



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT



Archaeological Museum

NEWSLETTER

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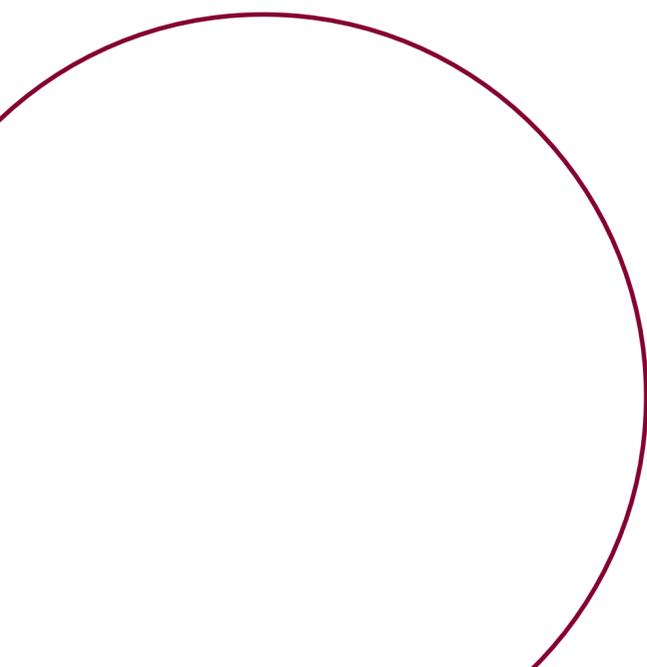
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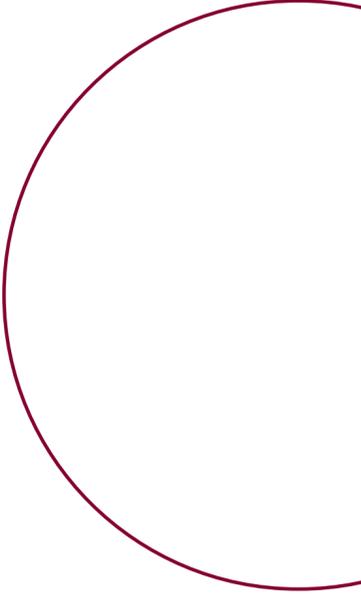
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INTRODUCTION

The American University of Beirut (AUB) Archaeological Museum has had an exceptional year despite months of drones, bombs and the ever-present threat of destruction. Coping with such challenges required nimble thinking and innovative ideas, the most important being, how to protect the Museum, its staff and collections in a time of war.

Tackling the situation head on, Curator Nadine Panayot and the Museum staff pulled off a remarkable safeguarding operation which has become a model for emergency heritage protection; as described in the section **Safeguarding the Past in Times of Crisis: Emergency Preparedness, Innovation, and Regional Engagement at the Museum.**





Even in these difficult times, our beloved **Children's Program** continued to attract and inspire young minds in greater numbers than ever. Alongside this, the section, **Learning, Inclusion and Discovery: A Year of Engagement at the Museum** outlines the scope and impact of a series of initiatives designed to encourage learning opportunities through extended access to the Museum for both university students and children. The number of participants is impressive.

The section **Staying Connected: Leadership, Recognition and Research** captures the sharp focus the Museum achieved through new leadership roles awarded to Dr. Panayot, along with successful grant applications and research collaborations

All of this is not to forget our popular **Lecture Series** initiated in the form of a lively debate **Who Owns Heritage?** Friends also enjoyed a batch of





thought-provoking documentary films with post-screening Q&As. Once again, the Museum celebrated the annual **International Women's Day** and **International Museum Day**, along with **Beirut Art Days** and **La Nuit des Musées**.

The achievements of the Museum during these challenging times are perhaps best illustrated in our front cover picture. It is taken from **Portraits of Women – Beyond the Stones**, a travelling exhibition in tribute to exceptional women around the world who work to safeguard cultural heritage threatened or damaged by conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. Chosen as one of the featured women, Dr. Panayot shared her honor with her team, in recognition of their tireless work restoring the Museum's collections after the devastating Beirut port explosion on August 4, 2020. The portraits' upcoming destination is, Louvre Abu Dhabi in 2026 where our Museum's Mini Bunker Museum will be featured as an international best practice.



LECTURES

February 19, 2025

Who Owns Heritage?

Centered on the contentious question *Who Owns Heritage?* The American University of Beirut (AUB) Archeological Museum hosted a ground-breaking panel discussion exploring the rights and duties of heritage ownership in Lebanon. Two panelists, His Excellency former Lebanese Minister of Culture Rony Arajji and Professor Marc-André Renold, co-holder of the UNESCO chair on the international law of the protection of cultural heritage at the University of Geneva, with the participation of Mr. Sarkis Khoury, Director of General Antiquities, addressed a series of questions on the topic posed by Museum Curator, Dr. Nadine Panayot, who moderated the discussion.



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THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUB MUSEUM
and
ICOM LEBANON

Cordially invite you to attend a
**THOUGHT-PROVOKING
CONVERSATION**

WHO OWNS HERITAGE?

WITH

Counsel Rony Araygi
Former Minister of Culture

Prof. Marc-André Renold
Université de Genève
Chaire UNESCO en droit
international de la protection
des biens culturels

MODERATED BY

Prof. Nadine Panayot
Curator
AUB Archaeological Museum

Wednesday
February 19, 2025
5:30 pm

AUB
Archaeological
Museum

THE EVENT IS OPEN TO ALL, NO REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED



Minister of Culture H.E. Ghassan Salameh greeted by
H.E. Rony Arajji



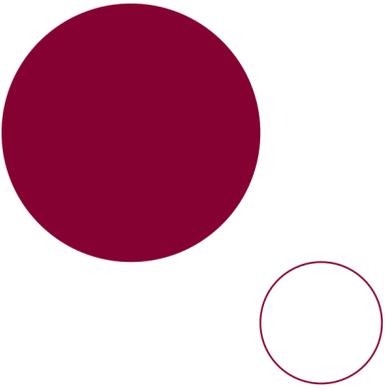
H.E Rony Arajji
discusses Heritage law



Professor Marc-André Renold with Professor
Nadine Panayot moderating on-line



DGA and UNESCO officials with our Curator Nadine
Panayot and H.E Rony Arajji



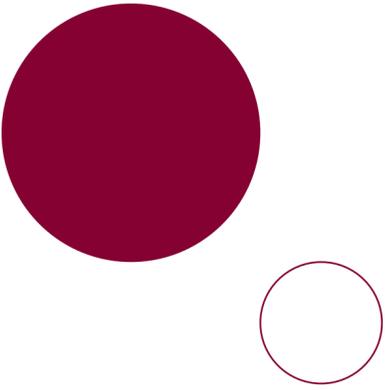
Dr. Panayot opened the discussion by outlining the overarching concerns, stating:

“Heritage is a cornerstone of human identity representing the collective memory of civilizations across time. Yet, the question of ownership, whether cultural, legal, or ethical remains deeply contested. Meanwhile, museums and universities play key roles in preservation but face scrutiny over contested acquisitions. Organizations like UNESCO help protect cultural heritage globally emphasizing collective responsibility. However, in some cases, and particularly in Lebanon, individuals or private entities may own heritage objects raising ethical concerns.

As globalization blurs borders and colonial histories come under renewed scrutiny, who has the right to claim, safeguard, and interpret heritage?

This conversation with two prominent experts, ex-Minister Arajji and Professor Renold, will explore ownership versus stewardship.”





The discussion opened with a fundamental question:

“How does Lebanese antiquity law define the ownership and stewardship of cultural heritage?”

In 2016, former Minister Arajji introduced a law aimed primarily at regulating the ownership of Lebanese antiquities held by private individuals. At the time of its passage, the law was considered controversial and was never fully implemented.

Elaborating on the rationale behind the law, or decree, Minister Arajji explained:

“Lebanese Government Decree No. 166, issued in 1933, clearly states that all discovered and undiscovered antiquities, whether located on public or private land, belong to the state. However, while the Decree explicitly regulates discoveries and requires authorization for excavations, it does not address the initial acquisition or subsequent purchase of artifacts.





This regulatory gap concerning private ownership led me to work on Decree No. 3065, which aims to establish a clearer framework for private possession while ensuring appropriate state supervision and protection.”

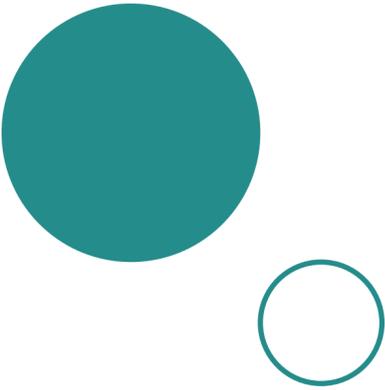
Since the passing of the Lebanese 1933 Decree, several international conventions regarding heritage ownership were passed, notably in 1954 and 1995. Dr. Panayot posed the following question to Professor Renold:

“How do Lebanon, as a state, and the new Decree No. 3065 align with the provisions of these conventions?”

Professor Renold responded: “Lebanon, as any national state, is subject to a certain number of international laws, rules, and conventions.

I would say that the 1954 Hague Convention, which specifically relates to cultural heritage in time of conflict, is not directly connected to the Law 3065 on the issue of undiscovered cultural heritage and private ownership, and in this context.





The 1970 Convention is more topical to our subject as it addresses the means to fight illicit traffic of cultural property. It has been ratified by over 120 states, including Lebanon, and it is somehow the main benchmark in the field of public and private ownership of cultural property and of combating illicit traffic.

However, this Convention is not directly applicable or enforceable. It needs national legislation to be effective. Its rules are relatively broad, it states a certain number of very broad principles, but in order to be effective, it needs a national law. So it needs a national Lebanese law just as my country needs a Swiss law to be to be effective. As Mr. Arajji points out, there are a number of laws in Lebanon which implement this particular obligation and probably Law 3065 is to be considered as part of that.

The 1995 United Nations Convention was adopted as a follow up on the 1970 Convention. It is more stringent and it fights against theft and illicit excavations, and illicit exports of cultural property. It is directly enforceable, so it does not need a national legislation to be effective.





Only 56 states have ratified it; Lebanon and my country Switzerland have not. Switzerland is an important art market and until now the art market has been relatively critical of the 1995 Convention and this has prevented its ratification. I do not know the details of Lebanon except that I have been told that there were reports by the commission in favor of its ratification in early 2010.”

Responding to the question as to **why Lebanon has not ratified the 1995 Convention**, Sarkis Khoury, Director of General of Antiquities who was attending the discussion explained:



“We are still in the process of studying this Convention. Egypt has not signed it either, as there are shared concerns about how it addresses older collections. While it is effective for new acquisitions and recent trafficking, it does not take historical collections into account, it is not retroactive. Although we are still reviewing this Convention, we have ratified the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention, which has allowed us to classify 34 sites for protection in the event of armed conflict.”



Given that in the recent past Lebanon has witnessed serious armed conflict that has impacted many parts of the country, especially those in proximity to important heritage sites, Dr. Panayot invited Dr. Renold to address the following question:

“Have these international conventions contributed to protecting the Lebanese heritage especially during the recent conflicts?”

Professor Renold responded: “Well I definitely believe so, because as was mentioned earlier, a certain number of sites have been listed according to the Second Protocol of the Hague Convention and therefore, if you believe in international law, and its validity, which I do, you believe that it is effective and it should be followed by belligerents in international conflicts. Maybe I am wrong in thinking that none of these sites listed in Lebanon have been victims of destruction or damage.”



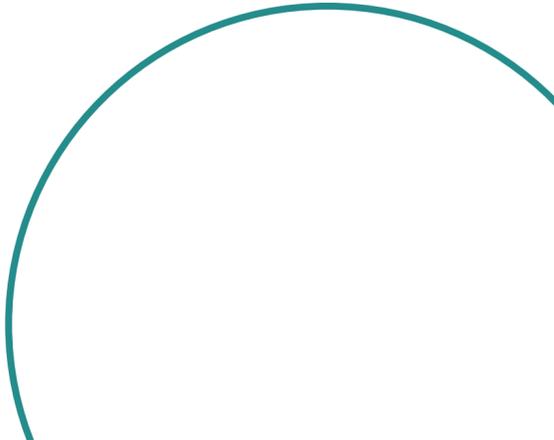


If that is the case, you can perhaps say that at least one of the reasons is because they are effectively legally and internationally protected.”

Mr. Khoury pointed out to Professor Renold that three designated heritage sites in Lebanon, including Beaufort Castle, were struck during the recent conflict, indicating that they did not receive the protection they are entitled to. As a result, UNESCO is currently investigating the sites.

Professor Renold responded: “Based on what you’re saying, this constitutes a violation of international law. I’m very pleased to see that UNESCO is stepping in to review the situation, which should eventually lead to consequences under international law.”

Minister Arajji added: “I believe these conventions have helped protect Lebanon. While some archaeological sites may have been affected, the principal sites remained unharmed. It’s also essential to do your part by adhering to international conventions. We can never know what might have happened if these sites hadn’t been included on the UNESCO list or covered by these agreements.”





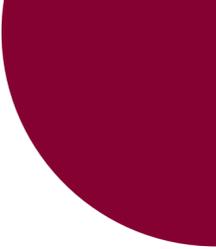
When a country is party to such conventions, any attack by Israel—or any other aggressor—on a protected site becomes not only an act of destruction but also a violation of international law. This distinction is critically important in the realm of international law.”

Returning to the topic of Lebanese national law, Dr. Panayot asked Minister Arajji to elaborate on the rationale behind Decree 3065 with regard to ownership of cultural artifacts:

“For decades, the relationship between the Lebanese state and private collectors of antiquities was unclear and marked by mistrust. This was largely due to widespread theft from archaeological sites, illegal trafficking, and concerns over the legitimacy of ownership claims. As a result, many collectors hid their artifacts for fear of confiscation. The authorities were aware of these collections but lacked a structured policy to address the issue effectively.

As Minister of Culture, I sought to end this legal uncertainty by introducing Decree No. 3065. I was not alone in this effort—I worked with Ann Marie Affeich and others; it was a collective initiative.





The goal was to establish a clear and fair framework that would encourage collectors to declare their artifacts, allowing the state to build a national inventory. That was the primary objective. The Decree was not designed to protect collectors per se; it aimed to ensure transparency and accountability in documenting our cultural heritage.

As with any law or regulation, there will always be individuals who try to exploit the system or act illegally. But in my view, the objective was legitimate: to enable Lebanon to access private collections kept in Lebanese homes and thereby create a comprehensive national inventory.

We had other goals as well: to identify and confiscate illegally acquired pieces under transparent and legal conditions, and to facilitate the repatriation of Lebanese artifacts held abroad. Many Lebanese collectors possess significant collections outside the country, and they will never consider bringing them back unless the state creates a positive and trustworthy environment.



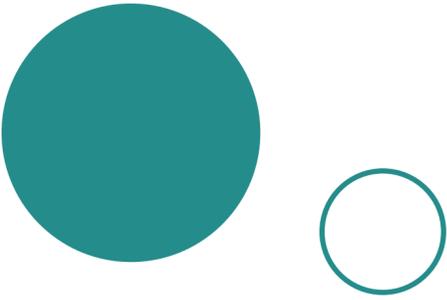


The broader aim was to rebuild trust between the state and collectors. And by ‘collectors,’ I don’t mean professional antiquities dealers—I mean ordinary citizens, people like you and me, who may own one, three, five, or ten artifacts in their homes. I want to emphasize that this Decree does not regulate or legalize the trade in antiquities; it strictly concerns private ownership, with the goal of ensuring stronger oversight and safeguarding Lebanon’s cultural heritage.

Unfortunately, the Decree was not properly implemented, and I will express my criticisms of the General Directorate of Antiquities (DGA) amicably and constructively. I also urge Minister Salameh, the current Minister of Culture, to take action to revitalize this Decree. In my opinion—and I know some of you may disagree—I believe it is a sound text that could be highly beneficial if properly enforced.”



Dr. Panayot noted, “I understand the need to build a national inventory and a complete one. However, when you say that for those who own collections overseas, this decree would allow them to bring them back.



My question here goes to Professor Renold: **“Isn’t this in contradiction to the international conventions?”**

To which Professor Renold replied, “No I don’t think so. The question is, there is a “legitimate” collection held abroad and the collector is thinking about repatriating it and the Lebanese law enables this. If the collection has been acquired legitimately, I don’t see a problem from the international law perspective for bringing it back. If on the other hand, the collection had not been established legally at the time it was put together, then I’m not sure it’s a question of international law. If it was not legally established at the time, it’s not going to be any better today so it would just simply not come back. I would say that’s my view but I do not see how international law could prevent this.”

Minister Arajji provided further insight into the conditions under which ownership of an antiquity would be considered legitimate under the new law, stating:

“The antiquity must be publicly and peacefully held, free of ambiguity, and for non-commercial purposes by a





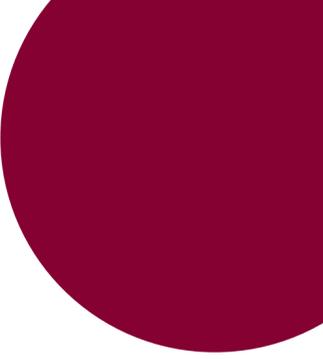
Lebanese citizen or a foreign resident who has lived in Lebanon for at least five years. This condition is in accordance with Article 306 of the Lebanese Civil Code. The declared antiquity must not have been stolen from the Beirut Museum, lost from it, or obtained through illicit excavations or removed from a public archaeological site.

Some artifacts may fall under these categories yet remain in private homes. When a collector declares such an artifact, they may be acting in good faith, unaware that it was looted. In such cases, the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA) has the authority to intervene and confiscate the artifact.”

Dr. Panayot then asked:

“Given the strict nature of Lebanese legislation—particularly the 1933 law—wouldn’t it have been simpler and more straightforward to state that private ownership of antiquities is prohibited, and that all such objects must be included in the national inventory?”





And Professor Renold added to her question:

“Am I correct in understanding that the Decree functions as a form of amnesty? In other words, once the items are declared and inventoried, their ownership is regularized, and the holder is no longer at risk of legal proceedings related to them, is that accurate?”

Minister Arajji responded by saying:

“It is correct, unless they were stolen, as I mentioned, from the Beirut Museum.

In this case, the state has all the powers to confiscate them.”

Dr. Panayot further clarified: “In other words, ownership is confirmed once the object has been inventoried and officially recognized by the Directorate General of Antiquities.”

To which Arajji replied: “But they have to keep them in Lebanon, they are forbidden to travel or to export them or to trade also?”

Dr. Panayot continued, “I thought that if the ownership was established, then trade within the country was allowed.”





Minister Arajji answered, “Yes, of course. It is allowed based on the law of 1933. It is allowed under certain circumstances.”

Dr. Panayot raised another question:

“What about ancient collections that have remained in families for, say, three generations prior to the ratification of the 1970 Convention?”

This is also the case for the American University of Beirut Museum, the third-oldest museum in the Near East, established even before the creation of Greater Lebanon. It is therefore a regional museum, with pieces from across the Near East. Do you believe the legitimacy of this ownership could be contested in any way?”

Minister Arajji replied:

“Yes, if we strictly apply the law, because can you actually prove the origin of all the artifacts held in the Museum? Do you have certificates of provenance or warranties? Absolutely not. And that’s the issue faced by nearly all 19th-century museums around the world.

That’s why the Decree had to be very clear: artifacts must be kept within the country, publicly and without ambiguity.



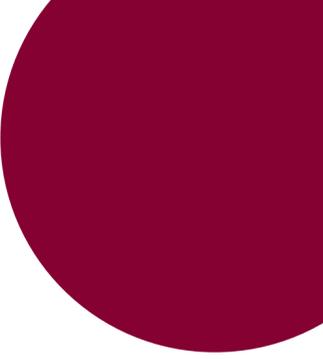


In my opinion, the AUB Museum should register all of its artifacts to benefit from this Decree and establish legitimate ownership. I was the first to register the three artifacts I personally own. Unfortunately, only about 20 individuals have registered their items so far.

