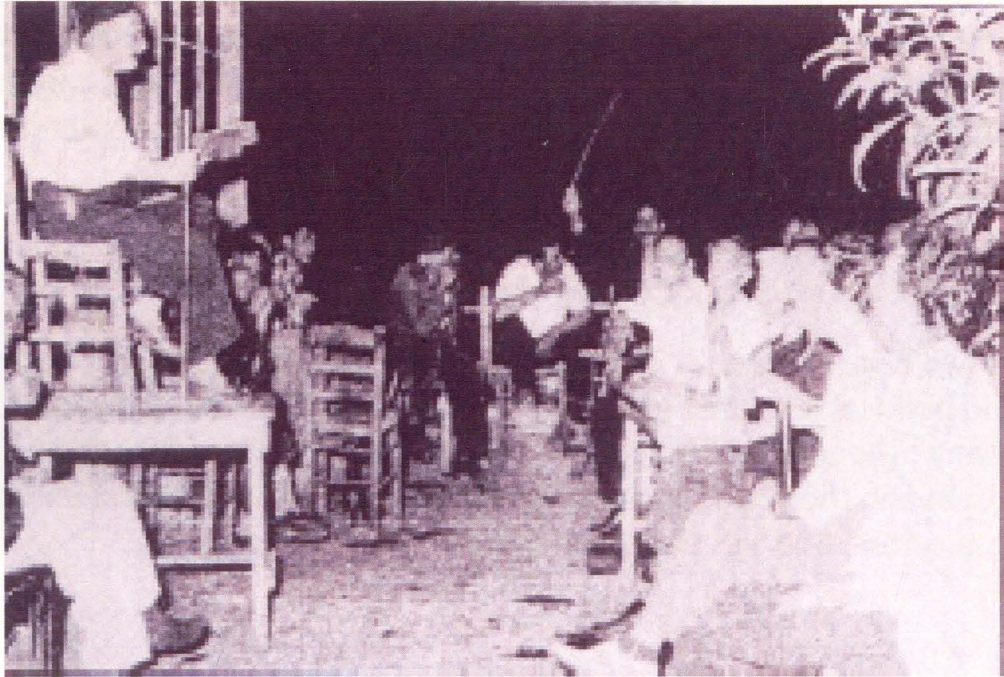
During this era, Hamra emerged as a Cinema-Theater district, with the opening of

several venues; Al Hamra in 1957, Granada in 1959, Cinema Starco in 1960, Edison and Sarola in 1961, Cinema Eldorado in 1966, Clemenceau in 1966, Piccadilly in 1967. Art, theater, music and dance in a variety of genres, serious surrealistic expression, satire, traditional folklore and other forms and styles were prevalent at the time. Publishing houses and book exhibits became commonplace and Hamra featured "the largest variety and periodicals found in the Arab world." (Sweid, Mohammad)

AUB stopped being an "exclusive cultural sanctuary," as other centers emerged in the area to satisfy the "aroused appetite for popular culture, ideas, and ideological discourse." Concurrently, many foreign embassies and their associated cultural centers were established in the area; such as the American and French Embassies and the Kennedy Center, British Council, Goethe Institute, University Christian Center among others.(ibid)

Diversity was distinguished in the area; and it enriched life in the community. A multitude of lifestyles were allowed to coexist side by side.

In 1975, the civil war began and with it, Ras Beirut suffered from the unstable economic, social and political tension and violence of war for two decades. "Fortunately, Hamra unlike many other neighborhoods hosted a community that did not experience direct violence between the coexisting groups." This did not stop the mass exodus of people, trade and culture and a decline began in every sphere of society.



Brief History of Cinema-Theaters in Beirut.

In contrast to other Levant cities, cinemas in Beirut weren't considered disgraceful forms of public entertainment. The origin of this liberalism was derived from the prevalence of earlier forms of live entertainment such as puppet shows, picture shows, and the "Hakawatis" or storytellers.(Khalaf, Samir)

In the 1900's, the Hakawati was the most prominent among live performances. Every afternoon, he would appear at familiar souk intersections near cafes, wearing a tarboush and carrying a stick which was used to keep people's attention by knocking on a table. He would sit elevated from the audience atop a table and read out his humorous tales. The Hakawati utilized the table as a crude stage and altered the atmosphere as a result, coffee and water-pipes would be served as well. The Hakawati represented an early version of today's "sitcoms and street improvised performers."(Khalaf, Samir)

The appearance of the Hakawati declined as movie houses that slowly replaced his appeal started appearing. Although his was an interactive live show, the cinema represented a modern outlook and a global perspective, which were very appealing to urban dwellers of the time.

The first movie houses appeared in the Bourj area of downtown Beirut, and were initially located on "upper floors of cafes, restaurants and hostels." By 1913, spaces were specifically built to house cinemas. The Opera, built in 1931 and based on "classical Egyptian antiquity," was an example of the large monumental style projects of that era that were meant to become urban landmarks. Following the civil war, The Opera was refurbished in 2000 and now serves as the Virgin Megastore.(ibid)

The cinema's spacious character and large capacity meant that it was often used as a lecture hall, auditorium, cultural venue and a political mobilization center.



يوسف لي.



بريجيت باردو.



التلفزيون بعد اقربا في لبنان

احجزوا منذ
الآن جهازكم
كرايتس

Graetz

دادية - تلفن بيوت

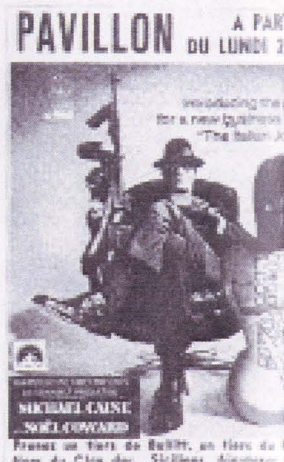
The Multiplication of Cinema- Theaters and cafes in Hamra.

By the 1950's, the increase in these monumental structures overwhelmed the downtown area, which housed about 25 cinemas at the time, so that they became primary points of reference. Due to the many genres being shown as well as the relatively cheap admission prices, cinemas were accessible to all age groups as well as most socioeconomic segments.

Political instability during 1958 resulted in the closure of downtown cinemas for six months. Many cinema investors began to explore alternative locations as a result, and Ras Beirut became a popular choice as a result of "AUB and its students population." Both Hamra Street and Bliss Street were being commercialized at the time and it was unclear which area would become more commercially successful. Some investors chose to hedge their investments by opening cinemas in both locations. For example, Mohammad Tasbahji was a major investor in both Cinema Edison on Bliss Street and Sarolla Cinema on Hamra Street. Each cinema was housed in a building Tasbahji had developed, but each cinema was operated independently. The momentum clearly favoured Hamra, and many more cinemas opened on that street in successive years. Newly opened cinemas would promote themselves to customers through the films they were showing and the venues earned their reputation based on the quality of films on display. As the number of cinemas in Hamra increased, each theater began specialising in a specific genre or target market, leading to a proliferation of theaters each catering to a specific segment of society.

Main Genres/Types:

- French Films
- Martial Arts Movies
- Indian & Pakistani Films Action & Adventure Films
- Arabic Movies
- Dramatic Films
- American Movies
- Romantic Films
- Pornographic Features



سينما «بيلوس»: حشد جماهيري على الفيلم الإسباني «في الحق في الحياة».



- Comedy and Humour Films
 - Lebanese Theater Plays (e.g. Rahbani Bros.)
 - Arabic Musical Shows (e.g. Dalida)
 - Folklore
- (Sweid, Mohammad)

Cinemas began to gain mass appeal at the time and were a major part of the zeitgeist. In fact, in 1931, students took to the streets to protest discriminatory movie admission prices, showing the pervasiveness of cinemas in the lives of people. Cinemas also became the center of the debates on the morals of society, as indicated by a large number of newspaper articles written about the topic at the time, and the debate amongst politicians on the impact they were having on society. Censorship of films and topics resulted from these debates. (Khalaf, Samir)

Cinemas had French, English and Arabic names signifying the type of movies they played and tacitly the desired type of audience as well. Also, as political or social reactions, some cinemas were named after political figures such as the Jamal cinema after the late Egyptian president, or even incidents such as the Tiran Cinema (now Strand) named in protest against the Israeli invasion of the straits of Tiran in Egypt. The Edison Cinema was named after the American inventor Thomas Edison.

Ownership of entertainment venues was divided along sectarian lines, with the Sunni Itani family and the Christian Haddad family. During the civil war, the Itanis stayed in Hamra which the Haddads moved to Achrafieh and Jounieh opening venues there. The relative safety of Christian areas at the time helped the Haddads grow their business and secure exclusivity over "tier one" films, while cinemas that were still in the less safe area of Hamra were relegated to "tier two" films and most were eventually forced to shut down. The spread of television sets at around that same time further accelerated theaters' demise.

The demise of movie attendance resulted in most theaters being turned into porno-

graphic theaters such as Cinema Edison, parking lots such as Blue Building, supermarkets such as Supermarket Idriss, or low-end department stores such as El Dorado on Hamra. Other venues that were still under rent control, were abandoned and left to decay such as The Strand, Piccadilly, and Cinema Versailles.



Bliss Street 1930's



Bliss Street 1960's/



Bliss Street Today

2- Hamra Today and Hamra in the 1960's

Population Change

The urban fabric of Hamra is very different today from what it was in the sixties. That period was characterized by its mixture and diversity of people, architecture, culture and art.

The civil war turned Hamra into a more homogenous neighborhood, losing much of the area's diversity. The proportion of Arab and foreign students at AUB and LAU is below what it once was as well.

Functional and Cultural Change

Buildings constructed in the sixties were characterized by their commercial and cultural ground floor programs that emphasized street life. More recently, high-end, gated, recessed residential buildings have become the prevalent trend in the area. The resulting pedestrian flow, socioeconomic make-up, and character of the neighborhood have all suffered as a result.

The cultural scene in pre-war Hamra was also very vibrant and alive, reflecting the cosmopolitan social life, where people used to spend most of their time in cafes and cinemas, all within walking distance of each other. The embassies and cultural centers around the neighborhood created a cultural web that enveloped residents of the area. The rapid decline and subsequent commercialization of many areas in Hamra has resulted in "a shift away from values of community, spirituality, and integrity, and toward competition, materialism and disconnection."

Reemergence of culture

In spite of the decline since the sixties, and within the present context, some elements



1960's Map of Hamra, highlighting the existing Theaters.

of a cultural revival have begun to show. New cafes, restaurants, and theaters have begun to emerge to fill the cultural void left in the wake of the war. Babel Theater and Al-Madina Theater are two examples of grass roots efforts of reviving theater in Hamra.

As a result of interconnected events, which are beyond the scope of this research, many local political and social phenomena from a series of assassinations, strikes, and sit-ins, there has been a renewed interest in the relative stability and latent demand of the Hamra area. This reemergence of street life, cafes, pubs and restaurants in Hamra acts as proof-of-concept for the potential of cultural and cosmopolitan life in Hamra.

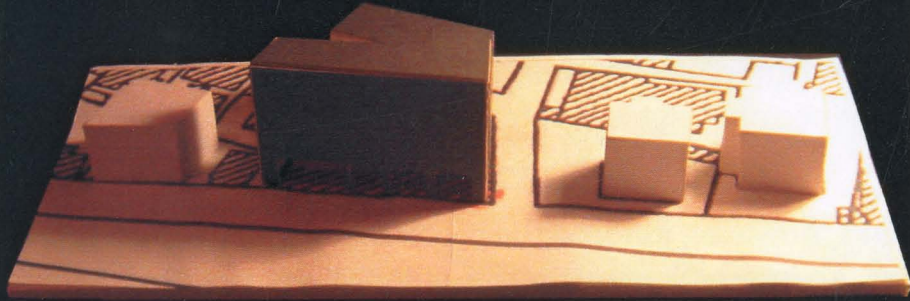
Some recent development has, however, ignored the cultural and architectural significance and heritage of spaces. An interesting example is of the Wimpy and Modca cafes on Hamra Street that were meeting points of writers, thinkers and the intellectuals of Hamra. Both have been turned into retail clothing shops.

Abandoned Performance Venues

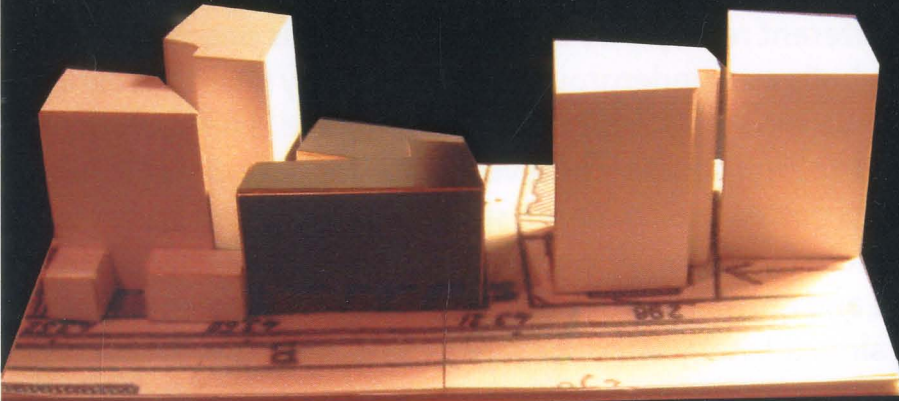
The number of abandoned theaters and cinema spaces within Hamra tell a story of an abandoned culture and of a different reality. The existing condition is one with a relatively large number of hidden hollowed underground spaces, empty shells that are forgotten and unused. All of them are waiting to be explored, each one is filled with the potential to breathe again and accommodate whatever we desire, as a direct result of its structural hollowness and forgotten reality. These spaces are scattered across Hamra in the basements of the buildings, as if bubbles that lie under, only barely touching the surface. Their old signage and entrances act as faint reminders of their past, barely visible from street level, but almost totally unnoticeable as a result of the hollow atmosphere that lays within.

What is happening recently in Beirut generally does not recognize the cultural or even the architectural significance and heritage of these cinemas; they are being demolished or turned into spaces that target a consumerist vision of society.

Suburban Villas
around Edison
Building in 1961.



Present State of
high end Residen-
tial Buildings.



3- The case of the Edison Building

Analysis of Neighborhood

The site chosen for intervention is located at a corner, bordered by three streets, Bliss Street from the north, Makhoul Street from the south and Bakhaazi Street from the west.

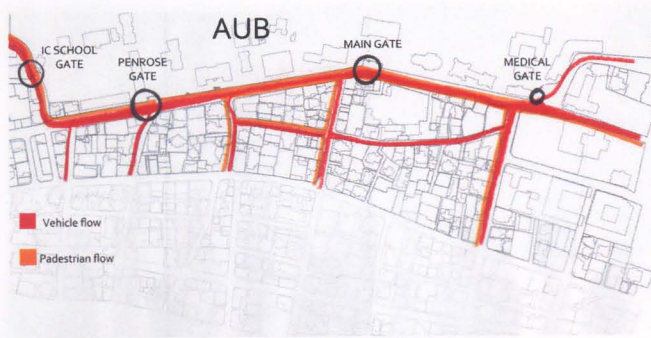
A-Bliss Street

Bliss Street has been one of the earliest and constant changing streets along the years due to its prime location spanning along AUB. Buildings on Bliss street faces the greenery landscape of AUB and overlooks the sea and the mountains, as AUB cascades downwards due to the sloping nature of the topography.

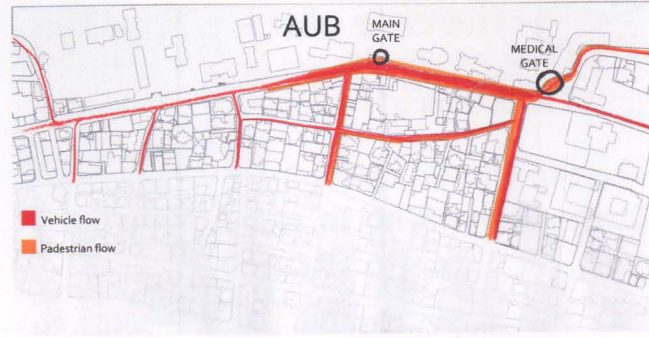
The street once filled with a suburban nature of red tiled villas (1871-1920), is now a mixture of different styled building, built at different periods; there are the mid- transitional style apartment buildings with commercial shops on the ground floor (1920-1950), modern buildings with multiple uses such as offices, commercial complexes and furnished apartments (1950-1975) and lastly gated high rise residential towers (after the civil war).

Bliss is characterized by the continuing AUB fence on one side and the buildings on the other. The street changes nature along its span, specifically affected by AUB and its gates. I dissected the street into three main strips according to the gates of the university.

