



Beit Beirut

Museum and Urban Cultural Center



Owner: The Municipality of Beirut

Partners: The City of Paris
The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The French Embassy in Lebanon

Objective: To safeguard architectural heritage and to provide a place of memory, and a platform for urban research and cultural dialogue

Project Timeline:

- 2003:** Issuing of Expropriation Decree.
- 2008:** Creation of a Cooperation agreement between the Municipality of Beirut and the City of Paris.
- 2009:** Creation of a Consultative Scientific Committee representing the civil society.
- 2010:** Award of Design and Supervision Contract, and commencement of design works.
- 2011:** Issuing of Construction Permit.
- 2012:** Award of Construction contract and commencement of execution works.
- 2016:** Preparation of the Legal Set-up of Beit Beirut.



The History ... 1924-1975

An Innovative Architecture, and a Place of Life and Productivity,

In 1924, in the context of the French Mandate period, Beirut was home to an array of architectural styles and influences. The prominent Architect Youssef Aftimos was commissioned by the Barakat family to build a residence in Beirut. He came up with a remarkable plan featuring an open corner. The open corner became the hallmark of the residence and allowed an open visual vista for the rooms surrounding the corner balcony.

In 1932, the Architect Fouad Kozah, who had previously added an innovative reinforced concrete service staircase to the residence, further completed the building by adding two floors. Furthermore, he reinforced the noteworthy architecture by combining Ottoman, local and western influences, as well as traditional sandstone and new reinforced concrete construction techniques. The ochre-colored sandstone gave the building its name the Yellow House.



The War ... 1975-1990

An Abandoned and Reclaimed Space, and a Place of Chaos and Unrest,

In 1975, war broke out in Lebanon, and the building located along what came to be known as the city demarcation line, was abandoned by its inhabitants and taken over by snipers.

Given its prime location, and its unique open corner architecture, the building took on a new role and became a sniper base with strategic vantage points and varied shooting angles, and witnessed countless days of clashes and crossfires.

In 1990, the armed war in Lebanon came to an end, and the building stood shattered and scarred. It then continued to deteriorate as a result of aging as well as acts of vandalism and pillaging, and in the late 1990s, was threatened to be demolished.

Yet, this building which held countless memories of war, as well as stories of lives and architectural development in the city, was yet to take on another new role. Following a massive mobilization by the civil society, it was then rescued by the Municipality of Beirut.



The Regeneration ... 2003-2016

A place of Memory, a Museum and an Urban Cultural Center,

In 2003, an expropriation decree was granted on grounds of public interest, and the building was purchased by the Municipality of Beirut. Under the terms of the expropriation decree, the building was to be renovated and expanded to include, among other things: a museum, a cultural and artistic meeting place, and an urban research facility.

In 2010, the design development of the project was initiated, and this iconic building which came to be known as “Beit Beirut” was designed and elaborated to become a living cultural center which will enable visitors to learn more about the city and its memory, through:

- A museum space;
- An artistic and cultural exhibition space;
- A media library;
- An educational workshop space;
- An urban observatory;
- An auditorium;
- A restaurant, a café and a gift shop;