Among those, I believe one collector may have tried to exploit the Decree. But we cannot allow a few individuals trying to take advantage of the system to prevent us from establishing a national inventory and properly regulating our national heritage.”

Dr. Panayot further elaborated: “This also raises the important issue of stewardship. When a museum such as the AUB Museum, free and open to the public, dedicates itself to the care, conservation, and restoration of objects, it fulfills a role that goes far beyond private ownership. These objects are made accessible to scholars from around the world and serve local, national, and international communities alike. This stands in stark contrast to private ownership, where





objects are typically kept in homes and not available to the public. The key distinction here lies between ownership and stewardship: stewardship implies a responsibility to preserve and share cultural heritage for the benefit of all, not just for personal possession.”

Minister Araihi agreed: “This makes a big difference. If the Decree had been properly implemented, and effectively promoted, these private collections could now be part of the national inventory. In that case, you and other researchers could approach collectors, and if they felt confident, they might allow you to study their artifacts. But as things stand, no one is willing to do that, and we have no idea what artifacts are hidden in private homes. We’re all delighted when we visit these homes for dinner and admire the pieces, it’s beautiful, but when it comes to registration...?”

Mr. Khoury interjected:

“This is not private ownership, it is the ownership of the state. These pieces may be in someone’s custody, such as the artifacts at AUB, but legal ownership





belongs to the state. For example, if you wish to take antiquities out of Lebanon for an exhibition, you must obtain permission from the Minister of Culture. The Decree allows for possession, but not ownership.”

Minister Arajji responded:

“With all due respect, although you are the Director General, I’m not convinced by your interpretation. The 1933 law clearly speaks about ownership. When it regulates trade, it’s not regulating custody, it’s regulating ownership. The state is indeed the owner of artifacts discovered by chance or through official excavations. But if, for instance, my grandfather passed away and I inherited a collection from him, that does not automatically make the Directorate General of Antiquities the rightful owner. I’m sorry, but that is not the case.”

Dr. Panayot turned to Professor Renold for his opinion: “I understand that the intention behind this decree is to clarify ownership: individuals retain ownership of their objects, but once inventoried, these items cannot leave the country



without a permit. While this may initially seem restrictive to the owner, there is also a significant benefit.

Once an object is officially listed, it gains visibility, it becomes known, published, and accessible to scholars. This exposure can enhance its value and meaning, both academically and culturally. In this sense, the inventory process introduces a degree of transparency and public engagement that is beneficial.

That said, concerns often arise around ownership, as people fear that state intervention may lead to confiscation or excessive control. However, rather than limiting ownership, this regulation introduces oversight while opening opportunities for loans and public access. In my view, it strikes a balance between protection and visibility, and the broader objective appears both responsible and commendable.”

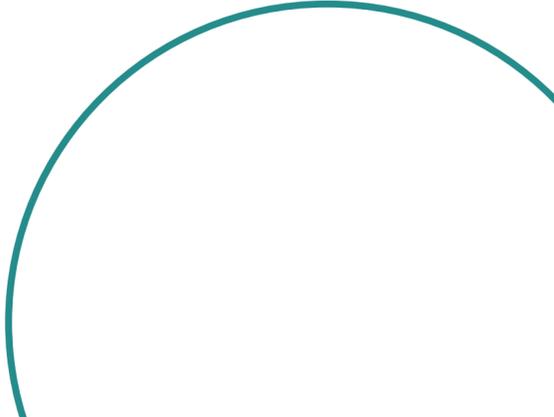
Minister Ariaaji added, “This limitation on ownership doesn’t apply only to

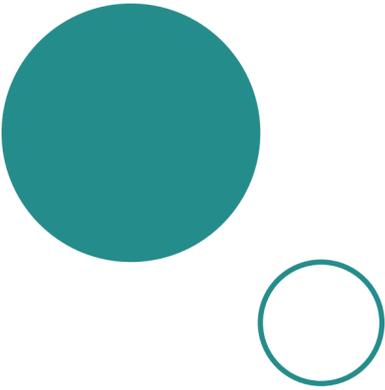


artifacts—it exists for land as well. In Lebanon, land ownership is considered sacred. For example, you cannot sell land to a foreigner without the approval of the Council of Ministers. That's a significant restriction, but it doesn't mean you're not the owner. The same principle applies to artifacts: you may be the owner, but certain limitations apply. Of course, with some artifacts, there may be issues regarding provenance—but that doesn't automatically mean you cannot be the rightful owner."

Dr. Panayot added: "We regularly meet collectors, often third-generation individuals who have inherited their great-grandfathers' collections. Many of them have left the country for various reasons and are unable to take these collections with them. As a result, the objects remain here, often neglected and at risk. What options do they have?"

I raise this because I currently have a list of individuals who are eager to donate their collections to the museum. However, all acquisitions have been on hold since the war in Iraq. This policy was initiated by my predecessor, Dr. Badre, as a precaution to avoid any implication in, or encouragement of illicit trafficking."





Wrapping up the discussion, Dr. Panayot remarked: “This brings me to my final question, which is more philosophical in nature:

“If heritage is the property of the state, then by extension, it belongs to the people. This raises a fundamental issue of how communities can be granted the right to interpret, preserve, and benefit from the heritage that surrounds them?”

Currently, it is the responsibility of the Directorate General of Antiquities to administer collections and heritage sites. Yet the true ownership lies with the public. In today’s globalized world, we are increasingly seeing (particularly through UNESCO conventions) that the most effective and sustainable way to protect heritage is by empowering the local communities who live near and engage with these sites.

This principle should apply across all forms of heritage. So, the question becomes: **how do we move forward?**

Minister Araihi, you yourself initiated an important gesture in this direction by installing artifacts at the airport, a powerful symbol that heritage belongs to the people.





You also proposed placing collections in private universities, an initiative that, though it did not come to fruition, had my full support. We know that Lebanon holds millions of objects that remain hidden away in storage. These could be far better appreciated, studied, and shared if made accessible to academic institutions, both public and private, where they can be actively preserved and interpreted.

Which leads me to this closing reflection: Shouldn't we begin re-evaluating some of our more rigid laws; not in any way to relax the fight against illicit trafficking, but in a way that amplifies the voice of local communities? After all, the pride and sense of belonging of a people are rooted in their territory and their heritage. Shouldn't we give them the tools to care for and celebrate it?"

Minister Arajji suggested:

"Why not establish a transparent partnership between the DGA, the Ministry of Culture, and collectors? That would be a real solution."





Why are we eager to promote public-private partnerships in areas like electricity or environmental conservation, but when it comes to artifacts and antiquities, the subject becomes taboo?”

Dr. Panayot replied:

“I completely support that idea. In fact, I believe that’s exactly where our focus should be. Cultural heritage should be present in educational institutions across the country. We have enough artifacts to exhibit everywhere, of course, under the administration of the DGA and the state, but at least they would be preserved, made visible, and valued. The only way to establish a culture of respect and appreciation for cultural heritage is by exposing children and students to it.”

Minister Araihi added:



“This would only work if the officials in this country truly believe in the role of the Ministry of Culture and the DGA. Too often, the DGA is seen as an adversary, and the Ministry of Culture as amateurish.



Things will only improve when national authorities begin to respect these institutions and empower them to act.”

Professor Renold noted:

“I agree with you. In Switzerland, we strive to work democratically, but we face similar challenges. When we passed our cultural property law in 2005, many feared the art market would collapse—collectors would flee, the black market would expand, and so on. But in fact, the opposite happened. A balanced and practical law was adopted through consensus among stakeholders: the market, collectors, dealers, and public authorities. The result was a functioning system that provided legal clarity and security. No one left, the market stayed, and even thrived. Collectors were satisfied because the law also protected their rights. I believe we must always aim to build consensus between private collectors, private owners, the market, and the interests of the state and community. That’s how we arrive at effective, sustainable solutions.”



As this panel drew to a close, it became abundantly clear that the question, “Who owns the heritage?” cannot, and should not, be answered simply. While this discussion was never meant to resolve the questions of ownership and stewardship surrounding cultural heritage in Lebanon, it succeeded in bringing attention to the complex and often uncomfortable realities surrounding cultural heritage in Lebanon. Gathering voices from academia, cultural institutions, and government, the panel discussion paved the way for more inclusive, transparent, and forward-thinking conversations. If heritage is, as Dr. Panayot noted, the cornerstone of identity, and more importantly, of human dignity and wellbeing, then our shared responsibility is to ensure that its future is shaped by dialogue, accountability, and care.

April 9, 2025

Legitimacy and Power in the Coinage of Al-Andalus, presented by Professor Almudena Ariza Armada, accompanied by an exhibition ***Coined for Power: Rulers, Myths, and Propaganda***, co-curated by Professors Jack Nurpetlian and Nadine Panayot.

 **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT**
Archaeological Museum

THE AUB ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM
and SHEIKH ZAYED CHAIR FOR ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES
Present

LEGITIMACY AND POWER IN THE COINAGE OF AL-ANDALUS

By
Professor Almudena Ariza Armada, PhD
Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Spanish Studies,
New York University- Madrid

Accompanied by an exhibition
**COINED FOR POWER:
RULERS, MYTHS, AND PROPAGANDA**
Co-curated by Professor Jack Nurpetlian & Professor Nadine Panayot

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025 | 5:30 PM
AUB Archaeological Museum

ABSTRACT

Coinage, in general and specifically Islamic coinage, not only had an economic and fiscal function, but was the essential instrument for collecting taxes and dominating the market and financial practices. It was also a crucial tool for transmitting the ideology of power and the ruler's image, as well as a key legitimizing element. Thus, it became a primary national instrument through which different local powers and territories expressed their recognition of the sovereign power and the sovereign power its authority over them.

In the case of al-Andalus, the Andalusian coinage is clear evidence of all this. Through its legends and even signs and monetary symbols, it perfectly reflects the legitimization mechanisms employed through various currency reforms by Muslim dynasties in general and by individual rulers during moments of crisis that required new legitimizing elements.







Professor Almudena Ariza Armad takes the audience on a fascinating numismatic tour

The Conquest

The Umayyad conquest of the Iberian Peninsula in 93/711 marked the beginning of al-Andalus as part of the Caliphate of Damascus, and consequently, the Eastern influences and dynamics in Andalusī coinage became an element of legitimacy for the new territory.

The Independent Emirate

In 138/756, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I established the Independent Emirate of al-Andalus. Despite the extinction of the Umayyad Dynasty in the East and the existence of a new Eastern caliphate, he maintained the Umayyad monetary model as an instrument of dynastic legitimation, an element of dynastic vindication, and a challenge to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. In this way, the coins, as those of the previous period, were characterized by bearing the standard formula of specimen, mint, and year and featured only religious legends: the shahāda on the obverse and surahs 112 and 9:33 on the reverse.

However, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān I and the following emirs only minted silver, possibly due to political reasons, according to his well-known policy of prudence, renouncing the caliphal prerogative to mint gold coins.

During this period, the only monetary reform applied by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II was the introduction of engravers’ or mint masters’ names, reflecting Eastern practices.



Dirham of emir ‘Abd al-Raḥmān II with the name Yaḥyā between the second and the third line of the obverse. AH 219/834-835 AD, al-Andalus. Ex Tonegawa Collection. Image: Aureo & Calicó

The Andalusī Umayyad Caliphate

In the 4th/10th century, al-Andalus became a Caliphate by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III, confronting Fāṭimids and ‘Abbāsids. To legitimize his new status, he minted gold coins and reformed the legends. His initial issues maintained continuity with the previous period, but adding his name and caliphal title placed him on the same symbolic level as the other two caliphs, while also asserting his Umayyad identity. In less than one year he adopted the ‘Abbāsīd model of the double marginal legend, affirming his legitimacy in connection to the broader Islamic world. However, he soon abandoned it in pursuit of his own model and established the Andalusī caliphal typology, replacing the religious legends with political ones on the reverse, and introducing the title of Imām, which challenged the Shī‘a Fāṭimids and vindicated the Universal Caliphate. This is especially important considering that the other Sunni Caliphs of Islam, the ‘Abbāsīd, never did so.

Additionally, the change from the mint al-Andalus to that of his palatine city, Madīnat al-Zahrā', is another symbol of power and legitimacy, responding to the Fāṭimids, whose first caliph had built his own city (al-Mahdīya) and relocated the mint from al-Qayrawān.



Dinar of caliph 'Abd al-Raḥmān III. Standard Andalusī caliphal typology. AH 343/954-955 AD, Madīnat al-Zahrā'. Ex Tonegawa Collection. Image: Aureo & Calicó



The Civil War (fitna) and the Taifa Kings

At the beginning of the end of the Caliphate, Hishām II systematically reintroduced the title of ḥāḍjib on coins, reflecting his weakening caliphal power and the growing political influence of his ministers. This practice became a common element of legitimacy for the later Taifa kings. During the civil war (fitna), Sulaymān al-Mustaʿīn introduced the title of heir (walī al-ʿahd) on coins to reinforce his legitimacy and dynastic claim following the ʿAbbāsīd model. The Ḥammūdīd caliphs later adopted this practice as well. After them, the title would no longer be used on Andalusī coins. During this period of significant instability, engraving the names of local political leaders became another element of legitimacy, and, once again, it looked to the East.



Ḥammūdīd caliphs also introduced legitimizing symbols with a propitiatory value and Shī'a connotations on coins, such as the fishes, stars, octagrams, hexagons, the Seal of Solomon, and isolated letters.



Dirham of caliph 'Alī b. Ḥammūd with stars and fishes.
AH 408/1017-1018 AD, Madīnat Sabta (Ceuta). Ex
Tonegawa Collection. Image: Gaspariño

During the second half of the 5th/11th century, when there were no caliphs to be recognized in al-Andalus, the elements of legitimacy changed: the honorific titles of the Taifa kings proliferated and mentioned a generic caliph 'Abd Allāh, "Servant of God". Finally, when the Almoravid power in al-Andalus was inevitable, seeking legitimization, the Taifa kings began to strike coinage following the Almoravid model.

Almoravid and Almohad period



Hūdīd dirham mentioning the ‘Abbasid caliph.
Without date and mint. Ex Tonegawa Collection.
Image: Aureo & Calicó

During the 6th/12th and 7th/13th centuries, al-Andalus became part of the Almoravid and Almohad Empires, so the coinage was Almoravid and, later, Almohad. The Almoravids legitimized themselves by mentioning the ‘Abbāsīd caliph, using minor titles (amīr or amīr al-Muslimīn); and introduced pious expressions related to the Prophet Muḥammad and formulas for asking God for help, especially in times of significant tension.



The Almohad caliphs, as a political-religious affirmation announcing a new era, reformed the monetary system, affecting not only metrology but also calligraphy and the shape of the coins, minting round dinars with an inscribed square, and square dirhams on which were engraved the axis of the Almohad doctrine: the references to al-Mahdī Ibn Tūmart, and the reaffirmation of the Divine Oneness.

However, when local dynasties tried to confront these Maghrebi powers, new legitimation elements were introduced on coins. The most interesting examples are Ibn Mardanīsh and Ibn Hūd of Murcia. During the 2nd Taifa period, Ibn Mardanīsh introduced pious formulas asking God for help, which played a legitimizing role in a moment of great instability and later became common in the coinage of the Naṣrid Kingdom of Granada, and also used typical Almohad legends on coins that followed Almoravid standards. In the post-Almohad period, Ibn Hūd resorted to several political and religious legitimizing resources in his ambition to be the emir of the entire al-Andalus:



the rejection of the Almohad coin model prevailing in the Mediterranean area; the emphasis on the fact that he had received his legitimacy from the same Caliph of Baghdad, by including on coins not only his mention but also all his titles; and the use of the surah 65:3, which appears for the first time on Andalusí coinage.

The Naṣrid Kingdom of Granada

The Naṣrid Kingdom of Granada, while keeping the Almohad model to make its coins competitive in international commerce, introduced specific legitimizing elements that defined its coinage. They sought religious legitimacy by engraving two new Qur'anic verses, the surahs 3:26 and 3:200, on Andalusian issues, and by incorporating pious sentences.

The political legitimation was achieved by engraving the dynastic motto and their filiation (nasab) on coins, spanning several generations.



A genealogy tracing back to the Banū Khazrāj allowed the Naṣrids to consider themselves even more legitimized than the Umayyads, while also presenting themselves as defenders of Islam.



Dinar of the Naṣrid emir Muḥammad VII. Without date, Madīnat Gharnāta (Granada). Ex Tonegawa Collection. Image: Aureo & Calicó

[Click here to watch the lecture](#)

April 30, 2025

Les Modernités Ottomanes autour des Années 1870, presented by Professor Henry Laurens, and an **Ottoman Marble Egg Donation** by Mr. Nabil Sinno.

 **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT**
Archaeological Museum

L'Orient Littéraire

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LES MODERNITÉS OTTOMANES AUTOUR DES ANNÉES 1870

Lecture by
Professor Henry Laurens

&
An Ottoman Marble Egg Donation
by **Mr. Nabil Sinno**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2025 | 5:30 PM
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استانبول — مطبعة احمدکامل

The event is in French and open to all, no registration required.



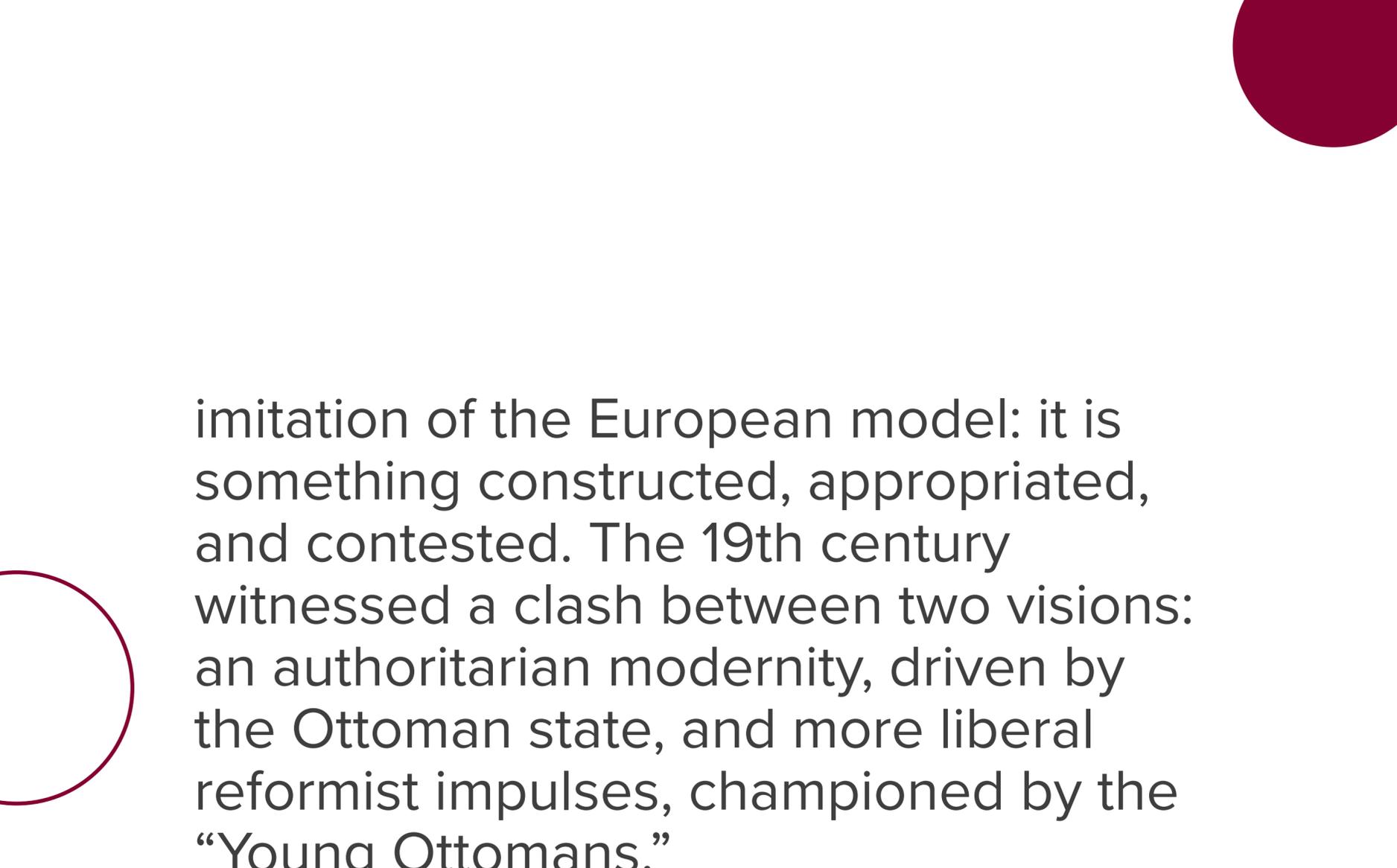
Professor Henri Laurens, a renowned historian specializing in the modern and contemporary Arab world, was invited to the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut to give a lecture on Ottoman Modernities Autour des Années 1870. This talk took place as part of an event celebrating the museum's acquisition of the Constitution Egg, a masterpiece of calligraphy and miniature created in 1911 by the Lebanese master Sheikh Nassib Makarem. This symbolic object served as an opportunity to explore the historical context of the first Ottoman Constitution of 1876 and the profound transformations experienced by the Empire at the end of the 19th century.

