

# 109 Architects & Youssef Tohme

## USJ Campus de L'Innovation et du Sport

Beirut, Lebanon

Photographs: contributed by 109 Architectes

The design of the new campus for innovation and sport at the Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut is fruit of a rich, multi-layered reading of this complex context, resulting in a project that is physically, culturally, and historically integrated into the city's urban tissue. The program of the campus has been fragmented to create a complex of six volumes of a scale and proportions that enable them to relate to the grain of the surrounding city. The volumes recreate the typical configuration of an urban block in an Arab city, configuring an internal courtyard that forms the heart of the complex. The courtyard is shaded by the buildings and a reflecting pool serves the double purpose of reducing the local air temperature and increasing the humidity, while fresh air flows through the narrow gaps between the buildings. This street-level meeting space flows fluidly to the top floor of the main teaching block via a monumental staircase, culminating in a landscaped terrace overlooking the city.

Light is a vital element in oriental architecture and one that shapes its style and identity. The design team for the Campus de L'Innovation et du Sport have taken inspiration from traditional architecture in exploring the expressive potential that this element offers, creating interiors that are animated by striking contrasts in light qualities and conditions. In the main external façade towards the city, the large polycarbonate façade of the sports faculty is juxtaposed with the mashrabiya-inspired façades of the three smaller volumes that house the vertical circulation and ancillary facilities of the faculty, a lecture theater and various meeting rooms, offices administrative spaces. The façades towards the courtyard have a very different character, with massive in-situ colored concrete walls, their rough texture and horizontal construction joints recalling the rammed earth walls of traditional Lebanese architecture. The openings are small in keeping with this idiom and distributed across the façades randomly, in a stylized reference to the scars that the Lebanese War has left in the built fabric of the city, a poetic reminder of the reality of destruction and violence.

**Architecture:**

109 Architects in collaboration  
with Youssef Tohme

**Design team:**

Ibrahim Berberi , Nada Assaf,  
Rani Boustani, Etienne Nassar,  
Emile Khayat, Naja Chidiac,  
Richard Kassab

**Client:**

Université Saint-Joseph (USJ)

