Aga Khan Award for Architecture

2016

WINNING PROJECTS

Issam Fares Institute
Beirut, Lebanon

Architect: Zaha Hadid Architects

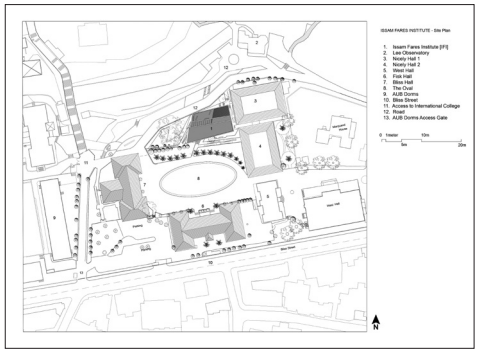
Client: American University of Beirut

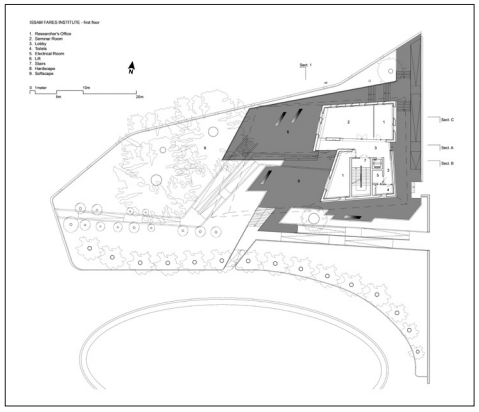
Project description

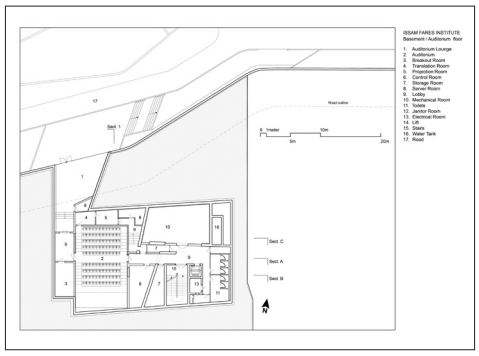
'This building asserts confidently that we are not a university that stays rooted in time and place; rather we challenge conventional thinking and actively promote change and new ideas', says Peter Dorman, President of the American University of Beirut (AUB), of the Issam Fares Institute, the latest addition to the AUB. In terms of its form, the building is undeniably bold, yet it also displays a sensitivity towards time and place – towards the context, both built and topographical.

The context in this case is the AUB's upper campus, set on a hilltop with views of the Mediterranean. In the immediate vicinity are four historic buildings and some equally venerable – *c* 150-year-old – cypress and ficus trees, as well as one of the most important open areas on the campus, the Green Oval. Responding to the givens of the site, the architects significantly reduced the building's footprint by cantilevering a large part of the structure over the entrance courtyard – a move that also draws the space of the adjacent Green Oval towards the base of the new building. The existing landscape is preserved, including all of the old trees, which form a kind of datum line determining the height of the institute, as is evident from a look at the south facade. Further connections with the landscape are established by the roof terrace, with its expansive views, and by the circulation ramp that snakes smoothly through the trees to the southern entrance on the second floor.

The Issam Fares Institute – a research centre for public policy and international affairs – has a combined surface area of 3,000m^2, divided into six floors. Its facilities include research spaces and administration offices, seminar and workshop rooms, an auditorium, reading room, recreational lounge and roof terrace. The interiors are divided by walls of partially pigmented glass (though the original idea was for the glazing to be clear, for maximum transparency). The structure is of high-quality in-situ reinforced concrete, in tune with the local construction culture of working with concrete, and particularly fair-face concrete.







Jury citation

"As the last in a series of buildings, the Issam Fares Institute completes the central oval courtyard of the upper campus of American University of Beirut, located on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean. This educational building solves a dense programme within a surprisingly small footprint in a manner that is sensitive to its context. With its contemporary form and the purity of its architectural language the building differentiates itself from its neighbours, though it is not in conflict with the campus and its architecture.

"Cantilevering over the courtyard and overlooking the old cypress and ficus trees, the building presents an extremely powerful and authentic volumetric structure without obstructing the view of the buildings behind. The building's height, matched with that of the trees and the surrounding structures, serves to strengthen the powerful relationship it creates with its context. Throughout, a fluid planning strategy has turned to advantage the level variances of the site, and a welcoming environment has been created by providing entrances at various levels via ramps that weave through existing trees, in the process becoming part of the landscape themselves.

