

A black and white photograph of a city street in Beirut, Lebanon. The scene is dominated by modern high-rise buildings, including a prominent cylindrical tower with a curved facade. Palm trees are scattered throughout the landscape, with a large one in the foreground on the right. A dark car is visible in the lower-left corner. The sky is overcast with soft, diffused light. The text "Beirut, January 2013" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Beirut, January 2013



General Foaad Chehab, main road crossing East - West parallel to Downtown.



Along the General Foad Chehab road



Sight axis from Downtown to place d'étoile with the Mohammad Al-Amin mosque in the back.



Nejmeh Square, or Place de l'Étoile, a central square in the Downtown area. It is home to the Lebanese Parliament and its complementary buildings, two cathedrals, a museum, and several cafes and restaurants.



Saint Georges Greek Orthodox Church is the oldest church in the city of Beirut, and one of the oldest in the region. The first Christian temple ever built in the very location goes back to the mid sixth century AD and it's closely associated with Beirut's famous Law School.



A typical scenario in Downtown: rush traffic passing government institutions along Wayland road in Downtown, carefully observed by the military.



Looking towards Downtown from Gemmayzeh.





Traffic. Massive parking lots. Construction. Highrises.



Martyr Square has been one of the principal meeting points in the city for more than 100 years and has become a symbol of national unity especially after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005.

*For an architect, walls define space; they turn us into subjects as we cross their thresholds. We define our existence in relation to walls, continuously fighting imaginary battles of spatial and urban territorialisation.*

*Yet throughout our history, walls have been both witnesses and voiced to out battles (“dite par les murs” as Michel Foucault would say in 1977) when newspapers became censored, walls became newspapers, the only form of both our individual, and in a strange way, collective expressions.*

*We should not expect a city to remain the same; we should not fall into nostalgic traps of trying to build the same walls that existed before the war. If these walls could actually speak, we would hear them repeat what Foucault said about himself: “do not ask who I am, and do not ask me to remain the same.”*



The egg (1966) by modernist Lebanese architect Joseph Philip Karam has gained an iconic status in the city's landscape for its quirky and distinct shape and the fact that it remains perhaps the last pre-war structure within the Martyr's Square center.



Scars of the war(s) still visible today.



Skeletons of former life and joy. This used to be an art cinema.



A former church.



Urban fabric of the district Ashrafiyeh.





Ashrafiyeh.



University Saint Joseph Campus de L'Innovation et du Sport by 109 Architects with Youssef Tohmé, finished in 2011.



Ahmad Moukhtar Bayhoum Road. One of the main traffic arteries leading into the city from the south.



The Beirut Souks. The largest and most dense shopping area of the city with over 200 shops and a department store. Located at the same site as the old souks (markets) of Beirut, rebuilt after the war according to the ancient Greek street grid maintaining the landmarks and original street names.



Mohammad Al-Amin Mosque, Sunni mosque built between 2002-2007. The dimension and materiality of the building makes it a landmark and a political statement like no other in Beirut.



Roman columns along the Cardo axis (running north and south) in the Garden of Forgiveness.



The excavated Roman ruins in the Garden of Forgiveness.



The National Museum of Beirut is the principal museum of archaeology in Lebanon. About 1300 artifacts are exhibited, ranging in date from prehistoric times to the medieval Mamluk period.





The Roman Baths located on the eastern slope of Serail Hill. The scene consists of ruins originally discovered in 1968-69, but developed as a public space in 1995-97. Being a public space it is rather odd that the plateaus are closed off with fences and trespassing is not allowed.



Sun shading integrated in the concrete facades.



Solidere s.a.l is a Lebanese public-private real estate company in charge of planning and redeveloping Beirut Central District. There are various opinions on their strategy towards rebuilding Beirut; some of the critique has been of their merciless handling of heritage buildings and properties.



Keep calm and carry on. Military is a part of the daily life in Beirut. When asking a man at the neighbouring table of a café how he feels about the presence of the military he simply replied, "you should feel save. It is when they are not around it gets dangerous".



