Beneath Beirut

Bernard Khoury and The Role of Architecture in Post-War Beirut

To what extent does architecture help heal trauma

Figure 1- Personal collage, images courtesy of ABC News, Françoise Demulder , Don McCullin and Vice.

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My five Key questions guiding the Dissertation:

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2.   Who is Bernard Khoury?

3.   What is the relationship between architecture and trauma in Khoury's work?

4.   How does Khoury use architecture to help heal or evolve from past scars?

5.   Why does Khoury choose particular spaces/places over others?

6.   To what extent does architecture and design, like that of BO18, help heal past trauma?

1-Role of Architecture Post-War: This question explores how architecture can serve communities, shaping their social and cultural identities in the aftermath of conflict.

2-Architecture and Trauma: This relationship can reveal how physical spaces reflect collective trauma, influencing societal healing and individual experiences in urban areas.

3-Healing Through Architecture: This question explores how architectural interventions, such as BO18, can promote recovery and resilience, transforming sites of suffering into spaces of hope, escapism and renewal essential in post-conflict societies.

4-Spaces for Adaptation: Why specific sites are chosen for reuse over others can reveal the connection between memory, identity, and community needs.

1.4 Methodology

As well as direct experience of how war can impact an urban fabric and how trauma translates into society, I have extensively researched Bernard Khoury and his first project, B018, through articles, interviews, videos and books. Through this research, I had to touch on a number of disciplines, including design, architecture, psychology, history and politics. Looking into these disciplines has provided me with a good foundation to build upon, a deeper understanding of my topic, and helped answer the questions I have outlined above.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background and Significance

My interest in this topic is rooted in my experiences of Beirut's nightlife, destruction, and war; it drives my curiosity about how we rise and evolve from war and its tragedies. I aim to gain an understanding and maybe even mourn the past and what is to come after the 2024 war in Lebanon and come through with the knowledge that every problem has a solution in design and that from destruction, there can only be creation and healing. This interest has led me to choose to learn about the renowned Lebanese architect Bernard Khoury and one of his iconic projects, BO18 **(Figures 2 and 3)**, a nightclub in Beirut, Lebanon. Bernard Khoury's work fascinated me long before I discovered my passion for design and architecture. His projects are bold and striking, with a distinct military-inspired aesthetic that has always resonated with me. BO18 is a prime example of this, resembling a bunker with an exterior design reminiscent of what I can only describe as military tanks, projecting a raw and brutal aesthetic. The nightclub has a dark and intriguing backstory that is well-known in the clubbing scene and indeed to the broader Lebanese society. This ghoulish narrative has always interested me, and when tasked to think of a subject for my dissertation, I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to delve deeper into the details and explore the man behind the space, the history of its location, how it came to be and the relationship between its architecture and the trauma of the past and how that plays into its current use.

Figure 2- Photograph of B018 facing southwards on Vice.com. Image courtesy of B018

Figure 3- Photograph of B018 facing southwards showing downward entrance on Archnet.org

Chapter 2

Definition of Post-War Architecture

Post-war architecture comprises the architectural practices, theories, and projects that develop after significant conflicts, particularly civil wars, global wars, or large-scale violence that disrupts social order and alters physical landscapes. This type of architecture is characterised by its response to challenges arising from the destruction of built environments, the necessity for reconstruction, and the importance of addressing trauma's psychological and social shocks. A complete understanding of post-war architecture requires an awareness of the historical context from which it arises. Following major wars, cities like Beirut often take a pounding from bombs and shelling, leading to extensive damage to their infrastructure, therefore needing immediate and complete reconstruction. The rebuilding of European cities post-World War II serves as a historical example that showcases how architects and urban planners face the double challenge of confronting war's emotional scars while repairing functionality. The post-war period is marked by the need to regain what was lost and to create a new identity that reflects the changing cultural, social, and political landscape due to the ravages of war. This great task requires exploring new ideas and revisiting previous architectural narratives that can better serve communities in the wake of distress and suffering. Post-war architecture has some main characteristics:

Response to Destruction: Architects must address the urgent necessities of communities and cities affected by war. Their response often focuses on finding quick construction techniques and materials for fast recovery.

Community Engagement: The rebuilding process often spotlights the importance of community participation. This approach guarantees that new structures are relevant to their inhabitants and reflect their values and needs, promoting a sense of belonging and healing in post-war contexts.

Commemoration and Reflection: Many post-war architectural projects feature memorial elements that acknowledge community trauma. Through their design, new places respect and recognise the past, no matter how painful it may be, and create new spaces for reflection and/or escapism to help heal.

Flexibility and Adaptability: Due to the unpredictability of post-war environments, architects often design flexible spaces that adapt to changing needs. This approach can involve creating multipurpose and/or multifunctional buildings and spaces that can move with time, allowing their occupants to progress without needing to reconstruct constantly.

