

# positive + negative -

## Bernard Khoury

**Work**  
IB3 Building

**Author**  
DW5/Bernard Khoury

**Location**  
Beirut

**Year**  
2006

**Project Manager**  
Walid Ghantous/DW5

**Structures, Engineering**  
Rafic El Khoury

**Building contractor**  
La Constructa

**Image Credits**  
Courtesy of Bernard Khoury

The IB3 Building grows up on the ground of Gemmayze in Beirut downtown, a place that in the last years was destroyed, rebuilt and is still in transformation. It occupies the plot # 595 in Saifi area in an angular position like a stronghold or a military block. Khoury plays with shapes and images taken from another time: that imaginary and material places of a military and politically Beirut. Forms taken from the battlefield, from a present history. As in the bunker-jazz club B018 (1998), so in the Centrale's restaurant suspended tunnel (2001) or in the dirigible-building B.C.D (2004) and in many other buildings, Khoury works through parallel icons of the architecture.

The IB3, with its inclined facade opens to the southern city sky, give the back to the harbour to north and builds the edge of a big urban court like a fragment of a wide enclosure near Martyrs' Place. Its sharp figure is visible from far away, and as well as appears estranging from the Centrale's restaurant steel cylinder nearby, when its roof is open.

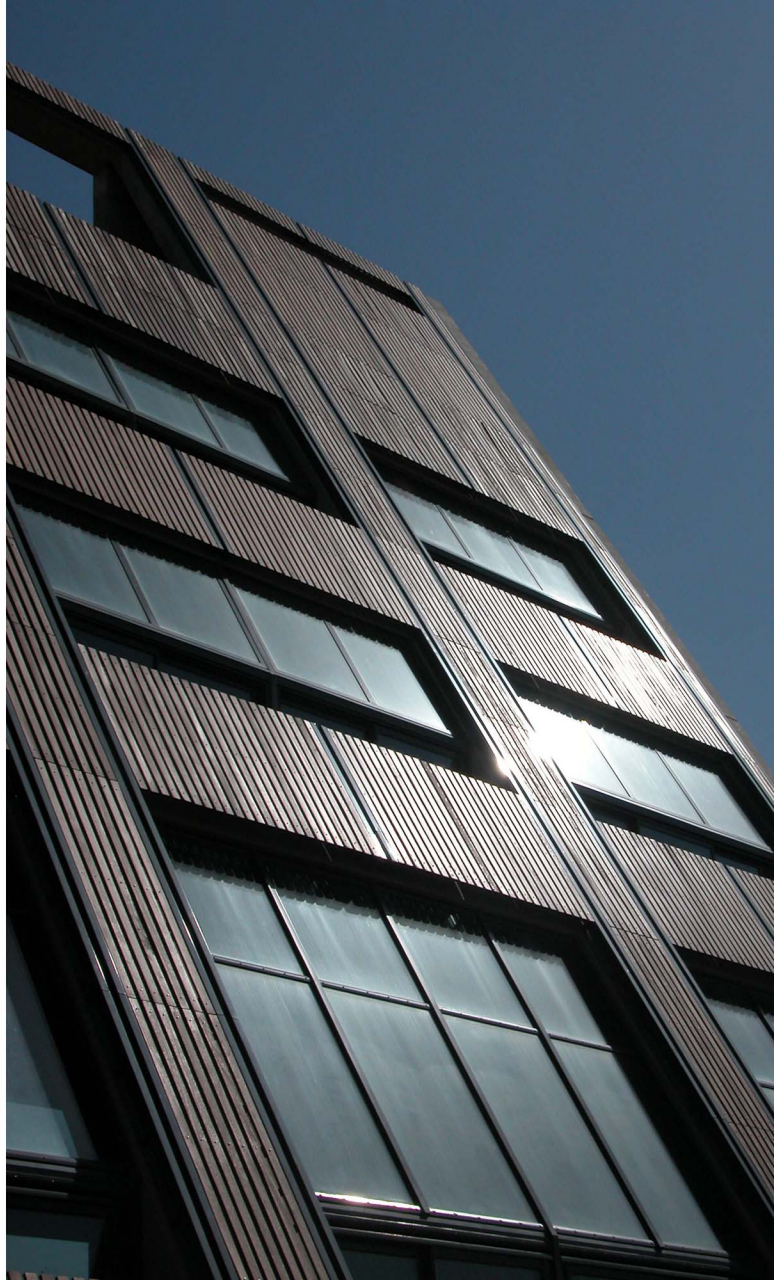
An area of 4000 m<sup>2</sup> is occupied by side, built over the ground only on the terminal edge, it fills completely the mass permitted by zoning guidelines and reaches two different heights. West volume catch up with the next building line of eaves, while east side get on higher showing a blank concrete facade. As if to fill the pyramidal mass diagram it configure itself like as a tapered building. This is the way to free up the shape from usual building types and give to the whole mass a sculptural form that plays with increase of speed into the scale. The urban landscape relationship that the IB3 set in Beirut Saifi, is so strong because it is not conventional (even if it represents the iconic figure of a steep roof), this is not simply an higher building, but it's like a mass that go up in a sharp frame and becomes a counterpoint landmark in the field of minarets of the Mohammad El Amin mosque nearby. In the corner, you can find two blowing cypresses, mounting elevator and staircase block, that means a 'reversed landscape' image. As in the false presence of the fireplace on the terrace of the Betsegu'i's penthouse (Le Corbusier), the two cypresses are both surreals and classicals and reach the sky domain by a poetic license.