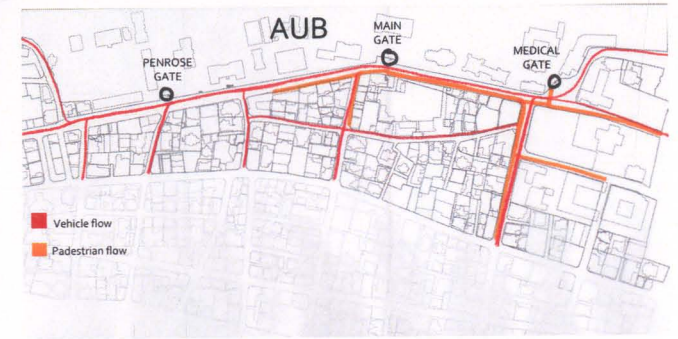
Starting with the area between the Medical gate and the Main gate, buildings on the opposite side have mostly food venues targeting students in AUB. These are mainly local and international fast food chains. The second part which is the span between the Main gate and the Penrose gate, and this section, closest to the gate starts with food venues similar to first strip then gradually changes nature into high end residential towers, gated fences and security, gradually it goes back to food venues again as it gets closer to the Penrose gate. The third strip becomes more oriented towards a dif-



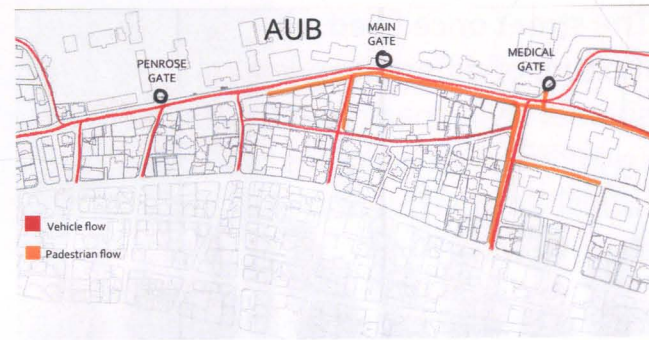
Vehicular Traffic and Pedestrian Flow on a typical weekday at noon.



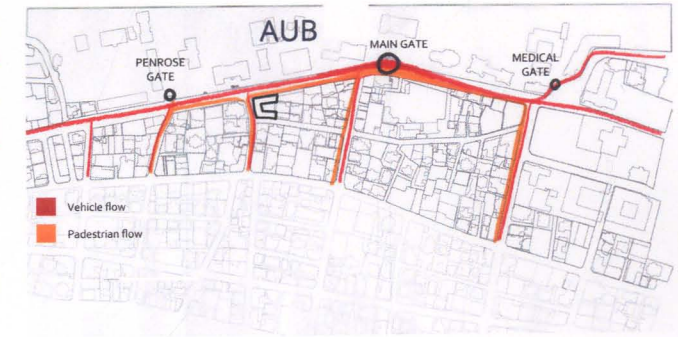
Vehicular Traffic and Pedestrian Flow on a typical weekday at night time.



Vehicular Traffic and Pedestrian Flow on a weekend.



Vehicular Traffic and Pedestrian Flow on a typical weekday in the morning



Vehicular Traffic and Pedestrian Flow on a Holiday.

ferent older target group, having a mosque, Arabic sweets shop, a police station and eventually goes back to residential towers with gated gardens.

-Users of Bliss Street

AUB, IC and a local school located in front of main gate are the main contributors to the flow of people and traffic. The flow of pedestrian and car traffic changes repetitively by hour of the day, weekday versus weekend and on official holiday.

Early in the morning you can see those who are heading towards their shops and offices on bliss and to the university, there are a mixture of students attending AUB, IC and the local school in front of the main university's gate. During mid day, the street becomes over flood with the students in the area, a lot who usually head to food venues and restaurants. In the afternoon till late at night one can identify users coming from areas outside of Hamra, mainly young men spending time in front of the fast food place that usually open till after twelve.

B-Makhoul Street

The character of the Makhoul Street differs from bliss. On Makhoul street life is much calmer and quieter, and the street is characterized by a mixtures of stylized buildings; red-tiled villa dating from the years 1870-1920, mid-style buildings (1920-1950) with shops on the ground floor and more recent buildings from the 1990's which are exclusively residential.

When first walked down the street, starting from the Edison, one can feel the relationship between the Edison Building to the left and the facing 1920's Makdisi Villa on the right. The villa's fence is of the same height of the shops of the Edison building, while the greenery goes upwards beyond this fence, as high as it's facing Edison Façade. This has created an enclosed entrance to the street and has defined its edges as both structures reach to the edge of the pavement from each side.

-Users of Makhoul Street

The street is differentiated by its residential nature, with some discrete shops on the



Security

Legend

-  Directional Cameras
-  Radial Cameras
-  Parking prohibited
-  Security Patrol
-  Secured Zone



Security Barricades slowing traffic in front of Prime Minister's Building.

Movement of Pedestrian Flow next to Edison Building.

ground floor that target the citizens of the neighborhood; a pets shop, restaurant, shoe repair, and a handmade accessories shop.

Surrounding conditions of site

Today's surrounding reality of the building is a different one from when the building was built. Specifically on Bliss Street certain factors have helped in decreasing activity and interaction of pedestrians with the building. This is due to many reasons:

1-The deteriorated condition, ragged look of the building, and the closed and non-functional space. On Bliss Street, one shop and the entrance of the cinema are closed. While on Makdisi the service entrance and a shop are closed.

The gloomy dark character of the cinema entrance, have resulted in using its glass door as a wall for colorful posters.

2-An existence Tenant, the Hajj, owner of the luggage store, who insists on putting large object on the side walk to prevent scooters from passing, thus this decreases the pedestrian usage of the sidewalk.

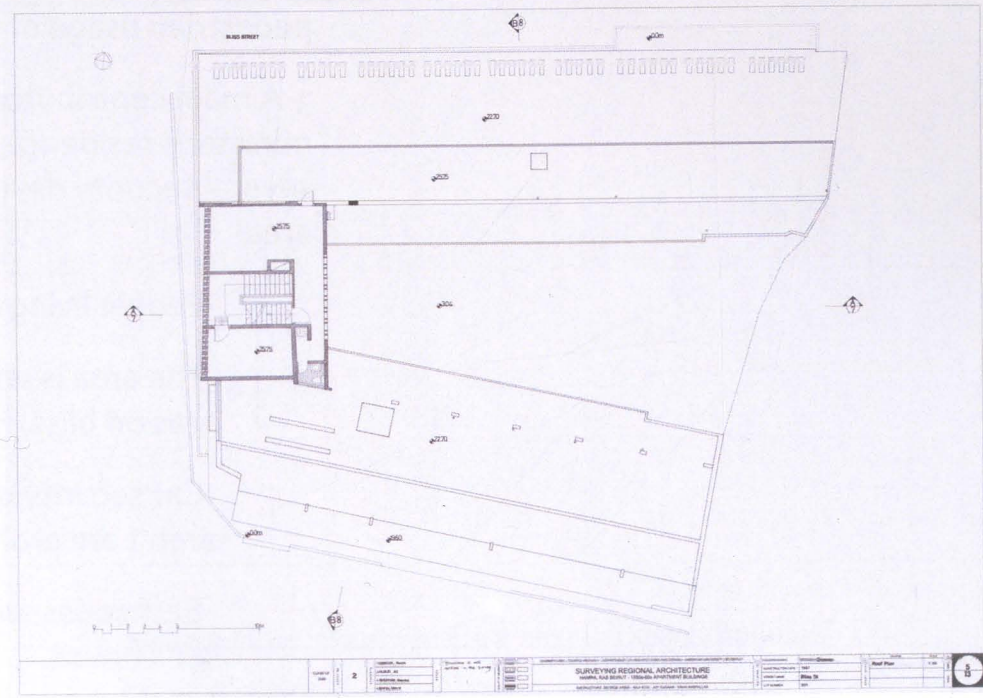
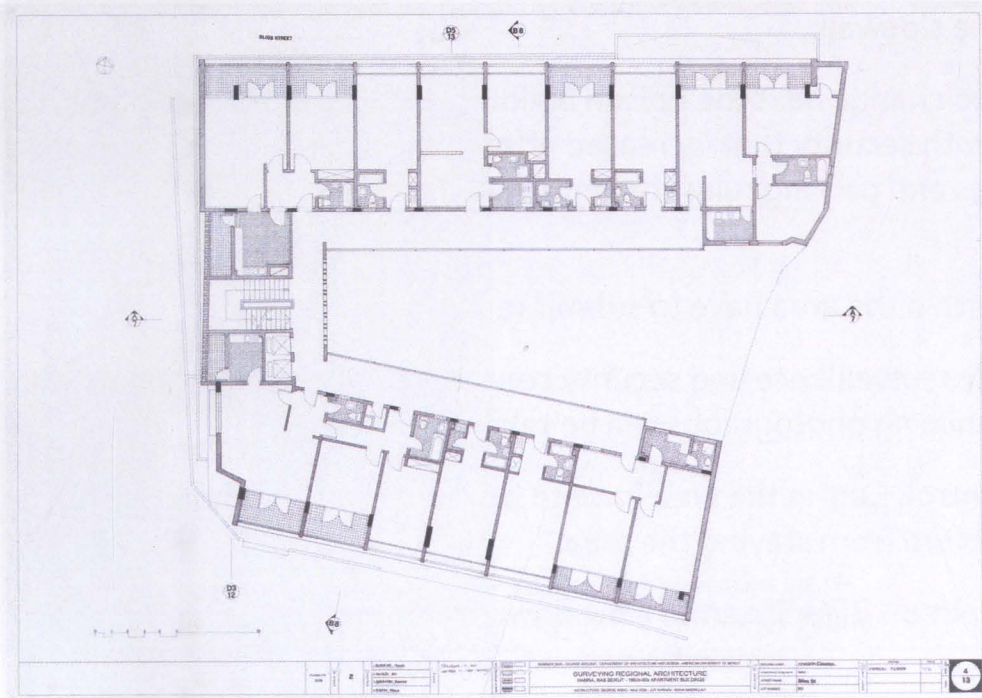
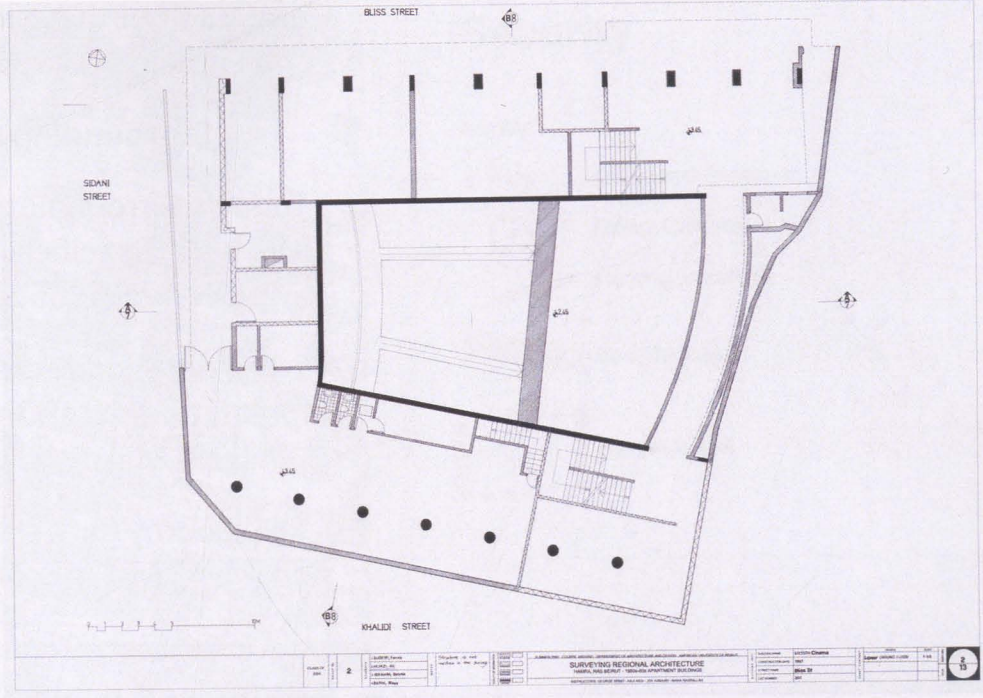
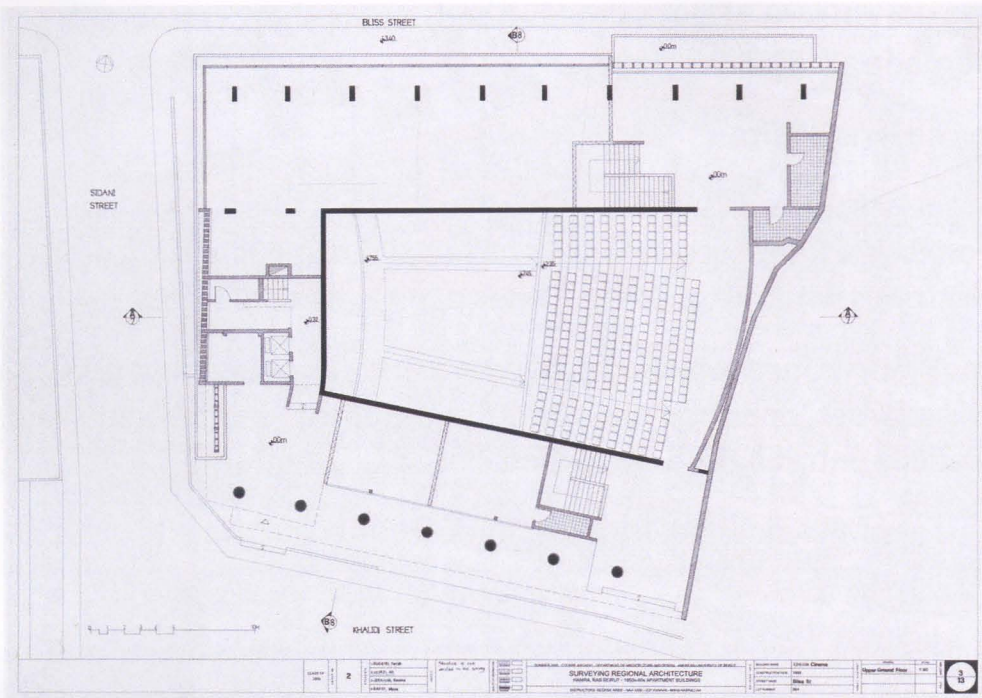
3-A main contributor to change next the Edison building, is the existence of prime minister's residence, with security that increased after political instability. There are several security devices and parking rules that interfere directly with daily life in the area:

- People living within the area have to submit registry papers.

- The area is under surveillance and security control, radial and directional cameras on bliss, hence no photographs can be taken in the area.

- Car security control. Cars in the area have to be registered and those which aren't are prohibited from staying the area.

- Barricades are put on Bliss Street to slow down traffic next to the prime minister's house.



4-The emergence of gated, residential buildings with no retail shops on the ground floor, unlike earlier parts of the street. This transforms the character of the area and limits the life of commerce and interaction next the Edison building.

5-The scarcity of parking on Bliss Street, required by the users of the area, results in double parking occurring in front of the building, hence motorcycles and scooters belonging to nearby Restaurants Park in the entrance of the cinema after six o'clock.

These points have contributed to the decrease of activity and life when getting close to the Edison building. Also pedestrians have no idea about the existence of the cinema or the courtyard in the middle of the building.

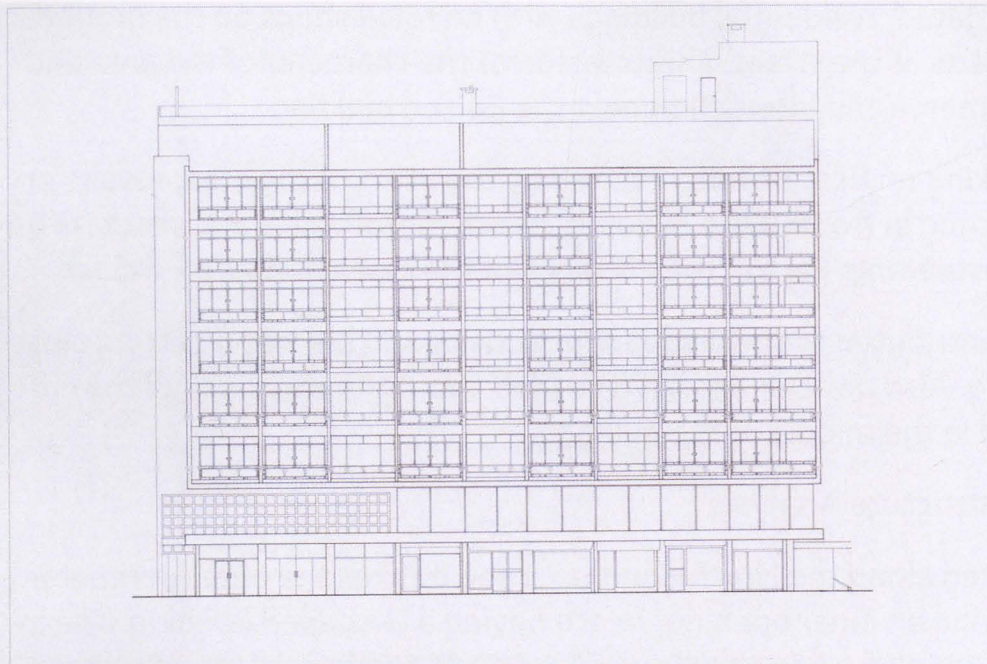
Building and structure Analysis

The building is oriented along the North-south axis and it takes the outer perimeter shape of the site leaving an inner opening, hence having a U-shaped building. The inner void is a result of 1960's building code, which permits building on top of cinema theaters, that in the Edison building has in the middle area of its site.