The Many Faces of Ottoman Modernity

A Plural and Non-Linear Modernity



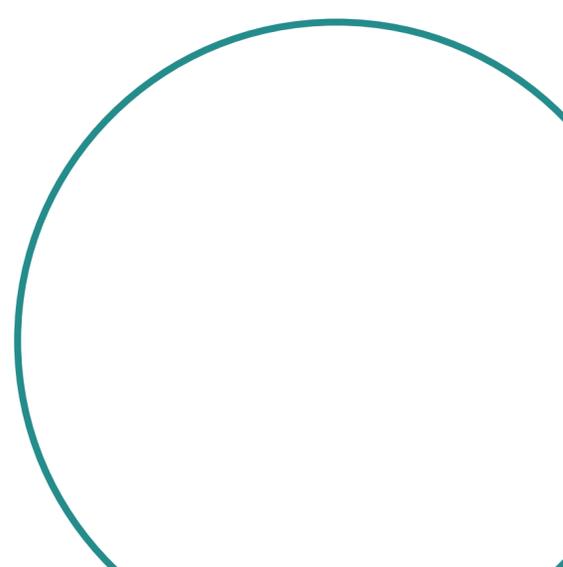
Professor Laurens began by highlighting the multiple meanings of the term modernity in the French-speaking world, ranging from its historical sense to its ideological implications. In the Ottoman context, modernity cannot be reduced to an

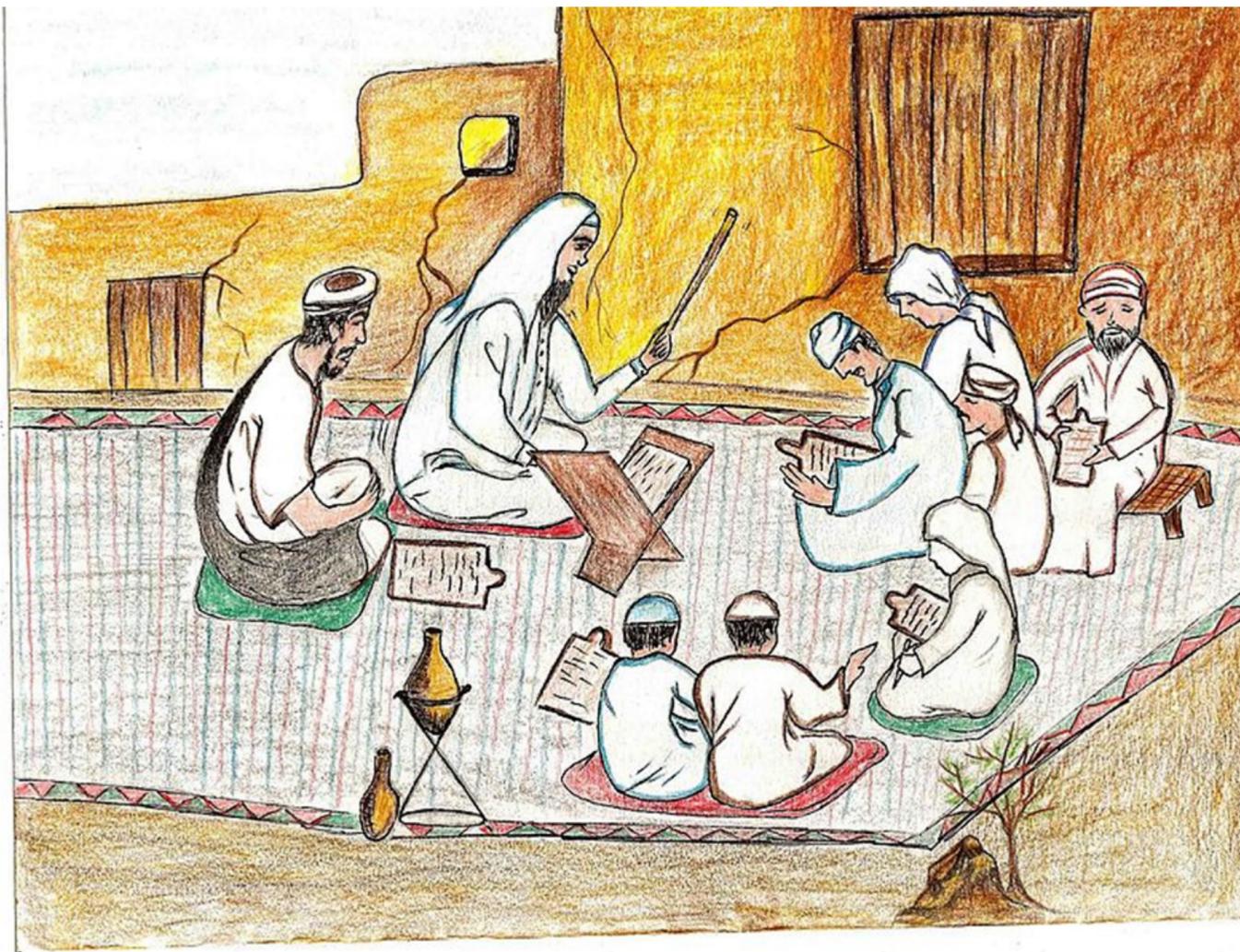


imitation of the European model: it is something constructed, appropriated, and contested. The 19th century witnessed a clash between two visions: an authoritarian modernity, driven by the Ottoman state, and more liberal reformist impulses, championed by the “Young Ottomans.”

From Military Reform to the Modern State

The first reforms, initiated by Selim III and later by Mahmud II, aimed to modernize the army along European lines. The abolition of the Janissaries in 1826 marked the beginning of a transformation era: general conscription, administrative centralization, diplomatic engagement, and the development of new institutions (schools, ministries, judicial systems). These reforms were driven both by a desire to preserve the Empire and by observation of European powers. However, they also provoked internal resistance, often expressed in religious terms.



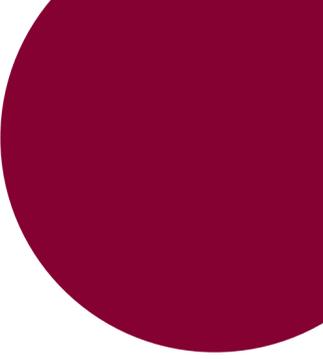


A photo of an Ottoman school before the reforms

A drawing representing traditional education in the Ottoman Empire, with a teacher and students sitting cross-legged.

The Tanzimat: Authoritarian Modernity and Religious Tensions

Between 1839 and 1876, the Tanzimat period saw the implementation of ambitious state reforms, rooted in a centralizing and authoritarian vision of modernization. The goal was to produce a rational state with a uniform fiscal, legal, and administrative system. However, these changes triggered religious opposition: the state was



accused of mimicking Christians and betraying Islam. To counter this resistance, Islamic vocabulary was sometimes repurposed to present Western-derived concepts in a culturally acceptable manner.

Education, Press, Public Opinion: The Emergence of a New Elite

With the creation of modern schools and the increased circulation of printed materials, a new elite emerged. Educated in modern sciences and often influenced by Europe, these young civil servants, journalists, and thinkers sought to shape the Empire's destiny. The Young Ottomans movement crystallized these aspirations: they advocated for a representative regime, broader consultation of the population (shura), and an Islamic reform compatible with liberalism. Figures like Namik Kemal promoted a modern interpretation of Islamic law, seen as a contract between God and humankind. Though a minority, this movement paved the way for the declaration of the 1876 Constitution.





FIGURE 9. An Ottoman cartoon depicting a conversation between a traditional and a modern lady. (For a discussion of the cartoon's caption, see p. 100.) *Hayâl*, no. 157 [June 17, 1874], p. 4.

A caricature of two Ottoman women (circa 1870s)

Text included: “You should be ashamed.” – “It’s you who should be ashamed of your outfit in this age of progress.”



Political Crises, Sectarian Tensions, and the 1876 Constitution

The 1870s were marked by a series of crises: financial ruin, Balkan uprisings, intercommunal massacres, and European diplomatic pressure. To respond to this instability, Midhat Pasha and his supporters drafted the Ottoman Constitution of 1876, promulgated during the reign of Abdulhamid II. It proclaimed the unity of the Empire and established a multi-faith parliament including Muslims, Christians, and Jews. However, this liberal opening was short-lived: after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, the Parliament was suspended and Abdulhamid instituted an authoritarian regime.





By Tenniel, 'Punch', January 25, 1873

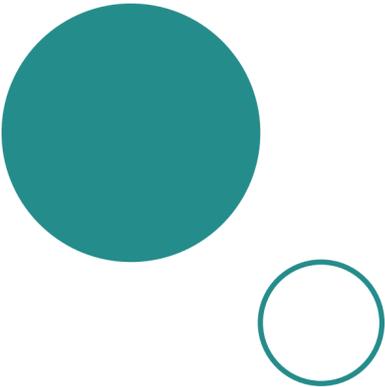
Keeping the Russian at bay.

A British political cartoon about the 'Russian threat' (circa 1873)

A Russian approaches the Ottoman borders, while Britannia tries to push it back. The message: "We must keep the Russians at bay, or they'll invade us."



A depiction of the 'Bulgarian martyrs' (massacres of 1876)
A violent and emotionally charged scene showing
Bulgarian women being martyred.



Islamic Reformism and Arab Elites

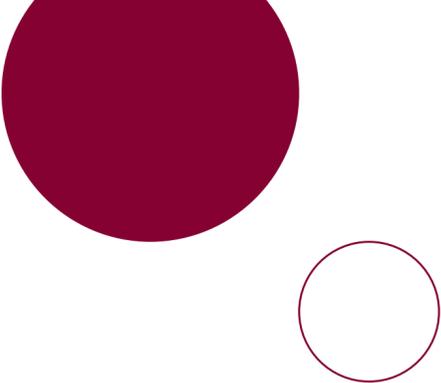
At the same time, in the Arab provinces (notably Egypt and the Levant), another reformist current emerged, seeking to modernize Islam from within.

Thinkers like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh advocated for religious reform inspired by European models. This movement shared with the Young Ottomans an interest in modernity but expressed it through an Islamic framework. Sunni Arab elites also began integrating into the Ottoman administration, a trend that would continue until the Young Turk Revolution in 1908.

Crisis and Legacies

The violence in the Balkans, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, and internal political crisis hastened the end of the constitutional experiment. The Parliament was suspended, though the Constitution remained on paper. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 revived the constitutional project.





In the meantime, Arab elites were increasingly integrated into the Ottoman administration, a process later criticized as excessive “Arabization” by the Young Turks.

Conclusion

Professor Laurens concluded his lecture by emphasizing the deeply plural nature of Ottoman modernity. While reforms were inspired by Western models, they also responded to internal dynamics and real needs for adaptation, survival, and social and religious reform. Far from being linear or uniform, this modernity took multiple forms: enlightened authoritarianism, liberal aspirations, Islamic reform, and popular resistance. It continues to inform contemporary debates on the role of Islam, modernity, and Ottoman legacies in the Arab world. This complexity, illustrated by the story of the **Constitution Egg**, was brilliantly retraced by Professor Laurens, showing that every attempt at modernization is also a struggle to define the future.



The Constitution Egg by Sheikh Nassib Makarem

Background and Provenance

The *Constitution Egg* is a marble artifact crafted in 1911 by Sheikh Nassib Makarem during the reign of Sultan Mehmed V (1909–1918). It features microscopic inscriptions of the sultan's tughra (imperial seal), the Ottoman Constitution in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, two poems honoring the Ottoman army and constitution, and a map of the Ottoman Empire. The piece took two years to complete, showcasing Makarem's exceptional precision and artistry.

During the French Mandate in Lebanon (1923–1946), a French officer acquired the Egg, later entrusting it to Mr. Nabil Sinno in 1946. Upon Nabil Sinno's passing, his family discovered his wish to donate the Egg to the Museum of the American University of Beirut, a donation fulfilled in 2024.

Historical and Cultural Context and Significance

Eggs have long symbolized purity and new life, largely due to their white shells. While the origins of egg-shaped objects in Ottoman art are unclear, they likely draw inspiration from Renaissance Europe, where ostrich eggs—symbols of the Virgin Birth—appear in religious artworks such as *The Brera Madonna* (1472) by Piero della Francesca. These eggs were later adopted into Islamic contexts, often suspended in mosques to repel spiders, including in the chandeliers of Istanbul's Blue Mosque.

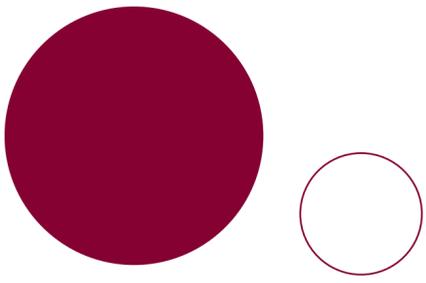
Although not intended for suspension, the ***Constitution Egg*** may reflect this tradition. What truly sets it apart, however, is the masterful calligraphy of Sheikh Nassib Makarem (1889–1971), one of the most acclaimed Arabic calligraphers of the 20th century. A rare master of all classical styles, Makarem's art transcended technical perfection to express profound personal emotion. His tableaux merged color, movement, and feeling, elevating calligraphy into a form of visual poetry.

Sheikh Nassib Makarem (1889–1971)

Sheikh Nassib Makarem was born on September 14, 1889, in Aylat, district of Aley. Educated at Souk el-Gharb High School, Makarem initially followed his father's trade as a carpenter but upon his father's early death, he turned to calligraphy to support his mother and seven siblings. First taught by his mother, he was largely self-taught, modeling his work on renowned calligraphers.

He established a workshop in Beirut, where his talent quickly gained recognition. In addition to his artistic practice, Sheikh Makarem also taught Arabic calligraphy at several institutions, including the International College, Lycée Français de Beyrouth, and as-Sirat College in Aley.

His son, Professor Sami Makarem, became a noted scholar of Arabic and Islamic literature, a calligraphy expert, and chair of the Department of Arabic Literature and Near Eastern Languages at the American University of Beirut.



Master of Miniature Art and Calligraphy

Throughout his career, Sheikh Nassib Makarem (1889–1971) demonstrated exceptional skill in miniature art and Arabic calligraphy. His work reflects a rare fusion of precision, perseverance, and a deep belief in the human capacity to create beauty on even the smallest scale. Motivated by a profound love for art, he produced pieces of extraordinary delicacy and meaning. For Makarem, calligraphy was not merely a technical craft but a deeply expressive art form, where beauty flowed from soul, mind, and spirit.



May 8, 2025

Unveiling the Mysteries of Ancient Egypt: The Opet Festival presented by Dr. Arto Belekdanian, and moderated by Dr. Jack Nurpetlian



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT
Archaeological Museum



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
Department of History and Archaeology



UNVEILING THE MYSTERIES OF ANCIENT EGYPT



With
DR. ARTO BELEKDANIAN
Egyptologist



Moderated by
DR. JACK NURPETLIAN
Lecturer

THURSDAY, MAY 8 | 6:30 – 7:30 PM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, AUB

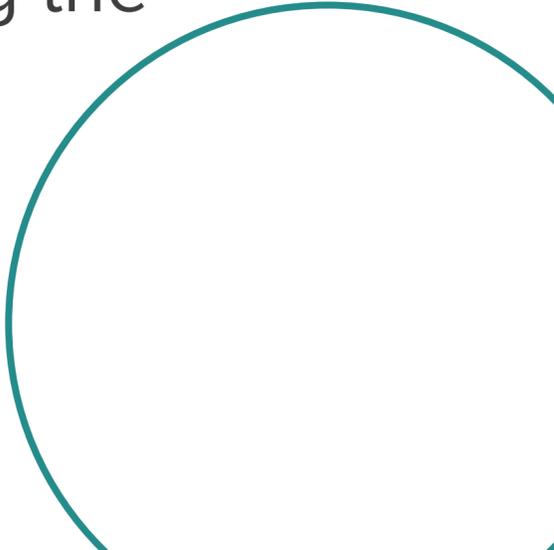


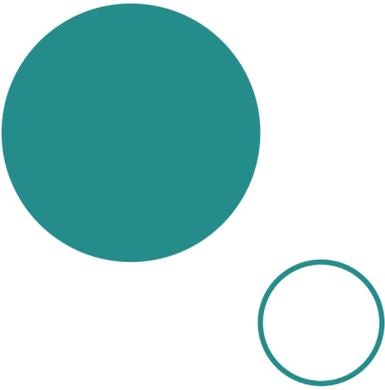


Dr Arto Belekdanian explores the socio-political and religious context of the annual Opet celebration, one of the most significant festivals in the ancient Egyptian calendar, commemorating the yearly Nile inundation and subsequent renewal of all things. This included the natural world, the reigning pharaoh and his kingship, and even Amun, the King of the Gods. By putting this festival in its socio-political and religious context Dr Belekdanian offers a fascinating glimpse into the historical context of the New Kingdom (c. 1550–1069 BC), the role of temples in ancient Egypt, and ancient Egyptian religious beliefs, all while providing a great opportunity to see ancient Egyptian religion in action.

The New Kingdom

The New Kingdom was one of the most prosperous periods of ancient Egyptian history. Spanning the 18th to 20th Dynasties, it began with the expulsion of the Hyksos, a people from the Levant who had been ruling the northern half of the country.





To prevent future foreign rule, kings adopted an aggressive foreign policy that brought security and immense wealth. This prosperity fueled some of Egypt's most iconic monuments: the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings, the Great Hypostyle Hall of Karnak, the cliff-carved temple of Hatshepsut, and the Great Temple of Abu Simbel with its colossal statues of Rameses II. The kings of the New Kingdom credited Amun, the chief god of Thebes, for their victories in battle and for Egypt's prosperity. In gratitude, they built and greatly expanded his temples. Two of these, both located in Luxor, were the setting of the Opet Festival.

The City of Thebes

The god Amun, or Amun-Re when combined with the sun god, had become the most important deity in Thebes. His cult center was the Great Temple in Karnak. Although its origins predate even the Middle Kingdom (c. 2034–1650 BC), it saw its greatest expansion during the New Kingdom (c. 1550–1069 BC). This place was so sacred, that all kings who had the





means to do so added to it. The result is a sprawling temple complex that, to this day, remains one of the largest religious complexes in the world, even though no construction has taken place there in nearly two millennia.

Karnak was also the home of Mut and Khonsu. Amun's name means 'the Hidden One,' and he was associated with the principle of male fertility in nature. Mut, his wife, complemented him perfectly: her very name meaning 'mother,' she embodied female fertility. Their son was the lunar deity Khonsu. Together, they formed the Theban Triad. The ancient Egyptians often grouped their gods into configurations of three, called a triad, consisting of a husband, wife, and their child. Perhaps the most famous triad today is that of the city of Abydos, consisting of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.





