

# World Music Center

BY KONSTANZE ULLAND, GRADUATE  
TERMINAL STUDIO INSTRUCTOR: HOWARD DAVIS, PROFESSOR  
MEDIA ADVISOR: LARS UWE BLEHER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Upon the task of designing a World Music Center for my terminal project in the architecture graduate program at the University of Oregon, I began to question the attributes of contemporary architecture in a more general way. On the one hand I wanted to create a building that would be suitable for this unique program, on the other hand I found myself wondering whether there is a certain type or a style of architecture that would be global enough to speak to people of many different cultures, while at the same time being a piece of contextual architecture.



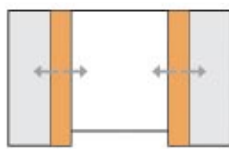
This design has become a statement of my personal conviction of what contemporary architecture should be about: First and foremost it's about space, materials, and light. I further consider it important to have an overall concept that ties it all together, while at the same time having beautifully developed details. Also, I believe it should have a contextual presence without screaming at its neighbors.

The World Music Center was defined as a cultural institution where non-mainstream musicians from all over the world might perform, interact and live for a limited period of time. Given these requirements I approached the

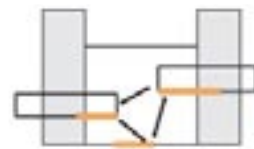


building with a somewhat different view and did not treat it as a traditional concert hall. Since it is World Music I dealt with it in a rather casual way – as the music in its original setting is more likely to be performed out on the streets, on the public town square, under the open sky.

Out of the need to give the space life during both day and night, a very simple diagram was born:



flexible zone



fusion concept



central space vs. dense edges

A central space that can become the performance area in the evenings, and is fed by its rich, dense edges during the daytime. The two side bars house mostly public uses, such as classrooms, café, offices, recording studio, practice rooms, and are connected to the central space by a flexible zone. This intermediate area can be counted towards either side,



according to the time of day or the venue. Essential are the platforms that project out into the central space and the balcony areas running along its perimeter on all four stories.

I like to think of this central space as an urban living room that is occupied during the day with areas to watch, study, and play—and when a performance takes place, the furniture gets pushed aside, the balconies turn into seating areas and the platforms into stages.

One aspect that was very important to me throughout the design, was the idea of unconventional performance practices. I envision that the space would spark a creative way of using it, e.g. having a performance that

utilizes all three stages at the same time. Musicians from Africa are on the upper stage, some from Ireland on the in the middle, while a group from India is situated on the ground level. At first they would play separately, listening to each other, then they start to interact and finally their music fuses to one big piece of art. This could even involve moving through the central space and changing the stage or switching the viewing location – for both musicians and audience. By doing so the architecture can become the initiator, but can then itself pull into the background, while the idea of World Music is being expressed by spatial means: Fusion of different cultural ideas.

As I started out with this overall idea, it had to be carried through to the choice of materials and the design of details. In doing so, the idea of layering spaces, materials and programs became essential to the whole project. On the larger scale this meant that the basic organization of the building was layered from the South bar which houses the apartments over the shared central space to the North bar, which contains the public functions, offices and classrooms.

For the apartment side the layering technique meant moving from the wrapping circulation gallery, inwards to the apartment space, and then again outwards to a series of balconies. I designed the wall between private and public spaces to have layers of different transparency levels, such as an acoustic perforated metal wall, with an absorbing material behind, some translucent panels with another layer of textile curtains behind for privacy. On the outside façade, I intended to create a similar effect with corten steel louvers that filter the views.

For the North bar with the practice rooms, I addressed the issue of transitioning with sliding doors of corten steel, that can be opened up to the spaces behind according to the user's needs.

I attempted to carry this concept down to the scale of a balcony rail or a fixed furniture – always thinking of how to express the transition point.

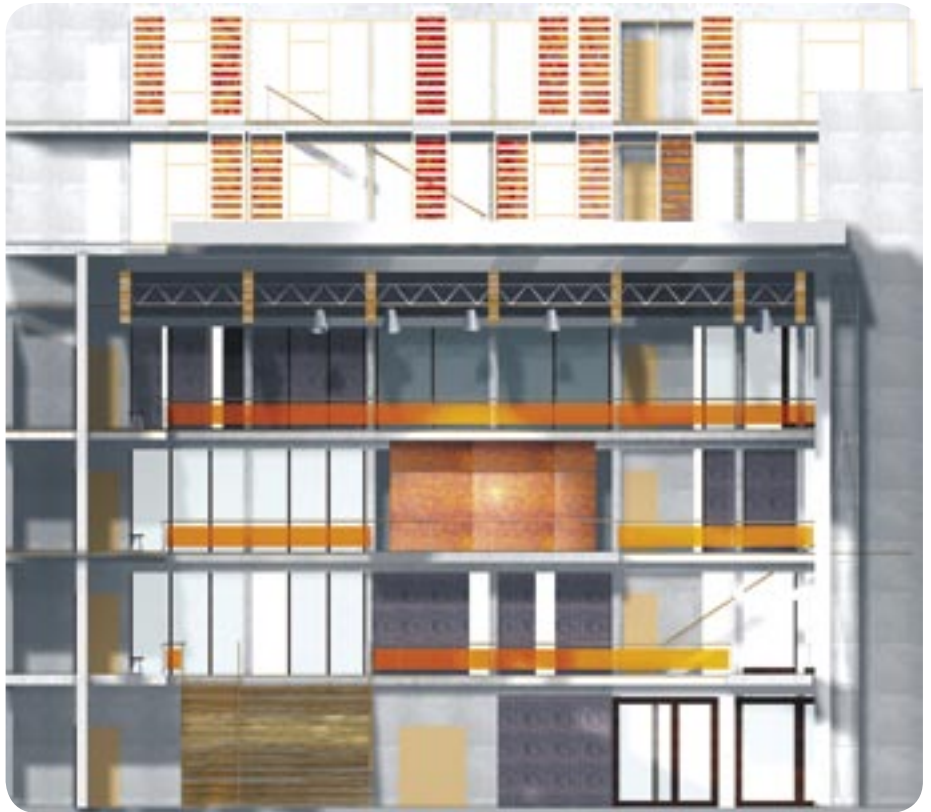
As I strongly believe that contemporary architecture has great responsibility to our environment I tried to address issues of sustainability through the use of natural ventilation with a double skin facade, natural sun shading through overhanging balconies, and thermal mass by keeping spaces free from suspended ceilings. Also for a performance building, the acoustical requirements were high. I tried to address those by shaping the wall with enough larger scale irregularities to break lower frequencies, and highly textured surfaces to diffuse the higher pitches. In all of these decisions I wanted to assign a greater purpose to these details, by tying them back into the overall visual quality of the space.





Throughout the design process **form•Z** functioned as my main tool, in addition to physical models to experiment with the central space. The realistic use of lighting effects and the rendering capabilities of the software helped to describe visually what existed as an idea in my head. All the perspective renderings of this building were created by using **form•Z**, only people and some context was added in Photoshop later on.

With this design I have tried to express what architecture means to me: Creating spaces for people that are breathtaking and comfortable at the same time.



I would like to thank my terminal studio professor Howard Davis, who was a great teacher and who always pushed my ideas and without whom I could not have developed this project. Also, I would like to thank my media professors Glenn Wilcox and Lars Uwe Bleher, who first taught and introduced me to the **form•Z** software.