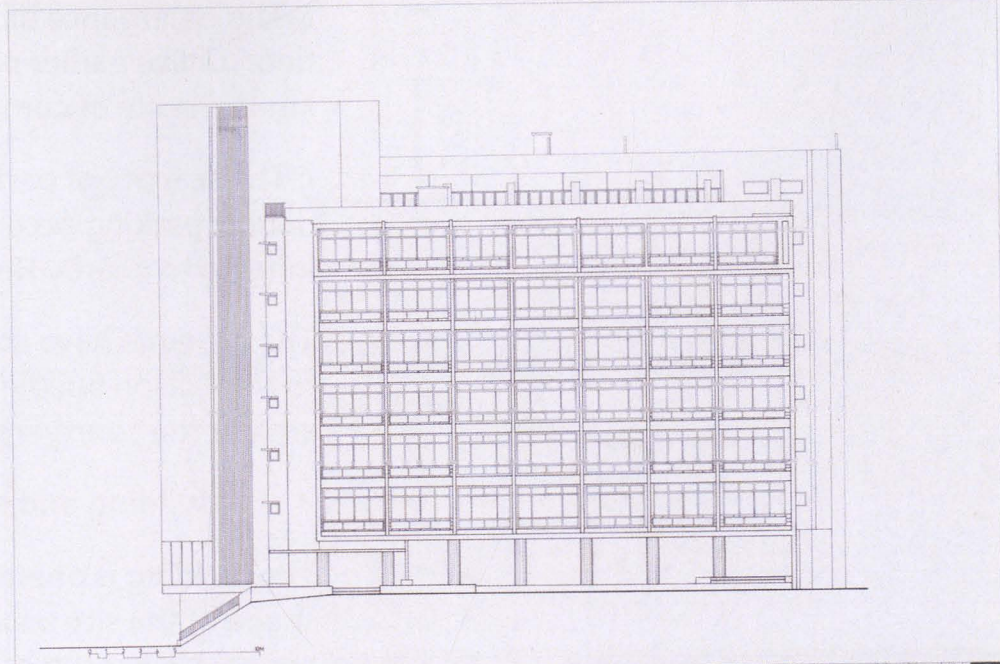
The site varies in topography, where bliss is about 3.5 meters lower than Makhoul. The building takes advantage of this slope, by having an extra floor that uses the difference. Two different entrances for the building, the public one on bliss the private one on Makhoul.

The numbers of floors vary on each street according to building laws. The main northern façade overlooking Bliss Street and AUB contains nine floors, while the southern one that faces Makhoul Street and the late nineteenth century Makdisi villa, goes up only seven floors. The eastern side of the building contains the main staircase and is on Bakhazi Street.

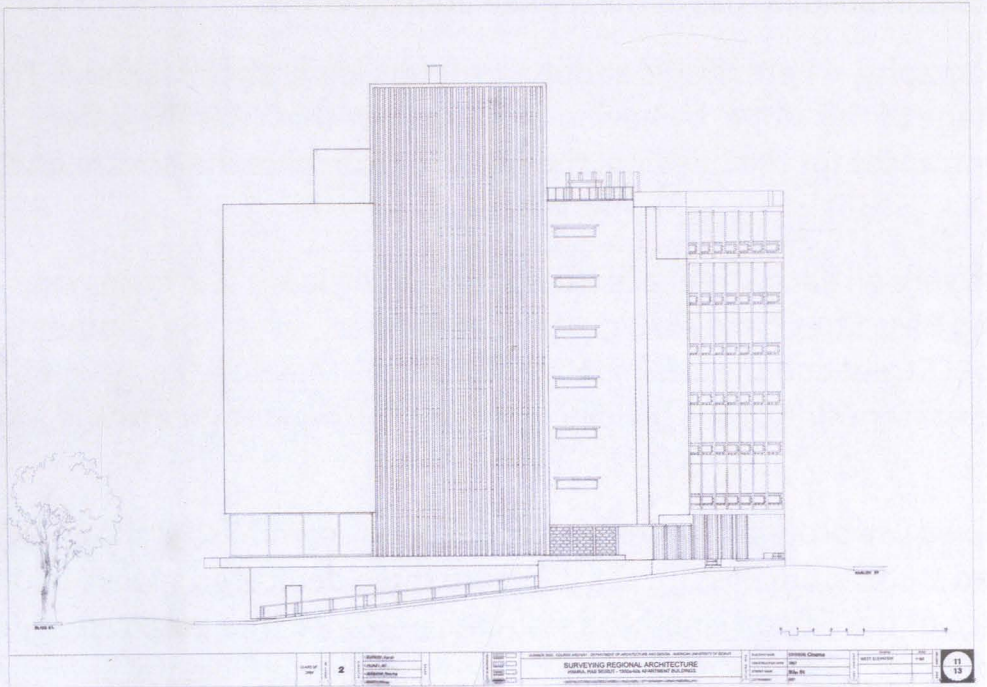
The building had a mixed use program; a cinema, a restaurant, commercial shops and varied residential sized studios. On Bliss Street there are three dedicated spaces for retail shops, the entrance of the Edison cinema, a staircase entrance that led to an upper restaurant, above the shops, and residential studio apartments that filled the upper



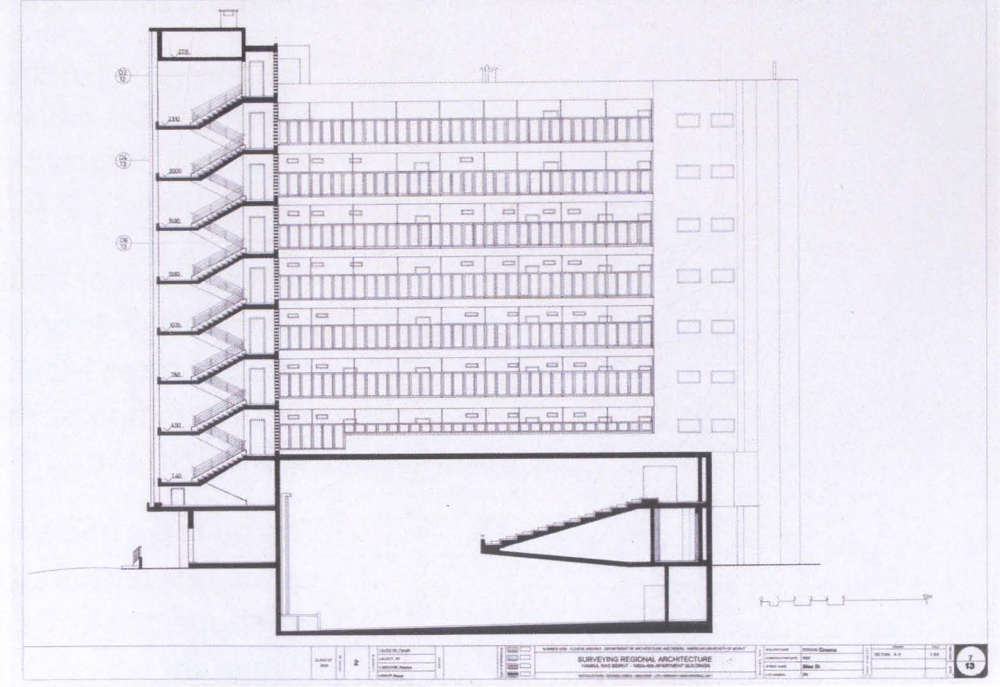
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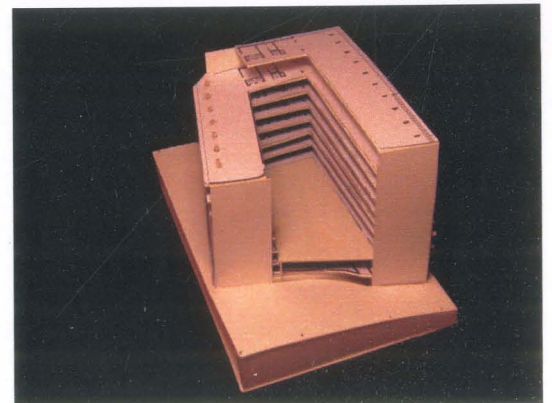
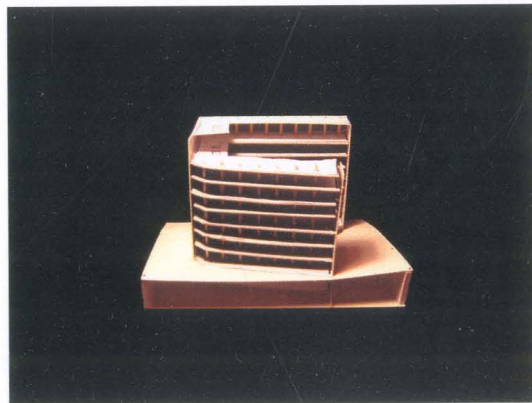
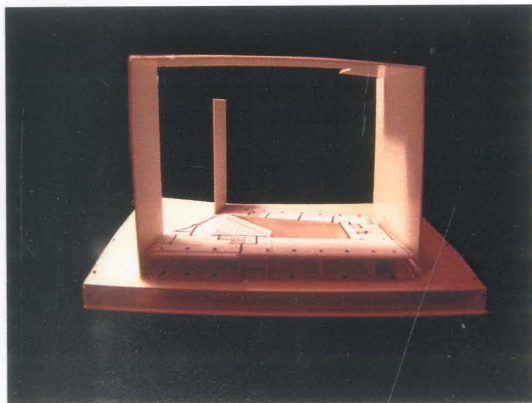
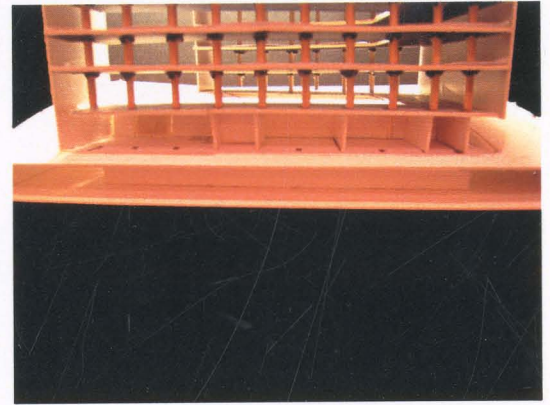
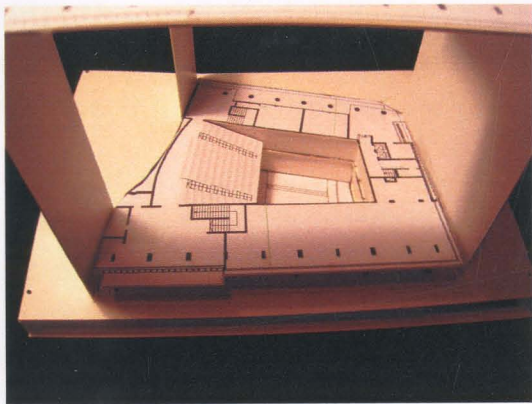


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floors. The shops are: a bookstore and a luggage store which both opened in the sixties. On Makhoul Street there are two spaces for commercial shops, only a video store open, a back service entrance for the cinema and the main entrance of the residential upper floors and the upper studios.

The main circulation of stairs and two elevators are in the middle area between the two arms of the building. This area is the only connection between these two arms. An open air corridor spans from the middle circulation area, towards the inner edges of each side, all the way forming a U-shape that connects all the apartments. On either side the residential apartments vary in size, yet they all have balconies overlooking either on Bliss or Makhoul.

Surveying Regional Architecture, 1950s -60s
Apartment Buildings Boudairi, Farah; Hijazi,
Ali; Ibrahim, Basma; Rafih, Maya.



Story Board Of Edison Building

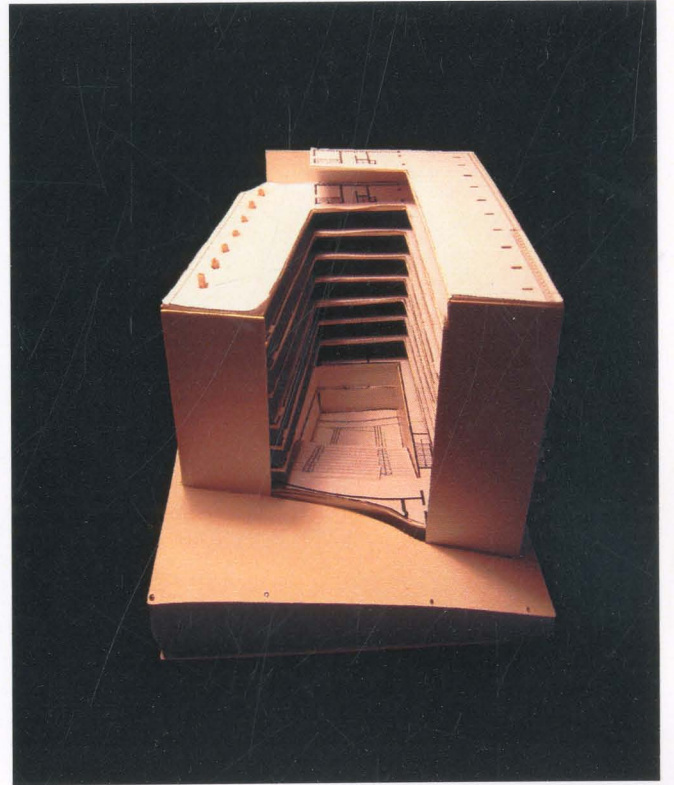
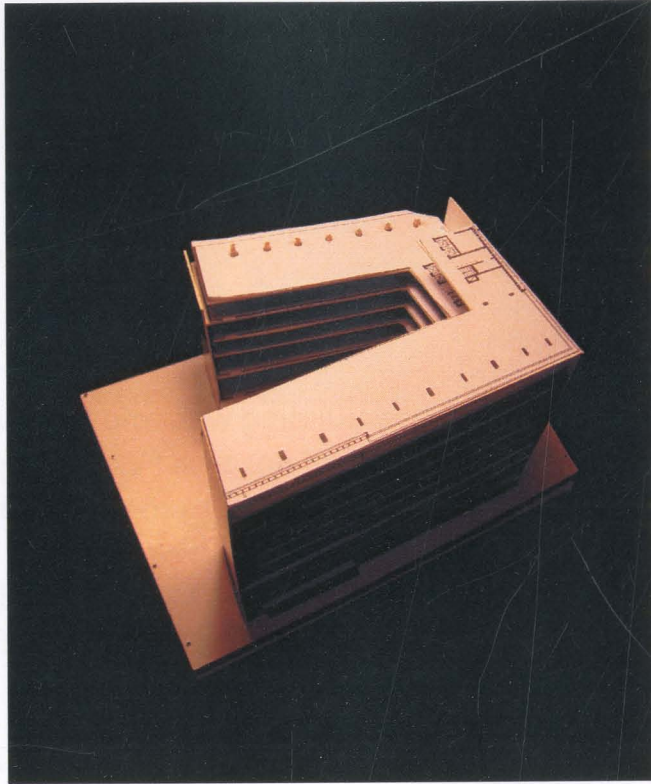
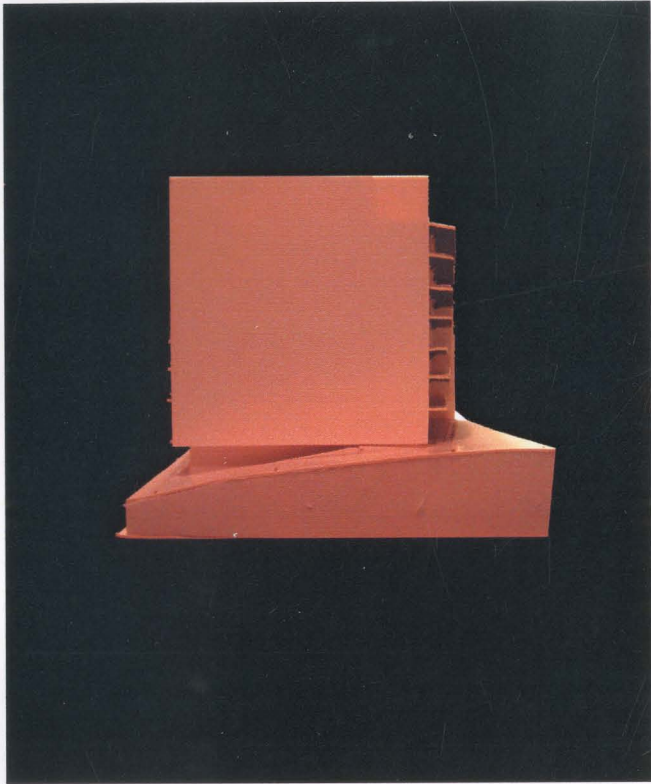
The owner of the Edison building was Mr. Mohammad Tasbahji who built two cinemas in the same period, one of which is the Edison. The cinema was rented by Naef and Fuad Darweesh , and later by the Haddad Company.