**Structural consultant:**

B.E.T. Rodolphe Mattar

**Mechanical consultant:**

Ibrahim Mounayar

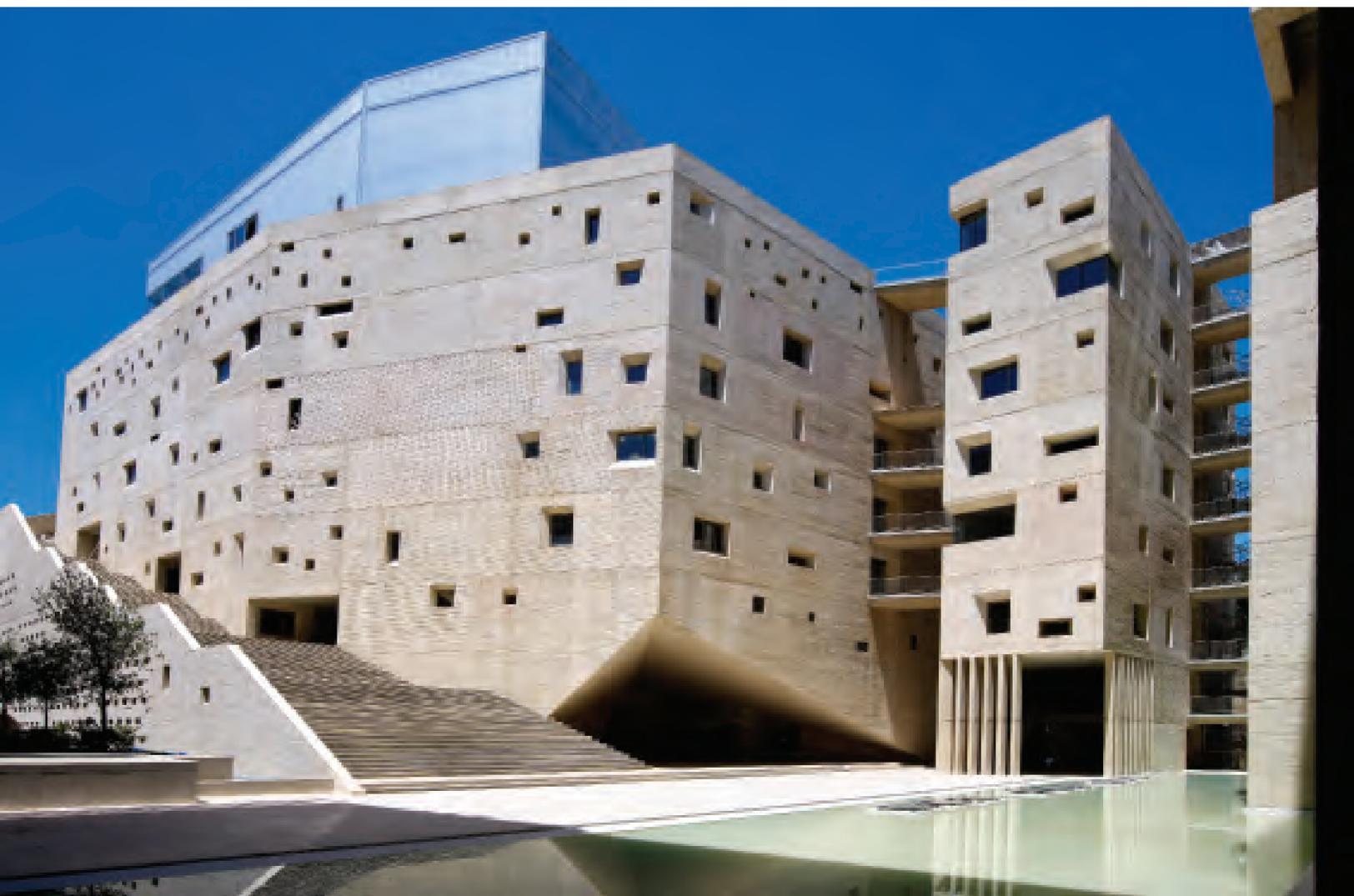
**Electrical consultant:**

Georges Chamoun

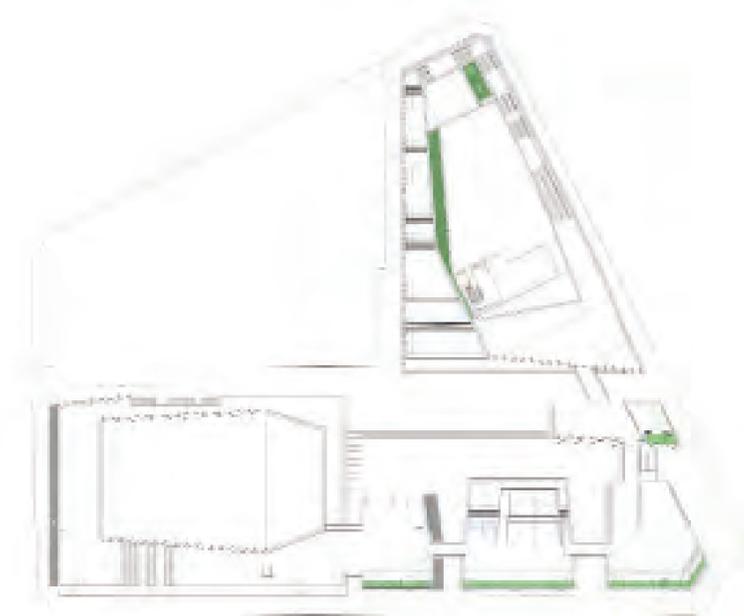
**Control bureau:**

Apave