King Seti II (left) presenting offerings to the Theban Triad; from right to left: Amun, Mut, and Khonsu. From Amun's chapel in the barque shrine of Sety II in Karnak.

© Arto Onnig Belekdanian

A little over two kilometers to the south of Karnak lies Luxor Temple. The oldest known evidence for it goes back to the early 18th Dynasty. In contrast to the Great Temple of Amun in Karnak, most of Luxor Temple is the result of the reigns of two kings: Amenhotep III (c. 1390–1352 BC) and Rameses II (c. 1279–1213 BC).



The magnificent Grand Colonnade of Luxor Temple. The beautifully detailed and vivid reliefs on its walls, completed mostly under Tutankhamun, are a major source for the procession of the Opet Festival.

© Arto Onnig Belekdanian

Preserving the Universe

Unlike churches, mosques, and synagogues, ancient Egyptian temples were not where the congregation assembled. Only priests were admitted. However, the general population did have access to the open-air courts fronting temples, at least on special occasions like festivals. Temples were far more than just the home of a deity and the venue for the practice of their cult: they maintained the universe.

As we all experience, all things in life age and decay over time; the gods, and the world itself, including nature, were not exempt. The universe was constantly under threat of falling back into Chaos (Nun, the primordial waters of pre-creation). In the theology of Heliopolis—from Greek helios ‘sun’ and polis ‘city’—the sun god was the creator. He arose from the depths of Nun on the first land, and proceeded to bring the created world into being by separating it from the eternal Nun. But creation was not a one-time event.

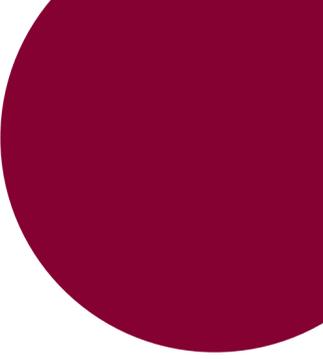


The sun god regenerated the whole world, his creation, every day. On his daily celestial journey, he was believed to age, die and seemingly entering the underworld in the far-off distance in the west. There, he tapped into the very same primordial, dangerous, yet fecund, forces of the ocean of pre-creation that ignited the spark of creation at the dawn of time. Rejuvenated, he exited the underworld and rose from the eastern horizon as an infant. Dawn was not merely the start of a new day: it was a repetition of the act of creation that renewed the world, regenerating it after it had plunged into darkness and chaos.



The sun god travelled along the body of the sky goddess, here represented in the form of the celestial cow. The air god Shu is lifting up the sky, aided by other gods. The goddess' underbelly is studded with stars. The sun god, with the sun disk on his head, can be seen on the left, between the cow's forelegs, travelling aboard the solar barque. From the tomb of Sety I in the Valley of the Kings.

© Arto Onnig Belekdanian

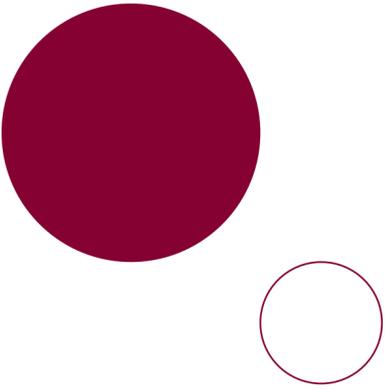


Daily temple rituals mirrored this process, ensuring the world's survival. Priests awakened the god's statue in their dark sanctuary each morning, re-enacting the god's emergence from Nun and rejuvenating the cosmos. The fate of the world rested on the correct performance of temple rituals. As Egyptologist Stephen Quirke put it: 'The closest analogy to the Egyptian temple thus becomes not the church or mosque ... but the power station in which society produces the energy it needs to function and survive. An Egyptian temple is a machine for the preservation of the universe.'

The Procession of the Opet Festival

Every year, on the occasion of the Opet Festival, the statues of the Theban Triad were taken from their sanctuaries in their temples, and transported in a great procession from Karnak to the Luxor Temple. Opet took place during the second month of the Egyptian calendar, roughly coinciding with the





Nile's annual flood—the most crucial event in Egypt's agricultural cycle. This deposited rich nutrients without which the depleted soil would not have been renewed, leading to famine.

The ancient Egyptians drew parallels between the Nile flood drowning the land and plant life around it, essentially killing life, and the sun setting. It was only by dying, submerging into the primordial waters of Nun, being subject to Chaos, that the sun god could be resurrected, and it was only by drowning that the soil and nature could be regenerated. Just as daily temple rituals helped the creator god's daily rejuvenation at dawn, so too did the Opet Festival help the creator god and all of nature be regenerated on an annual basis near the start of the year, just when the flood was expected to arrive.





The earliest evidence for the Opet Festival comes from the reign of the female pharaoh, Hatshepsut (c. 1473–1458 BC), in the mid-18th Dynasty. At this point in time, the procession's journey was over land toward Luxor Temple, and via the river back to Karnak. The most detailed and vivid pictorial evidence are the reliefs carved on the walls of the Grand Colonnade of Luxor Temple under none other than the now world-famous Tutankhamun (c. 1336–1327 BC). These show that, by his reign, both legs of the journey were undertaken by boat.

The statues were carried inside portable barque-shaped shrines, lavishly decorated and guarded by priests, soldiers, musicians, and dancers. The air was filled with drumming, singing, sistrum-rattling, and the sound of trumpets. This was not merely spectacle: this scared away evil spirits. Priests also burned incense—the air that the gods breathed. In essence, the temple environment was recreated in mobile form.

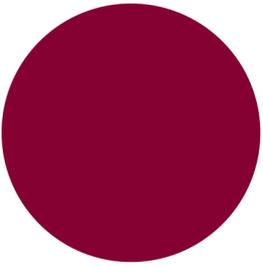




The procession of the barques during the Opet Festival would have been spectacular. Here, in addition to standard-bearers, we see musicians playing lutes, as well as a drummer on the right. From the scenes in the Grand Colonnade of Luxor Temple.

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The pomp and circumstance were further bolstered by chariots drawn by majestic and beautifully decorated horses, the visual spectacle even further enhanced by rich offerings, acrobats performing feats, and the dazzling sight of a flotilla of luxurious ships floating down the river. Tutankhamun's scenes offer a tantalizing glimpse into what all of this would have been like. What a sight this would have been!



Divine Kingship

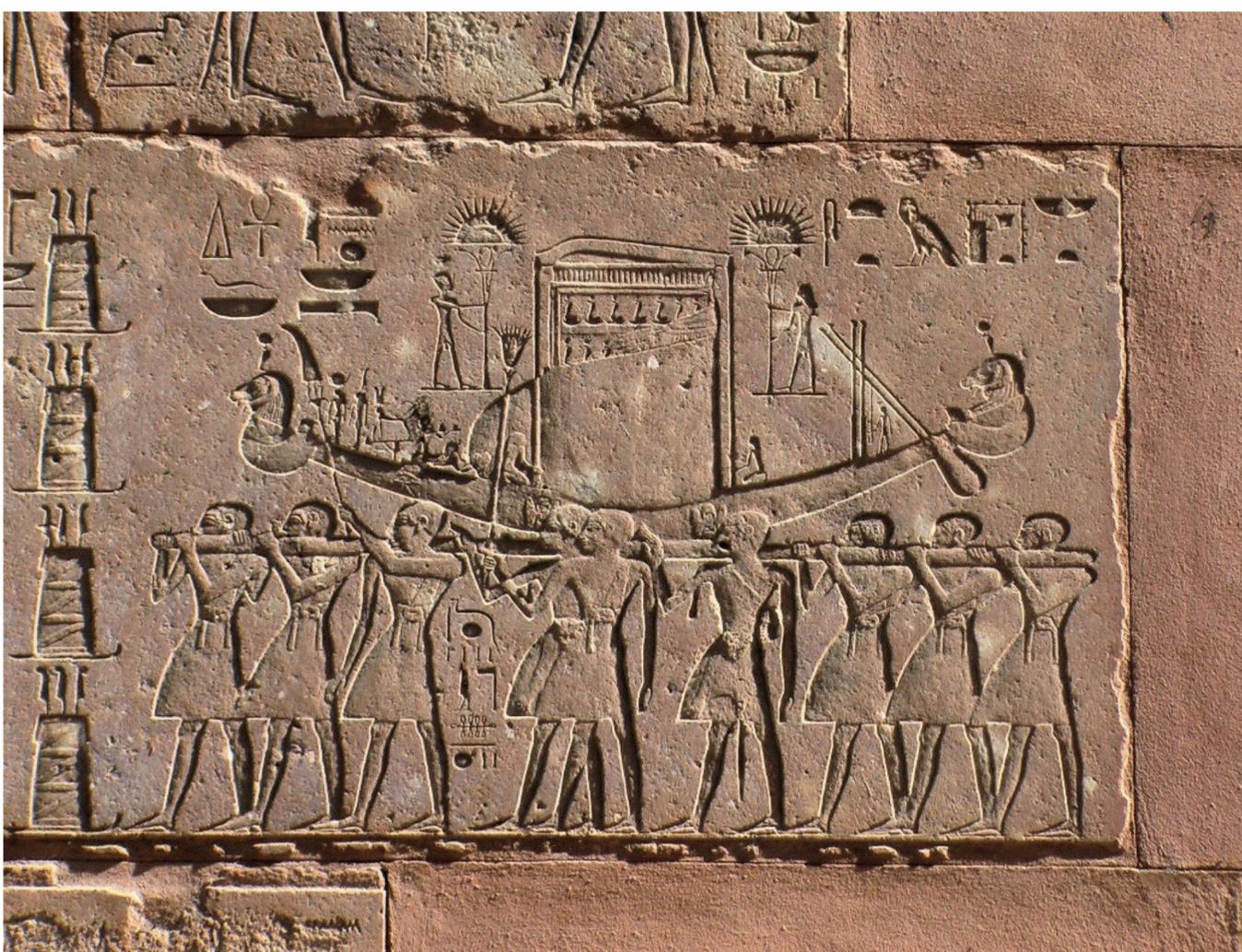
The Opet Festival was not just about the gods but also about the pharaoh. The institution of kingship was the sun god's gift to humanity. The king's role was to maintain cosmic order, called Maat.

In popular culture, the ancient Egyptians are portrayed as believing that Pharaoh was a god. The question of the divinity of the king is a complex and multifaceted one, but many Egyptologists believe that the ancient Egyptians perceived the office of kingship as being eternal and divine, while making the nuance that the ephemeral incumbent of the office was human.

As with all other things in the created world, this fusion of human king and divine royal office deteriorated over time, and had to be regenerated. This is why there was a fourth processional barque—in addition to those of the Theban Triad—that was transported to Luxor Temple during the Opet Festival: the one containing the statue of the divine king.



The royal ka—the life-force of kingship—was passed down from one king to the next, tracing back to the sun god himself, whom the ancient Egyptians believed to have ruled in Egypt’s deep mythological past. The barque of the royal ka travelling alongside those of the Theban Triad reaffirmed the pharaoh’s legitimacy and divine connection.



Priests carrying the barque of the god Amun. From the Red Chapel of Hatshepsut in Karnak, now in this site’s open air-museum.

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Why Luxor Temple?

The goal of the Opet Festival, then, was to rejuvenate the creator god Amun-Re, regenerate all of nature, and reforge the fusion of the ruling king with the divine office of kingship. But why go through all the trouble of a lavish procession travelling two kilometers south to Luxor Temple? There is something to be said about the ‘bread and circuses’ aspect of the spectacle of the procession, but this was by no means the only factor at play.

Luxor Temple was not merely where the Theban Triad stayed for a number of weeks, once a year, on the Opet Festival, otherwise devoid of any residing deities. The purpose was to visit the mysterious deity who called Luxor Temple his home. This was Amenemopet. He embodied Amun’s aspect as the self-engendered creator at the dawn of time. In fact, the sanctuary of Luxor Temple was believed to mark the very place where the first land emerged from Nun, where the creator came into being.



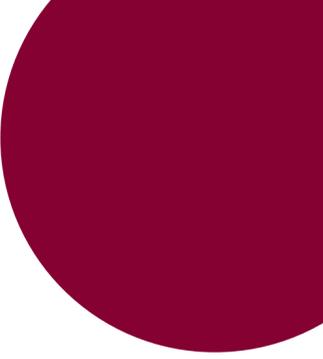
The rituals at Luxor likely involved the king entering the sanctuary, awakening Amenemopet, tapping into the potential energy of this past self of Amun, freshly emerged from the limitless fertility and possibility of the primordial ocean. The king would have then transferred this spark to the Amun of Karnak, reinvigorating and rejuvenating him. In this sacred moment, three entities—the king, the royal ka, and Amun—became fused, sharing their divine essence.

This union renewed the king's right to rule and recharged Amun's creative force, ensuring that cosmic Order and fertility would prevail for another year. The king and Amun emerging from the dark recesses of Luxor Temple, seemingly stepping outside of Nun and back out onto the created world, was seen as a repetition of the act of creation by the exuberant crowds in the sunny temple courtyard.

The Conclusion of the Festival

Once the rituals were complete, the statues were returned to Karnak by boat. If the civic calendar was roughly synchronous with the actual solar calendar (the reason why not can easily be the subject of its own article), the annual Nile flood would have begun to arrive at around this time. The successful completion of the rituals of the Opet Festival inside Luxor Temple would have thus seemingly affected the yearly life-giving inundation. The flotilla of ships then went downriver, back to Karnak, in tandem with the swelling waters that would have continued their northward course, bringing renewed life to the rest of Egypt.

The Opet Festival was one of the grandest events of the Egyptian year, combining theology, politics, and public celebration. The beliefs surrounding it were deeply cherished by everyone involved, from the king, through the priests of Amun, to the jubilating masses. Although no longer celebrated today, Opet's deep significance meant that many



of its aspects were recorded in vivid detail, offering us a glimpse into this remarkable festival, with its chanted hymns, beating drums, flotillas of boats, and the king's solemn entry into the dark sanctuary to awaken the creator. It rejuvenated Amun, regenerated the natural world, and reforged the divine connection between king and cosmos. More than a religious celebration, it reaffirmed the king's divine mandate to rule, strengthened ties between the state and the powerful priesthood of Amun, and delighted the populace with a spectacle that combined piety, pageantry, and entertainment. The Opet Festival thus bound together gods, king, and people in a shared experience of cosmic renewal.



June 18, 2025

Cultural Dialogue and Women's Negotiation Skills, presented by
May Rihani



 **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT**
Archaeological Museum

 **INSEAD** Alumni Association Lebanon

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BUSINESS SCHOOL ALUMNI

THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUB MUSEUM
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cordially invite you to attend a lecture on

**CULTURAL DIALOGUE
AND WOMEN'S
NEGOTIATION SKILLS**

By **May Rihani**

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 2025 | 5:30 PM
AUB Archaeological Museum

The event is open to all; no registration required.



May Albert Rihani, a global leader in education and development with over 35 years of experience across 40 countries, was invited to share her considerable knowledge and insights in international diplomacy. Former Co-Chair of the UN Girls' Education Initiative, she has directed major programs with USAID, the World Bank, and UN agencies, and served as Director of the Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland. A trilingual author of 12 books, including *Cultures Without Borders*, Rihani has also been a candidate for the Presidency of Lebanon (2022–2024).

Rihani describes intercultural dialogue as more than conversation it is a deliberate process of engaging with people of different cultural backgrounds to foster understanding. As defined by Professor Peter Praxmarer of the Università della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano it is “the art and science of understanding the Other.” In today’s globalized world,

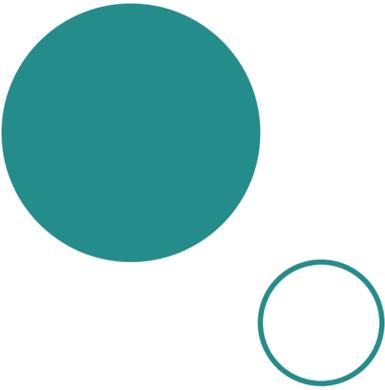
such dialogue is essential for building bridges between communities, traditions, and perspectives that may otherwise remain divided.

Key Principles of Intercultural Dialogue

A number of principles guide meaningful intercultural engagement:

- **Otherness:** is central to the discussion. It challenges us to reflect on how we define “Us” versus “Them.” Often, societies elevate their own group while casting outsiders in a negative light. Yet, globalization has both reshaped and reinforced these divisions, creating new figures of “the Other,” such as migrants or refugees, while preserving old prejudices based on race, religion, or class.

- **Empathy:** another cornerstone. True empathy across cultures requires moving beyond an ego-centered view to one that values community and interconnectedness. By appreciating differences, we open the door to genuine understanding.



- **Tolerance:** recognizing the legitimacy of multiple ways of thinking and acting. In practice, tolerance calls for respect for cultural uniqueness and originality, even when it diverges from one's own values.

- **Active listening:** deepens the exchange. It is not merely about hearing words, but about processing meaning, asking open-ended questions, and resisting the urge to judge or respond too quickly. This approach builds trust and clarity.

- **Building rapport:** the ultimate aim: to form bonds that endure beyond the initial conversation. Similarly, openness and a spirit of lifelong learning allow individuals to approach dialogue without preconceptions, remaining receptive to growth and new perspectives.





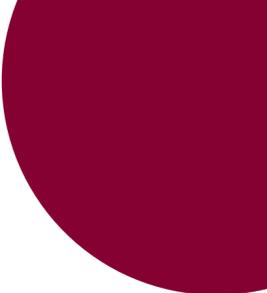
Negotiation Skills for a Global Context

The principles of dialogue also underpin effective negotiation. A skilled negotiator combines assertiveness with empathy, listens attentively, remains calm under pressure, and demonstrates flexibility. Emotional intelligence, being able to “read the room” and adjust accordingly, proves invaluable. The best negotiators pursue their objectives strategically, without losing sight of fairness or the motivations of others.

Gender and Negotiation: Complementary Strengths

While negotiation requires a shared set of skills, research and experience suggest that men and women may emphasize different strengths. Women often excel through their innate capacity for empathy and their ability to invest time in building rapport. These qualities allow them to achieve deeper connections and more sustainable agreements.





Men, by contrast, often bring assertiveness to the table, a quality that can be advantageous in pressing for outcomes. However, assertiveness must be balanced; when pushed too far, it risks alienating others and undermining the process.

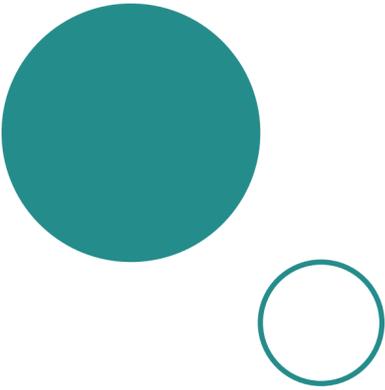
Lessons from the Field

The principles of intercultural dialogue and negotiation come alive in real-world experiences. In Afghanistan, negotiating with educational leaders made it possible to expand schooling for girls, a breakthrough achieved through persistence, empathy, and respect for local concerns. In Mali, dialogue with rural parents helped to overcome resistance to girls' education, showing how rapport and trust can gradually shift entrenched traditions.

Conclusion

Intercultural dialogue is both a philosophy and a practice. By cultivating empathy, tolerance, and openness, and by combining these with thoughtful negotiation skills, individuals





can bridge divides and find common ground. Women, with their ability to nurture understanding and rapport, bring particular strengths to this work. In a world marked by diversity and change, such skills are not optional—they are indispensable.



GALLERY TALKS

Minting Power: Phoenician Coins and the Politics of Identity, presented by Professor Jack Nurpetlian.

