

Pantomime

The proposal looks to the first puppet show performed in 5th Century BC, Greece, for inspiration. The word 'Pantomime' originates from the Greek word 'Pantomimos' meaning 'Imitator of All.' The initial strategy takes the existing theatre's basic plan and duplicates it on the western boundary. Through imitation, the new building is seen as a puppet of the original theatre - not identical but theatrically exaggerated.

Its placement to the west creates an open space between the old and new and forms a courtyard for open-air performances. Existing trees along the south of the site are moved into this courtyard, providing shade and greenery. A flat concrete roof is wedged between the volumes at a 3m height. This helps to frame the courtyard, provide a cafe volume to enter into, and allows views towards the courtyard trees, sparking curiosity in passers-by.

A series of columns and steel trusses allow for flexible performance arrangements below and provide a regular rhythm expressed on the exterior facade. Using white aluminium panels as cladding, the form represents a tent-like structure, reminiscent of a carnival marquee draped over the wondrous performances beneath. The curved panels provide an interesting distorted backdrop for light and shadow to play. Shadows of trees dance as they sway in the wind referencing the most basic forms of puppet - the shadow puppet.

Corners are carved out to accommodate the inner program - a foyer and a gangway for technicians - further exaggerating the form's draped marquee effect. The overhang created along the street side also references the Bulgarian National Revival period where homes' upper floors would overhang the street below, providing shade and a social gathering space.

A dimple in the north facade offers a minimal imitation of the old theatre's performative clock. The dimple allows light and shadow to represent the passage of time, forever changing, forever performing - a conceptual nod to the past and future of the puppetry arts.

Building Density: 636m²

Total Built-Up Area: 1341m²

Total Landscaping Area: 108m²

Estimated Cost of Implementation: €2,300,000