

BEMA

# 13 architects shortlisted for just-named Beirut Museum of Art

By ARIEL ROSENSTOCK • May 12, 2016

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Site of the future museum (Photo by Roger Moukarzel)

Last mid-April, the non-profit arts organization Association for the Promotion and Exhibition of the Arts in Lebanon ([APEAL](#)) announced a group of 13 shortlisted architects for their new initiative: to design and establish a new modern and contemporary art museum in Beirut, Lebanon. At the time, the museum was unnamed. This week, we learned the official name of the museum: [Beirut Museum of Art \(BeMA\)](#).

Lord Peter Palumbo is chairing the independent design competition jury that includes a mix of international curators and artists, as well as the architects Lord Richard Rogers, Fares Al Dahdah, George Arbid, and Rodolphe Khoury. The late Zaha Hadid was also on the jury.



(Photo by Roger Moukarzel)

“The museum will not only alter the panorama around it, but also recuperate at an urban scale the cultural dimension that local developers and municipality members envisaged for the city as early as 1915,” said jury member and architect Fares el Dahdah. “It has the potential to form a new cultural center of Beirut.”

The jury selected the thirteen firms from a group of 66 architects of Lebanese origin working out of 16 countries. They include:

109 Architectes s.a.r.l.  
 Bernard Khoury / DW5  
 Hashim Sarkis Studios, LLC  
 HW architecture  
 ibda design  
 IDC / Verner Johnson  
 ETEC SA  
 L.E.FT Architects  
 Lina Ghotmeh / DGT Architects  
 Najjar Najjar Architect  
 Raëd Abillama Architects / Nadim Khattar  
 WORK Architecture Company (WORKac)  
 Yatsu Chahal Architects (YCa)  
 Said Jazari Consulting Office (SJCO)  
 Youssef Tohme Architects and Associates (YTAA)



New York City-based [WORKac](#) is helmed by Dan Wood and GSAPP Dean [Amale Andraos](#). For the competition's phase two, the thirteen firms are tasked with creating concept designs and strategies for the Université Saint-Joseph-owned site in Beirut.



(Photo by Roger Moukarzel)

“Physically, the building will naturally respond to the needs of its program; it will feature multiple gallery spaces, a community art space, and spaces that can be used for conservation, documentation, public education or discussion programs, and artists-in-residence,” said APEAL president, Rita Nammour. “A goal of the project is also to provide respite from the surrounding vibrant cityscape by providing a public green space.”

APEAL is searching for a director and assembling a curatorial team. While the modern and contemporary art collection is still under development, Nammour said it will include “visual arts, painting, sculpture, works on paper, new media, photography, video, performing arts, film, architecture, and design.” The museum will feature mostly Lebanese and Middle Eastern art, but also include works by international artists.

“Situating adjacent to the demarcation line of the country’s devastating civil war, the new museum aims to be a unifying national platform that will bring together diverse populations and narratives as well as strengthen civil society and participation,” said Nammour. “BeMA: Beirut Art Museum will be an anchor within Beirut’s new ‘museum mile,’ home to the National Museum and Museum of Lebanese Prehistory, the Mineral Museum (MiM), and will soon include Beit Beirut (House of Beirut), and Metropolis Center.”

APEAL is working with [Temporary.Art.Platform](#) on an artist-in-residence program called “Works on Paper” that is connecting commissioned artists with four daily Lebanese newspapers. “In the lead up to its opening BeMA will continue to build connections through key bridges with other existing cultural institutions,” said Nammour.

Beirut has seen a flurry of arts and culture museum development in the past few years. “The creative ferment is happening even as unrest in the region and domestic political instability have ground the economy and tourism to a near halt and threaten to embroil Lebanon in new conflicts,” reported the [New York Times](#) this past October 2015. “How the city can contain such contradictions is a testament to its vivacity, history of surviving sectarian conflicts and long-established art scene.”

The jury will select the winning design this fall 2016. The museum is expected to open in 2020.

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