JOIN US FOR A GALLERY TALK WITH DR. JACK NURPETLIAN ON ANCIENT COINS

In ancient times, official news was commonly distributed orally through public addresses, as modern forms of mass media —such as newspapers, television, or the internet— did not exist. For this reason, coins were considered the primary means of transmitting news in the ancient world. Mass-produced and widely circulated, coins eventually became one of the most effective, if not the most effective, forms of mass media.

The talk will discuss this theme by providing examples of actual coins selected from the museum's collection.

This gallery talk is organized with the collaboration of AUB Archeological Museum, the Department of History and Thamarat al Funun—A Colloquium in Middle Eastern Studies



Dr. Jack Nurpetlian is an archaeologist in the Department of History and Archaeology at the American University of Beirut, where he has taught since receiving his doctorate from the University of Warwick in 2013. Specializing in numismatics, his research focuses on the coinages of the Syro-Phoenician territories during the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods, as well as ancient Armenian coins. His recent work examines how coins served as tools for spreading political, military, and religious propaganda to the masses.



Tuesday,
April 22



12h30



AUB
Archaeological
Museum



Lunch will
be served



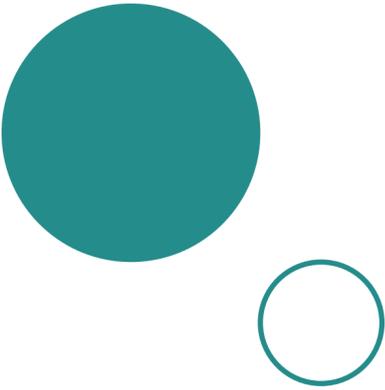
Archaeological Museum

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Professor Jack Nurpetlian
presenting his captivating talk





A war galley, a winged seahorse, two rocks floating in the sea, and a dog searching for a seashell — these are just a few of the tiny inscriptions and motifs found on ancient coins from Phoenicia, on display until fall 2025 at the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut (AUB).

The exhibition, titled ***Coined for Power: Rulers, Myths and Propaganda***, is curated by Dr. Nadine Haroun Panayot, curator of the AUB Archaeological Museum, and Dr. Jack Nurpetlian, lecturer and numismatist in the Department of History and Archaeology at AUB. The exhibition showcases around 20 coins from the university's remarkable and visually striking collection, which spans every major historical period. It takes visitors on a journey through time, tracing the rich history of the Mediterranean and Levantine shores.

“Coinage first appeared in the 7th century BC in Lydia (Asia Minor). From there, the tradition was continued by the Greeks, Persians, Phoenicians and Romans.”



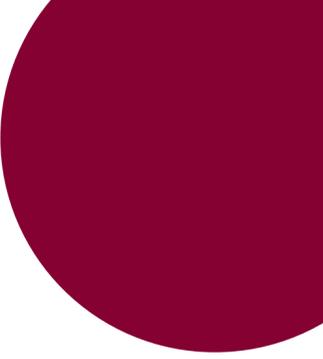


Before that, Babylonians and earlier civilizations used nuggets of gold or silver for trade. Every coin tells a story; it reflects the intentions and agendas of the ruling powers that issued it,” explains Nurpetlian.

It didn’t take long for rulers, kings, and emperors of the ancient world to realize they could capitalize on coins, using them as tools of power and propaganda. It became essential to show who ruled and how, using effigies and symbols. This tradition has continued into modern times through the printing of money and postage stamps — methods by which a country defines its identity, asserts its image, and communicates how it wants to be perceived.

“For example,” says Nurpetlian, “the cedar tree has always been a symbol of Lebanon, even into modern times. It is engraved on coins, printed on currency, and featured on stamps. For the Phoenician coastal cities, it was inevitably war galleys, maritime symbols, and sea deities — because the Phoenicians wanted to assert that they were the rulers of the sea.”



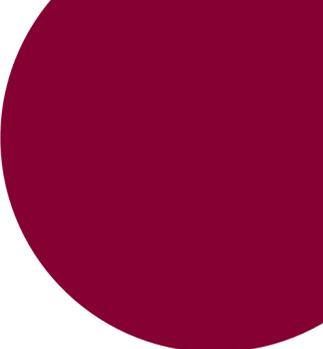


Among the coins on display, the ones from Tyre are particularly distinctive. They feature symbols such as the olive tree, the two ambrosial rocks floating in the sea — which, according to legend, were stabilized by Tyre’s patron god Melqart to found the city — and a dog by the sea chewing on a shell. Melqart, the Phoenician version of Hercules, was believed to have had a dog, and the legend says that this dog discovered the purple dye (extracted from the murex shell) during a walk by the sea. This purple dye, worn by royalty in antiquity, became one of the key sources of wealth for Phoenician traders.

“Under the Roman emperors, cities were allowed to showcase their local identity on the reverse of the coins. The obverse, however, bore the symbols of foreign rulers — a way of showing allegiance to the emperor while maintaining some level of independence, which was essential for peaceful existence and trade,” says Nurpetlian.

On three coins from the same era — the 2nd century BC — minted in Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut, the independent





cities of Phoenicia appear to be sending messages to one another.

At the time, Sidon and Tyre were rivals, and Beirut was relatively insignificant. It had not yet become the first Roman colony in the Near East. Later, however, Beirut gained prominence when it was officially incorporated into Roman territory, and its inhabitants were automatically granted Roman citizenship, enjoying the protection of Roman law.

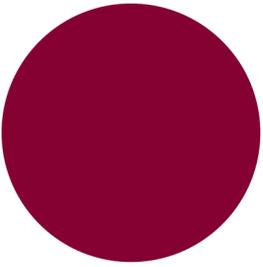
On Tyre's coin, inscribed in the Phoenician alphabet, one can read: "I am the metropolis; I am the mother of Sidon." Sidon's coin counters with: "I am the metropolis, and I am the mother of Tyre." Ten years later, following the accession of a new king and the minting of new coins, Beirut responds boldly, addressing all the coastal cities of the region. Its coin states: "I am the metropolis, and I am the mother city of all of Canaan."

Written by Patricia Khoder, AUB Office of Communications

May 20, 2025

Minting Power: Phoenician Coins and the Politics of Identity





FILM SCREENINGS

During Spring semester, the AUB Museum hosted a series of documentary film screenings and related discussions largely focused on the preservation of the regional archaeological heritage. Mainly projected in coordination with the Beirut Art Film Festival, the films took viewers on a journey through Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen in the company of courageous archaeologists striving to protect their countries' archaeological treasures.

The common thread between all the films is the passion and dedication with which these hard-working archaeologists faced the real or potential devastation of their heritage through war or deliberate destruction. Confronting ravaged or at-risk sites, their distress is palpable, their determination inspirational.



December 18, 2024

Documentary Screening dedicated to Aleppo's heritage: **Revoir Le Bimaristan** by Houda Kassatly



Houda Kassatly in discussion with the audience following the documentary screening.



Houda Kassatly during a book signing



In 2018, after years of civil war in her homeland, ethnologist Houda Kassatly returned to Aleppo on a photographic mission commissioned by UNESCO. Retracing the footsteps of her family, she strolls through her native city describing what she sees: between untouched neighborhoods and gaping ruined houses, she reveals the friezes, rosettes, and stone-lace door pediments that bear witness to the refinement of the past. Soothed by the preserved interior of the Bimaristan Arghoun, one of oldest psychiatric hospitals in the world, Kassatly nevertheless worries about the future face of Aleppo, as life returns to the city. Her 22-minute documentary blends photographs and text, following a documentary filmmaking practice inherited, among others, from the work of Chris Marker. The film was followed by a Q and A with the director and a book signing.



The event concluded with a delightful performance of Christmas carols by April Armstrong, Secretary, SFM Executive Committee, as guests enjoyed the boutique's Open House.



April Armstrong enchanted the audience during the boutique's Open House event

January 22, 2025

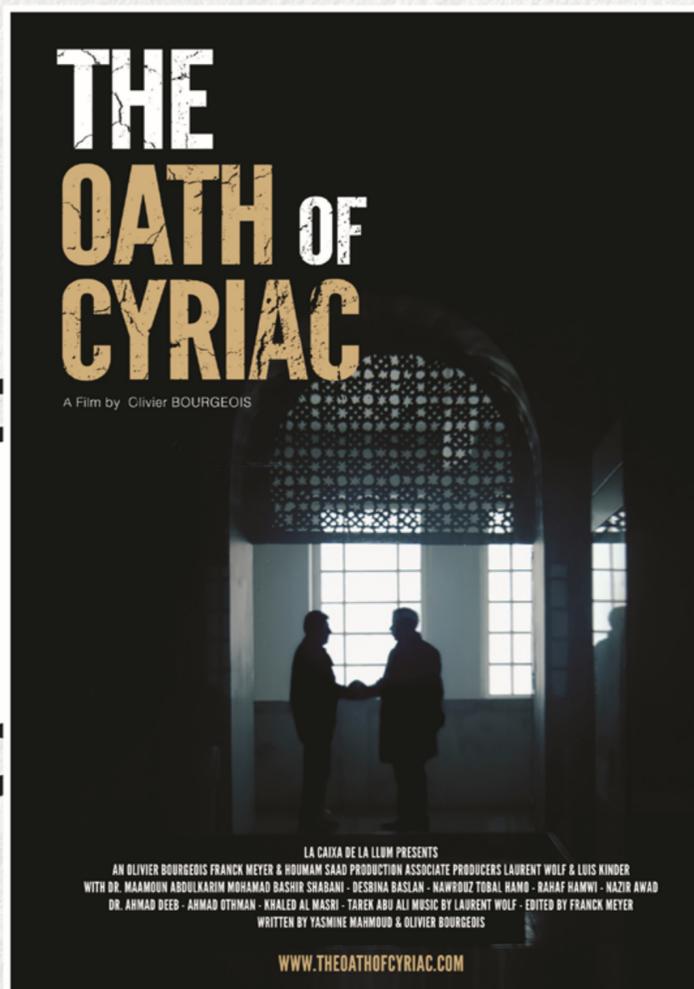
The Oath of Cyriac, by Oliver Bourgeois



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Archaeological Museum

THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE AUB MUSEUM
Cordially invites you to attend the screening



THE OATH OF CYRIAC
by **Oliver Bourgeois**

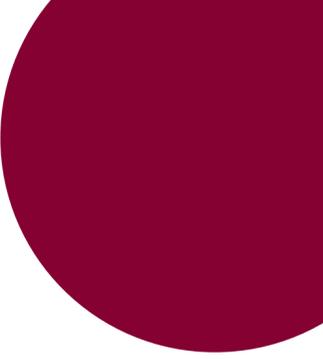
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2025 | 5:30 PM
Archaeological Museum, American University of Beirut

The screening will be followed by a Q&A with the director

The event is open to all, no registration required.

Follow us on
social media





Olivier Bourgeois' multi award winning docudrama *The Oath of Cyriac* (2021), shot over a number of years, tells the gripping story of how, during the Syrian civil war, a small group of archaeologists, museum curators, government officials, and volunteers undertook the monumental task of preserving the Aleppo Museum collection at great personal risk. At first, tens of thousands of artifacts were packed into storage. As the situation escalated, larger artifacts were padded with sandbags. Later still, objects packed in wooden protective cases filled with sand were hidden behind double walls and false ceilings hastily erected in storage rooms. *

As fighting encroached on the Museum, the decision was made to transfer boxes holding thousands of antiquities to Damascus. This secret, high-risk operation was successfully expedited in the dead of night, as loaded trucks navigated the dangerous M5 Motorway.





Ultimately this drama reaches a happy conclusion with the restoration of the Aleppo Museum in 2019. Speaking about the dedication and courage of the archaeologists, Bourgeois said, “Their resolutely apolitical fight is an act of resistance that symbolizes the refusal to see disappear before our eyes what has linked men to each other for millennia.”

Bourgeois employed a range of options to recount his derring-do tale of every day archaeologists, including documentary footage, dramatic reenactment – featuring the archaeologists themselves – and on camera testimony. A pulsating music score amplified the real tensions underlying the operation.

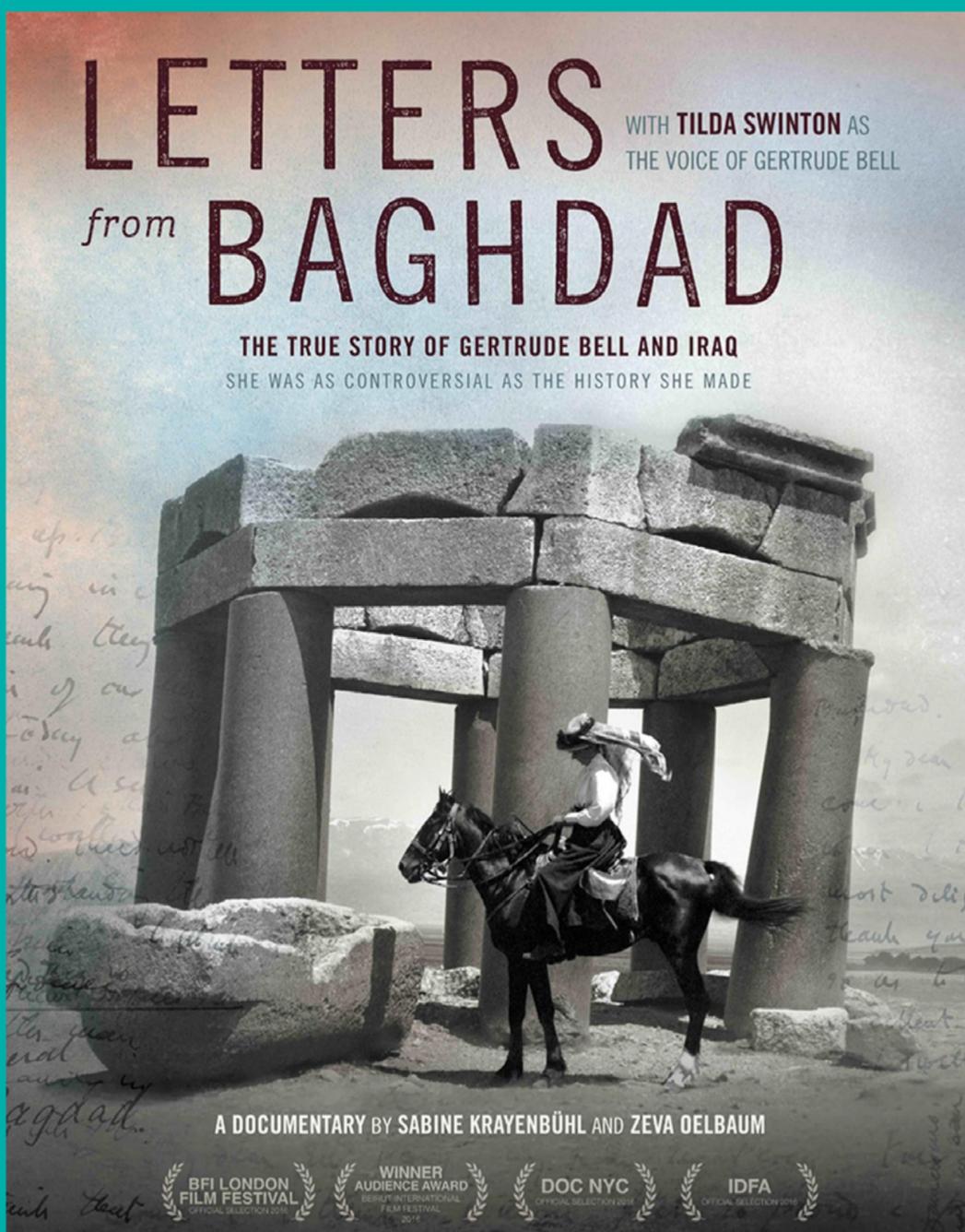
Olivier Bourgeois joined the audience on Zoom for a Q and A at the end of the screening.

*(Similar to the National Museum of Beirut after the onset of the civil war in 1975, when parts of the collection were walled off or buried in cement cases; and not unlike the recent initiative undertaken at our own AUB Museum to pack and safely crate key artifacts).



February 26, 2025

Letters from Baghdad. The True Story of Gertrude Bell and Iraq, a documentary by Sabine Krayenbühl and Zeva Oelbaum 2016. With Tilda Swinton as the voice of Gertrude Bell.



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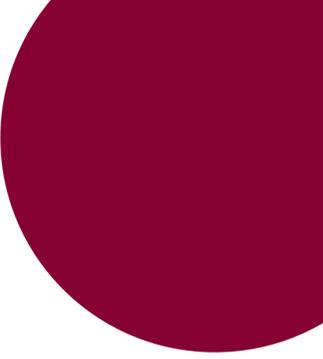
present

Wednesday, February 26
at 6:00 PM
AUB Bathish Auditorium

Tickets sold by
Antoine Ticketing
Online & All Branches
LBP 300,000

With the support of
Saadallah & Loubna Khalil
& Foundation
Philippe Jabre Association

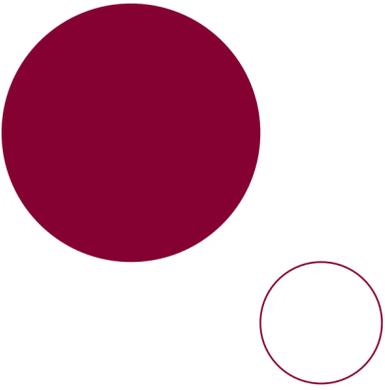




The multi-award-winning film *Letters from Baghdad* steps back in time to explore the life and legacy of Gertrude Bell through a close reading of her personal correspondence from her many years in the Middle East. Sometimes called the “female” Lawrence of Arabia, Bell was a British spy, explorer, and political powerhouse whose untold story is the subject of this film. She traveled widely across Arabia before being recruited by British military intelligence, and after World War I, played a key role in drawing the borders of Iraq.

Using stunning, never-seen-before footage of the region from a century ago, the film chronicles Bell’s extraordinary journey through the uncharted Arabian desert and into the inner sanctum of British colonial power. Bell left more than 1,600 letters, and the story is told entirely in her words and those of her contemporaries – excerpted from their intimate letters, private diaries, and official documents. A unique portrait of both a complex woman and a long-vanished world, the film takes us into a past that is eerily current.



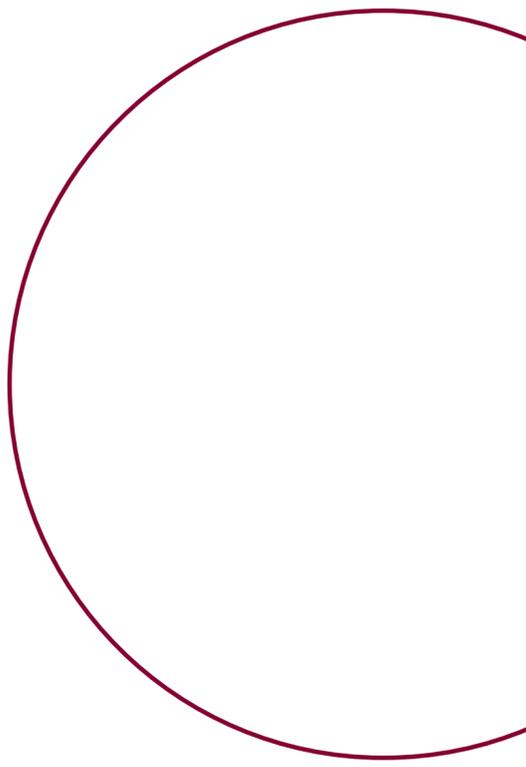


The extraordinary Bell broke all the conventions while simultaneously maintaining the essence of her upper-class English upbringing. An outstanding Oxford scholar who, on the one hand, pined for the security of her family home, and on the other, was a fearless explorer of the East, she spent her life straddling both cultures.

Often unfairly compared to Lawrence of Arabia, Bell was, as the film shows, well ahead of him in her knowledge and understanding of the Arab people and their customs. In 1914, she became the first woman to travel solo by camel across Central Arabia. She took copious notes on all she saw and did, and later provided T.E. Lawrence with maps and information he used during the Arab Revolt.