During the war, as the Christian company was concentrating on other areas , the cinema started gradually losing profit. Also in recurrent periods the space was used as a war shelter for safety.

After the war, the building was sold to Saudi princesses from AL – Soud family, while the cinema got rented out by a Lebanese porno investor, whom changed it to a pornographic cinema in the years 1996- 2003. After the complaints of the residents, the cinema was left abandoned until today. The building got sold again in the year 2004 to Mr. Imad Al Taher who is a Lebanese developer. He built a couple of residential Towers in Hamra and his future plans are to tear down the Edison Building and build a gated high end residential project.

The initial program of the building eventually changed with time, especially during the civil war. The cinema became a pornographic cinema and later closed down; the restaurant became a storage area rented by the luggage store owner; hence the commercial shops are still run by the same people, who have been present since the sixties till today. The shops are in good condition, yet managed poorly. During the civil war many tenants left the building, leaving vacant apartments for war refugees.

Today's users are all tenants and are a mixture of people. Some apartments are inhabited by families and others by young or elderly singles. Most of the residents are paying old rent, about 30000 Lebanese lire a month.



Social Analysis

Interviews:

1-Nader and Wissam, LAU students.

A-Dr. Pierre Azouri, AUB Engineering Professor.

B-The Hajj, Retail shop Owner

C-Old Woman

2-Fictional Interviews:

A-Young Lebanese male

B-Lebanese/American male

C-Migrant Syrian worker

A-My first interview was with two students Nader (nineteen years old) and Wissam Shayya (seventeen years old), whom both go to LAU and live on the fifth floor. Due to the apartment's location in Hamra, the cheap rent, and comfortable ideal size for university students, the grandfather, who is the original renter gave the apartment for his grandsons to use, during their college years. Before them, two of their cousins used the space while they went to AUB three years ago.

When I first met them, they had only moved in a month ago. My questions were mainly about their connection to the building if they have any, and if they have noticed anything special about the building. They have explained that this apartment was used by many of their cousins who went to colleges in Hamra, mainly AUB, LAU and the Hagazian University.

They originally live in Sawfar, up in the mountains, and whenever they'd go down to Beirut they'd stay in the apartment, with their cousins. They always knew that this apartment would be theirs when they move to Beirut to attend college. The apartment always reminded them with their elderly cousins, and the college life that was yet to

come. They explain that although the apartment wasn't in a very good shape, yet they still liked it. They explained that each relative of theirs have left a piece of furniture, a poster, alcohol bottles and even street signage, that were stolen of the streets. What they like the most about the apartment is the balcony, where they smoke and drink coffee while watching AUB and Bliss.

B-The second Interview was an Egyptian, engineering professor at AUB, Dr. Pirerre Azouri, who is a graduate from AUB. He lives at the ninth floor, overlooking AUB. He first came from London to teach at AUB and moved to the Building in the 1960's, as recommended by Mr. Barbir who was in charge of faculty housing at AUB. He took the place of another X- AUB professor, Mr. Hawzer who was leaving AUB. Later Mr. Hawzer came back and asked for his apartment, yet Dr. Azouri had already settled in and liked his new residence.

After I have explained to him about my thesis, he made sure to inform me that the building is going to be demolished, although he believes it is worth preserving. He explained that he is depressed to leave it, as he will not find a place close to AUB with a stunning, the entire campus and the Sanine Mountains and the sea.

He explained that when he first moved in the tram was still working, and that the building had central heating, which he explained to be a luxury at the time. I asked him if he used to go to the cinema downstairs, or eat at the restaurant. He replied that although many people used to go there, especially families and AUB students, yet he didn't like to go to the cinema or the restaurant, because he never liked the atmosphere.

C - My third interview was with the luggage shop owner, who is also renting a whole residential floor for his family and the restaurant's space, which is now a place for his storage.

The first thing he said was that I should refer to him as Hajj and not write his name, also that I am not allowed to take photos of his shop, nor the floor where his family lives , although I have the approval of the owner of the building, Mr. Taher.

He explained that the building was one of the most beautiful buildings in the areas and that they had central heating. He also made sure to explain that he was there since the beginning in the 1960's and that his shop was doing much better back then. He also explained that the war has changed a lot of things in this building including this country "Lebanon". Although I tried to focus our talk on the building, yet he kept on leading our conversation towards today's reality. He complained that there are no rules and regulations these days, and that things are in constant chaos. That's why he explained that every day he places two large carton boxes in the middle of the walk way, so that no motor cycles would cross on the pavement in front of his shop.

I asked him about the cinema and the reason to why it changed and became a pornographic one then later got closed. He explained that back in the sixties and during the years of the war, the cinema was a nice place, where only rich "upper class" families were able to afford coming. Later he said that the lasting civil war was the reason behind the decreasing number of audience, very similar to the scenario how his shop became as it is today. Eventually the investors left it. He explained that in certain periods, the cinema was used as a shelter for the residence of the building. Later he said that it became a "bad place" and that he was responsible for kicking the bad, filthy investors out. He wouldn't just let a pornographic cinema run next to his shop. He complained that there is a storage place in inner parts of the building that at some point was used as a flipper center for billiards, where many young men and teenagers would hang out and play billiards.

I interviewed briefly an old woman who lives with her son and his newly wedded wife. She moved to the building with her husband and son in the late sixties and since her husband died she grew attached to the apartment and the plants put in the shared corridor, just outside of the apartment, as it all reminds her of him. She explained that after her husband died, she decided that she would give her only son and wife the apartment to live in and in this way she won't be left alone. She explains that she and her husband used to sit in the outer corridor, next to their plants, open the door and windows of the apartment to enjoy the northern breeze. She explains that living in this apartment was a blessing because, no one would have dreamed to live on Bliss Street,

next to AUB and the prime minister's house Mr. Fuad Al- Saniora, yet paying cheap rent.

The following fictional characters are depicted based upon general descriptions and pieces of interviews with area residents and building tenants described.

I interviewed three people, who visited the cinema when it was a pornographic one. They all refused to add their names. The first interviewee is a Lebanese in his late twenties who lives close to the Edison building in Hamra. He wasn't so open about his experience, just that he knew it existed and he wanted to explore it on his own. He explained that although there was another porno cinema right in an upper street, which is more enclosed, yet he preferred to go to the Edison because he thought it would have a better audience than the other one, which looked in a bad condition. He explained that it was a weird experience and that he didn't and wouldn't do it again. He explains that it was very awkward, especially after the show was over, when he saw the faces of the audience at the entrance when he was leaving. He explained that many of the faces he saw were familiar, and that he was afraid he'd be labeled as customer, when it was his first and last time.

The second person is in his twenties and his family house is right behind the Edison building. He is Lebanese yet lived most of his life in the United States of America. This interviewee was more open about his experience when he said that one of his first arousal was in this cinema! He was also beneficial in terms of explaining the atmosphere that existed. He explained that it was a very casual atmosphere, where men of different ages, but mostly elderly would sit in scattered seats, some in the lower area and others in the upper balcony. Some of men in groups would cheer, laugh and whistle. Usually a man comes and would try to lower their voices down, but he explained that no one can stop a man from his real macho instincts! (He laughs). He suspected that some of the men who were sitting alone would be having it "going on", as he was! Yet no suspicious noises were heard. He justifies that maybe they were over heard by the cheering men. He also explained that a lot of "nawateer al hay", were there, who were mostly migrant Syrian workers.

He explained that it was a very cheap (5000 L.L) a ticket and casual thing, sometimes wouldn't be stamped or taken; he later shows me a ticket which he kept in a box.

The third interviewee was a migrant Syrian worker who works as a nator in one of the buildings in the area. A friend of mine interviewed him as I preferred not interview him myself. The main headlines were that it was a cheap place to hang out with his friends some times, also because there aren't any places for them to go to. Also due to the fact that the cinema was so close and that they knew the guy at the entrance, so whenever there was something urgent for work they would just leave and come back. He also asked not to put his name because he feared the idea of anyone knowing, especially his wife to know, he said "it wouldn't be nice, decides you know they don't understand"!

He was disappointed when the cinema closed; because it is one of the few things him and his friends enjoy. He also explained that the only unpleasant thing about it when bumping into the Hajj, the owner of the luggage as he treats him in an repulsive way.

Architect of Edison

Built by the polish architect Karol Schayer (1900-1971), the 1960's Edison building comes from a the modernist period when architects were experimenting with space in Beirut. They were exploring the rational architectural approach using new building technologies and climate responsive designs.

Schayer have built around 130 buildings around Beirut with a concentration in Hamra, and he is known for his high definition of quality material, use of contemporary techniques, openness of space and lightness of architecture.

8 – Issue addressed and problem definition and thesis argument

The cosmopolitan and cultural life of Hamra before the civil war, specifically in the period between the 1950's – 1960's, was a result of the presence of AUB, along with the historical layers and events which brought the educated and professional people from different sects, religions and countries. The initial presence of the university, the mix of people who were present at the time, along with cash influx from the gulf sustained a stable economic environment and created a dynamic urban lifestyle of independence.

Based on field research and site analysis of Hamra today, especially through the lens of theaters, a stark stop in the continuity of cultural life in general and specifically in cinema-Theaters can be seen.

Comparing 1960's Hamra to today's Hamra, one can identify the cultural gap. This is proven by the mere fact that the large number of cinema-Theater spaces and cultural cafes have turned into porno screening cinemas, commercial oriented spaces, parking or were kept closed. .

The years after the war weren't enough to bring back the symbolic manifestation of the cinema-Theaters and the intellectual level of the past. What is present is the abundance of a pop-culture and commercial nature of Hamra.

When knowing that AUB was a main contributor to this cultural life, and without it the area wouldn't have been the same, it is essential to maintain the quality of education and culture in the area, to be able to build the society around it. Yet due to the fact that AUB is no longer the only contributor as a cultural provider, and not as much concerned with the surrounding community and neighborhood as it used to be, it is our task those who are interested in the cultural identity to help nurture culture and desire such spaces.

Zooming in on bliss street, real estate is making it more desirable and financially rewarding to build gated expensive residential buildings. These towers are exclusive in nature when compared to the earlier type of construction of mixed use. Eventually these buildings will change the character the character of the neighborhood and spe-

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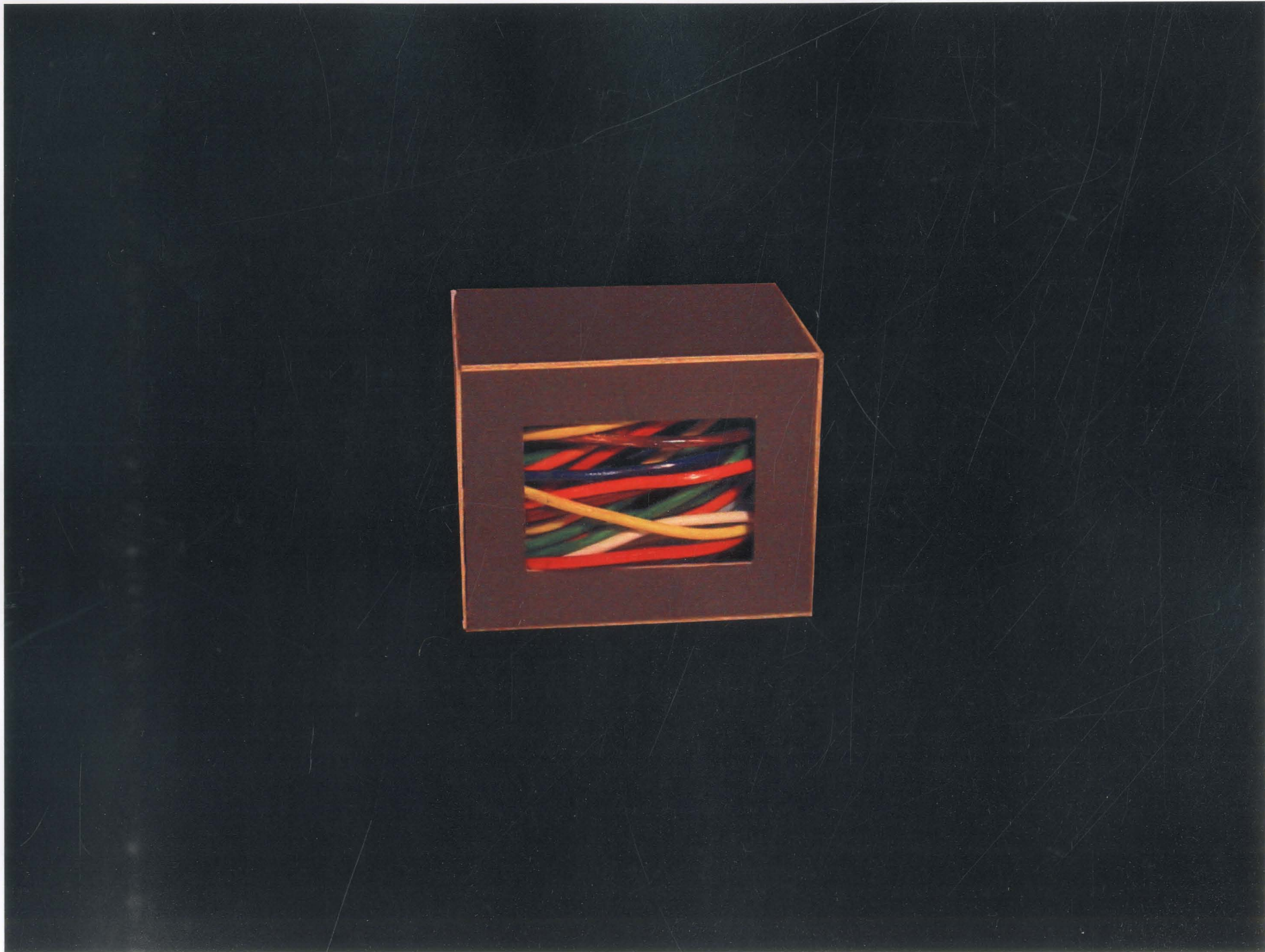
cifically bliss.

Architecturally speaking, the structures of the sixties during the modern period express a certain identity of Beirut in a specific time span. The building is considered a heritage. One that needs to be used rather than demolished. Many modern buildings in Beirut are being treated with no consideration to the period it they were built.

An example is the Carlton Hotel, which got demolished last year, and will be replaced by a high end residential hotel, similar to all the towers around it in the area.

My research and thesis question deals with the abandoned performance venues, specifically the theater- cinema space. Hence I am Interested in the architectural manifestation of the sixties cultural era.

In response to the reality of the abandoned Edison building and cinema theater within the current reality of site, deterioration, surveillance and AUB, I will try to maintain the level of culture on bliss in specific and Hamra at large. Instead of demolishing or renovating, my process is one which explores and researches the possibility to use and adapt these already built spaces into new structures, with a new program that brings in back life to these venues, bearing in mind the form, the site location and today's cultural need of these spaces.



11-The concept

My project is inspired by the cosmopolitan spirit of the 1960's, when culture was dynamic in venues easily accessible by all and when cinemas had multiple usages; playing a movie, a political and social meeting point and a place to debate and question society's reality. I am inspired by the Hakawati character before the establishments of cinemas, whose performance was a interaction between the sender and the feeder, and which was a direct reaction to life's conditions. He was a live show that happened naturally in any space within the proximity of the café. His show's environment is a relief filled with laughter and satirical moments, criticizing serious issues by the form of arts.

It will be a place that provides spaces for the individuals to think and produce and a melting point of interaction and conversation between the young and the matured to form a social identity of a place and culture, building on the ups and downs of the past, of cultural peaks and war. It is a place for intellectuals and readers who have the luxury and maturity to negotiate and discuss identity. It is a place of reminder with the conditions people went through cinemas became so abundant then turned into porno-centers and eventually dead spaces.

It's a place to exhibit forms of expression and due to close proximity to AUB, it will be an awareness center for students, pulling them away from the pop culture around us, going back to what's real and constructive. A place of interaction, conversation and production.

The project is open to all types of people and accessible by whoever is interested in an ongoing search and exploration. The project is for those attending one of the most prestigious universities in the Middle East and Arab world and for those who aren't provided with this luxury. It is a place for actors and producers, for the interactive improvisation period of reading a script and screening a film . It is for the residents of the neighborhood. A place for meeting lovers, friends and even enemies

It is a place with different environments for the interactive atmosphere and for the public to relax and enjoy openness elevated from the chaotic street and able to zoom out of daily exhaustion.