Architectural Identity: After war, architecture struggles with concepts of identity. What was no longer is, and from this, architecture aims to create a story that respects the past while at the same time working to achieve a future. Conversations between the old and the new are vital to reflecting history within a modern context.

Understanding the various concepts within this realm, such as trauma theory, urban studies, and cultural geography, can deepen our understanding of post-war architecture and what informs it. Trauma theory tells us how communities may cope with grief and loss through their built environments. Urban studies focus on the transformation of cities post-conflict, honing in on the socio-political effects of architectural decisions on community cohesion and identity. Cultural geography examines the links between place, memory, and identity, shedding light on how communities engage with their environments.

Therefore, post-war architecture must address these cultural narratives to create spaces that reflect users' experiences. But in Beirut, things are a little different.

Lebanon's capital, Beirut, has a history that can be traced back 5,000 years, making it one of the world's oldest and most continuously inhabited cities. Formerly dubbed the Paris of the Middle East due to its heydays in the 1960s, Beirut has often been described as a cosmopolitan and commercial power-sharing region, an assembly of religious and political ideologies, and a place where East meets West. Such complicated contrasts may have contributed to the outbreak of its civil war between 1975 and 1991.

Most of central Beirut was destroyed during wartime, and more than 80% of it was supposedly beyond saving, even though only a third of the destruction was due to the war. Because of the lack of laws to protect heritage sites, of the 1500 listed heritage buildings, only 300 remained due to post-war reconstruction efforts led by the national developer, Solidere. Critics of the developer, Solidere, expressed that its reconstruction efforts had turned central Beirut into a playground for the rich and had failed to harmonise with the surrounding areas, thus creating a disconnect between communities and their environments. Instead of reviving its role in pre-war days as a nationally diverse centre, the new Beirut central district became home to consumerism buildings and other spaces catering only to a materialistic culture. *(See Figure 4).*

The execution of this international urbanist model, without consideration for the people's trauma or how these architectural decisions may impact community cohesion and identity, has predictably fed into the identity crisis that is woven into Lebanese society, a constant challenge for the ever-changing Middle East. Although post-Cold War globalisation of markets may have built economic and socio-political bridges internationally, the unavoidable force of growth and gentrification has formed identity issues in preserving Beirut's urban memory. Solidere's large-scale development defined the assumed end of the Lebanese civil war in 1991, and the "Disney-Fication" restoration process induced the city into a state of post-war denial.

According to Bernard Khoury, the city entered "The Amnesia Years" after the war and Solidere's reconstruction efforts.

Figure 4- *Solidere's masterplan on patrimoinedorient.org, photograph from area-arch.it*

'In these plans, a large portion of the old and traditional buildings of Beirut were destroyed to create space for more high-end modern buildings to attract investors, in the hope of creating Beirut an international and regional business city'.

Riad al-Solh, a triangular square – Observatory Patrimoine d'Orient.
https://patrimoinedorient.org/index.php/en/2021/09/27/riad-al-solh-a-triangular-square/

Chapter 3

Architecture and Trauma

What is trauma?

'The Paradox of trauma is that it has both the power to destroy and the power to transform and resurrect.'

Peter A. Levine

Trauma, derived from the Greek word trauma, meaning 'wound', is a powerful emotional and psychological reaction to an event or a series of events that overwhelm a person's or a group of people's ability to survive the day-to-day living. Trauma can disrupt our sense of safety, stability, and well-being, leaving behind mental and emotional wounds that manifest in symptoms like anxiety, flashbacks, disassociation, and emotional numbness.

From a collective standpoint, entire populations or societies can be traumatised as a result of extraordinary circumstances, like wars, genocides, or pandemics, which can recast cultural identities, change physical landscapes and impact historical narratives. These wounds can run deep, leaving neurological damages that can change brain function, impacting our memory, emotional regulation and stress response.

Various approaches exist to help in growth and recovery from trauma, with architecture and design playing a crucial role in healing, transformation, and resurrection from the disruption and destruction wrought by wars and violence.

Trauma in architecture appears in many ways. When the violence of wars ends, and the altered landscape emerges, once celebrated structures may be left in ruin, cities and towns destroyed, taking identity and cultural continuity with them. For example, the ruins of Beirut left behind from its 15-year civil war and from the subsequent wars that followed in 2006 and most recently in 2024, showcase how a city, a town or a village can become unrecognisable, disrupted, paralysed and within it, what used to be a place of dwelling, of community, of life and living is no more.