With her depth of knowledge and powers of persuasion, Bell proved to be a unique asset when recruited by British Military Intelligence, becoming Major Miss Bell, the first female military intelligence officer. The only woman with a diplomatic role at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919,





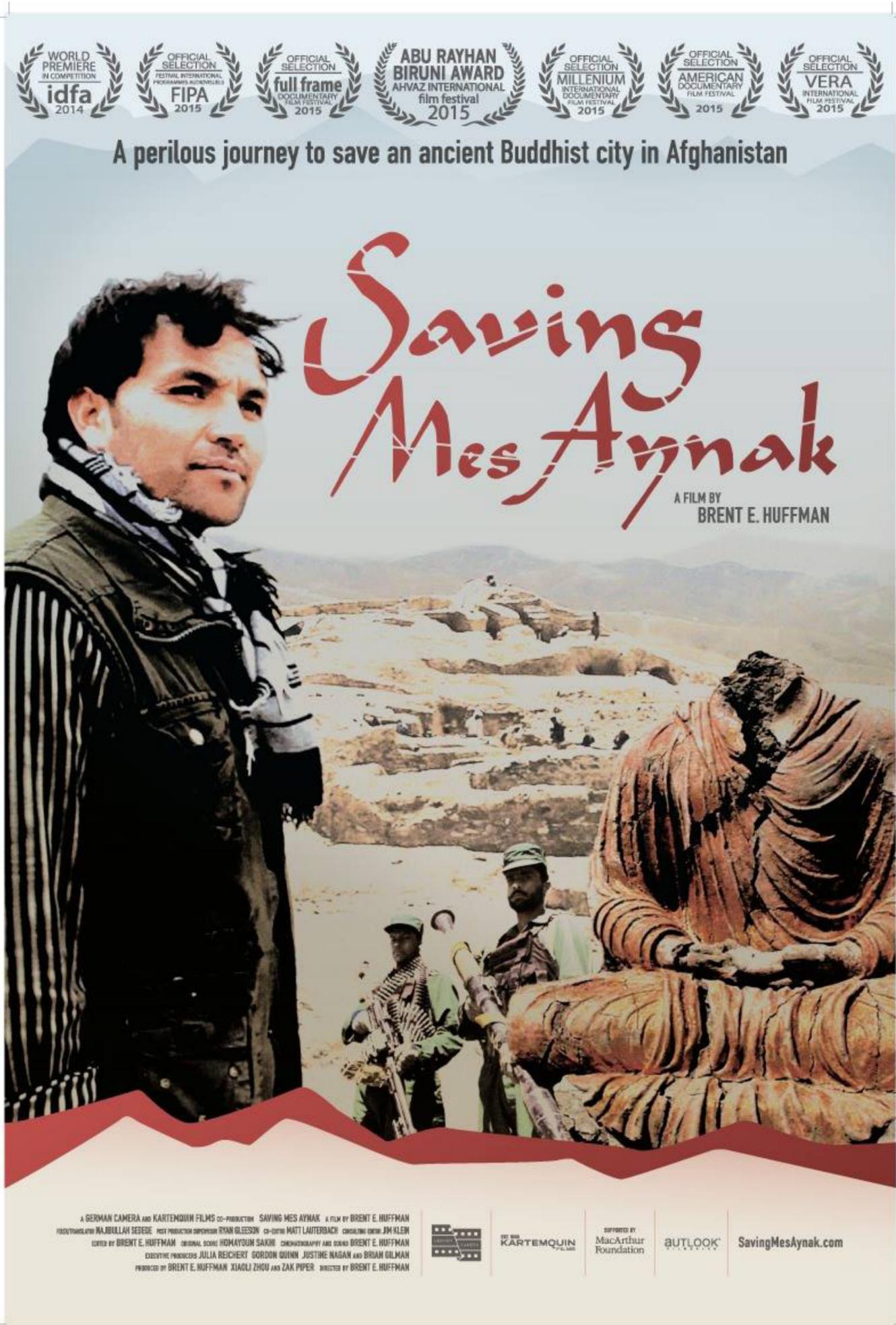
she was also the only woman (invited by Winston Churchill) at the Cairo Conference in 1921. In short, in her day, Bell was the most powerful woman in the British Empire. Yet, in spite of all of her accomplishments, (she also credited with having established the Baghdad Archaeological Museum) she has been virtually written out of history.

During the post-screening Q and A session on Zoom, film-makers Sabine Krayenbühl and Zeva Oelbaum spoke about bringing Gertrude Bell to life through the voice of outstanding actress Tilda Swinton. They also gave voice to Bell's family, peers, colleagues, and critics, through a well-chosen cast of actors. Together along with rare archival footage and photographs, these elements came together to form a captivating tale well told.



March 17, 2025

Saving Mes Aynak. A film by Brent E. Huffman

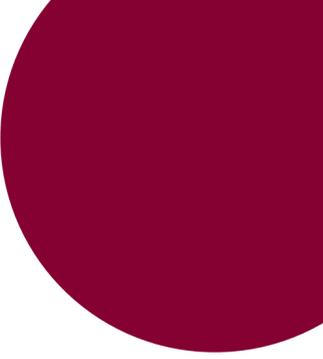




Saving Mes Aynak, follows Afghani archaeologist Qadir Temori as he races against time to save a 5,000-year-old Buddhist archaeological site from imminent demolition. Replete with statues, stupas, and ancient frescos, the 100-acre site, 40 km southeast of Kabul, sits atop a \$100 billion worth of copper deposits. With a Chinese state-owned mining company closing in on the ancient site, eager to harvest its copper bonanza, the odds are stacked against the archaeologists. Nevertheless, at considerable risk to themselves, Qadir Temori and team confront what seems an impossible battle against the Chinese, the Taliban, and local politics to save Mes Aynak from likely erasure.

Directed by award winning film-maker and academician Brent Huffman, the film raises many questions about the conflict between economic opportunities and cultural preservation. At the same time, it pays homage to the courage of archaeologists like Temori defying the odds in their quest to save their heritage.





In his statement about the film Huffman said, “I created ***Saving Mes Aynak*** to be a catalyst for change. My hope is that the documentary can actually save Mes Aynak by rallying international support to stop the destruction of this site scheduled for next year. Mes Aynak, a 5,000-year-old treasure trove, over 500,000 square meters in size, is truly one of the unseen wonders of the world. Comparable to Pompeii and Machu Picchu, these sprawling ruins feature hundreds of life-size or larger Buddha statues, dozens of temples, hidden caverns, and thousands of priceless artifacts like birch-bark manuscripts, gold and copper coins, jewelry and intricate hand painted murals.... If Mes Aynak were to be tragically destroyed, ***Saving Mes Aynak*** would be the only visual record that this wondrous city ever existed.”

Huffman was present for the screening, and the Q and A that followed the film, he said talks were ongoing with the Chinese Mining company but the fate of Mes Aynak was still in the balance.



March 18, 2025

Saving Yemen's Cultural Heritage. In-Person Panel Talks and Film Screenings

BEIRUT ART FILM FESTIVAL - BAFF, in collaboration with AUB - ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, presents

Saving Yemen's Cultural Heritage

In-Person Panel Talks and Film Screenings

Tuesday, March 18 at 7:00 PM at AUB - Bathish Auditorium



Pier Paolo Pasolini *The Walls of Sana'a* | Film screening
Khairallah Khairallah *The Collapse of Yemen* | Talk in Arabic
Pr. Salma Samar Damluji, *Yemeni Architecture: Culture in Post-Conflict* discussion in English with Vladimir Djurovic
Pr. Brent E. Huffman, *Yemen Mosaic* | Film screening & Talk in English
Q&A

Tickets at 300,000 LBP sold at
Antoine Ticketing Online & all branches
www.BeirutArtFilmFestival.org

With the support of



Saving Yemen's Cultural Heritage,
comprised in-person panel talks and
a series of film screenings examining
the quest of archaeologists to preserve
and restore Yemen's unique ancient
heritage.



By way of context and political analysis, seasoned journalist Khairallah Khairallah gave a presentation on Yemen's history and contemporary challenges.

The scene was set with the rare, newly restored, black and white short film ***The Walls of Sana'a*** shot by the legendary Italian film-maker, Pier Paolo Pasolini in 1971. Pasolini was overwhelmed by the magnificence of what he encountered and its obvious imperilment. He wrote,

“...the problems of Sana'a, I felt them as my own. The degradation, which like a leprosy is slowly taking over, hurt me with pain, rage, a sense of helplessness, and at the same time, a feverish desire to do something that compelled me to film.” This documentary turned into an emergency call to UNESCO.

A decade later, in 1982, architect Salma Samar Damluji, a specialist in traditional Arab architecture, began in-depth studies on Yemen's earthen-built heritage.





These studies, carried out over more than two decades, culminated in scholarly works: ***Architecture of Yemen: From Yafi' to Hadramut***, published in 2007, and an augmented reedition, ***The Architecture of Yemen and its Reconstruction***, published in 2021 to include a chapter on construction and reconstruction projects in the Hadramaut and Daw'an regions between 2008 and 2014.

As the co-founder of Daw'an Architecture Foundation and as its Chief Architect and Director (2008-24) Professor Damluji secured funding for reconstruction projects in Hadramaut. Prior to her talk, ***Yemeni Architecture: Culture in Post-Conflict***, along with landscape architect Vladimir Djurovic, she presented a short film showcasing several of Daw'an's traditional earthenware reconstruction projects.



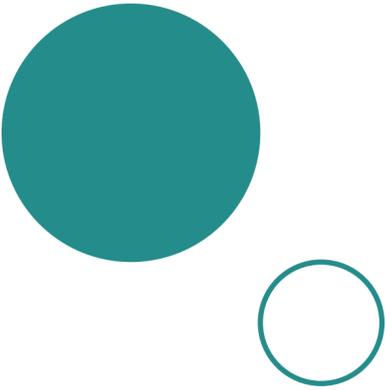
These include historical traditional mudbrick mosques and shrines alongside historic sites like the Quaiti Palace and the former British Administrative Headquarters.



While all restorations are achieved in partnership with local master builders and craftsmen, every effort is made to engage the community in the work which includes a training program for volunteers and young architects and students during in situ activities.

In ***Yemen Mosaic***, the award-winning documentary filmmaker Professor Brent E. Huffman, of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, screened excerpts from the feature film he has been crafting since 2022 about the Yemenis struggle to save their incredible cultural heritage. A selection of three excerpts focused on reconstruction efforts funded by the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (ALIPH). We visit three cities – Shibam, Taiz, and Dhamar – where Yemeni specialists, many of whom are women, document, protect, and preserve their heritage. Together with their colleagues, these women express their deep-felt emotion towards the plight of their heritage and, above all, their determination to save and restore it in face of looting, climate change, and war.





Huffman points to the fact that Yemeni citizens working to protect this heritage risk their lives under constant threat of violence, corruption, and a lack of funding to start and complete heritage projects. Climate change – including flooding, storms, earthquakes, and fires – poses an immediate and increasingly perilous situation for fragile ancient heritage.

Huffman was present at the screening of ***Yemen Mosaic*** and took part in the discussion that followed.



May 28, 2025

Hima Anfeh. In-Person Panel Talks and Film Screening



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Cordially invites you to attend the screening of

حمى انفه Hima Anfeh



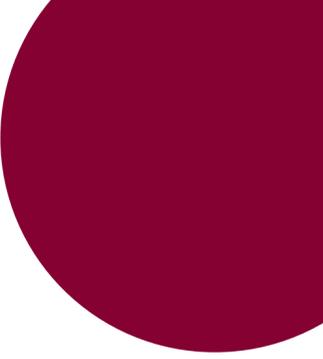
a film by Pascale Féghali and Gabriel Ferneini

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2025 | 5:30 PM
Archaeological Museum, American University of Beirut

Followed by a garden party

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social media





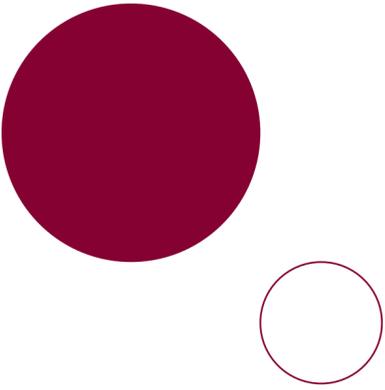
As a special, end of year event, AUB Archaeological Museum hosted a screening dedicated to Hima Anfeh, a film by visual anthropologist Dr. Pascale Feghali Santos and photographer Gabriel Ferneini. The evening highlighted the unique story of Anfeh and the collaborative work that brought the film to life. The screening was followed by the Friends Society's highly popular annual *Garden Party*

Setting the Scene

In her opening remarks, Museum Director Nadine Panayot reflected on her first encounter with Anfeh in 2010, when she joined a rescue effort for the seaside chapel of *Saydet al-Rih*. What began as an emergency intervention soon became a deep connection to a site of layered history: its carved rocks, salt pans, resilient flora, and quiet traditions.

She reminded the audience that while the evening was not about archaeology, ethnography, or natural heritage, the film was infused with all of these elements.





Produced for *Hima Anfeh* as part of an academic initiative of the AUB Archaeological Museum and supported by the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, the film also marked a milestone in the founding of the Digital Cultural Heritage Incubator (DITCH). Panayot expressed gratitude to the directors for their voluntary work and to Haroun Studios for their pro bono post-production support, before paying tribute to the inhabitants of Anfeh whose lives and values give the film its soul.

The Director's Vision

Dr. Pascale Feghali Santos introduced the audience to her path into visual anthropology, shaped by mentors such as Jean Rouch, a pioneer of *cinéma vérité*. She described her dual tools, the camera, for close observation, and the pen, for reflection and analysis, both essential in documenting human experience. The film, she explained, follows a rhythm from dawn to sunset, shaped by the perspectives, stories, and silences of Anfeh's people.



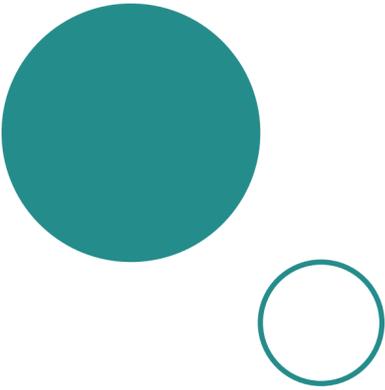


By blending imagination with lived realities, and by respecting the natural pace of conversations, the directors captured what she called “moments of grace,” when participants spoke authentically, beyond performance. Filming, produced between October and December 2023 under difficult national circumstances, became itself an act of resilience and trust-building.

A Collective Experience

Through its grounded and aerial imagery, ***Hima Anfeh*** takes viewers into a landscape where heritage and daily life intertwine. The generosity of the community and the careful, respectful approach of the filmmakers allowed the audience to witness a way of life deeply rooted in land, sea, and tradition. The screening offered more than a documentary, it was a shared moment of dialogue, memory, and preservation. For the Museum, the event renewed its commitment not only to archaeology, but also to living heritage and to the communities whose stories continue to shape Lebanon’s cultural fabric.





CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

From exploring the secrets of the “spooky” Museum at sunset, to unearthing the ancient wisdom of creating colors, and the fine craftsmanship of ceramic tile making, this year’s Children’s Program proved more inspirational than ever for eager young minds keen to explore history and culture at AUB Archaeological Museum. Educational team members Reine Mady and Hsein Sleiman describe the sense of fun and awe the events inspired.



December 6, 2025

Spooky night at the Museum

In a departure from its usual Sunday morning format, on a late Wednesday afternoon the AUB Archaeological Museum welcomed children into its galleries for a very special edition of its Children's Program. As the children gathered together just before sunset, the unique twilight atmosphere set the perfect tone for the evening's spooky theme.



Wizards, witches, elves and others gathered outside the Museum



Let's not forget the treats.
Bake sale to support Grade 12 students' graduation in Beirut.

The ***Spooky Night at the Museum*** event invited children aged 7 to 13 to come dressed in costumes to explore the museum in a setting unlike any other. With lights dimmed and spooky sound effects and music echoing through the halls, the museum turned into a mysterious playground filled with riddles, laughter, and wide-eyed wonder. Among the costumes, Harry Potter and Hermione made an appearance, so did Santa's cutest elf.

A coven of little witches drew special attention when a staff member jokingly told them they were far too cute to be real witches. Without missing a beat, they cast a dramatic “death spell” on him, leaving one of their mothers visibly shocked and the staff member thoroughly amused.



The scavenger hunt begins



Story time





The highlight of the night was an interactive scavenger hunt, featuring clever riddles and rebus puzzles that guided participants to objects across the museum's rich collection, from Byzantine lanterns and Palmyrene funerary reliefs to ancient incense burners, cedar trees, and murex shells. A short tour was conducted beforehand to help the children better understand the riddle clues and the significance of the artifacts. Each clue revealed a new piece of history, blending fun with learning in an engaging and accessible way. As the children wandered the galleries, they were challenged to solve brain teasers like:

“I am the headless rider” - leading them to a Hellenistic figure;

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of us all?” - pointing to a cosmetic mirror in the mezzanine;



“I never made it, I wanted to go and see the world but the blazes of fire struck me down” - a reference to an object from the downtown Beirut excavations where a fire took place.



Older kids were given rebus puzzles and wordplay challenges to stretch their minds further.

Adding to the spirit of community and celebration, the event also featured a bake sale to support Grade 12 students' graduation in Beirut.

Of course, no spooky evening would be complete without candy. Each child received a bag of sweets, and in the spirit of Halloween generosity (and personal taste), a lively and spontaneous exchange of treats took place in the museum's courtyard. It quickly became clear that dark chocolate didn't have many fans, while gummies and lollipops were in high demand.

Spooky Night at the Museum was more than just a festive event, it was an immersive educational experience that brought together families, students, and museum staff to celebrate archaeology, creativity, and the joy of shared discovery.





Tired but happy, that was fun!

February 2, 2025

Let's Discover Colors!



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT

Archaeological Museum

THE CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM
IS ORGANIZING A PROGRAM ON

LET'S DISCOVER COLORS!

**SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 2, 2025**

9:00 AM–12:30 PM

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM

**REGISTRATION BEFORE
THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2025**

A pigment expert will share how colors have been sourced from ancient times to the present. She will demonstrate the process of extracting colors. Guided by our museum educators, children will explore colorful objects in the museum and create their own masterpiece on canvas!

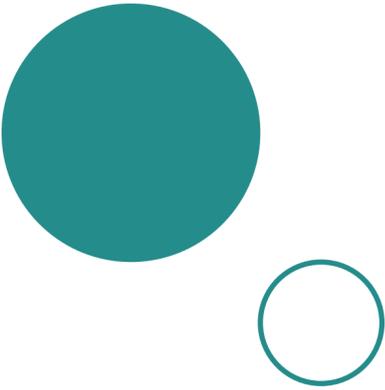
Mankoucheh cheese & zaatar plus juice will be served.
For a greener planet, bring your own water flasks for refills.

7–13 YEARS OLD

\$10 Bring exact amount of cash

Tickets are available at the AUB
Museum shop | 01-350000 ext: 2660/2





***Let's Discover Colors!* took an enthusiastic group of children on a vibrant, stimulating journey into the fascinating world of color. Designed to engage their young minds in both learning and creativity, the program offered a hands-on experience that brought the science and beauty of color vividly to life!**

The stage was set with an engaging PowerPoint presentation by pigment expert Dr. Amale Bohsali, who guided the children through an historical exploration of color. Dr. Bohsali shared fascinating stories about the ways in which colors have been sourced from the Stone Age to modern times. She demonstrated the process of extracting colors, illustrating how different pigments are derived from natural materials like plants and minerals! The children were captivated by her vivid descriptions and absorbed a lot of information about the remarkable science behind the colors they see every day.





Dr. Amale Bohsali's color power point captivates her audience

Following the presentation, Dr Bohsali and the Museum's enthusiastic educational team gave the children a guided tour about many colorful objects displayed around the museum. The wide range of artifacts, each showcasing the richness and diversity of color throughout the ages, gave the children a further understanding of how colors have been used in art and culture for millennia, sparking their imagination about how color can convey a story or express an emotion.



