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Hala Wardé seals Beirut museum project deal

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HW architecture, led by Lebanese/French architect Hala Wardé, has been selected to design the newest art museum in Beirut, Lebanon.

An international jury, chaired by Lord Peter Palumbo, the chairman of The Pritzker Prize for Architecture, has selected the winning design for BeMA: Beirut Museum of Art from a shortlist of 13 design teams.

The new museum will be centrally located in the heart of the Beirut positioned on a symbolically-charged site in Beirut that once marked the dividing lines in the

Lebanese civil war — now to be transformed into a site of unification.

It will boast of a garden amphitheatre, accessible public space and a tower designed to house exhibitions and artist residences.

The museum's permanent collection will include modern and contemporary artworks from Lebanon, the Lebanese diaspora and the wider region.

The jury also included curators Hans Ulrich Obrist and Dame Julia Peyton-Jones; architects George Arbid, Dr. Farès el-Dahdah, Dr. Rodolphe El-Khoury, Rem Koolhaas, and Lord Richard Rogers; artist Lamia Joreige; and Henrietta Nammour, the president of the Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon (APEAL).

The late Zaha Hadid, who was active on the jury until her demise in 2015, remains an honorary member of the jury.

The winning design features a central campanile tower that will rise high nearly 400 ft above the base of the museum to act as a cultural beacon for the entire city.

The campanile will include space for workshops and performances, as well as artist's residences with expansive views of downtown Beirut.

The design also includes a public garden and landscaped promenade that will accommodate site-specific installations and artworks surrounded by lush vegetation, as well as an amphitheater for performing arts.

The Museum is situated on a plot of land owned by Université Saint-Joseph (USJ) and the selected design reflects a careful consideration of connections to the campus and to the larger urban surroundings.

In a statement announcing the winner, the Jury said: "The design was selected for the way it creates a succession of varied landscapes and spaces where art and society can come together. The connections between garden, amphitheater, exhibition spaces and roof garden have been well considered and offer a continuous visitor experience that lends itself to both exhibiting art and engaging with the community."

On the win, Hala Wardé said: "I am honored to realize my first major project in the city of Beirut where I was born, on such an exceptional site."

"This museum program, in connection with the university, will allow us to create a new cultural and social space with a garden and amphitheater, and will single out this artistic territory with a strong and recognizable urban beacon, which through its multiple expressions, will belong to the new urban landscape of the city," she stated.

"It is a moving coincidence to receive this news as the architectural world is gathered in London to honor Zaha Hadid, an inspiration to women and architects worldwide, who was originally a member of this competition's jury. I am thinking of her today with great affection," said an emotional Wardé.

One of the most significant developments for Lebanese art and culture in a generation, BeMA is set to open in 2020, and is envisioned as a multidisciplinary hub of art and design dedicated to showcasing modern and contemporary Lebanese culture. **-TradeArabia News Service**

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- News
- Features
- Contractors
- Real Estate
- Interiors
- Manufacturers & Procurement
- Construction Links
- Advertise
- Subscribe
- Contact Us

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October 2016				
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th
2	3	4	5	
9	10	11	12	1
16	17	18	19	2
23	24	25	26	2
30	31			