Post-war architectural responses can usually hold the tension between preservation, reconstruction, and creating new spaces commemorating the trauma. The renowned American architect Lebbeus Woods said, 'Architecture and war are not incompatible. Architecture is war. War is architecture. I am at war with my time, history, and all authority residing in fixed and frightened forms.' Woods posits that architecture, akin to war, is a dynamic and unpredictable force'.

Just as war reshapes societies and landscapes, architecture possesses the ability to challenge and disrupt established structures, both physical and conceptual. This analogy does not glorify destruction but highlights how architecture can resist stagnation, tradition, and oppressive systems. In this sense, architecture battles to reconceive space, identity, and meaning. He also highlights his dismissal of rigid, constraining traditions and the apprehension towards innovation that usually dominates architectural practices and societal norms. Woods situates himself as an activist, struggling against compliance and the bias to protect dated ideas in architecture and culture. For Woods, architecture should be fluxional, experimental, and brave, representing the convolution and ambiguity of the human experience, especially in the face of trauma or conflict.

In his *Pamphlet Architecture: War and Architecture*, his response to the bombing of Sarajevo, Woods highlights that the instinct might be to restore and recover everything lost when faced with a post-traumatic city. However, it is crucial to view these cities as resilient spaces with new potential and as Woods might describe this new potential as architectural forms that act as either 'injections', 'scars', 'scabs' or 'new tissue'. This requires a shift in perspective. While repair and reconstruction are natural responses, urban planning and architecture must delve deeper into the impact of trauma on cities and their complex realities. **(*See Figures 5 and 6*).**

It is no surprise that Bernard Khoury holds this philosophy. Once a student of Woods, Khoury took on this approach to express his rebellion against these norms through his work.

Bernard Khoury was born in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 19, 1968. His father, Khalil Khoury, was a Lebanese architect, talented carpenter and industrialist who worked with exposed concrete, designing several projects in Lebanon, such as the Mont La Salle School Campus, the Municipal Stadium of Jounieh and the brutalist Interdesign Showroom building in Hamra. **(*See Figure 7*).** Khoury's father produced a range of work, from the design and production of furniture items to his involvement in the development of the master plan for the reconstruction of the Beirut Central District in 1977.

Bernard Khoury lived in and out of Lebanon during the early years of the Civil War, where he barely made it through secondary school before pursuing his architectural studies in America and went on to receive his Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1990 and Bachelor of Architecture in 1991 from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), followed by a Masters in Architectural Studies in Beirut, which became his experimental grounds where he produced 16 unbuilt projects spanning a period of four years (1993–1997). During the latter years of his practice, he was financially supported by his family's furniture manufacturing business, which afforded him a design studio and access to their factories' workshops and manufacturing facilities.
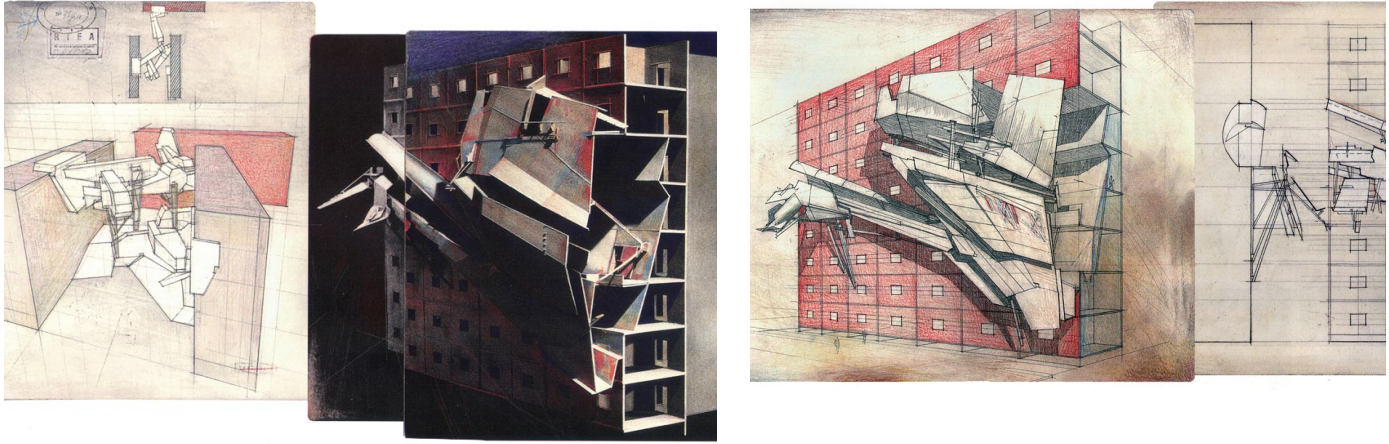
Figures 5 and 6- 'A typical residential block, badly damaged in places, reconstructed with new types of spaces for residents' use. The principle here is that reconstruction integrates people's experiences of the destruction into needed social changes, as well as architectural ones'.