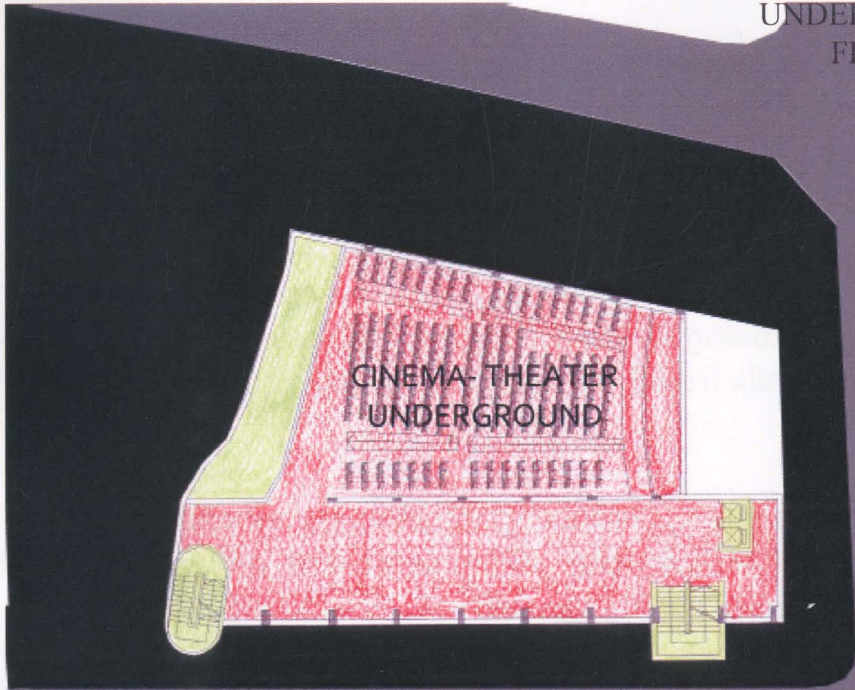
The project will function as a node on Bliss Street, and an entrance for those who are coming from upper area of Hamra. I envision a connection between the passing pedestrian and the space. I envision it being an attraction point, where it pulls the pedestrian inside, to use its pathway to walk from Makhoul to Bliss streets, and on the way be informed by what happening.

It will vary in character according to street, respecting the different atmospheres each one. On bliss it will house the public facilities that will open on AUB, on Makhoul it will be more discrete and residing the more private venues.

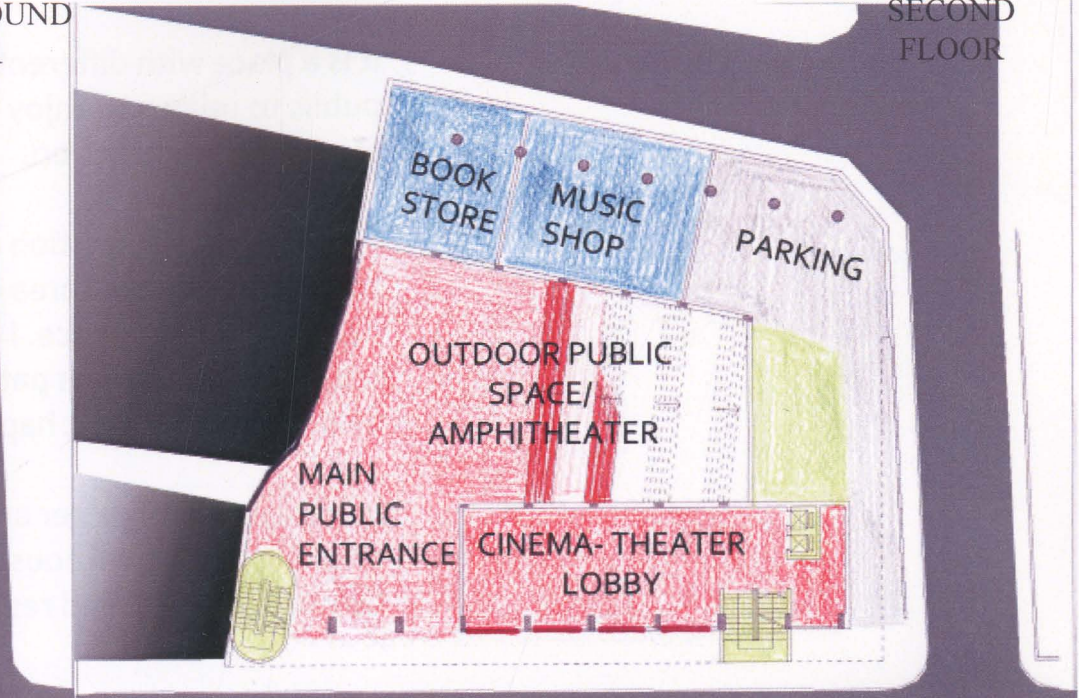
This project is a design manifestation that coupled with research methodology will bring light to forgotten bubbles buried underground that will eventually be seen visually and thought of mentally.

I find the case studies to be useful architectural manifestations but also programmatic expressions; the globe theater, the Kennedy school of governance, the weapon exhibition. Each space is of a different program, yet all have things to say and issue to educate and inform.

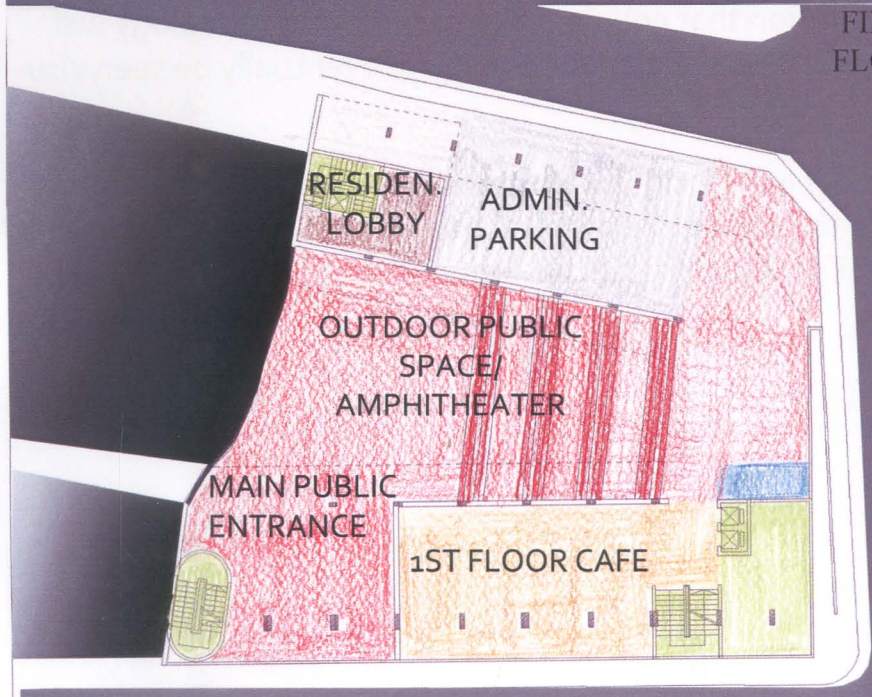
UNDERGROUND FLOOR



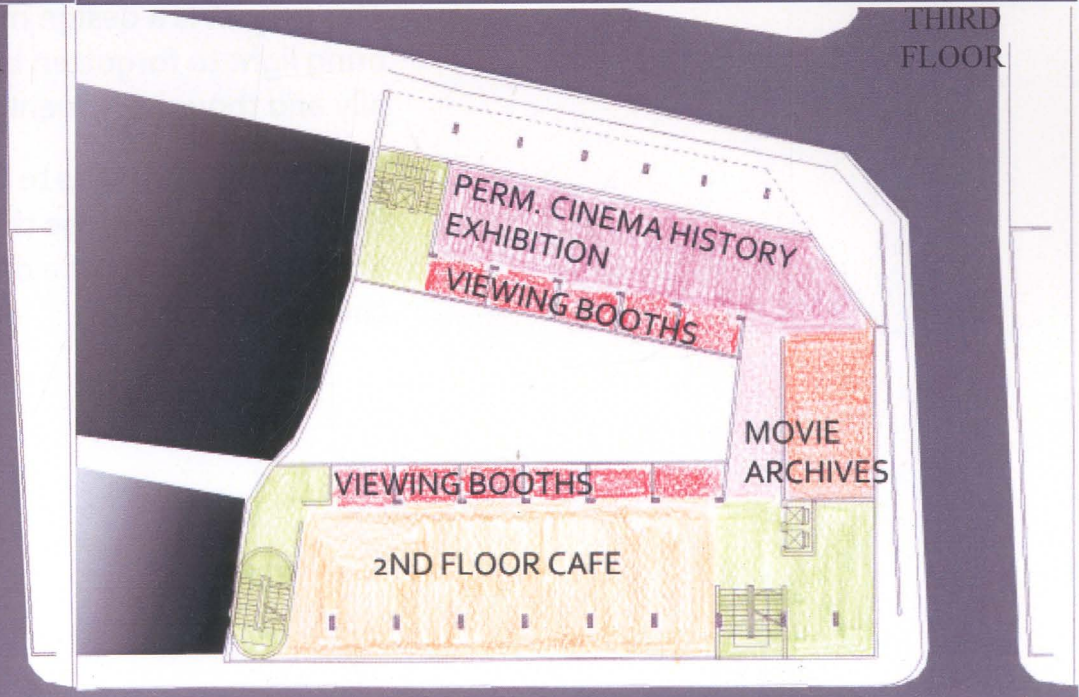
SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



13- Program

1-Performance

Underground cinema-theater	315 m ²
Lobby –entrance hall	113 m ²
Cinema- theater service rooms	200 m ²
Outdoor amphitheater-public space	315 m ²
20 Outdoor Viewing booths	8 m ²

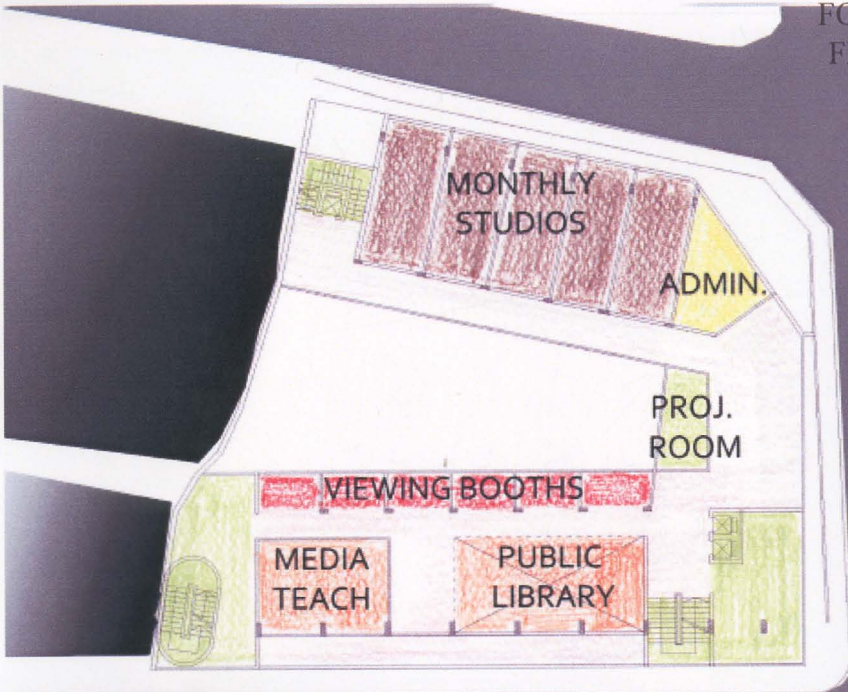
2-educational

Public library	60 m ²
Media teach, digital library	45 m ²
Classical Arabic movie archives.	70 m ²

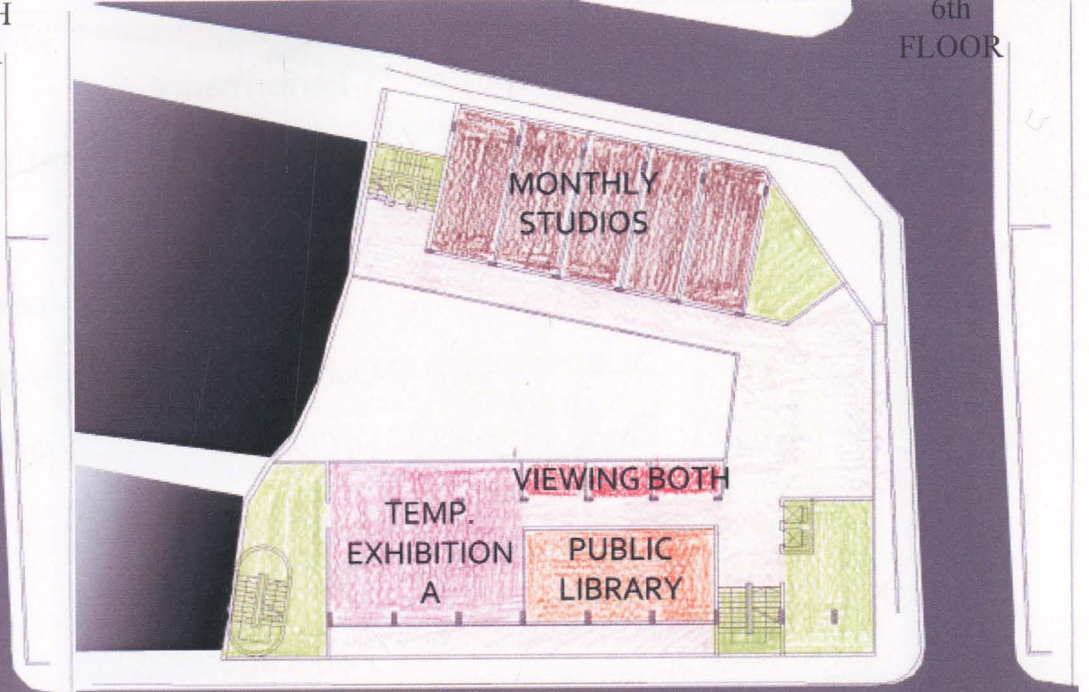
3-Exhibitions

Permanent exhibition (history of cinema Edison & Beirut)	115 m ²
Temporary Exhibition A	112 m ²
Temporary Exhibition B	220 m ²
Temporary Exhibition C	220 m ²