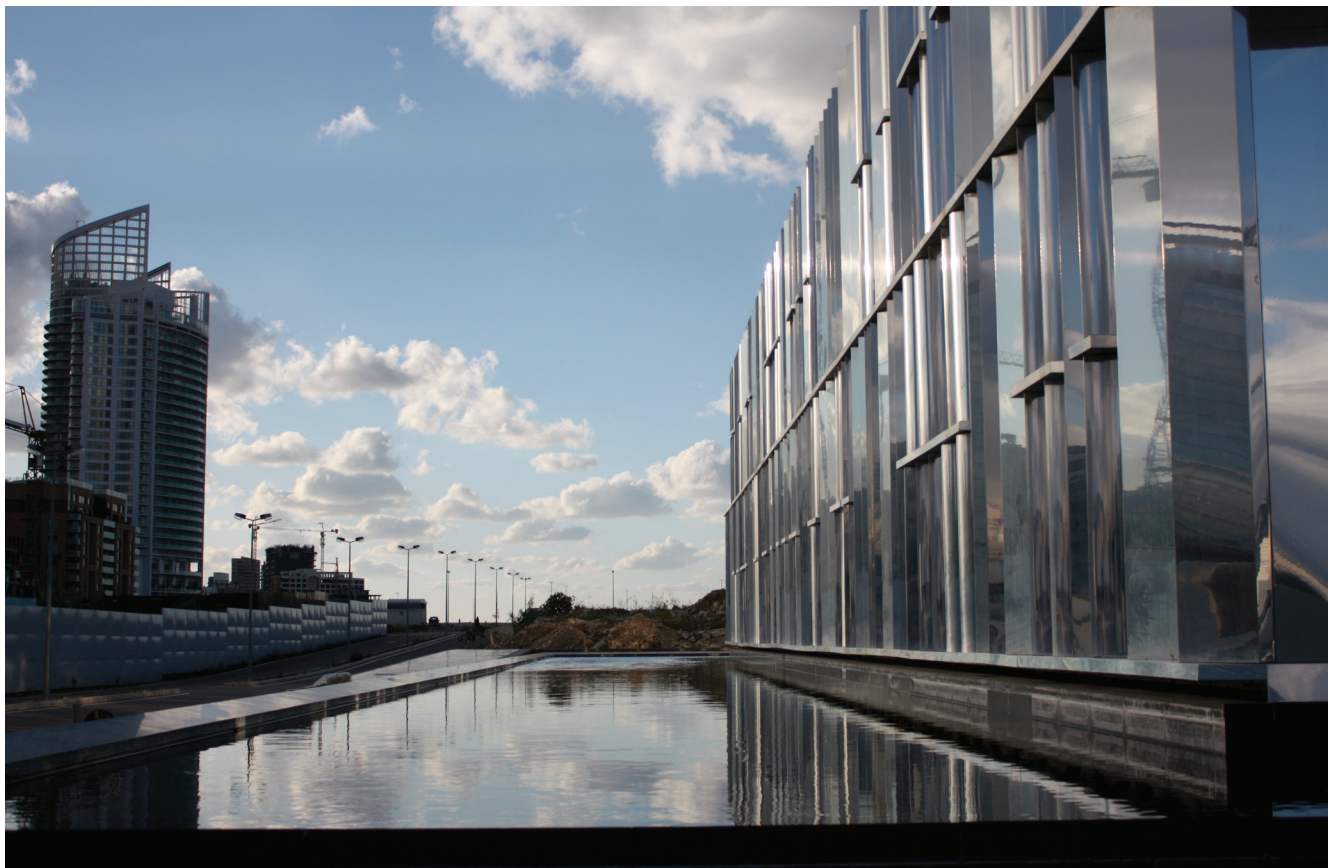
New development is blooming. All over town are posters with promises of a prosperous, luxurious and modern lifestyle fronted by pictures of amongst others Jean Nouvel.



The repetitious contrast between a prosperous lifestyle on the one hand and a lack of resources to recover from the destructions of the war on the other.



The Corniche promenade is one of the last truly public recreational spaces in Beirut, without commercial influence and military restrictions.



The facade mirrors of Beirut exhibition centre to the right and the Marina Towers in the back.





Beirut Marina and Town Quay by Steven Holl and L.E.F.T



One of the few places in Beirut that has remained the same despite the rest of the city changing.



Kids daring the waves.



Sunset view towards North East of Beirut: Lebanon stretching from the sea to the snowy mountains.

*“...the city which had been refashioned and marketed by the planners as an entertainment capital for the Arab World has proven its capacity to reclaim its role as a ‘political’ space in the full sense of the term, and a beacon to the Arab World.*

*Beirut is perpetually redefining itself: Mediterranean and Arab, cosmopolitan and nationalist, secular and religious, liberal and conservative, political and hedonistic, superficial and genuine... A city in search of its identity, at the crossroads of cultures from the Arabian Peninsula to the Caucasian plateaus and across the Mediterranean Sea.”*