WAR AND ARCHITECTURE: Three Principles | LEBBEUS WOODS.
https://lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com/2011/12/15/war-and-architecture-three-principles/

Figure 7 - *The Indesign building in Beirut, Hamra,* by Kahlil Khoury. It is distinct in its brutalist design and Khoury's father's work with exposed concrete. Source: Ivyrem.com

Khoury first came to public and critical attention with the completion of B018 nightclub in 1998 in Karantina, Beirut, his first built project. This building sparked a string of temporary projects which came primarily from clients in the entertainment industry, and in which Khoury relished the freedom of expression, living in the moment, and through which he found a standing for his ability to produce critical interventions in toxic zones, building him a reputation of debauchery leading the media, in various publications, to dub Khoury as "the bad boy" of architecture in the Middle East. His first five built projects: the BO18 nightclub, Karantina, Beirut (Built 1998); a bar restaurant called Centrale, in Beirut (Built 2000); the Japanese restaurant, Yabani, in Beirut (Built 2002); BLC Bank in Chtaura (Built 2004), as well as the Black Box restaurant on the northbound highway, greater Beirut (Built 2005).

Through his practice, DW5, he produced projects for local banks and real estate developers focused on permanent structures and large-scale projects. During the thriving post-war years, Khoury built several prominent structures in Beirut. According to Khoury, these were the 'product of very complex, problematic socio-political conditions'. Khoury's first permanent building, IB3, in Gemmayze, Beirut, was completed in 2006, paving the way for a series of residential projects; these include plot #732, Achrafieh, Beirut (Built 2008), plot #183, Rmeil, Beirut (Built 2009), plot #893, Achrafieh, Beirut, (Built 2010), plots #2251 & 1314, Damascus Road, Beirut (Built 2013) in which Khoury designed his residence. These were followed by seven high-rise residential developments, built between 2015 and 2020 and designed to make a forceful imprint on the cacophony of the Beirut skyline.

He also developed architectural identities and built a significant number of commercial branches for Banque Libano Francaise (between 1999 and 2006), Bank of Beirut (between 2006 and 2019), and Banque Libanaise pour le Commerce (between 2004 and 2005).

3.1 Khoury's Take on Trauma in Architecture

Khoury's perspective on trauma, a theme that is constructed through his work, was poignantly expressed during his lecture at the AA School of Architecture in March 2018. He stressed the need to confront trauma, with all its vulgarity, toxicity, and triggering abilities, in ways not necessarily confined to those highlighted in Chapter 2. In Lebanon, which lacks a functioning state, public sector, and consensual political projects, the architectural fabric is a complex tapestry of individualistic and distinct expressions that do not communicate with each other. Architects like Khoury are left to navigate this complexity and produce meaning from the void and its contradictions. From this void, ruins emerge or submerge, not just to haunt or challenge us but also to inspire and reconcile, often all at once.

The most notable physical display of Khoury's approach to trauma in architecture can be witnessed in one of his early works as a student with Lebbeus Woods and his first encounter with Beirut *(See Figure 8)*. While new plans for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Beirut's Central District were underway, Woods encouraged a reluctant Khoury in 1991 to work on an experimental project involving damaged or irrecuperable buildings. The project was called 'Evolving Scars', and the idea was to transform the process of demolition of war-ravaged buildings in Beirut into a collective architectural experiment. ' Evolving Scars' was a political act in the face of conventional urban planning systems. The model had a transparent structure, or skin, set around the outside of a ruined building; within the building, a machine, a 'memory collector', was placed to 'collect data' as it destroyed the building. As the building is destroyed, the remains are collected and contained within the transparent skin that wraps around the building, which now serves as a membrane. The process ends with the total demolition of the war-ravaged building, the physical fullness of the transparent outer membrane and hence, the fullness of the memory collector. The proposed idea did not project Beirut into an imaginary future, nor did it propose building physical structures. "Evolving Scars" was instead an attempt to translate the demolition of buildings into a transient architectural act.

As a practitioner, Khoury is drawn to difficult territories, or as he often calls them, 'Toxic Grounds'. Most of the grounds he has worked on were either highly fragile areas due to their past, cities undergoing recovery, or regions in which the government and its institutions have broken down and failed to regulate or control the expansion of the urban tissue. Beirut is a distinct example of what he often calls 'a wonderful catastrophe,' a city that has witnessed brisk and disorderly development over the last few decades. These chaotic developments are often catalysed by defensive postures that result from the incapability to foresee the future, the evolution of the surrounding context, and the instability that could bring danger right around the corner. There is no relief or comfort on unstable grounds, where the most basic urban planning rules do not come into play. This is the status quo due to the complete moral depletion and the failure and corruption of Lebanese institutions. Under such circumstances and conditions, architecture has to be a political act. What begins as a standard-built program may soon take on a totally other dimension. When the state does not provide the most common public spaces or structures – museums, social housing, parks, memorials-then a nightclub, a commercial building or a residential development must be created as projects that can hold a political charge.