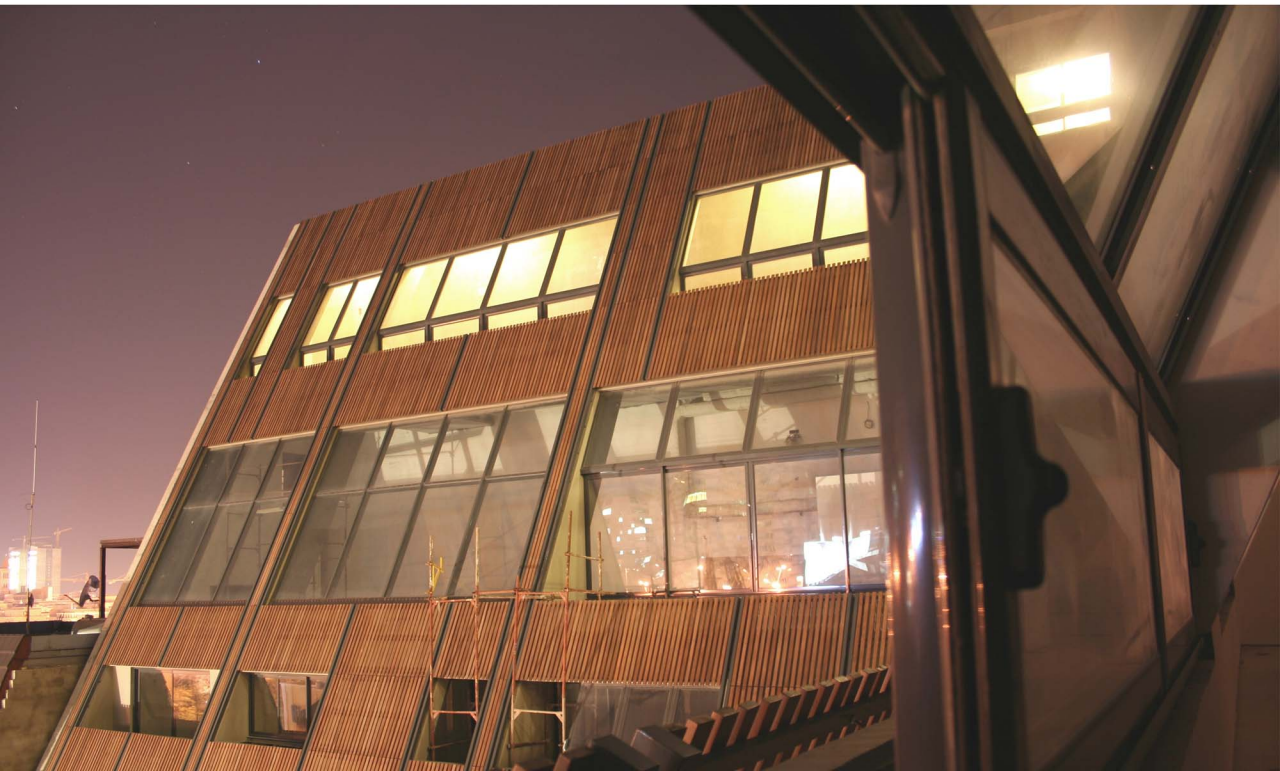
Well, this is a high-end bourgeois condominium with only four apartments dwelling the oblique facade (called by Khoury "suspended urban villas") that climb up in two penthouses. One more couple of townhouses occupy the basement. The project is based on idea to

