

# DanielStathamArchitects

\_project

## BEZALEL ACADEMY OF ART AND DESIGN, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

The vacant building site is approximately 9,182 m<sup>2</sup> and is in the centre of the City of Jerusalem, about 300m from the historic Old City and within the area referred to as the 'Russian Compound'. It sits on the small hill located on a prominent North-South ridge, with Northern and Eastern views overlooking the city. The objective is to relocate the campus to the city centre of Jerusalem presents not merely a physical move, but a cultural shift through which Bezalel aims to participate in the life of the city and to bring the academy closer to the general public, who will have easy access to exhibitions and events conducted on campus.

The design approach was establishing three criteria to achieve cohesion for this particular educational building. Firstly, the manner in which function and accommodation were organised. Secondly, the contextual and cultural background of Jerusalem and thirdly, the visual presence of the scheme for it's International identity and it's message as 'Arts for the City'. The concept was to create a ground plane open to the public to 'mix' with the Academy activities/creativity in addition to giving the City of Jerusalem a new public realm. To achieve these goals the building programme had to be shifted vertically both above and below the ground plane to create the 'Piazza' at the same datum as Holy Trinity Cathedral. This created a myriad of movement throughout the site and preserved an important urban planning feature within the Russian Compound of Jerusalem.

The general arrangement of spaces are a response to the site analysis which defined site lines, circulation and scale. The relationship to Holy Trinity Cathedral was also an essential component to the project as it forms part of the central axis and composition of the proposal. Holy Trinity Cathedral has a 45m viewing corridor through its east-west axis. This has been respected by designing a subterranean space which accommodates the refectory area and services. This allows students and the public to 'come together'. The space architecturally connects the change in level through the east-west section of the site in addition to framing the view of the Holy Trinity Cathedral through a solar controlled glass roof above.

The studio/workshops and administration facilities are located either side of the 'viewing corridor' to produce two large volumes. These volumes are sloped towards the central space of the site to create a scale that responds to both the site periphery and 'piazza' area in front of the Cathedral. This gradient within the forms accentuates and frames the cathedral in the West elevation composition which face towards the Rock of the Dome in Old Jerusalem.

The volumes also appear to 'hover' above the ground plane to provide both a cooling shade from the intense sunlight and to reveal within the unconstrained volumes which accommodate the creative departments of the Academy. The volumes become an expression of the tectonic nature of the ground floor plane (piazza). The mass has been sliced into slimmer volumes which create voids in the X,Y and Z axis. This design process generated an efficient method of both connecting the upper floors with each other in relation to the ground plane but also a solution to filtering light and introducing natural ventilation into these common/circulation spaces. The process was taken further by tapering the section in relation to the orientation of the sun path. This opens the building up internally and creates airy communal spaces for students and lecturers to converse.

The South and West facing internal walls reflect shafts of diffused daylight in a controlled way and distribute the light evenly into the studio/office spaces in the lower levels of the building. These internal voids provide openness and variation while optimising studio space. The outer envelope all the time is respecting the site boundary. The shift in level from the upper part of the site to the lower was addressed by submerging the lecture theatres, sports facilities and feature restaurant areas. This allowed student/tutor/ visitor to descend through functional spaces keeping this zone as a public space and engaging. The Upper Levels were solely for the Academy to study/create and discuss while being presented with sensational views of the old city of Jerusalem. The higher you move up through the building the more private the areas become with the North Annexe providing a roof top restaurant space for tutors to entertain National and International visitors to the Academy.