"The building makes a courageous – and at the same time fully respectful – contribution to the multilayered physical environment of this historic and rooted university campus. With its simple, exposed concrete surface and strong volumetric presence, it is an elegant yet unique solution to a complex and special context."

Project data

Patron Issam Fares, Beirut, Lebanon

Client American University of Beirut (AUB), Beirut, Lebanon:
- Peter Dorman, president
- Bassem Baroumi, facilities planning and design unit director
- Alain Eid, Issam Fares Institute project manager
- Tarek Mitri, director of Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
- Rami Khouri, founding director of Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (2006-2014)

Architect Zaha Hadid Architects, London, United Kingdom:
- Zaha Hadid, Patrik Schumacher, partners
- Saleem A. Jalil, project manager
- Christos Passas, Saleem A. Jalil, Graham Modlen, Human Talebi, Brandon Buck, Miya Ushida, project team
- Saleem A. Jalil, Rokhsana Rakhshani, Teakjin Kim, Ben Holland, Charbel Chagoury, Anas Younes, Fulvio Wirz, Mariagrazia Lanza, Renata Dantas, competition team

Rafik El Khoury & Partners, Beirut, Lebanon:
- Rafik El Khoury, principal
- Hazar Mansour, Roger Skaff, architects
- Georges Sfeir, Maya Charry, Guy Ghosn, structural engineers
- Issam Mourad, mechanical engineer
- Karim Nammar, electrical engineer
- Wassim Sader, acoustics
- Zeina Bou Mikhael, contract administrator

Contractor Kettaneh Construction, Beirut, Lebanon:
- Bahzad Choubassi, project director
- Elie Awaad, site manager
- Sabine Choubassi, Assem Soubra, project coordinators
- Georges Saade, mechanical coordinator
- Darwesh Haddad, structural engineer

Sub-contractors	Skylight: Alumco, Choueifat, El Kobeh District, Mount Lebanon
Metal stairs and railing	Mechrek Group, Beirut, Lebanon
Mechanical room aluminium louvers	SKAB, Metn, Lebanon
Lifts	Mitsulift Elevating Standards, Metn, Lebanon
Concrete floor	De-Concrete, Beirut, Lebanon
Gypsum boards and paint	Pillar Plan, Beirut, Lebanon
Blinds	Libel, Jal El-Dib, Lebanon

Mechanics, electrics and plumbing	CLIMTECH - Climate Technology Electro-Mechanical Contracting, Beirut, Lebanon
Internal glass-partition profiles	• Gemino, Padua, Italy • Debbas and Mirodec, Beirut, Lebanon
Tables and kitchens	• DuPont Wilmington, Delaware, USA • H.E.C., Beirut, Lebanon
Carpet floor finish	Pictura, Jdeidet el Metn. Lebanon
Internal wooden doors and kitchens	Awale Awale, Beirut, Lebanon
Internal steel doors	Fitzpatrick Sal, Beirut, Lebanon

Project data

Total site area	7,000 m^2
Total floor area	3,000 m^2
Building footprint	560 m^2
Cost	8,800,000 USD
Commission	May 2007
Design	July 2007 – December 2009
Construction	January 2010 – April 2014
Completion	May 2014

Zaha Hadid Architects

Zaha Hadid Architects is a global leader in pioneering research and design investigation. Collaborations with corporations that lead their industries have advanced the practice's diversity and knowledge, whilst the implementation of state-of-the-art technologies has aided the realisation of fluid and dynamic architectural structures. Hadid's vision redefined architecture for the 21st century and captured imaginations across the globe. Her legacy endures within the DNA of the design studio she created. Working with office partner Patrik Schumacher for three decades, Zaha Hadid Architects' work arranges form and space into breath-taking spatial compositions.

Zaha Hadid's work of the past 30 years was the subject of critically acclaimed exhibitions at New York's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2006, London's Design Museum in 2007, the Palazzo della Ragione, Padua, Italy in 2009 and the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2011. Zaha Hadid Architects recently completed the Salerno Maritime Terminal in Italy and Oxford University's Middle East Centre at St Antony's College. The practice is currently working on a diversity of projects worldwide including the new Beijing Airport Terminal Building in Daxing, China, the Sleuk Rith Institute in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, the King Abdullah Financial District Metro Station in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and the new Mathematics Gallery at London's Science Museum. Zaha Hadid Architects' portfolio also includes cultural, academic, sporting and infrastructure projects across six continents.

Website

http://www.zaha-hadid.com/