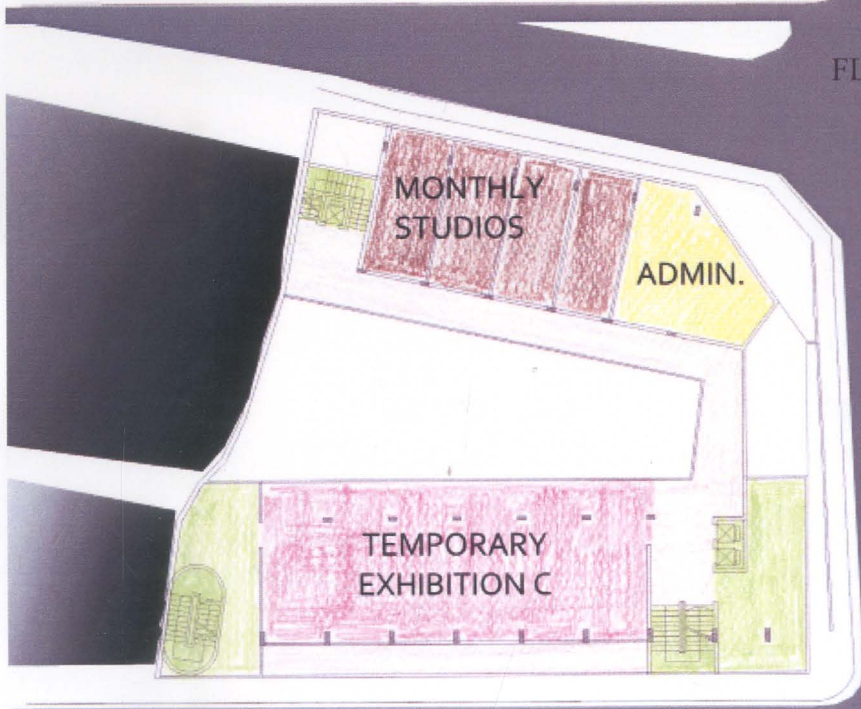
FOURTH FLOOR



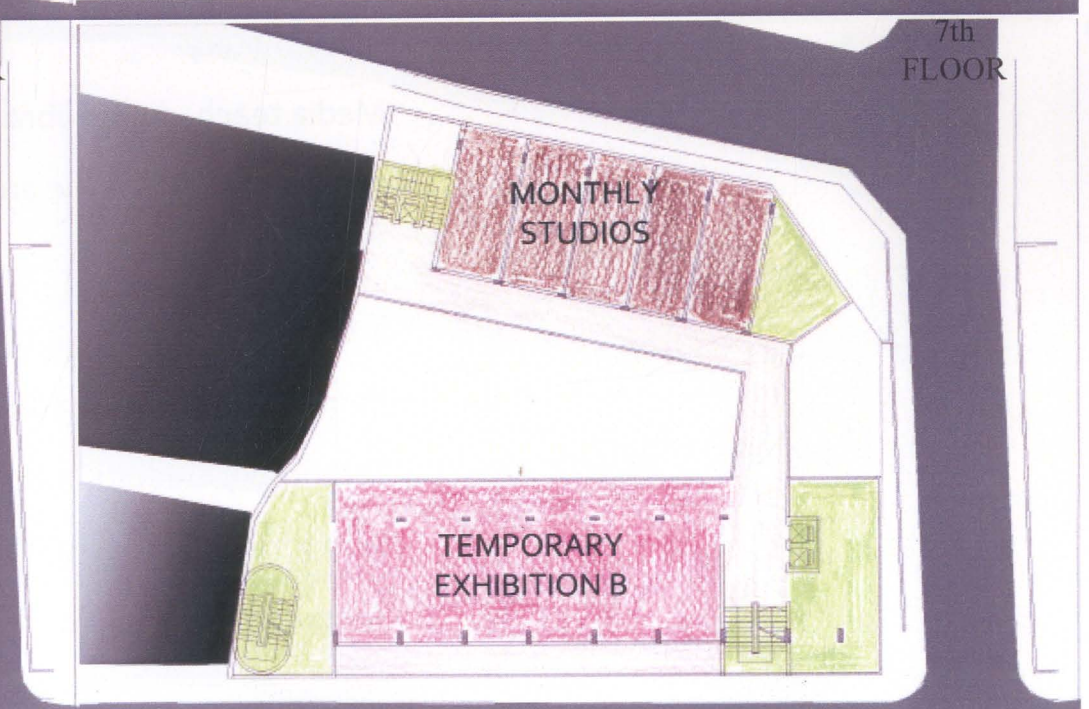
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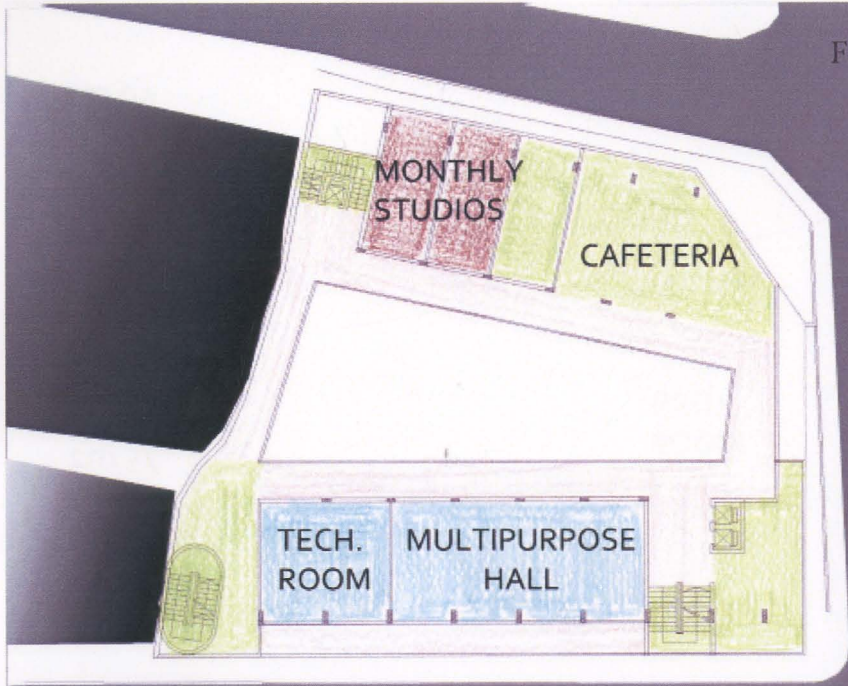


7th FLOOR

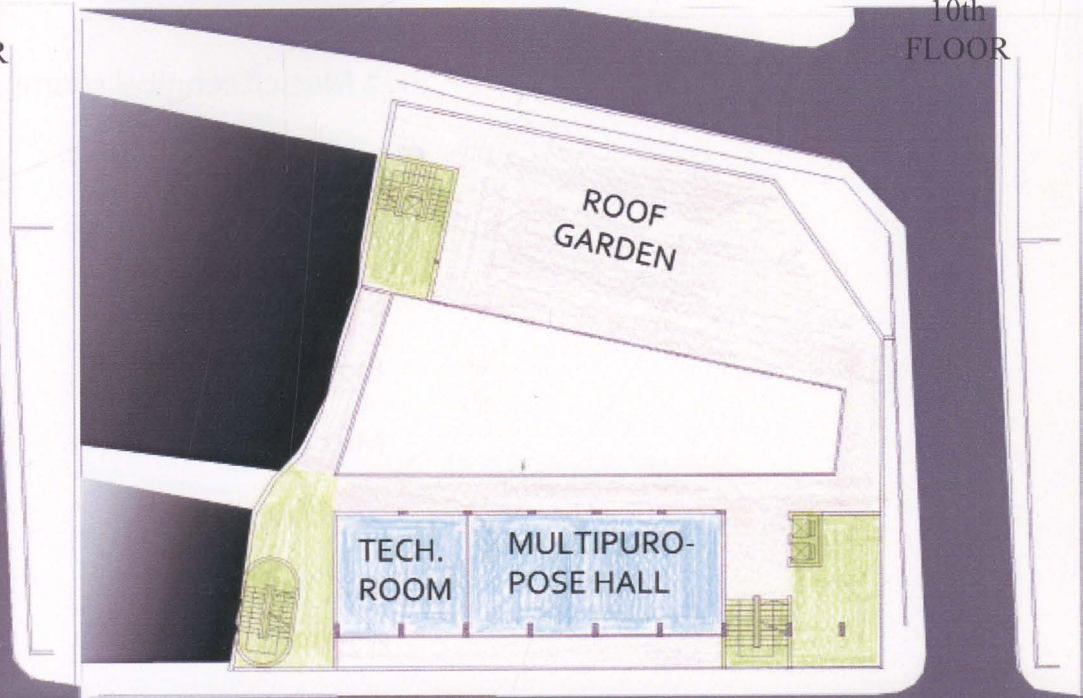


4- Workshops	
2 Music/technical rooms	40 m ²
2 Multipurpose halls	115 m ²
6 Work/office spaces	30 m ²
5-retail	
Existing bookstore	75 m ²
Music shop	75 m ²
Chair rental	10 m ²
6-Hospitality	
Café/pub A	135m ²
B	225m ²
7-Residential	
6 Day rental studios	30m ²
21 Monthly rental studios	30 m ²
9- Services + technical	

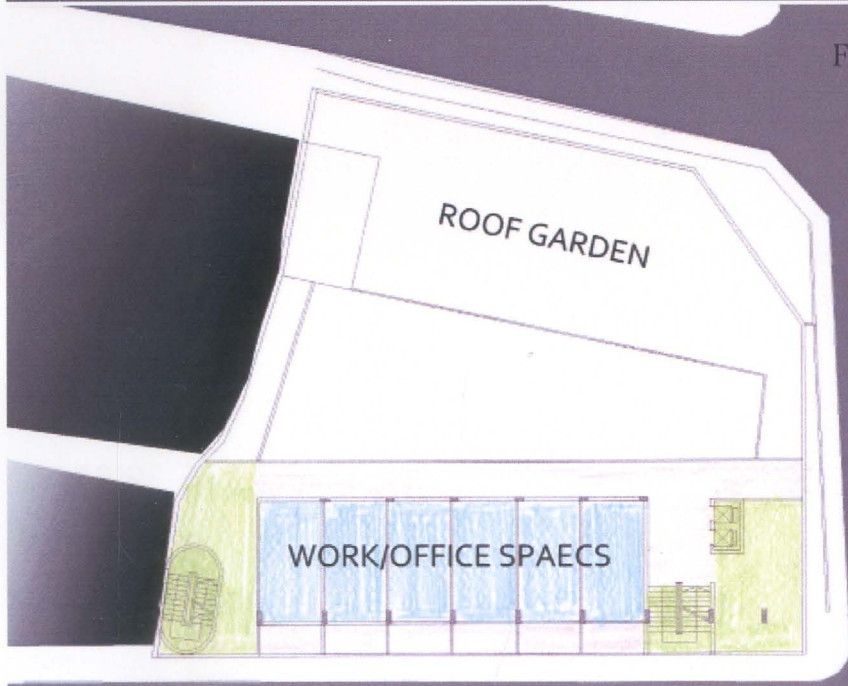
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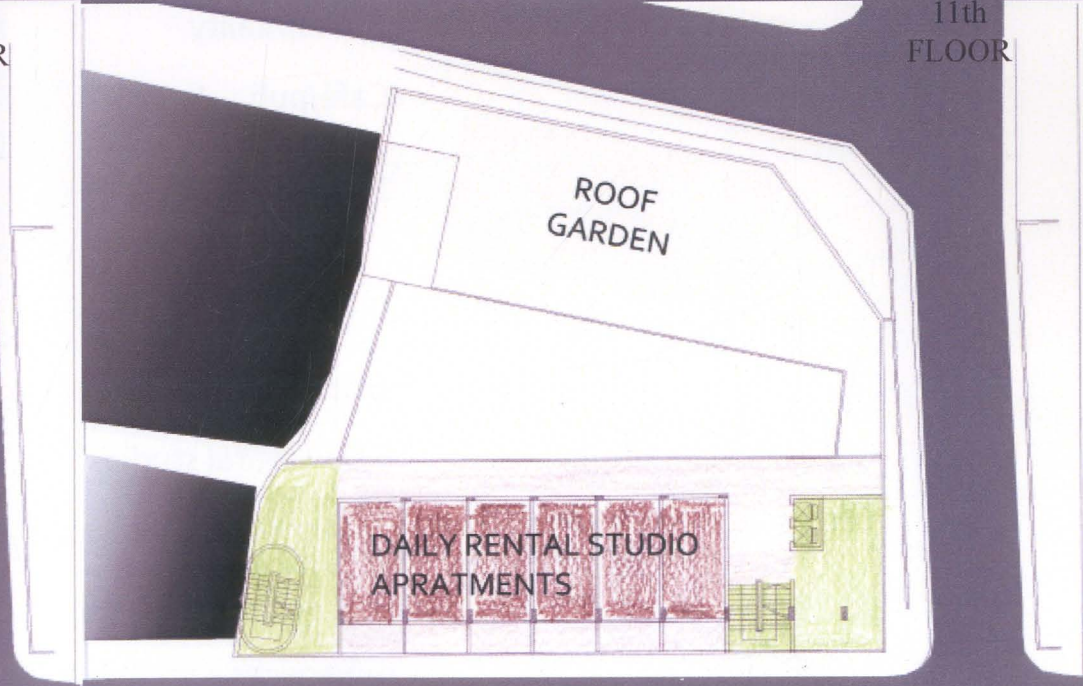
10th
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9th
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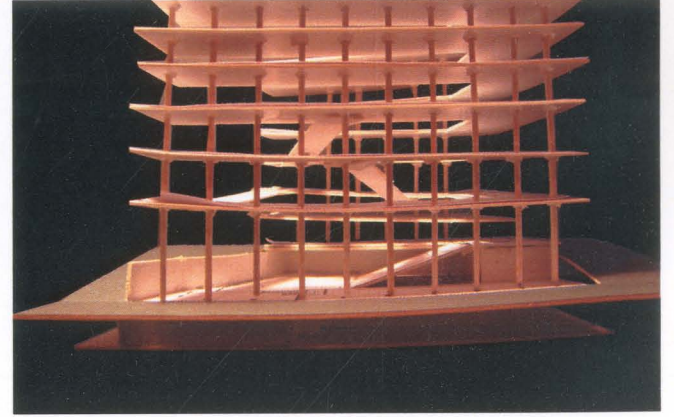
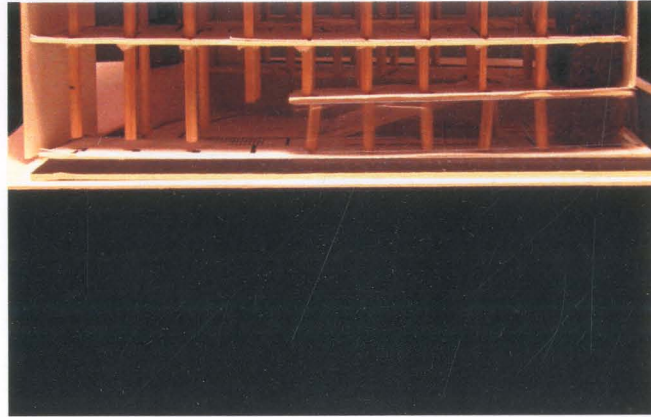
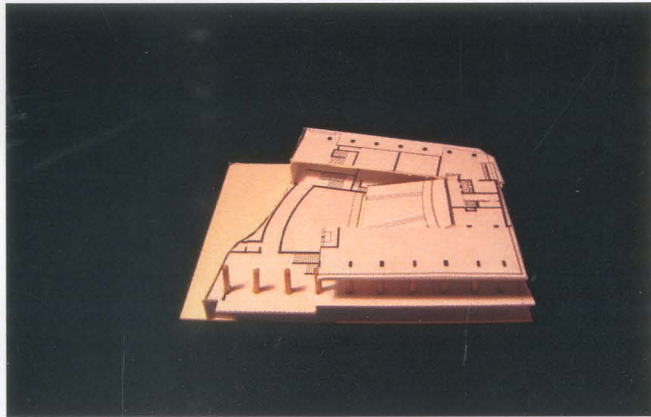
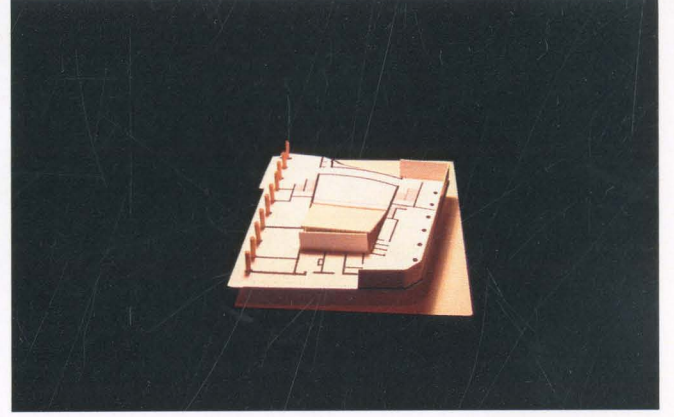
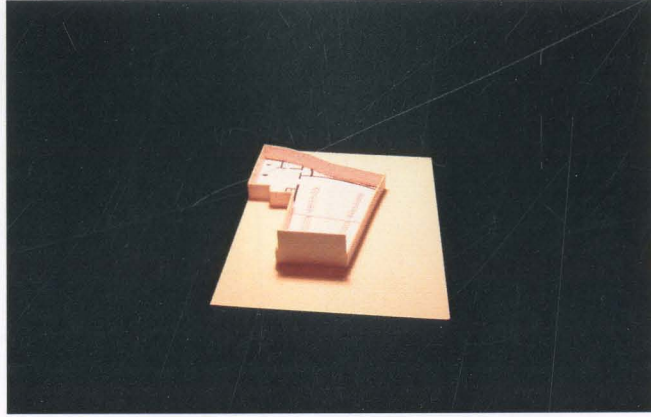
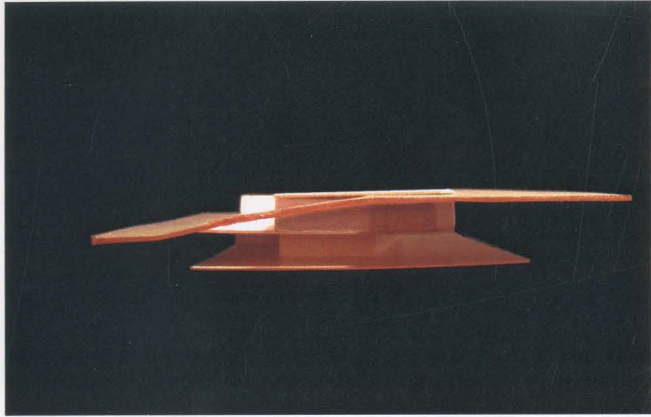
11th
FLOOR



Cafeteria	90 m ²
Laundry room	30 m ²
Backstage service room	95 m ²
Projection Room	17 m ²
10-administration – governance	
Space A	25 m ²
Space B	65 m ²
11-Garden	160 m ²
12-Parking	
(7 spots) for administration	230 m ²

13- Storage is provided in all service areas

14- Poster wall



Performance

The cinema underground already has a stage therefore it will be used for performances also. It is a multipurpose theater for screening alternative (non commercial) movies and for indoor performances. It is dedicated for reading scripts, improvisation, practicing and acting workshops.

The outdoor amphitheater is also a public space for the people and a passage way that links between Bliss and Makhoul streets. This space will be shared visually by the whole building. Due to the buildings original U shape, the inner sides on each floor acts as viewing spaces and booths that over look the space. Making it possible for people at upper floors to enjoy live performances, outdoor plays and projections projected on the existing facing wall.