These privately funded projects, which may seem frivolous and do not hold any social or political accountability on the surface, can be the vessels for a different kind of radicalism. Here, architecture and trauma take on a different responsibility in developing a history that may seem forced and sometimes not agreeable.
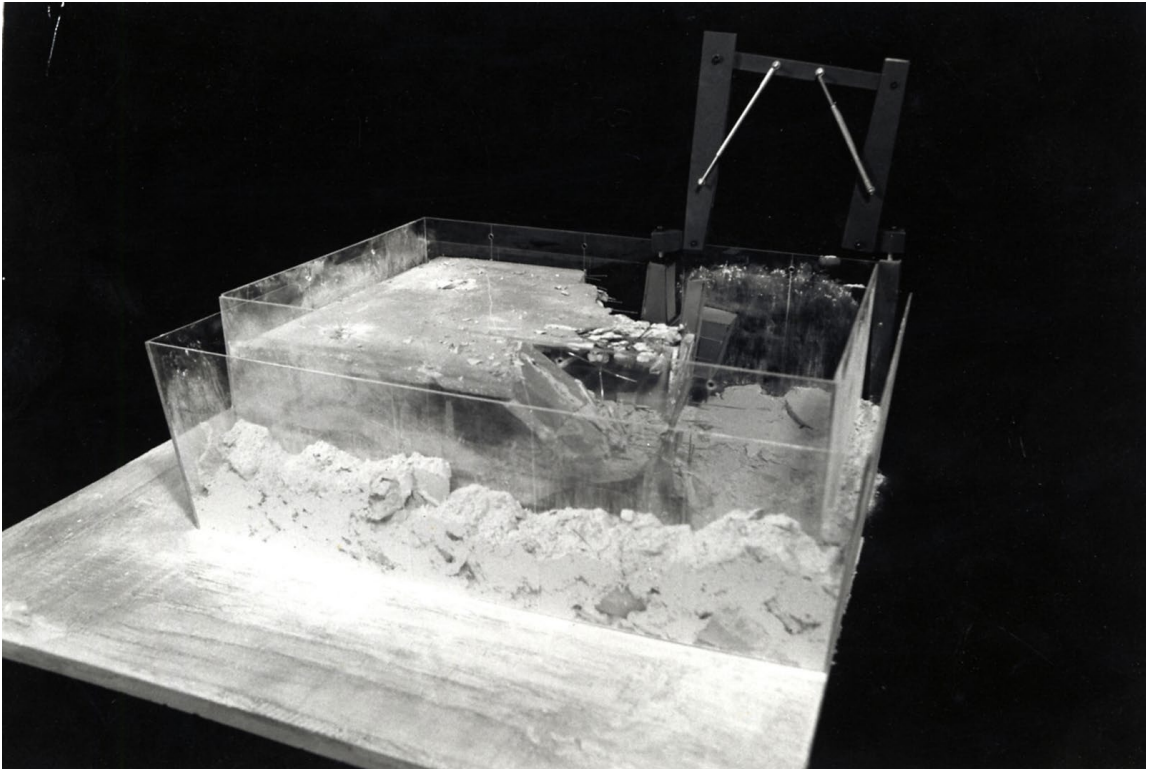

Figure 8- Evolving Scars, Khoury's project with Lebbeus Woods in 1991. Source: Bernard Khoury on bernardkhoury.com

Chapter 4

The Significance of Place in Architectural Adaptation

4.1 Site Selection in Post-War Reuse

The criteria for site selection in post-war reuse are usually derived from a mix of practical, historical, cultural, and socio-political factors which set out to balance the practical needs of rebuilding with the emotional and emblematic aspects of healing and trauma. The proximity of these sites to existing structures can have an important role because accessibility can notably impact the viability of adaptive reuse projects. The history behind a site is also a very important factor because locations connected with significant war events or trauma may be prioritised to protect their symbolic value. The conditions of the place can also affect how and if these sites are selected, with structures that are partially standing usually preferred for adaption due to commercial reasons and potential for restoration and reuse. The ecological context, including the surrounding fabric of the landscape, can impact decisions to promote compatibility with sustainable development practices. The community's needs and input are crucial because the site's rebirth should align with the aspirations and needs of the local population to promote social synergy and resilience. Economically, site selection factors are influenced by funding availability and commercial feasibility. Additionally, political considerations, such as the desire to promote reconciliation or address historical injustices, can shape the choice of specific sites for adaptation, turning them into instruments of collective healing and progress.