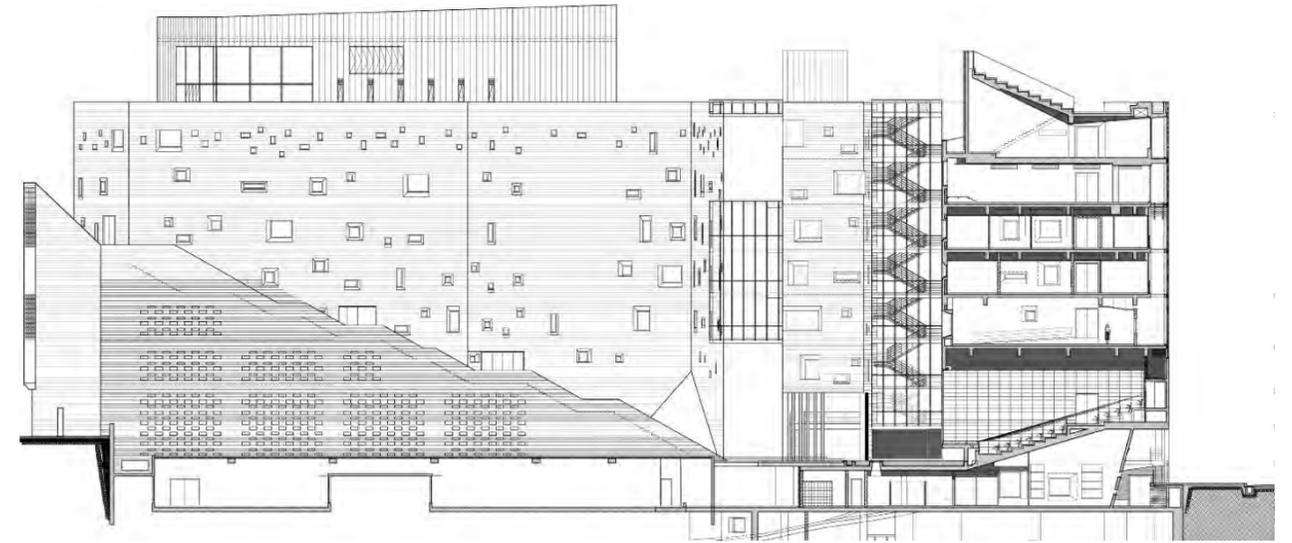
Conceptually an urban block with sculpted voids, the campus' hollow spaces define six autonomous blocks and construct multiple viewpoints across Beirut, connecting students to their dynamic setting.



