

**WE
DESIGN
BEIRUT**

**DESIGN "IN"
CONFLICT**



BURJ EL MURR

Burj El Murr, much like the city it rises from, is characterized by its reflection of Lebanon's political and institutional fabric, whether at the architectural and urban scale or at the historical and social one. This reflectivity is fundamental. It defines the tower's significance and situates it as a hyper contextual object that condenses Beirut's social and political condition. Halted in 1978 and never repurposed, refurbished or demolished, the tower persists as an index of the city itself, embodying both its failures and possibilities, not as a monument but as a measure of Beirut's urban condition.



DESIGN "IN" CONFLICT

Curators

Teymour Khoury
Yasmina Mahmoud
Youssef Bassil
Tarek Mahmoud

Architectural Co-Curators

Nicoletta Zakynthinou-Xanthi
Angela Chiesa

Universities

Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts
American University of Beirut
American University of Science & Technology
Holy Spirit University of Kaslik
Lebanese American University
Lebanese University
Notre Dame University
Phoenicia University
Saint Joseph University of Beirut





Conflict is not an event. It is a condition — fluid, systemic, inescapable. It structures perception, governs movement, and reshapes the spaces we inhabit. In Lebanon, conflict is not a rupture in an otherwise stable terrain but a mode of existence, a lens through which the built environment, material landscapes, and lived realities are continuously reconfigured. Architecture, design, and art are not external to these forces. They are entangled within them, absorbed into their mechanisms, and often mobilized as instruments of power.

This exhibition confronts that entanglement, resisting the comforting narratives of post-conflict reconstruction or speculative futures. Instead, it engages with conflict as a system to be navigated, interrogated, and revealed.

The works gathered here do not observe from a distance. They navigate the architectures, material traces, and territorial inscriptions that conflict leaves behind. They demand a reassessment of creative practice— not as a stable discipline offering resolution, but as a field in constant negotiation with instability. Here, instability is not an interruption but the medium through which these practices operate. Conflict does not simply destroy; it reorganizes. It dictates what is seen, erased, controlled, or contested. Yet, these processes often go unexamined, obscured by the spectacle of violence or the rhetoric of reconstruction. This exhibition insists on a different framework, one that does not situate conflict as an interruption but as an active and ongoing condition. It seeks to expose, reveal, and engage with its spatial and perceptual logistics as they unfold. This is not an exhibition about war. It is an exhibition about how conflict configures space, artefacts, form, and inhabitation in Lebanon— not as an isolated history but as an ongoing negotiation. These works do not seek to define what comes after conflict. They insist on engaging with what emerges through it.



DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE STUDENT SHOWCASE

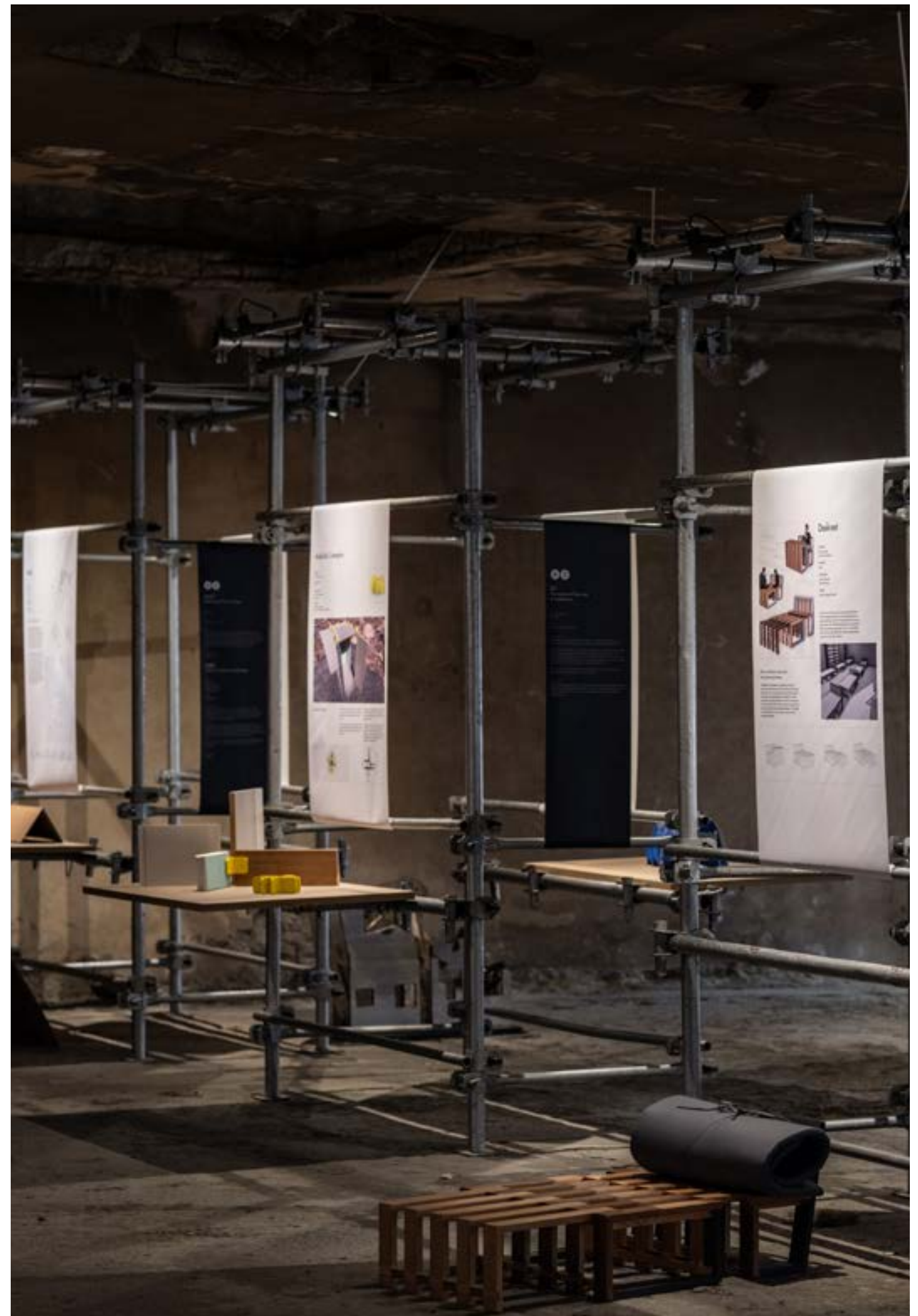
At the core of this exhibition is the work of students from nine architecture and design schools across Lebanon: AUB, LAU, LU, ALBA, USEK, USJ, AUST, NDU, and Phoenicia. Developed in a climate of political uncertainty and social precarity, these projects confront conflict as an active condition shaping both society and territory.

By situating them inside Burj El Murr, a structure inseparable from Lebanon's unresolved histories, the exhibition underscores the urgency of engaging younger generations in reframing how conflict is perceived and addressed through architecture and design. These contributions are not academic exercises but acts of inquiry that position architecture and design at the forefront of responding to the present condition.