4.2 Khoury's Approach to Place and Space

As we have learnt, Khoury often chooses sites punctured with historical or symbolic meaning, reflecting the city's complicated history of war, memory, and resilience. For example, B018 nightclub is located on the site of a former refugee camp in Karantina (Quarantine), Beirut, that was a place of tragic events during the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1991, accentuating the tension between memory, trauma and reimagining spaces for healing, albeit in the harshest of ways. He is attracted to urban scars (voids) or disused areas, seeing them as the potential for new tissue and criticism, especially where Beirut's wounds caused by conflict or abandonment are most evident. His architecture connects profoundly with the site's memory, often revealing its history through a daring and provocative point of view; in BO18, the subterranean structure, convertible roof, and bunker-like design reverberate themes of shelter and survival, altering the site into one of contemporary strength and life. His projects contest conventional aesthetics, moving away from the traditional buildings in downtown Beirut and celebrating raw materials and industrial shapes that echo Beirut's rough history and urban energy. He also highlights the communication between his buildings and their context, creating structures that expand on their backdrop's activity and cultural beats. Through his work, Khoury connects the past and present, commemorating the site's history while triggering new explanations and experiences.

While there are criteria for site selection post-war, such structure and process do not exist in Lebanon. As explained in my previous chapters, this is due to a failed and corrupt state where basic urban planning rules do not apply. Instead, we are left with characters in the shape of architects, designers, entrepreneurs and developers like Bernard Khoury and his collaborators, to bring meaning from chaos, to breathe new potential into these architectural forms described by Woods as being either 'injections', 'scars', 'scabs' or 'new tissue'. Khoury did not create or choose these battlegrounds but instead chose to act on these distressed, toxic grounds, where meaningful, sympathetic and sometimes contradictory efforts are needed most to deal head-on with memory and trauma.

Khoury's projects show that his approach to place and space is one of rebellion- almost like a punch in the face. He is at war with the system and the state of denial that seems to lead the post-war reconstruction efforts in Lebanon.

Chapter 5

Healing Through Architecture

5.1 The Concept of Healing Spaces

A healing environment is when spaces are designed to promote physical, emotional, and psychological comfort via intentional integration of form, function, and context. These environments go beyond basic functionality, providing comfort, connection, and opportunities for reflection or renewal. Bernard Khoury's architectural philosophy, embedded in the complications of Beirut's historical and social fabric, meets this idea in subtle and radical ways. Instead of creating spaces that follow conventional perceptions of serenity or neutrality, which are often correlated with healing and designed to nurture well-being, Khoury's designs challenge this idea and instead recognise the scars of history and the reality of human resilience. He uses his architecture as a tool to trigger emotional and psychological reactions and engagement as a form of healing; he welcomes the sensitivity of trauma and memory, using materials, forms, and histories that confront the past rather than erasing or romanticising it. Projects like B018 nightclub, with its underground, bunker-like structure, showcase how spaces can instigate reflection and function as a symbolic and actual shelter, which serves as a way for individuals to deal with the painful and violent past, bringing to the surface the complicated history, memory and identity. By concentrating on the wounds of Beirut's chaotic history, Khoury crafts environments that lead users to wrestle with collective memory while encouraging renewal. His work indicates that healing does not just develop from elimination or avoidance but from challenging and engaging with the context, offering users an option to reinterpret and rebuild. This way, Khoury reinterprets healing environments as spaces of strength, conversation, and change, a more modern understanding of healing environments- those that allow for uncertainty and discomfort, no handling 'with kid gloves, but rather 'rip the band-aid off' and instead encouraging a deeper and honest engagement with both the built environment and the collective narrative.

Through the use of stark materials, exposed forms, and urban interventions, he creates spaces that invite people to experience the tension between death and rebirth, poverty and wealth, and memory and trauma in architecture.

5.2 Khoury's B018 as a Mechanism for Healing

Khoury's mechanism for healing is most notably channelled in the design of B018 nightclub, a space he calls 'a place of nocturnal survival'.

Conditions in Beirut had become intolerable in the 1980s; civil war was raging, and Israel had invaded Lebanon and in 1982 it had reached the capital. Naji Gebran, whose father was a singer, dropped out of high school to follow in his dad's musical footsteps and became a drummer in a band called The Wrong Approach, whose members consisted of students from the American University of Beirut architecture department. With the band behind him and the situation in Beirut getting worse, Gebran decided to seek safety and headed to a beach resort north of the city. It was in his room at the resort, studio (chalet) No. B018, that his passion for music began to flourish. There, he started hosting private 'music therapy sessions' for his friends. Many of Naji's guests, including his cousin Bernard Khoury, travelled from abroad when circumstances allowed. Guests would arrive at the airport and head straight to Gebran's chalet parties, which offered a much-needed escapism and refuge from the harsh conditions of the city at that time. The parties were crazy, and Gebran would mix jazz, blues, funk, classical, and Arabic music. The music served as a magnet, creating a unique atmosphere where sessions lasted until dawn, repeating night after night.

