TERRITORY OF ART – The Well and the Campanile

A Well (Al-Blir; the etymological origin of the name Beirut) anchors the Museum’s foundations to this territory. With water we create a garden, composed of a succession of landscapes expanding over several levels embedded in the continuity of the green line created by the surrounding neighborhood. The garden will become a meeting place, a place where people want to spend time, visit the exhibitions, and experience the artistic interventions in the Campanile (Aleph).

Whilst the Museum’s collection and main exhibitions are housed in a low rise building of mineral bedrock that develops around the well and sunken garden, the Campanile is an essential vertical counterpoint that acts to mark the site as a cultural territory while also providing a flexible space for artist residencies, commissions, a library and event space. The tower becomes a landmark, an urban and territorial signifier, a meeting and gathering point. In a way it is the ‘other’ lighthouse for Beirut, a terrestrial lighthouse in complementarity to the coastal one.

Beyond the various possibilities of use within the Museum’s program, through its multiple expressions the Campanile becomes a tower of wind and water, tower of light, tower of knowledge, tower of memory, tower of music, by virtue of its façade, made like a musical score and whose enamelled bricks take on the changing reflections of the light and sky.

The visitor enters the Museum through a grand lobby that develops over several levels linking the Damascus Road to the museum gardens. The permanent exhibition space is above the lobby and the temporary exhibition space below on the garden level, next to the performing arts space offering a diverse program complementing the exhibitions.

The site is transformed into a Territory of Art with a succession of varied landscapes and spaces where art and society can come together.