have a free-plan structure able to be modified and partitioned by the architects of the future owners of each residence. (Khoury tells in an interview that today the spaces are "outfitting in styles that range from eclectic contemporary to decorative regionalism"). These apartments seem to be like big exclusive lofts recovered in a concrete structure left alive by the bombing. Wide square meters surfaces from 450 m<sup>2</sup>, the smallest residence floor, to 650 m<sup>2</sup> the biggest. All the surfaces are developed in two levels fitted and twisted alternately in the section so as to create double levels spaces in the bigger apartment and a criterion of 'spatial plan' (raumplan) which lends it well to a free use of the interior space. The plan is a geometrical 'L' that intersect with orthogonal cross (this hybridizes the types). The 'L' shape is occupied by the narrow terraces and the enormous living floors, generally splitted and doubled in both wings of the building; in one of the splitted floors are the bedrooms; the kitchen spaces are fitted in an external appendix, as well as the entrance floor were placed staircase and elevator boxes. The facade is 'decorated' by a wooden sections coating fixed to a burnished aluminium frames. Due to this handling, the facade reaches order and wholeness that unify the varying windows composition which follow, in a complex way, the alternated links of the functions behind. Abstraction and sculpturality come out is interpreted using varying materials on the long roofs: the encounter of the two slopes in the angle is obtained by different surfaces (wood and metal), remarking autonomy of parts. And finally an unique joint is guaranteed. The architecture of Bernard Khoury seems to move between the history languages (from the modern outfit to the ruins), between nature and technology, object and landscape, or ruin and building (remember the extraordinary 'Evolving scars', 1991); between tradition and abstraction (Bank of Beirut, 1991), archetype and image (Farayan House, 2007), urban types and different city sides. Between social sectors with an interest for a new social way (think about the Santa Cesarea project, which is innovative before by the human environment – as a dreamed way of life – than by the architecture itself).

*Corrado Di Domenico*

The oblique façade.





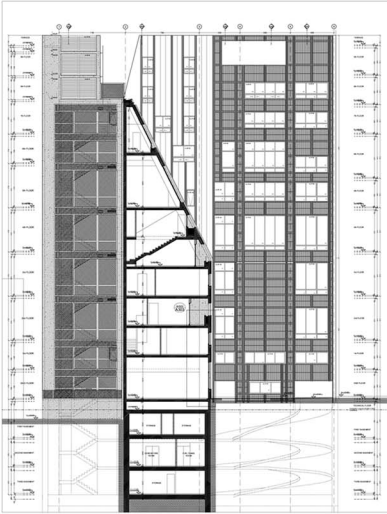
**On left page from top to bottom**

Details of the roof; The IB3 Building with the Centrale's restaurant suspended tunnel in front; details of the roof.

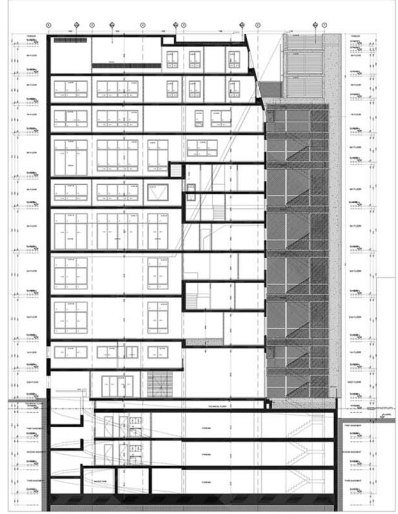
**To the right**

Details of the roof.