As the parties gained popularity over the years, Gebran's chalet became too small, so he decided to find a larger venue and publicise his music nights. With the support of his girlfriend at the time, he opened his first venue in Sin Il Fil, an eastern suburb of Beirut, in 1994. The club was a massive success; however, by the end of 1998, Gebran had to leave due to his deteriorating relationship with his girlfriend, who was also his business partner. He left the closing night with nothing but his records and the name B018. That night, he shared renewed hope and a drink with Bernard Khoury, and from this conversation, the two men decided to collaborate on building a new club. They set out to find a site for the new B018.

Contingent on the political point of view or affiliation of the average Lebanese citizen and in the absence of a symbol in sight, the area of Karantina either saw a number of military events or massacres during the Lebanese Civil War. Quarantine (Karantina) is an area located in northeastern Beirut to the south of the port of Beirut; its name comes from the French term, La Quarantaine, due to it being the location where a 'lazaretto', a quarantine, for maritime travellers was built during the French protectorate.

By the mid-1970s, Karantina was an impoverished neighbourhood primarily inhabited by Palestinian refugees as well as Armenians, Kurds and Shia Muslims. The area was also the headquarters for PLO guerilla fighters who were actively involved in the Lebanese Civil War, thus labelling the area as a military target by opposing groups, chiefly Lebanese Christians in nearby neighbourhoods. At the peak of the beginning stages of the Lebanese Civil War, in January 1976, the Karantina area was established to be a danger for residents of East Beirut. After several attacks by Christian militias with the aim of ridding the area of the PLO groups, the Palestinian population was expelled. Militants were neutralised in heavy battle, followed by the Karantina massacre executed by the right-wing Lebanese Front, which killed about 1,500 people and wiped out the area, demolishing the kilometre-long wall that had alienated the zone from the rest of the city.

Usually, cities in the Mediterranean tend to grow from the coast inland. However, in Karatina, there is a void, almost like the city's branches skipped and hopped directly over it and spread across to the other side *(See Figure 9)*. By the time that Bernard Khoury had found the site, it was over twenty years later, and the scars of war were still noticeable on the land, as they still are to this day, through the discrepancy between the sparse urban fabric of the location and the thickly populated neighbourhoods located across the highway that borders the zone. The area, the last time I was in Lebanon in 2019, was somewhat and is still mainly an industrial location, with Forum De Beirut being its architectural icon of contemporary Beirut, but mostly is occupied by a number of tanneries, a garbage processing company, Sukleen, a few army barracks and an abattoir; the air is putrid, violent on the senses just like its past.

Plot #317 in Karantina was introduced to Bernard Khoury by a broker with a stained past; he was a militia leader during the war years in Beirut and declared that he was one of the people responsible for the macabre events of 1976 that had led to the burning down of the refugee camps. The broker introduced the landowner, Youssef Nassar, who at the time was in exile in Brazil, to Khoury and who turned out to be the nephew of the commander of the Lebanese Army of the South (SLA) who collaborated with Israel during the Lebanese Civil War and controlled the security zone in southern Lebanon which had been invaded and occupied by Israel at the time. This problematic zone on Plo#317 in Karantina would become the spot where Khoury would build B018.

Embedded within a circular concrete slab and flanked by a carousel parking area, B018 lays on the edge of a busy highway that separates the north side from the Armenian neighbourhood to the south side and links west Beirut with East Beirut and beyond, with almost 400,000 cars passing daily, B018 disappears in the day, completely invisible to motorists *(See Figure 10)*. This vanishing act is an intentional move that works with the existing site void. As Khoury explains, 'preserving the void and sometimes when doing so you become more visible'.

Submerged underground, B018 sleeps during the day and wakes at night with the help of a garbage truck builder; this disappearing act was made possible by way of a retractable metal roof; the roof opens hydraulically to the sides and has a panel at the back that opens upwards at a 50-degree angle revealing a mirror that reflects the sights and sounds inside. The entrance is situated to the south of the roof, where a staircase leads down into a doorway that opens into a small foyer space with two doors, one to the right and one to the left, leading into the main area. Symmetrically distributed across the concrete pavement floor of the underground space, are block marble tables spookily suggestive of tombstones and mahogany sofas upholstered with red velvet and collapsible backs that serve as elevated dancing surfaces for both the performers and the clubbers, depending on the night. The room's parameters are draped with thick red velvet fabric. To the north end of the space sits the bar lined with dramatic high-back chairs, likened to coffins *(See Figure 11 and 12)*. While the clubbers pulsate to the beats and dance away their worries in this communal grave, the ceiling opens to the sky, rendering them oblivious to the deathly imagery that surrounds them.