A guided tour showcasing the museum's colorful collection

The highlight of the program came when the children were given the opportunity to unleash their own creativity by designing their personal masterpieces on canvas. Armed with paints, brushes, and a variety of colors, the children worked diligently to produce unique works of art. It was a joy to see how each child used the colors they had just learned about to express themselves, whether through abstract patterns, nature-inspired scenes, or imaginative creatures.

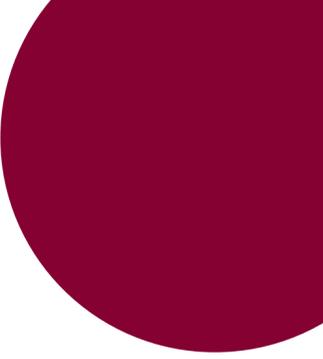


Creating colorful masterpieces on canvas.

Let's Discover Colors! Was a wonderful blend of education and creativity. It not only taught the children about the history and science of color but also encouraged them to explore their own artistic abilities. By the end of the program, every child had not only learned about the impact of color but had also created something truly special to take home as a reminder of their colorful journey.



Creations to be proud of



February 8, 2025

Let's Discover Colors!

In a second session of ***Let's Discover Colors!*** the AUB Archaeological Museum had the pleasure of welcoming students from **Cedar of Hope Academy**. These students were so well-mannered, enthusiastic and focused that the museum education team had to sneak in a bit of mischief to keep the energy lively and fun!

The day began with a captivating PowerPoint presentation on the fascinating history of colors, illustrating how colors are sourced, created, and used. Then, under the guidance of our engaging educators, the students explored a variety of colorful artifacts and objects showcased around the museum.





A PowerPoint presentation and guided tour led by our museum educators

Inspired by the rich history of color, the students then had the chance to express their creativity by painting their own artworks! Wielding their paints and brushes with aplomb they transformed their blank canvases into a world of artistic expression.



Young artists bringing their ideas to life

The day culminated in an energetic, fun “art riot” outside Post Hall, where the students proudly showcased their painting, filled with color, energy, and imagination.

It was a truly unforgettable day combining exploration and learning with lots of colorful fun!



Smiles all around as children present their paintings

[***click here***](#)

March 23, 2025

Ceramic Tiles



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT**
Archaeological Museum

THE CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE
IS ORGANIZING A WORKSHOP ON

CERAMIC TILES

**SUNDAY,
MARCH 23, 2025**
9:00 AM-12:30 PM
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM

**REGISTRATION BEFORE
THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2025**

A tile expert, Mr. Ghassan Fayed (*Blar El Atta*), will share the history of tile making from ancient times to the present. He will present a short film and give a demonstration of tile-making. Guided by our museum educators, children will explore the museum's tile collections, create their own designs and paint them on tiles!

Mankouchah cheese & zister plus juice will be served. For a greener planet, bring your own water flasks for refills.

7-13 YEARS OLD
\$15 Please bring exact amount of cash
Tickets are available at the AUB
Museum shop 01-350000 ext: 2660/2



On a bright, sunny Sunday, the museum courtyard came alive with the joyful buzz of children's voices as they eagerly gathered for a new educational experience. With curiosity in their eyes and creativity at their fingertips, participants of various ages gathered together to begin the fascinating exploration of the history of tile making, from ancient civilizations to modern craftsmanship.



Ghassan Fayad reveals the magnetism of Tiles





Leading the session was Ghassan Fayad, renowned tile expert and the founder of *Blat El Atiq*. Mr. Fayad captivated the young audience through his engaging PowerPoint presentation showcasing a rich array of tiles from diverse regions and historical periods. The journey began in Ancient Egypt, with the children marveling at the vivid blue-green Faience tiles, a hallmark of early ceramic technology. Next came Mesopotamia, where the majestic glazed bricks of Marduk's Processional Way Wall from Babylon (7th-6th century BC) offered a glimpse into the splendor of the ancient world. From there, the children were transported into the classical world, admiring intricate Greco-Roman and Byzantine mosaics, especially the expressive theater masks that once adorned grand halls and bathhouses. The exploration continued into the vivid geometric and floral world of Islamic ceramic tiles (9th–19th century CE), followed by the dazzling Moroccan *zellige* tiles of the 14th century, and the elegant designs of French tiles from the 16th century. The journey culminated in the bold patterns and decorative cement tiles of the 19th century.



Mr. Fayad then introduced the art of Terrazzo, a traditional cement tile used for floors, walls, and mosaic paintings dating back to the 15th century. He illustrated how today these tiles are handmade in his atelier *Blat el Atiq*, located in Maaser Al Chouf, part of the Chouf Biosphere Reserve. Each tile is individually crafted using mineral pigment, cement, handmade copper molds, and a hydraulic press, resulting in a tile 25mm thick and available in various sizes, colors, and designs. He emphasized the mission of *Blat el Atiq* to preserve the tradition of tile and terrazzo manufacturing, by combining traditional craftsmanship and leading technology to create a unique, sustainable, and high-quality product. In a wide-ranging slideshow he showcased a selection of the atelier *Blat el Atiq's* projects both in Lebanon and abroad, illustrating the beauty and versatility of this heritage craft.

To complement the presentation, the children watched a short educational film that demonstrated traditional tile-making techniques, offering an up-close look at the intricate process through expert hands.





Children exploring and finding inspiration in the Museum's collection

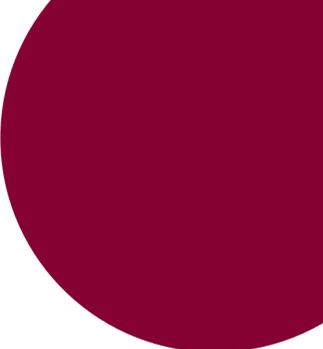
Guided by our dedicated museum educators, the children then explored the museum's tile collection, where they had the chance to see historical pieces firsthand.

Inspired by what they had learned and observed, children tapped into their own creativity by sketching or tracing prepared motifs and painting them onto tiles, bringing history to life through art and imagination.



Colorful and creative final tiles

This enriching event was not only a celebration of cultural heritage and craftsmanship but also a hands-on learning experience that left the children with lasting memories and a deeper appreciation for the timeless art of tile making.



April 5, 2025

In the second session of our **Ceramic Tiles** workshop, the AUB Archaeological Museum was delighted to once again welcome one of our favorite schools @cedarofhopeacademy.

Mr. Ghassan Fayad, renowned tile expert and the founder of *Blat El Atiq*, was, as always, well-prepared for the task. The children enjoyed his engaging PowerPoint presentation before touring the museum with our dedicated museum educators.

After the tour, they had the opportunity to either design their own pattern on ceramic tiles or sketch on pre-prepared ones. They were delighted by this hands-on activity, which sparked creativity and excitement.

The children left happy and full of energy. While some got a bit carried away outside the museum with spontaneous gymnastics and bottle-throwing competitions, their enthusiasm reminded us of the joy that comes with learning through play.

[click here](#)



EXHIBITIONS

March 7 - April 31, 2025

Linea Materna by Naguib Moein

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
Archaeological Museum

W A U
FACT OR ART 2017

LINEA EXHIBITION
MATERNA
NAGUIB MOEIN

OPENING
MARCH 7
12:30 PM
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MUSEUM, AUB

RUNNING THROUGH APRIL 2025
MONDAY- FRIDAY, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM

Follow us on
social media

***Linea Materna*, part two of the AUB International Women's Day celebration, explored the Legacy of Divine Inheritance through the matrilineal line in ancient Egypt.**

In an innovative art installation conceived by Curator Nadine Panayot, featuring extraordinary sculptures by the Egyptian artist Naguib Moein, ***Linea Materna*** initiated a timeless 'conversation' between Moein's sculptures and the Museum's fertility figures.

Moein's intricately carved wooden figures with enigmatic marble or brass faces, carry the weight of history in the symbols and motifs deeply etched in them. The references, thoroughly eclectic, are wide open to speculation. The filigree effect of the carving, in stark contrast to the inscrutable faces, creates a complex interplay between surface and texture, meaning and identity.

Dr. Panayot's judicious pairing of the sculptures with the fertility figures, in cases and around the Museum, provides the opportunity for Pharaonic queens, serenely confident matriarchs and assertive fertility goddesses, to readily engage in dialogue with their sculpted 'sisters'.

Contemporary Interpretations of Ancestral Myths

In her introduction to *Linea Materna* Dr. Panayot writes:

“In ancient Egypt, the power to rule was woven through the maternal line, where royal legitimacy was secured not by the father’s name but by the mother’s divine connection. Pharaohs were believed to be conceived by mortal queens and gods — **Amun, Ra,** or **Horus** —binding their authority to the sacred feminine. The mother was not only the vessel of life but also the guarantor of sovereignty, her lineage the unbroken thread that tethered rulers to the divine order of **Ma’at**.*

But this lineage was not only spiritual, it was embodied. Just as temples housed the divine presence, the human body itself was considered an architectural monument, a sacred temple that contained within it the **Ka***— the vital essence. **The pharaoh’s mother was both womb and shrine,** the earthly vessel through which kingship was justified and passed on.



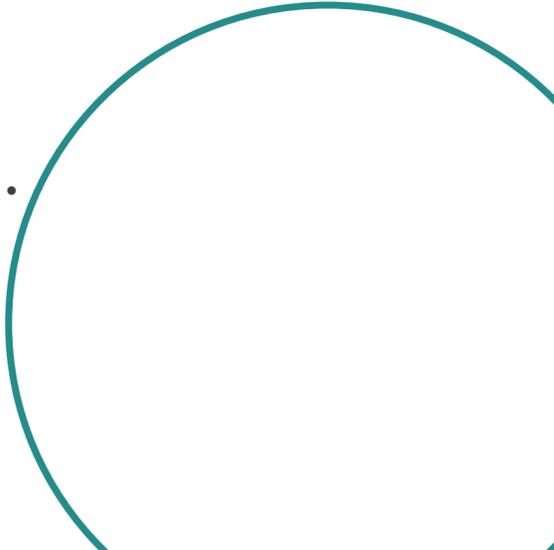
To reign was to be born of the right mother. The kingdom itself was a legacy held by royal daughters, ensuring that every ruler, even those who wore the double crown of Egypt as female pharaohs—**Hatshepsut, Sobekneferu, Tausret, Cleopatra**—was legitimized through maternal descent.

The narrative of feminine continuity, protection, and divine fertility echoes through **Naguib Moein**'s sculptures, placed in conversation with the museum's fertility figurines. They affirm the ancient wisdom: life, power, and permanence flow through the mother.

Past and present converge in this installation, where the sacred feminine once shaped the fate of kings and the destiny of a grand civilization.”

* **Ma'at**: the fundamental order of the universe—**truth, balance, justice, and cosmic harmony**. Goddess and a guiding principle that ensured the world remained in equilibrium, opposing chaos *Isfet*.

* **Ka**: the vital essence, the soul.





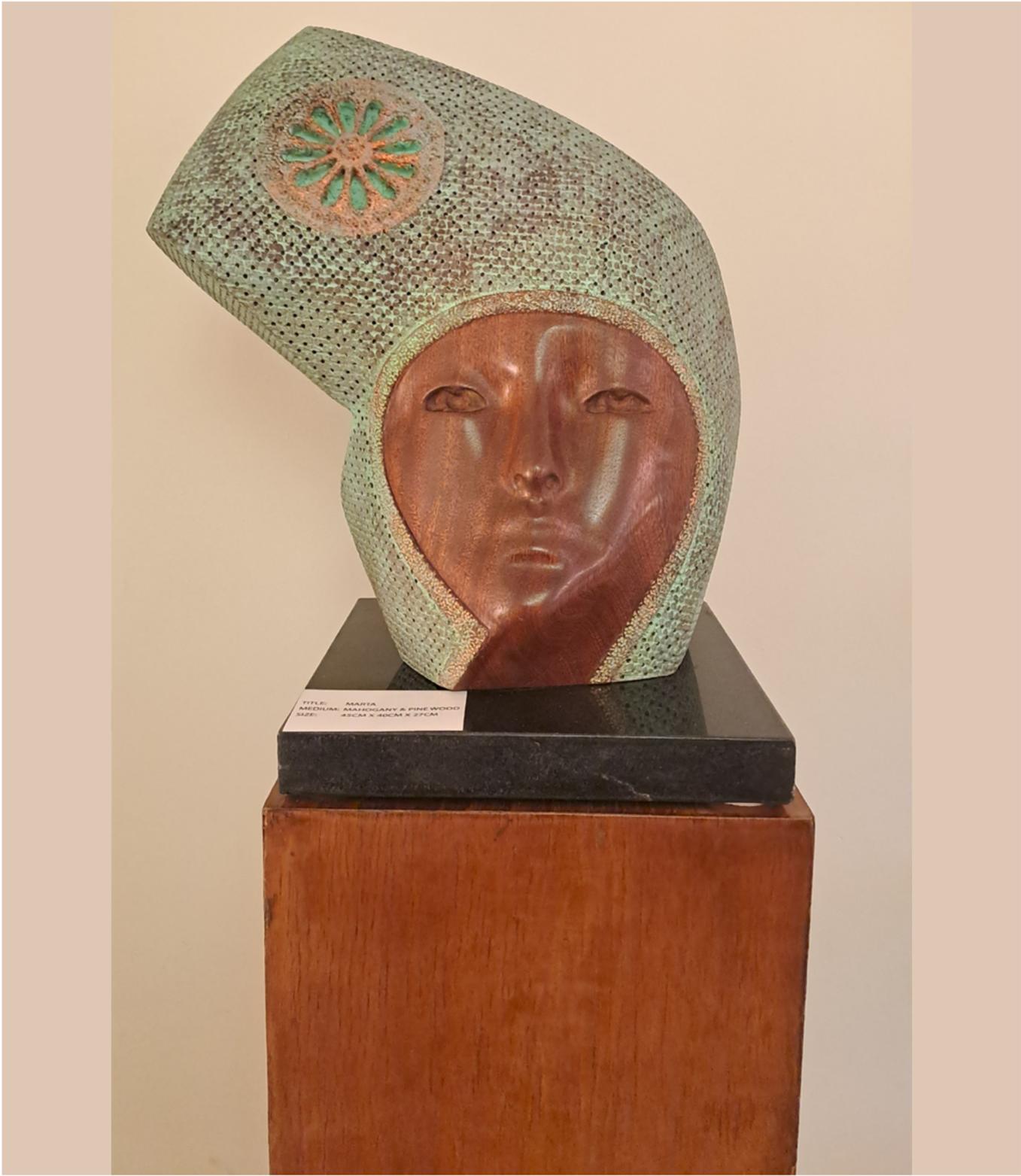
... Naguib Moein's work often highlights the impact of his studies in Italy, a significant influence evident throughout his art. This is reflected in his use of Gothic architectural heritage, with its striking shapes and ornaments, as well as his reliance on intersecting lines and decorative elements that envelop his sculptures. Arches, a recurring motif, appear prominently in both his early and recent works.



Moein's artistic approach is defined by unity of form, structural cohesion, and a strong emphasis on composition and ornamentation. He seamlessly integrates architectural aesthetics with sculpture, creating pieces that resemble intricate monuments, towers, or castles.

His work evokes the essence of an ancient legend, capturing the mythical narratives that have shaped human imagination since the dawn of civilization.

صيفٌ شعامة للأساطير الأسلاف Excerpts
from **Yasser Sultan's** article Translated
by ***Nadine Panayot***



MARTA
(MAHOOGANY and PINE WOOD)



LEO REX
(ROSE and PINE WOOD)



ICON
(BRONZE)



MAXIMUS EQUUS
(STATURIO CARRARA MARBLE
& PINE WOOD)





“Turrim” (Tower) mirrors the form and function of the Egyptian sarcophagus.



Contemplation between an ancient Pharaonic visage and its contemporary sister.

April 9, 2025

Coined for Power: Rulers, Myths, And Propaganda, Co-curated by Professors Jack Nurpetlian and Nadine Panayot (check page 88 of Gallery talk)



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
of BEIRUT

Archaeological Museum

THE AUB ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM
and SHEIKH ZAYED CHAIR FOR ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

Present

LEGITIMACY AND POWER IN THE COINAGE OF AL-ANDALUS

By

Professor Almudena Ariza Armada, PhD
Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Spanish Studies,
New York University- Madrid

Accompanied by an exhibition

**COINED FOR POWER:
RULERS, MYTHS, AND PROPAGANDA**

Co-curated by Professor Jack Nurpetlian & Professor Nadine Panayot

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025 | 5:30 PM
AUB Archaeological Museum

ABSTRACT

Currency, in general, and specifically Islamic currency, not only had an economic and fiscal function as the essential instrument for collecting taxes and developing the market and financial practices. It was also a crucial tool for transmitting the ideology of power and the ruler's image, as well as a key legitimizing element. Thus, it became a primary material instrument through which different local powers and territories expressed their recognition of the sovereign power and the sovereign power's authority over them.

In the case of al-Andalus, the Andalusian coinage is clear evidence of all this. Through its legends and even signs and monetary symbols, it perfectly reflects the legitimization mechanisms employed through various currency reforms, both by different dynasties in general and by individual rulers during moments of crisis that required new legitimizing elements.





A wealth of detail in each tiny coin



Whole civilizations encapsulated in coins

May 23, 2025

Beyond the Worn Object by
Margherita Abi-Hanna (Curator and
Instructor)



BEYOND THE WORN OBJECT

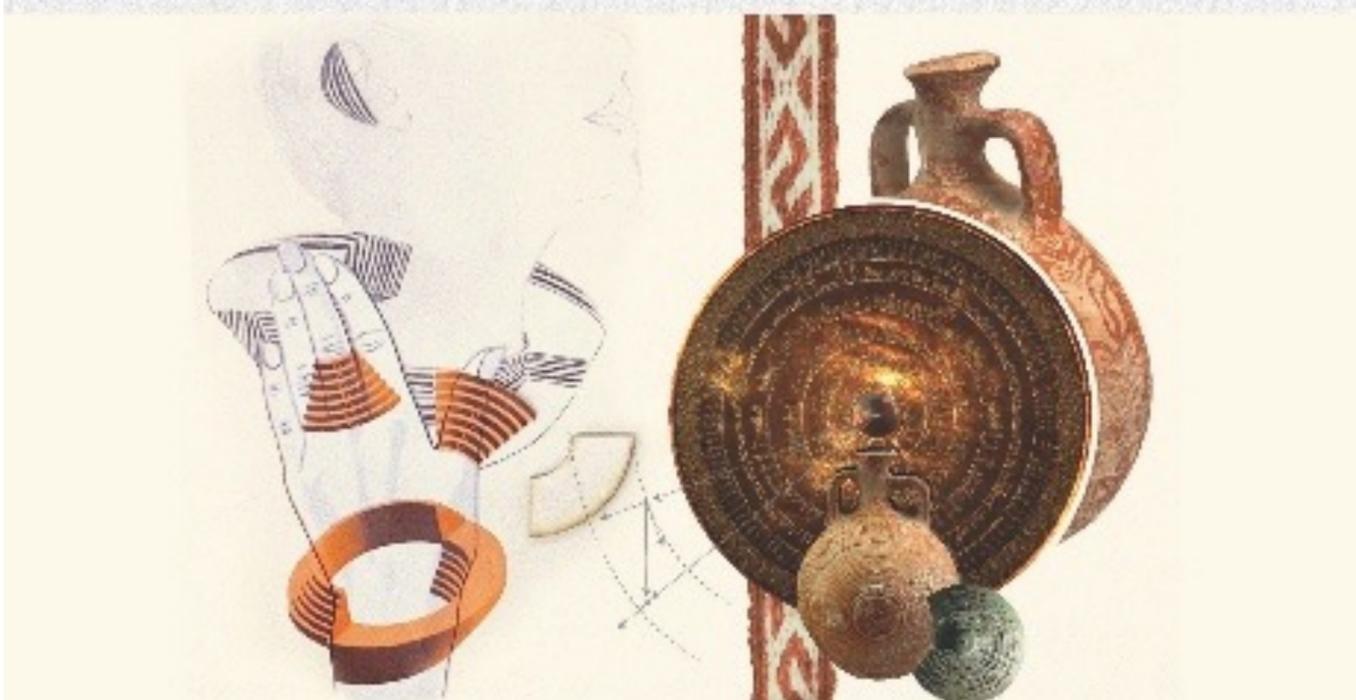
AN EXHIBITION OF STUDENT PROJECTS FROM
THE CONTEMPORARY JEWELRY DESIGN ELECTIVE
FALL 2024-25

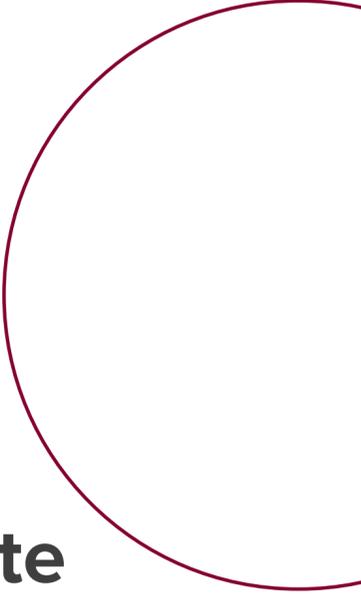
The Contemporary Jewelry Design elective challenges students to reinterpret an object from the Archaeological Museum's collection into a wearable jewelry line. Emphasizing concept, narrative, and experimentation, the course explores jewelry as both adornment and identity marker, engaging with heritage through innovative design and materials.