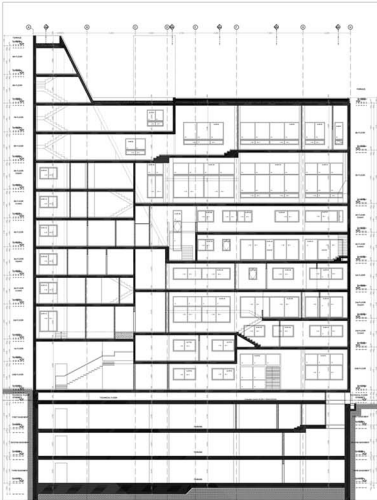




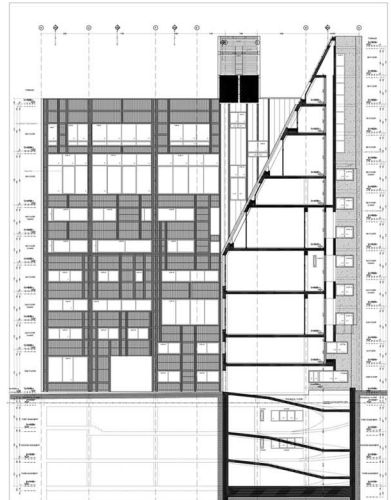
Section AA.



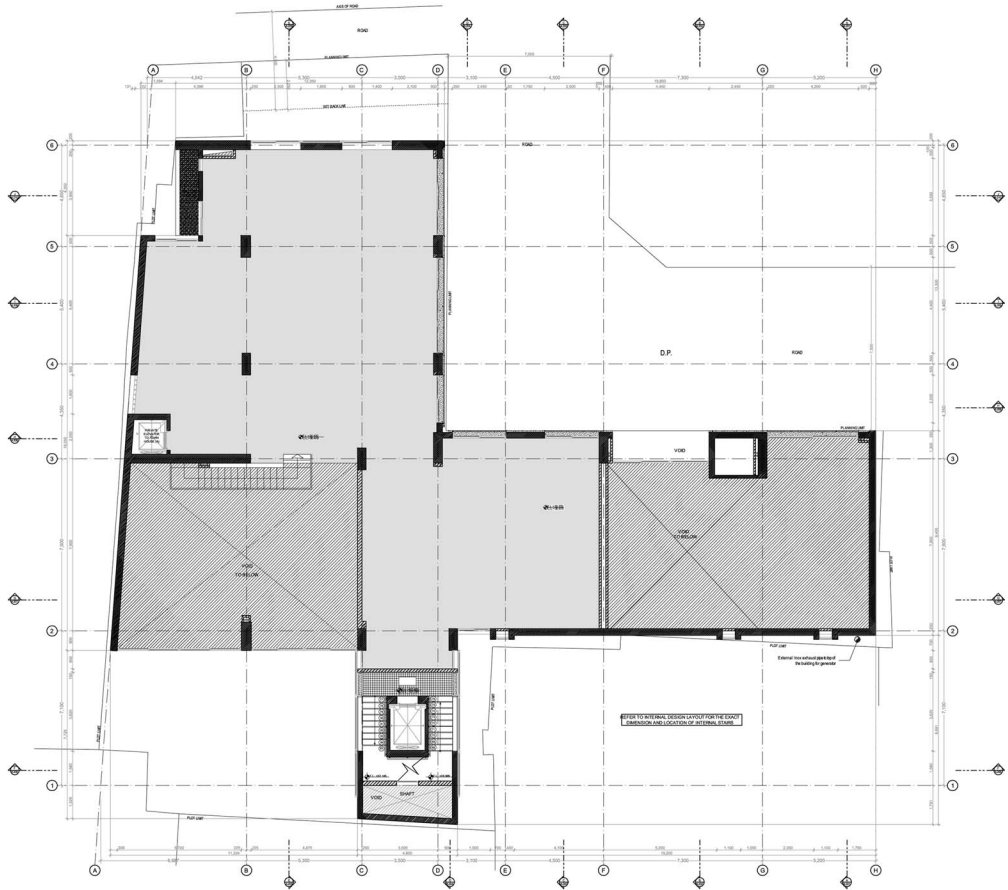
Section EE.



Section GG.



Section JJ.



First floor.

The Gemmayze landscape in Beirut downtown. The IB3 on the right.