Every detail of B018 was fabricated in situ, and Khoury would draw on-site and produce the bespoke elements, down to the ashtrays, in his family's workshops and manufacturing facilities, with the collaboration of local artisans.

B018 was never meant to exist for more than 5 years when Naji Gebran and Bernard Khoury set out to give the club a new home. 31 years later, it has won numerous awards, put Beirut on the map, and undergone some changes and refurbishments *(See Figure 13)*.

Figure 9- *Ariel image of Karantina area in 2000 with B018's site encircled in red. Beirut port is to the north. We see that development has bypassed the area leaving a void or as khoury calls it, a 'scar. Source: Google Earth*

Figure 10- *Photograph of B018 facing south. We can see the highway between Karantina and the Armenian neighbourhood to the south. The nightclub is invisible to the motorists driving past. Source: scenenoise.com. Image courtesy of Bernard Khoury, DW5.*

Figure 11 and 12- *Photograph inside of B018 facing north. Source: Archdaily.com.*

Figure 13- *Photograph inside the refurbished B018 facing north. The new design incorporates symmetrical design with hanging spines for 'uninhibited' dancers. 'The new interior is entirely built with solid stone. Walls, floors, ceilings, furniture are all finished in stone, in complete opposition to the initial take on B018'. This is due to the fact that initially B018 was not meant to live for more than 5 years and so now as permanent structure, the use of materials need to align with permanence. Source: dezeen.com.*

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Through my first-hand experience of B018 and from my research for this dissertation, it is clear to me that ultimately, B018 was a response to a challenging and volatile environment. Such conditions are an integral part of Beirut's history, and especially that of the Karantina site; with all of the contradictions that are indicated by the decisions that were made to make it a place of entertainment, B018 rejects participation in the state of 'amnesia' that dominated Beirut's post-war reconstruction. As the rebuilding of Beirut's central district continued to wipe out any remnants of war, B018's existence was facing the trauma and treating the post-war amnesia. It retains the idea of holding escapist activities by religiously maintaining the Lebanese's debauched survival mechanism, partying.

Although the design and philosophy behind it may appear as an ineffective or even an insensitive approach to remedying societal trauma in a post-war period, one can argue that B018's brutality is an attempt at administering an architectural immunization. I remember the first time I visited B018 at its new location back in the early 2000s. Initially, all I could focus on was the music. However, with each subsequent visit, I began to notice the details, remember the area, and question how we could be there, dancing, when the history of the space is so dark and violent. I felt guilty, uncomfortable, and even a little evil. How could we be so happy and entranced by the music when the ground beneath us was soaked in blood? This brings us back to the sense of discomfort and producing meaning in vulgar situations that Khoury maintains is essential in architecture post-war; for us to fully recognise and eliminate the trauma of war, a society has to become reconciled with its negativity instead of sweeping its problems under the rug. And boy, did we face it, to the point where it had become our 'new tissue'.

If international growth and advancement is to become a positive force in the restructuring and restoring of any urban fabric, it is necessary for it to observe and respond to a culture's needs before applying a 'one size fits all' model. Bernard Khoury's projects, especially B018, demonstrate a profoundly conflicted point of view when it comes to preserving local identities and Lebanon's discriminatory rebuilding efforts. Beirut, as a city with many contested sites and ideologies, its public spaces must advocate for and foster post-war diverse identities to create healthy dialogue and inclusion. By providing commercially driven urban models in a challenged city such as Beirut, problems that may appear to be resolved are instead numbed by materialistic endeavours that create illusions of modernism, reconciliation and progress which evade any reflection and questioning of the realities the country faces.

Although Khoury admits that his projects are not opinions and that his work is for those who can afford Beirut's pretentious nightlife, there is, in fact, intentional social condemnation. Whether his efforts at creating healing and therapeutic spaces are intended, he has indeed become a villain in the world of architecture in the Middle East and has reinstated the cruciality of preserving the collective memory without succumbing to the alluring, but harmful rose-coloured lenses of longing, as well as the out of touch cookie-cutter solutions introduced by commercial firms commonly seen across the region.

B018's brutal honesty toward the distressed psychological state of the people and its unique design earned it a place on In The Mix's list of "25 Clubs You Must Visit Before You Die", further cementing B018 as a symbol of Lebanon's resilience and it is people's love for life, come what may. Night after night, we chose to celebrate life and how incredible it felt that in the face of such a past, we could find happiness and connection, and for a moment in time, in this space, in this place, we are united by our scars, our trauma and most importantly by music. To this extent, I believe that architecture and places like B018 help heal trauma.

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List of Illustrations