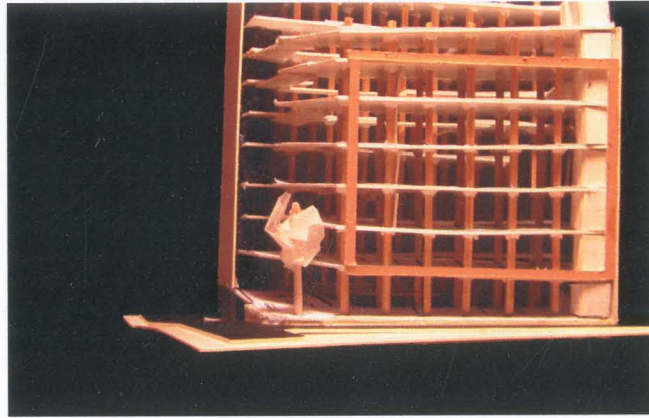
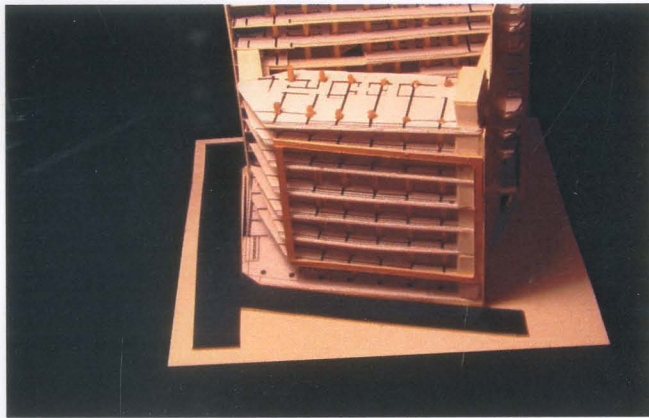
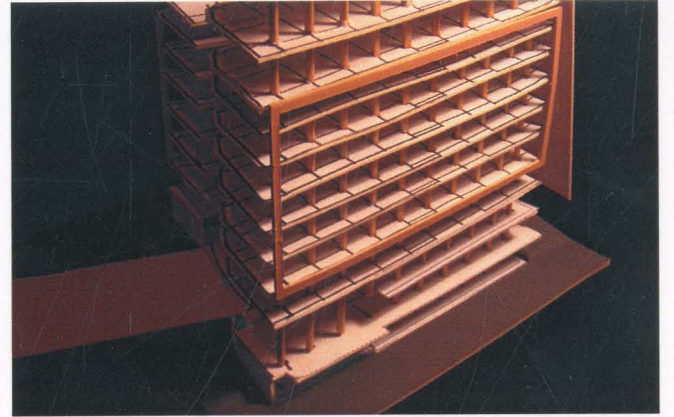
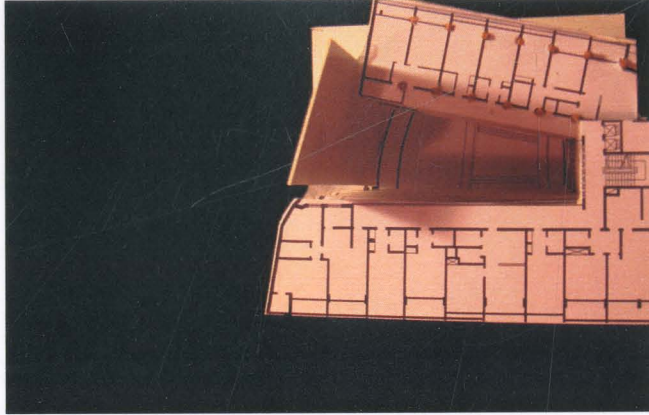
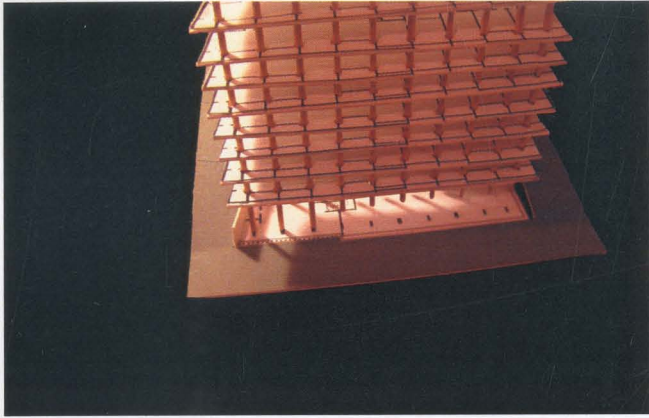
The third element of performance is the viewing booths, which are usually used within all the programs, such as reading space, but on event days they act as viewing ports that are rented by the users.

Educational

The educational is more likely oriented to performance and arts material. Over looking AUB the public library has a double volume and a media teach room next to it. The Arabic cinema archive is part of the permanent cinema exhibition. It will include a collection of Classical Egyptian and Le Vaunt movies, also alternative productions of today

Exhibition

Three exhibitions of two sizes will contain Temporary Art and objects and mixed media.



Located in upper floors, they are transparent and overlook AUB campus

The permanent exhibition on the first floor facing Makhoul Street is reassessed backwards and uses the corner to act as an attraction tool for those driving down Bakhazi and Makhoul Street. This Permanent exhibition is dedicated for the story board of the Edison building events and the history of Cinemas in Beirut.

Workshops

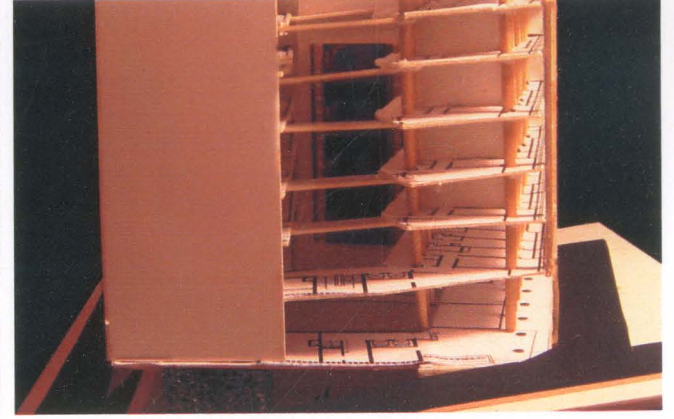
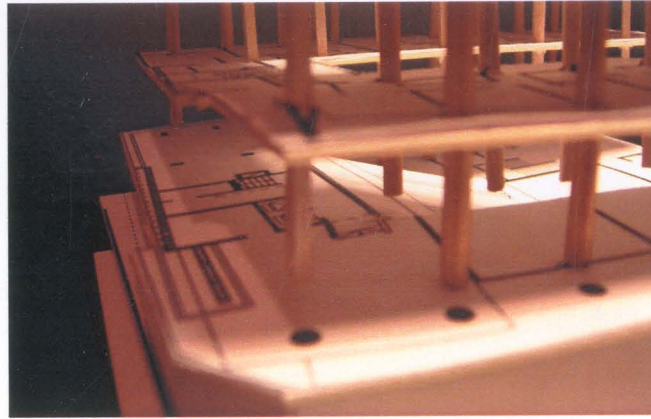
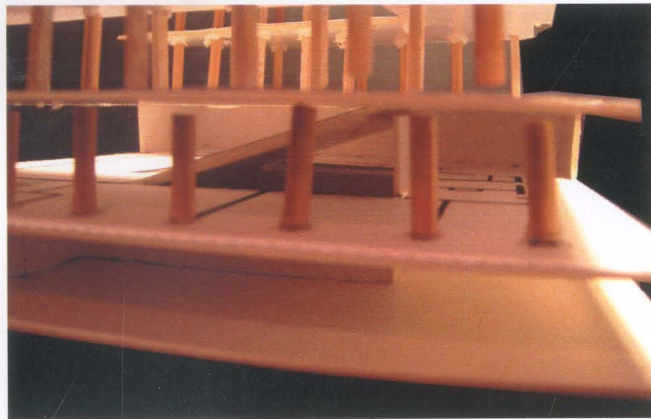
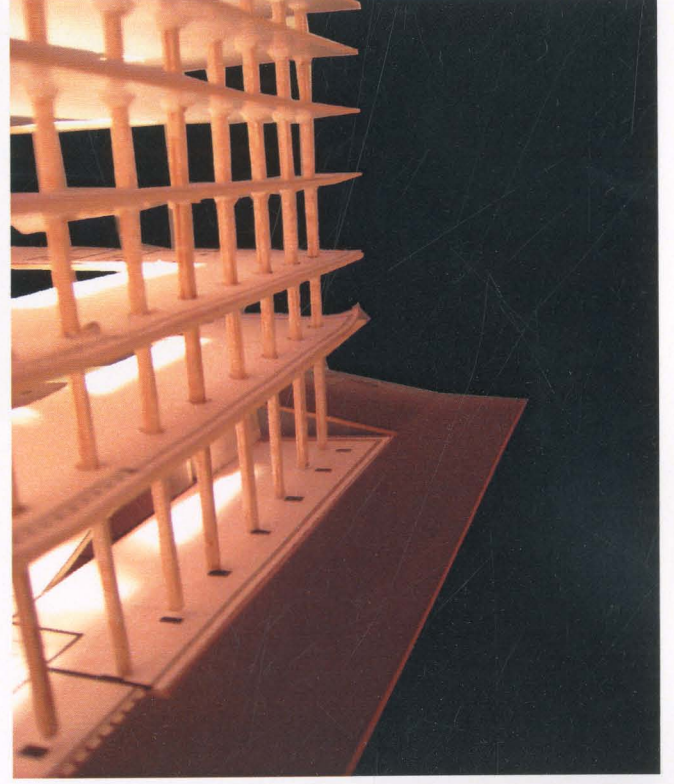
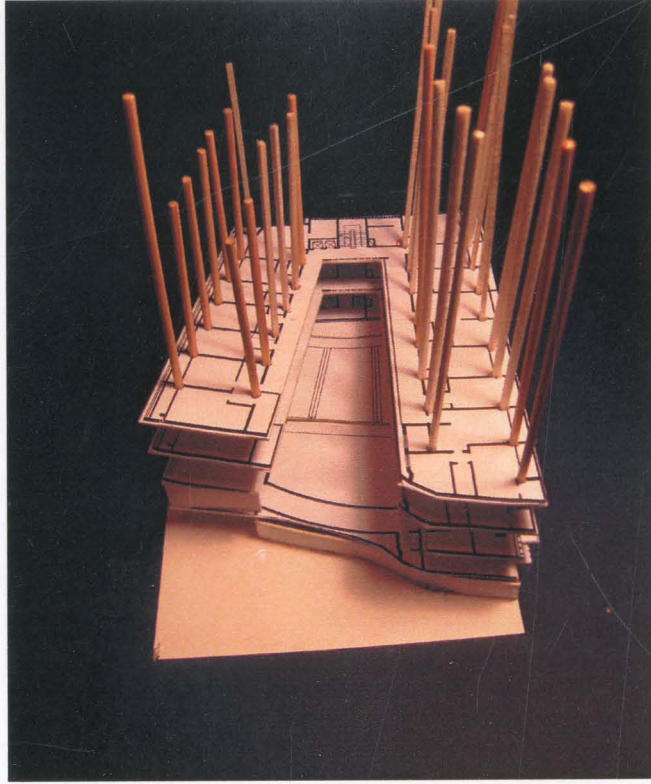
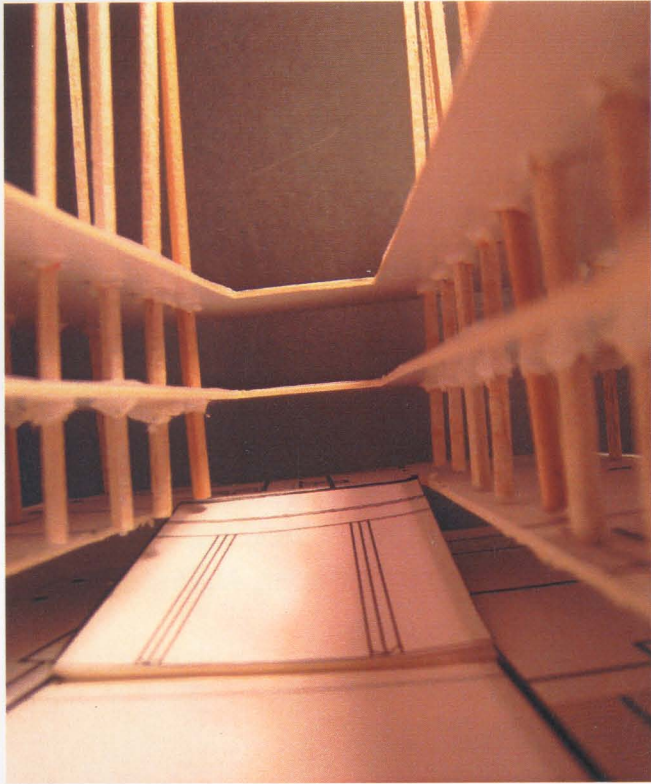
The two multipurpose halls, music rooms and cubicle workshops can all be rented on a by the hour or day. The multipurpose is open to all sorts of events; Acting workshops and rehearsals , meetings etc... the music room can be rented by local bands and musicians while the cubicles can be used by architects, graphic designer, AUB students as studying rooms....etc

Retail

The former existing bookstore is incorporated and pushed to the inside of the project. Hence the bookstore and a music shop will be facing the public space.

Hospitality

The Cafe pub adapts dynamically to day and night clientele. During day it functions as a café- restaurant and in the evenings it becomes more of a pub. The double volume allows for different people to use the space without be alienating different customer. The upper floor is more likely to house the trendier and hip spirit later in the evening. It is directly linked to the outdoor piazza.



Residential

There are two types of studio apartments. Those which are rented daily, are located on the top floor of the building overlooking AUB. Those which are rented on a monthly basis are located on Makhoul Street. I envision the daily studios to be used by transit people, in Beirut for some event or completion. The monthly studios will be open to whoever is interested, yet the program of the whole project will most likely attract a younger crowd. Hence the size of the studios accommodate for one to two people.

Services-technical

The upper part of the residential on Makhoul will have a service section, such as (laundry...etc), a cafeteria and an upper garden that will look the greenery of the old facing villa.

Parking

Due to scarcity in parking space, the provided ones are for the administration staff and residents.

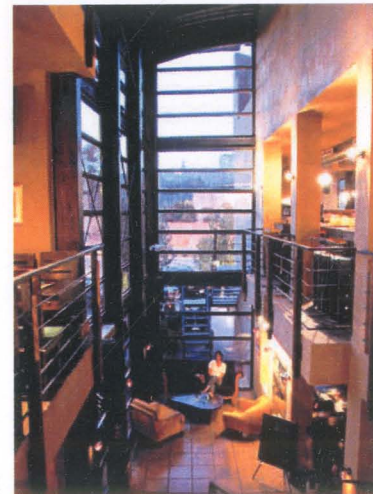
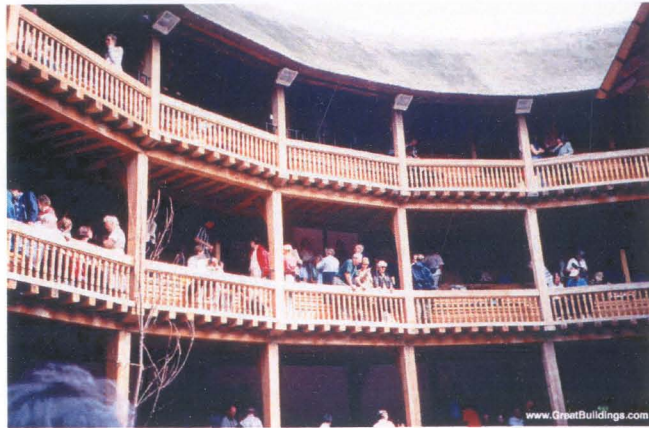
9- services- kitchen/WC/technical room

9- reading spaces that will be very simple, and connected to the library.

10 Administration offices and its dedicated parking.

Housing:

- A- renting by night, usually dedicated for transit users or those who are involved in acting workshops.



B- renting by the month, mainly taken by international students and AUB faculty members. These studios are located in a more private area, maybe higher in the building.

12-cafeteria on the top floor of the part overlooking makhoul, along with service areas for the housing.

List of case studies:

1-Blue Fig Cafe, Architect Khaled Nahas,Amman, Jordan

2-Caxiaforum ,Herzog and de Meuron,Madrid

3-Tate Modern , Herzog and de Meuron, London.