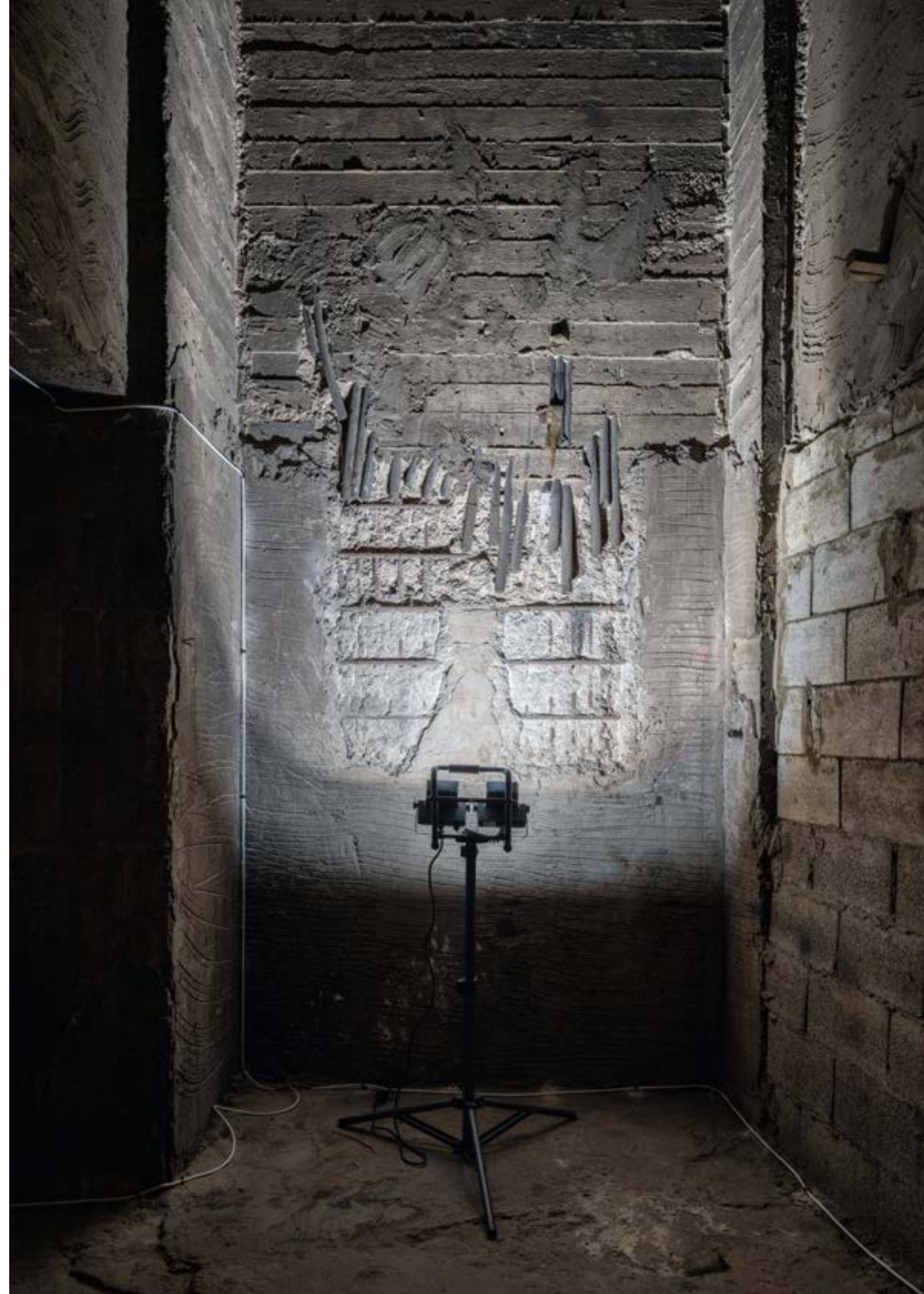
ALUMNI SHOWCASE

The Alumni Showcase extends the exhibition beyond the student body, inviting emerging practitioners to confront the realities of conflict through architectural and design interventions.

Paolo Barkett's The Window Project interrogates the apertures of Burj El Murr as instruments of surveillance and transformation, reconstructing how the tower projected geographies of restriction across Beirut.

Beirut Temporary Landscapes addresses the displacement produced by cycles of violence in the South, the Bekaa, and Beirut's southern districts, proposing strategies that confront instability at the scale of territory and population.

Lea Tabaja's Ode to Estrangement reimagines the abandoned Bechara El Khoury mansion as a temporary residence for expats, reclaiming a neglected site of heritage as a locus for renewal and adaptive reuse. Together, these works articulate how alumni and young professionals mobilize design to reframe conflict, situating architecture as a critical tool for engaging Lebanon's political and social conditions.





VERTICAL SURVEY

What happens when an unfinished, abandoned, and neglected structure is no longer treated as urban residue but recognized as an active site of historical production, one that reflects the political, institutional, and spatial condition of the city?

Burj El Murr exposes contradictions and registers overlapping temporal layers: the ambition of a pre-war modern project, the imprint of civil conflict, the stagnation of post-war reconstruction, and the continuing erosion of political, social, and urban infrastructure on both national and city scales. This installation reclaims the open ground at the base of the tower as a site of architectural and forensic observation. It adopts the grid logic of field archaeology, not to excavate history, but to document ongoing material deterioration and fragmentation.

A 1x1 meter grid, drawn according to excavation standards, organizes the surface and receives the debris falling from the building's facade.

Each fragment is treated as architectural evidence, material from a structure in active disintegration. Rather than aestheticizing ruin, the installation establishes a system for real-time observation. The incomplete concrete elements scattered across the site are structural, components left unresolved, exposed, and slowly degrading in full view. In a context where the definition of heritage remains politically unsettled and legally undefined, the installation raises a set of specific questions. What is the status of an urban element like Burj El Murr, uncompleted, unoccupied, and yet still present? What qualifies as heritage? Can such a structure, never inaugurated nor erased, be preserved? And if so, by what means? The installation does not attempt resolution but rather proposes a framework for sustained observation, one that remains open to accumulation, interruption, interpretation, and ongoing revision.







exhibtions@wedesignbeirut.com
www.wedesignbeirut.com
Instagram @wedesignbeirut