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Lebanese-French architect Hala Wardé to design BeMA: Beirut Museum of Art

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Beirut's newest museum, BeMA: Beirut Museum of Art is set to open in 2020.

The firm HW architecture, led by Lebanese/French architect Hala Wardé, was selected from a shortlist of 13 design teams to realise the project for BeMA, located in the centre of Beirut.



BeMA: Beirut Museum of Art. Digital rendering of perspective garden view. Image courtesy HW architecture and Beirut Museum of Art.

An international jury, chaired by Lord Peter Palumbo, Chairman of The Pritzker Prize for Architecture, has selected HW architecture as the winning design team for the BeMA: Beirut Museum of Art, envisioned as a “multidisciplinary hub of art and design”.

The jury also included influential 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 APEAL (Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon) President Henrietta Nammour. The late **Zaha Hadid**, active on the jury until her passing in 2015, remains an honorary member.



Architectural model of BeMA: Beirut Museum of Art. Image courtesy HW architecture and Beirut Museum of Art.

The new museum will house a permanent collection including modern and contemporary art from Lebanon, the Lebanese diaspora and the wider Middle Eastern region. BeMA will be located in the heart of Beirut, on a symbolically-charged site in the city that once marked the dividing lines in the Lebanese Civil War. This same site that historically signified division will now to be transformed into a site of unification, hosting the new institution slated to open in 2020. The museum will also hold cultural and educational programmes, and create opportunities for the production of new artistic work.

In the lead up to its inauguration, BeMA is already engaging audiences through a series of evolving programmes in collaboration with other institutions and spaces, including the launch of an artist-in-residence programme, a series of commissioned artist interventions, and a collaboration with community arts organisations across Lebanon. Once opened, BeMA will also support new commissions with local, regional and international partners, as well as other initiatives.



Hala Wardé. Image courtesy HW architecture and Beirut Museum of Art.

The winning design for BeMA: Beirut Museum of Art

The winning team, **HW architecture**, is an architectural practice created in 2008 by Lebanese-French architect Hala Wardé, who has collaborated for 26 years with renowned architect Jean Nouvel. HW architecture's multi-disciplinary team of creative individuals has gained expertise in designing and delivering large scale projects such as museums and mixed-use centres as well as small scale projects such as art galleries and private houses. Hala Wardé and HW are also currently leading the **Louvre Abu Dhabi** project, which she has been overseeing since its inception in 2006.

For BeMA: Beirut Museum of Art, HW architecture has planned a design featuring a central campanile tower rising high nearly 400 feet above the base of the museum to act as a "cultural beacon" for the entire city. The campanile will house spaces for workshops, performances and artist residences with views of downtown Beirut.



Situated on a plot of land owned by Université Saint-Joseph (USJ), BeMA will also have an amphitheatre for performing arts, and a public garden and landscaped promenade with site-specific installations and artworks immersed in lush vegetation.

Hala Wardé is quoted in the press release as saying:

I am delighted and 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.

C. A. Xuan Mai Ardia

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