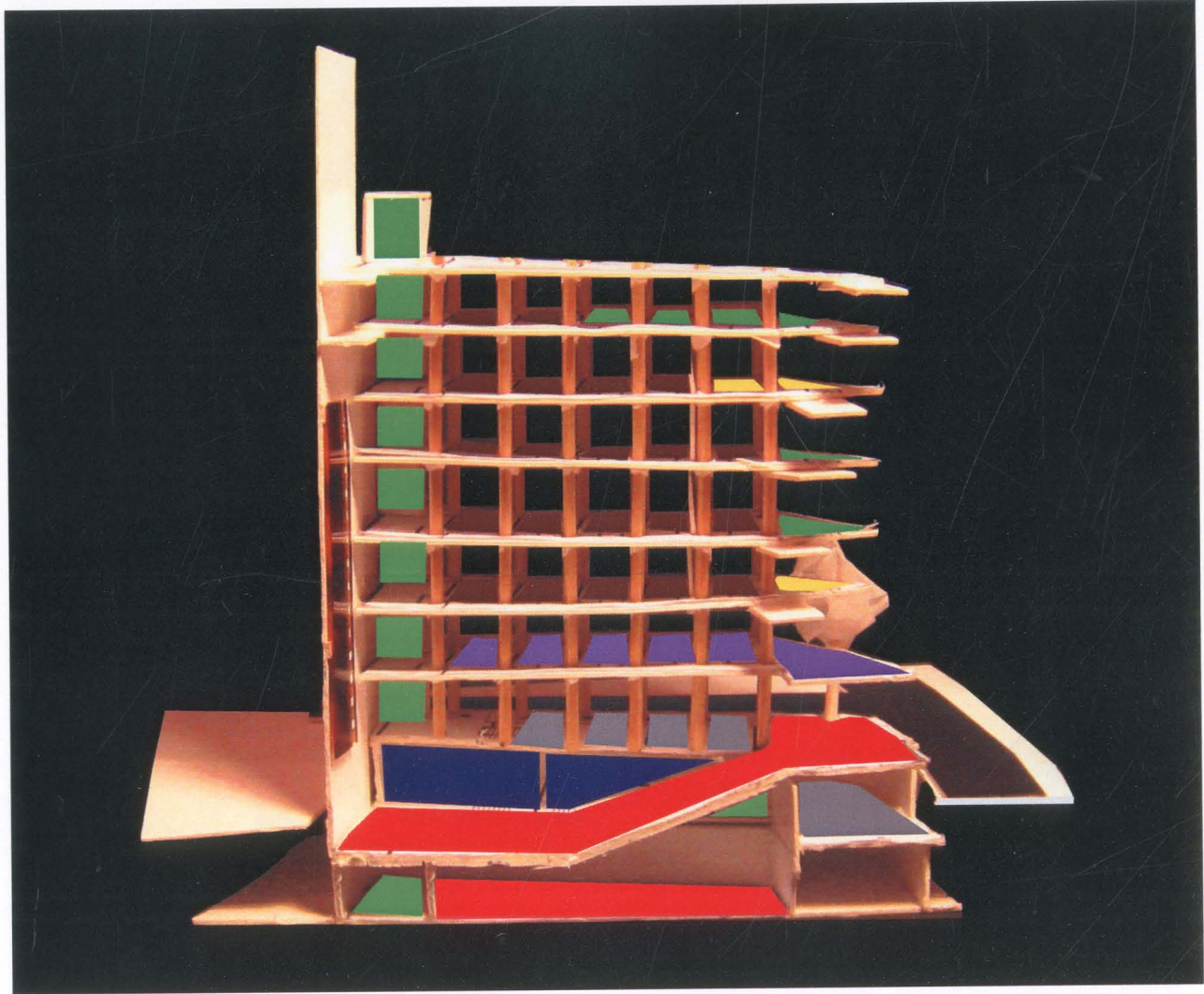
4-Teatro Le Manege,Pierre Hebbelinck v, Belgium

5- Globe Theater, London.

6- Kennedy School of Governance

The case studies were architecturally and programmatically beneficial. Spatially the globe theater has the same outer experiences of having a theater in the outdoors. The circular shape is the significance behind the building. The Kennedy School was inspiring in terms of the communal experience and activities.

Blue fig cafe is the ultimate example wanted in the cafe in the project. It is a place for everyone, where different age groups and ethnic backgrounds and ideologies share the same space that changes character.



13-Architectural Intentions and methodology

The vision is that of a very interactive complex that brings in different people to do different activities, meeting together and unconsciously making one another aware their practices.

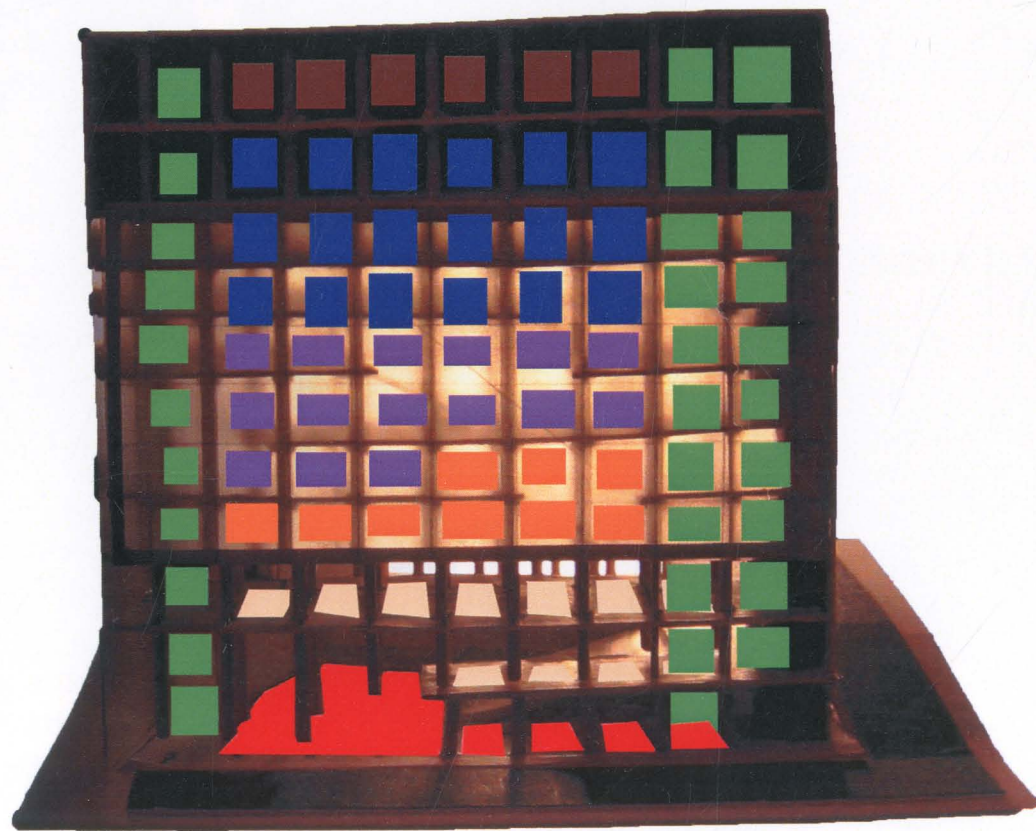
The methodology is to approach the building in its current state, an object, with its carvings, slabs, columns, voids and solids and to use these architectural components to find its potential for the new project's intentions. I am working with the voids and spaces, coupled with the program to create new voids solids and connections. I can cut, slice and sew as I see necessary. The relationship between the form and function is an interactive one and they drive and inspire one another.

Concerning the outer envelope, my main vision is to grab the attention of the passer by, hence giving him/ her hint of what happening inside. According to flow of traffic and pedestrians on of the streets, I worked the side corners and facades.

The main concept is that the surroundings of the project tries to include passerby's with what's happening inside it, using corner sides, ground floor spaces and the facades of the building .From the inside a different experience is desired, which very much depends on the U-shape of the building. The U- shape allows for the facing facades to interact and have a social relationship. The intention is to have an inner U shaped viewing area for watching performances happening in the inner courtyard and projections on the facing wall of the existing attached building. Also the insides of the building will be interactive, if not physically connected on all floors then visually.

The building is parted into two, the part facing Makhoul street is back bone of a solid private character while and frontal part, facing Bliss Street will be of a transparent and more public life, allowing for people to enjoy the open view.

Although each part will have its own vertical circulation for not interfering on one another, yet they are connected with light bridges at both ends of each part. Also these two parts are connected programmatically at three floors; the ground floor , plus one



Bliss facade

and last floor of Makhoul side, where a program from the Bliss side continues on the Makhoul part. .

Bliss facade

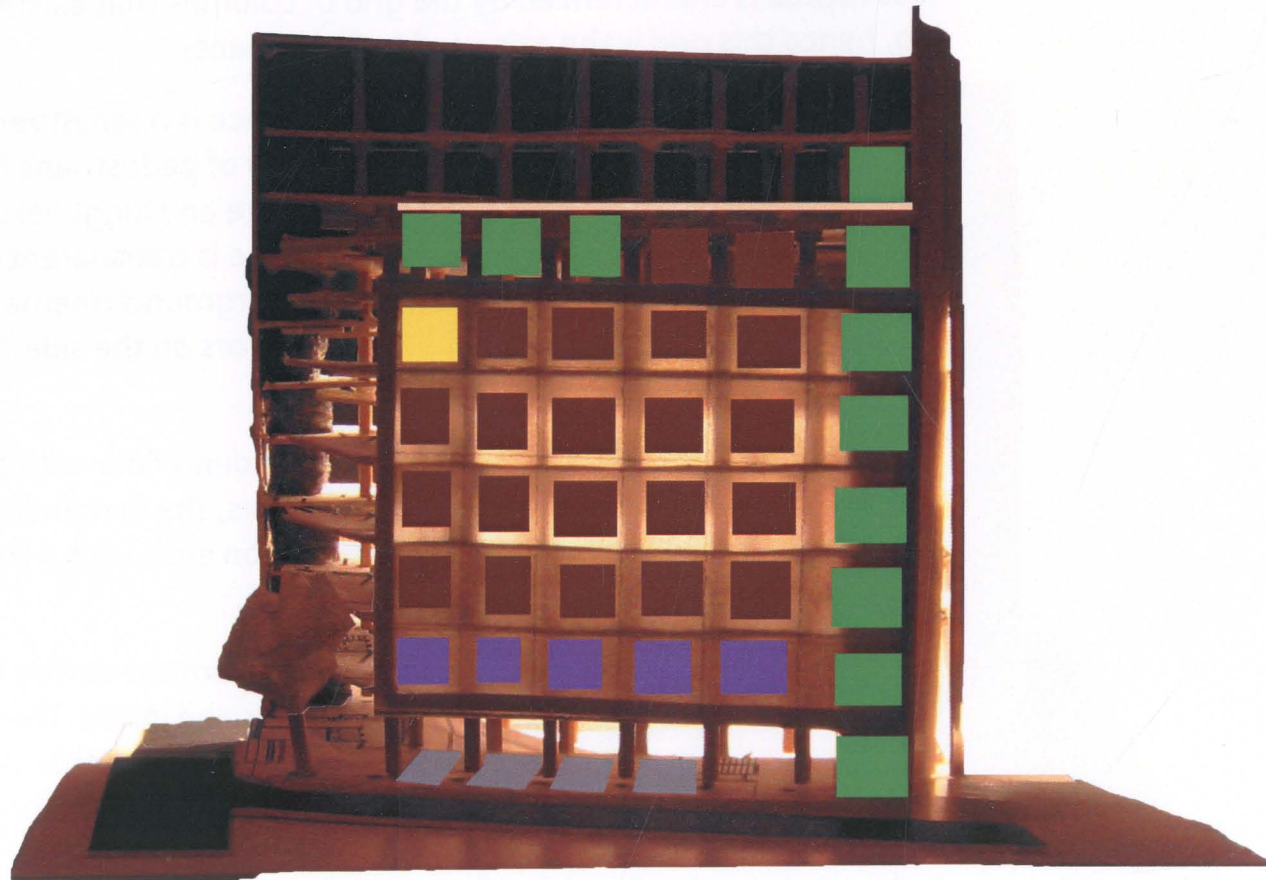
This façade is characterized by the grid of columns that existed from the earlier building, hence this grid is the axis used to form spaces.

On the ground floor the earlier cinema entrance is opened vertically, having a double volume, to allow for openness and direct flow of pedestrians from the sidewalk to the inner public space. The earlier retail (bookstore and luggage) space is converted to the cinema-theater entrance and lobby. This space is transparent hence it allows visual transparency of the slanted cover of the underground cinema-theater. The cinema-Theater can be reached by the stairs or elevators on the side. Services entrance is located at the far right.

The public space slants upwards to link the ground floor with the first floor, leading to the main café. The main café is on two floors, the first and second, hence it extend on to the side on Bakhazi Street. This extension ends with a tree that marks the entry from Makhoul .

On top, six floors wrapped by a façade frame from the earlier modern period, acts as a TV screen that emphasizes on the spaces housed inside. These spaces are a mixture of single, double and triple volumes that are linked together with strips of stairs. Administration, Temporary exhibitions, multipurpose halls, music rooms, reading spaces, a public library, boxes of void and services are all housed in these six floors. They all share the inner viewing strip the outer continuous edge, overlooking AUB. These spaces are multiples of the distance between two columns. There are many possibilities in which these spaces can be arranged.

The 10th floor is part of the motel , and these apartments are daily rentals. Hence these are linked with a garden on the top floor of the part on Makhoul street. The last floor is going to have a gym and an outer pool. Donators for the project will have lower membership rates and free entrees.



The Makhoul facade

The Makhoul facade

The ground floor has an informative permanent exhibition that speaks about the history of cinemas in Beirut, and specifically the construction phase of the Edison building, from start till end. Next to it is the lobby of the motel and vertical circulation.

The upper five floors houses studio apartments that are rented on a monthly basis. The top floor has a cafeteria for those who are staying at the motel and a service area, such as laundry room and kitchen. The roof is used as garden dedicated for the motel.

14- Target User

The building's mixed use nature implies several layers of users depending on the part of the program as well as time of day/year. One can, however, define a universal user of this building at an abstracted level.

The primary user of this building will be a culture lover, active pedestrian, passionate about Beirut's history, hopeful about Beirut's future. This user will be creative and will make use of spaces within the program that allow for and enhance creativity – in any field. This user has a true appreciation of the arts, as well as a true passion for verbal and nonverbal human discourse and conversation.

The spaces provided in the program specifically target many potential users. Creative workers, such as architects, graphic designers, writers, and others, can use the workshop spaces to work and cultivate their ideas. A family might pass by the exhibition space with their young children, especially on Sundays when many families come to take advantage of the open spaces at AUB. The program provides a link through the arts with many potential users such as art students, high school students, senior citizens, children and many other who would enjoy experiencing art or maybe even creating it. A vertical line through the program connects the consumption and production of art and performance.

The performance spaces, music shop and music rooms provide a space for local, regional and international visiting bands to interact with the local community, practice and hold concerts. Informal bands can use the building as their headquarters to practice, record and perform.

During global events such as the Olympics or the World Cup, the outdoor areas of the building can provide projection of events for pedestrians creating interaction opportunities at a central point in Beirut between many people from different walks of life. Student organizations, nonprofit, and other informal communities can host public meetings or hold private meetings using the facilities in the building.

Foreign students and expatriates will have another node which connects them to the city of Beirut through its cultural impact and the experience it provides. The mixed use

nature will enable some to reside in the building, shop in the building, interact with others, and consume culture and art.

At its broadest level, the passer by is the ultimate user of the building. In a fleeting moment, the building will impart upon the passer a feeling of connection and familiarity in a street dominated by barricades and barbed wire.

9 - Building codes and real estate/ management and possible scenario:

With such high land valuations, a highly sought location, and a trend towards luxury developments, the concept of a cultural center on Bliss Street might seem counter intuitive to simple economics.

The business model may not be as lucrative as a luxury residential tower, but it doesn't mean that this project can't be economically sustainable. Several revenue sources have been identified through studying similar projects such as the Beirut Art Center.

First, corporate sponsors as part of an emerging trend on focusing on corporate social responsibility may provide large annual donations and act as benefactors of the venue. This is a win-win for the businesses as it breeds goodwill and enhances their brand image. Second, many foundations and grants are available for promoting cultural activities; from the Ministry of Culture and the City of Beirut to the EU and USAID projects, a strategically located cultural center will be attractive to these organizations. Lastly, individual donations can be used for fund raising. Those who donate and sponsor will be recognized and rewarded with free tickets for plays, concerts, can be offered

I suggest a scenario that I believe best suits my goals and vision of the project. The apartment rentals should cover their own management, repair and maintenance costs.

The café and retail shops will provide rent and provide an avenue for potential joint ventures between the building's management and retail and restaurant operators, which – if successful – can yield higher profits than simple rental agreements and can lower the costs for both the renter and property manager.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS:

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- Director of "Memories of Ras Beirut."

Shayya, Nader. Personal interview. 23 Oct 2008.

- Tenant in Edison Building for 2 years.

Abdel Baset. Personal interview. 28 Oct 2008.

- Superintendant of Building.

Azouri, Pierre. Personal interview. 31 Oct 2008

- Tenant in Edison Building for 35 years.

Al Hajj. Personal Interview. 30 Oct 2008.

- Residential, retail and office space tenant.

Boyrjeily, Lucien. Personal Interview. 23 Dec 2008.

- Lebanese director and actor.

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