Site plan

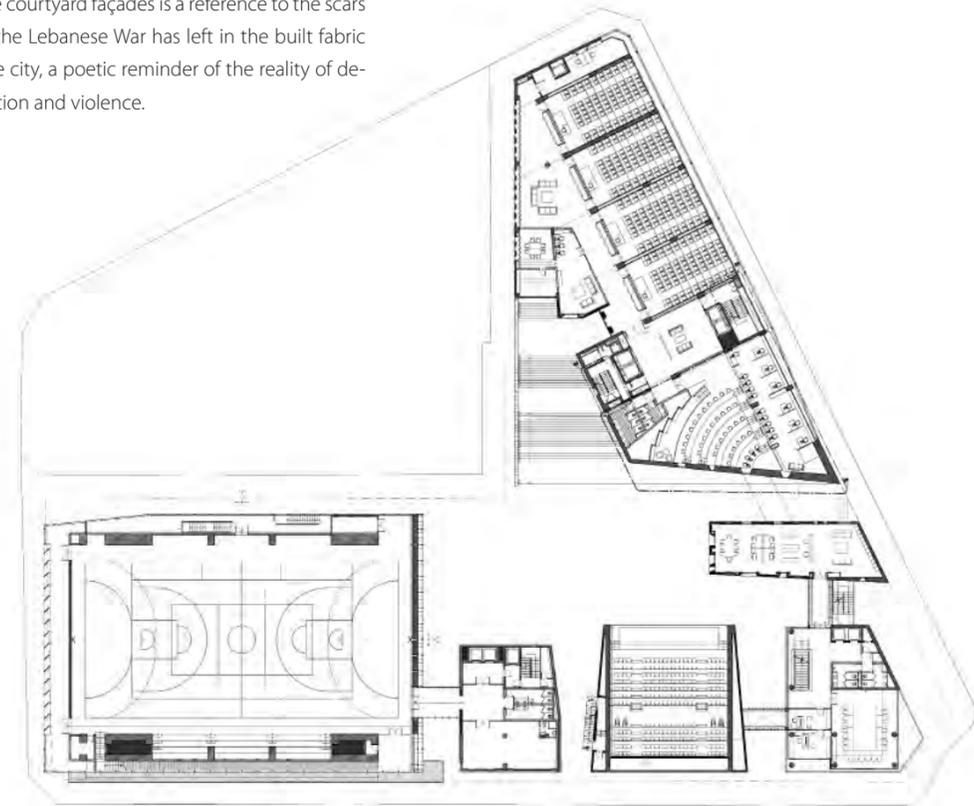


Ground Floor



Section AA

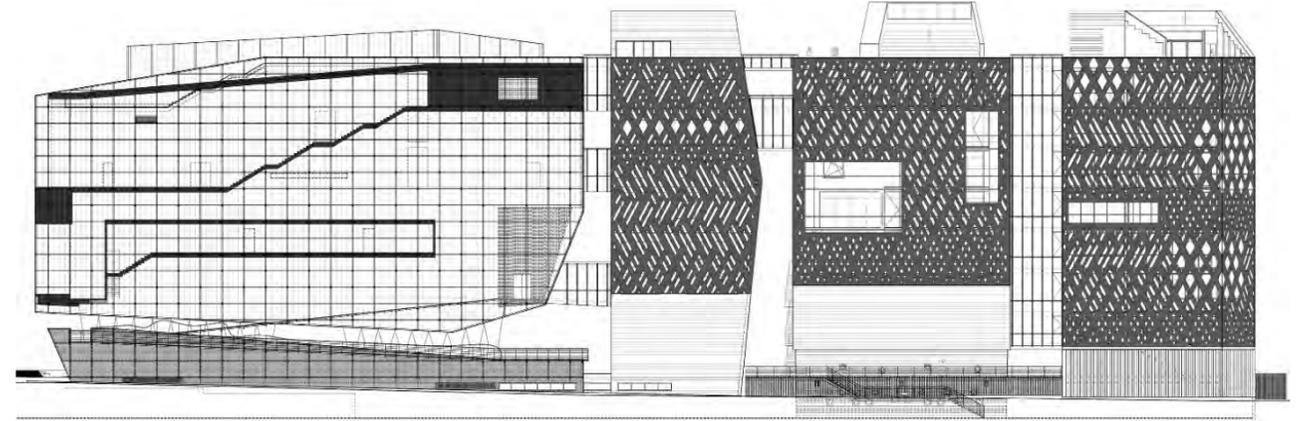
The stylized random distribution of the openings in the courtyard façades is a reference to the scars that the Lebanese War has left in the built fabric of the city, a poetic reminder of the reality of destruction and violence.



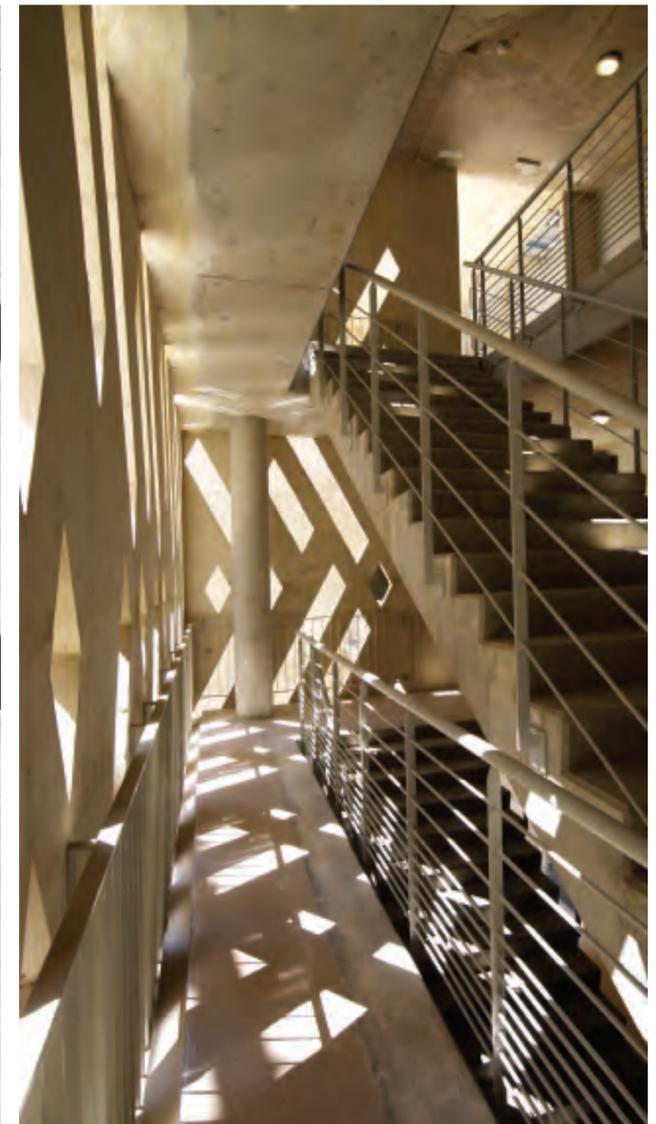
First Floor



The design team for the Campus de L'Innovation et du Sport have taken inspiration from traditional architecture in exploring the expressive potential of light. Three very different façade treatments generate striking contrasts in the lighting conditions of the interiors.



South-East Elevation





Section BB