Curator & Instructor
MARGHERITA ABI-HANNA

FRIDAY, MAY 23, 2025 | 12:30 PM
AUB Archaeological Museum

The event is open to all students. Registration is required.





Design students, their friends and family gathered together to celebrate and admire the innovative jewelry designs inspired by chosen objects from the Archaeological Museum collections.

The designs featured in the exhibition were created as part of the Contemporary Jewelry Design elective at the AUB School of Architecture and Design during the Fall semester of 2024/25. This elective is open to both Graphic Design and Architecture students. Despite the challenges of war and exceptional circumstances, the students completed the course online with remarkable strength and dedication.

The students conceptualized, designed and produced a complete jewelry line, referencing an object chosen from the Archaeological Museum's collections. They explored jewelry as an object worn to adorn the body while keeping in mind its role as an identity marker; reflecting history, style, culture, status, and more.



The resulting work explores the dialogue between objects and the body, critically engaging with historical visual culture and heritage through experimental materials and fabrication techniques.

The Contemporary Jewelry Design elective aims to develop students' ability to translate an object or idea into collections of wearable pieces reflecting their personal interpretations. The course focuses on pushing the boundaries in contemporary jewelry design, allowing the students to explore concepts and narratives through the making of wearable objects and how they interface with the body.



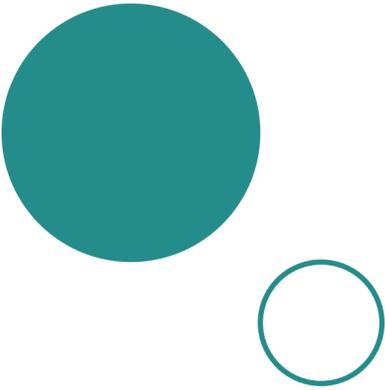
Dr. Nadine Panayot and course instructor Professor Margherita Abi-Hanna opening the exhibition

Among the featured designs:

Cedar Vitae by Theresia Abou Hala (Architecture)



Cedar from Lebanon
AUB Museum



An 8,000-year-old tribute to Lebanon and the enduring spirit of its cedar tree that carries within its rings the strength of a thousand untold stories. In the dark times Lebanon is going through, the cedar tree is an inspiration to every Lebanese citizen, an example of resilience and persistence. In fact, the cedar tree is exactly what each one of us is, and what we inherit from our nationality: powerful, regardless of its hollowness and holes. It reflects the will of the cedar tree to defeat external forces that try to destroy it. Its stump rings hold voids carved out by time and loss. These negative spaces represent the unspoken parts of our narrative as a people. These rings are fingerprints, an impression of our identity, that tells stories of life, growth, and struggle. This jewelry line aims to build a connection between the cedar's resilience and the Lebanese identity, with its wholeness and hollowness. It is an invitation to wear our story with its pride and pain.

Material: Wire / Baking paper / Wooden beads



Amphora Aurum by Marwa Bou Ghanem (Graphic Design)



Phoenician amphora
AUB Museum



Along the Mediterranean Sea a Phoenician ship is being loaded with hundreds of amphorae holding liters of oil that nourishes, and kilograms of raisin seeds that promise abundance. Uniquely shaped with its convex sides, sharp shoulders, and pointed base inviting the hands of the laborers and merchants. Each pointed base serves a function along the life of the amphora, grounding its presence in the stack below the ship's deck along several others and its embedding in soft ground upon offloading. After serving its purpose in trade the amphora was discarded, and a new batch was produced limiting its use once it reaches its destination. Excavations years later reveal a treasure trove of discarded amphorae shattered near shores, or deep in the ocean. Each restored amphora holds a story of a journey across an undulating sea within its cracks and broken pieces. What was once considered an easy producible and often discarded trading jar becomes a highly valuable piece exhibited in museums across the world symbolizing permanence, history, and beauty.

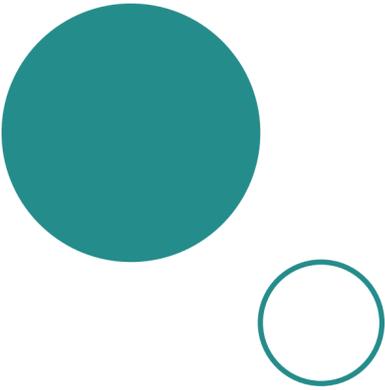
Material: Walnut shells / Gold foil / Chain



Coaxalus by Effa Zantout (Graphic Design)



Mycenaean globular jar (ca. 1400 - 1200 BC)
AUB Museum



Amidst the storm of war and uncertainty, I hold the ring passed down by my grandmother, wondering if something so delicate could truly shield me from the shadows.

Is protection something we wear, like a second skin, or is it a feeling that slips in and out of reach? The ancient Mycenaean globular jar expresses this idea of layered defense. Its concentric circles ripple outward, symbols of protection from another time, form an invisible armor, like shields of warriors, but gentler. Yet these circles move beyond the tangible, aligning with the unseen orbits that govern the cosmos, their endless paths tracing the rhythms of protection. Within them lies an ancient belief, that these patterns can repel the unknown, quietly turning away malevolent evil forces. Here, protection is more than a feeling. It is something carried and worn, like a talisman.

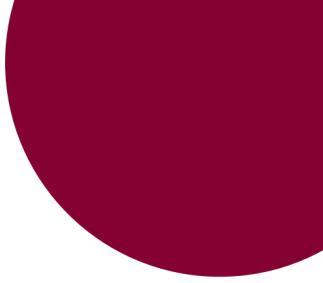
Material: Carboard / Paint



Murex Myst by Dana Hafi (Architecture)



Murex and Phoenician Purple Dye
AUB Museum



Is it worth dying for purple dye?
Tyrian purple was not just a color, it was a symbol of power and wealth. Long ago, only the richest and most powerful could wear it. If someone from the middle class dared to wear this beautiful color, they could face death. It makes you wonder what is so special about purple that people would kill for it? Kings like Constantine the Great wore purple robes to show they were in charge. The splendor of this dye came with a heavy cost; thousands of sea snails had to be crushed to make just a small amount of dye. What is the true cost of beauty and luxury? Is beauty still beautiful if it means harming nature? This jewelry collection, inspired by the rare and coveted Tyrian purple, explores the tension between power, beauty, and the heavy price nature pays for luxury, questioning whether the cost of elegance is worth the sacrifice.

Material: Wire / Paper / Paint / Powder dye



Mystic Meadows by Rasha Abou Karoum (Graphic Design)



Oil lamp (ca. 1600 - 1200 BC)
AUB Museum



Necessity is the mother of invention. In a world before electricity existed, one was beckoned to create, calling inspiration from Mother Nature herself. Taking the light we see in the sun and stars, and bringing it down to the ground, daring to control it, Bringing nature's elements closer to humanity. Creating energy was one of man's first creations. They made oil lamps that blanketed people with light, comfort, and safety. This simple device single handedly became one of the major survival necessities, eventually becoming the first mass-produced artifact. Each object is unique, carefully handcrafted and shaped for its beholder.

Material: Paper / Tulle fabric / Metal rings



The Untold by Alicia Iskandarian (Graphic Design)

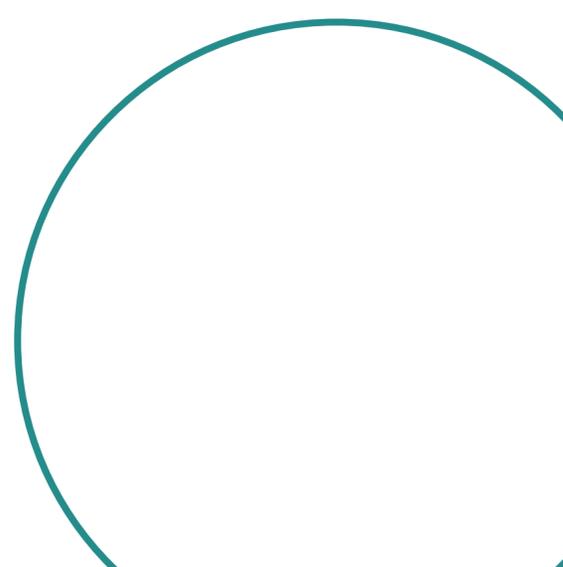


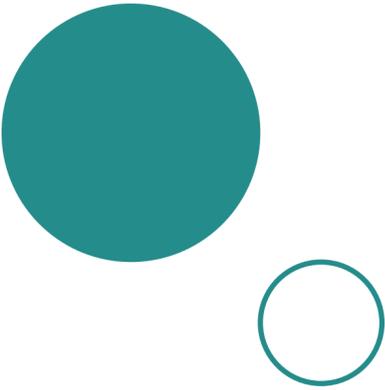
Mould for a bowl (ca. 13th - 14th c.)
AUB Museum



We, as humans, put great effort into surrounding ourselves with beauty. We also keep certain beautiful things just for ourselves – journals, sketches, heirlooms, and souvenirs – collected and cherished for no one else. Beauty withheld, where no gaze dares to wander, an amulet, a locket, bleeding ink in journals kept, a secret untold. Existing only where we can see, fragility of beauty, impossible to hold, so we wrap it in the quiet, my hiraeth. For hidden is not unloved, its spark divine. A treasure kept for those who seek, its heartbeat intertwined. Its sweetness buried in the shadows, its nectar sacred, only mine. The hunger deep inside, to shroud, to treasure, to confine.

Material: Christmas balls / Paint / Lace fabric





INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025

March 7, 2025

In honor of International Women's Day, the AUB Archaeological Museum and the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, along with the Embassy of Spain in Lebanon, presented a program celebrating the women's historical role as the life force and their contemporary role in cutting edge science.





Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship

Archaeological Museum



Cooperación Española



WOMEN PIONEERS IN MEDICINE AND STEM

In celebration of International Women's Day, join us in an event that gathers women in medicine and STEM to learn about their experiences and celebrate their achievements.

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Conference Hall 113, Asfari Institute & Archeological Museum at the American University of Beirut

OPENING REMARKS

Ambassador of Spain to Lebanon,
Dr. Jesus Santos Aguado

PANELISTS

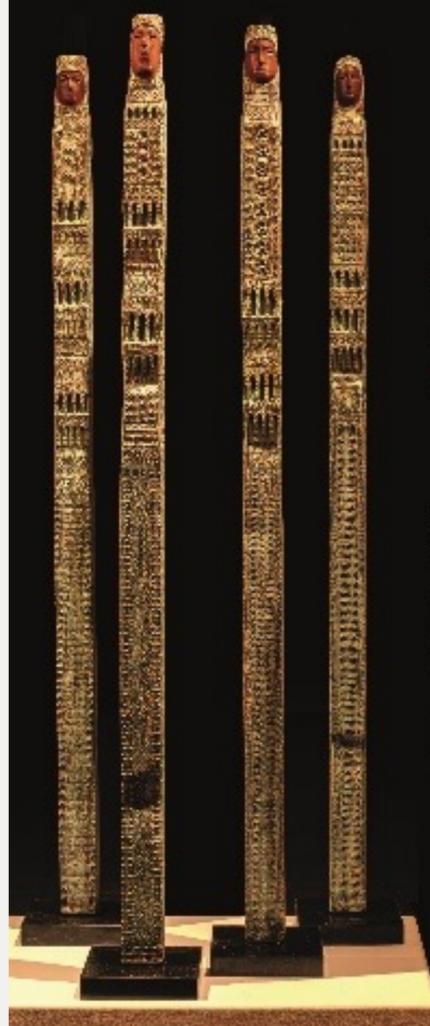
Dr. Nesrine Rizk, Infectious Diseases, AUBMC
Dr. Maya Romani, Family Medicine, AUBMC
Dr. Marianne Majdalani, Pediatrics, AUBMC
Dr. Souha Kanj, Infectious Diseases, AUBMC

MODERATOR

Dr. Mahmoud Choucair, Internal Medicine, AUBMC



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
Archaeological Museum



LINEA MATERNA

EXHIBITION

NAGU B MCEIN

OPENING MARCH 7

12:30 PM
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, AUB

RUNNING THROUGH APRIL 2025
WEDNESDAY – FRIDAY, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Follow us on social media





Lina Abou Habib (left) opens the proceedings

The events kicked off with a lively debate at the Asfari Institute about the role of women in medicine and in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Asfari Director Lina Abou Habib opened the proceedings with a welcoming remark, followed by H.E. Dr. Jesus Santos Aguado, who emphasized the importance of gender equity in medicine and STEM.



Thereafter, in a panel moderated by Dr. Santos Aguado, three distinguished women in medicine at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC): Dr. Nesrine Rizk and Dr. Souha Kanj, both in Infectious Diseases, and Dr. Ghada Fleihan, Endocrinology, discussed their journeys as students and practitioners, overcoming gender barriers, and their impact on medicine and STEM.

The objectives of the discussion were to:

- **Showcase Role Models** – Highlight the journeys of distinguished women in medicine and STEM, demonstrating their impact as practitioners, researchers, and mentors.
 - **Inspire Young Women** – Provide young aspiring medical and STEM professionals with tangible role models who have navigated challenges and excelled in their fields.
 - **Facilitate Dialogue** – Engage in a meaningful discussion on the barriers women face in medicine and STEM and explore strategies to promote gender equity.
 - **Celebrate Women's Contributions** – Recognition
- 



In Lebanon, women represent **52% of university graduates** but only **25% of the overall labor force**, indicating significant challenges in workforce integration. In STEM fields, Lebanese women account for **37% of STEM graduates**, yet they hold fewer leadership positions and are underrepresented in senior academic and research roles. Additionally, only **15% of engineers and 22% of IT professionals** in Lebanon are women, highlighting persistent gender disparities in traditionally male-dominated sectors.



In medicine, while the number of female students has increased significantly over the past few decades, disparities persist beyond education. Women remain underrepresented in medical leadership roles, holding fewer positions as department heads, deans, and executive leaders in healthcare institutions. Additionally, female medical professionals often receive lower salaries compared to their male colleagues, despite possessing similar qualifications and experience. Gender biases in research funding also create obstacles, as studies show that women-led projects receive less financial support, limiting their contributions to medical innovation and advancement.

At **AUBMC** women constitute a significant portion of medical students and faculty, reflecting global trends in increased female enrollment in medical programs. However, challenges remain in career advancement and representation in high-ranking positions. While AUBMC has made strides in fostering an inclusive environment, women still encounter barriers such as balancing professional and personal responsibilities, overcoming gender stereotypes, and breaking into traditionally male-dominated specialties.

Given their views about confronting these challenges, the Asfari event generated a lively discussion between the panelists and the well-attended audience.

The exhibition ***Linea Materna*** formed part of the AUB International Women's Day celebration.



INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY 2025

In recognition of International Museum Day and this year's theme *The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities*, the AUB Museum held an Earth Carnival. Hsein Sleiman describes the joy, laughter, and music that filled the museum and campus.



The poster features logos for the American University of Beirut (AUB) Archaeological Museum, the Faculty of Arts & Sciences (Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Media Studies), and ICOM (International Council of Museums). The event title 'INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY EARTH CARNIVAL' is prominently displayed. The date and time are 'SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025 10:00 AM-4:00 PM'. The theme 'Celebrate Earth and Nature with Us!' is followed by a list of activities: a 10:30 am-1:00 pm session with Hakawati Chadi Saad for costume design, and a 1:00-4:00 pm museum tour. A QR code and contact information are provided at the bottom left. The right side of the poster is decorated with images of children in nature-themed costumes and ancient Egyptian statues.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
Archaeological Museum

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of Sociology,
Anthropology & Media Studies

ICOM International Council of Museums

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY
EARTH CARNIVAL

AUB Archaeological Museum
SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025
10:00 AM-4:00 PM

Celebrate Earth and Nature with Us!

10:30 am-1:00 pm

- Hear tales from Hakawati Chadi Saad
- Design your costume with inspiration from our museum collection
- Parade around campus with musicians (Bring your instruments!)

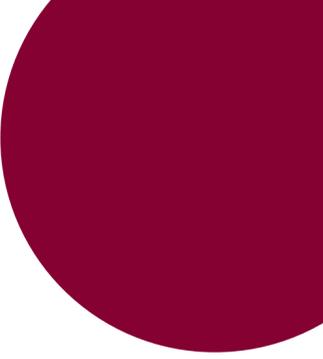
1:00-4:00 pm
Museum tours every hour

Eco-friendly bites in the garden

Free event - registration required - limited places
by Monday, May 12, 2025, at +961 1 35 00 00 ext. 2662
or WhatsApp +961 81 00 94 68

Follow us on social media

The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities

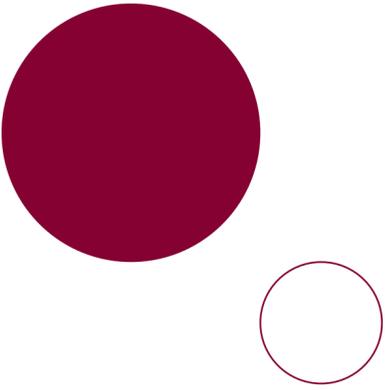


This celebration of Mother Earth reimagined the museum not just as a place of preservation, but as an interdisciplinary **μουσείον** (mouseion), reviving the ancient Greek meaning of the term as a home for the Muses, divine patrons of the arts, sciences, and humanities.

Invoking this spirit, the ***Earth Carnival*** transformed the museum and campus grounds into a lush, celebratory space where disciplines and communities merged. Students from archaeology, political anthropology, and several other majors worked alongside volunteers, staff members, professors, NGOs, eco-conscious artisans, and storytellers to create an immersive day of activities.

The event warmly welcomed families and students from public and private schools across Lebanon, from the southern towns of Hasbaya and Tyre to Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and Tripoli, under the patronage of the Lebanese Minister of Education, Dr. Rima Karami. More than 500 participants moved fluidly between several simultaneous stations, engaging deeply with experiences that fostered connections to folklore, nature, and ritual.





Outside the museum, at **Caliope**, visitors explored the history of Carnival itself, from ancient seasonal celebrations to the cultural and religious meanings that continue to fill the event with vitality today. Led by Professor Nikolas Kosmatopoulos and his Political Anthropology students, this session highlighted Carnival as a timeless celebration of life, renewal, and the rhythms of the natural world, as well as a space of revolt, where disguise, inversion, and collective expression challenge the established order and reclaim the power of the people and the earth alike.

Highlights included student presentations on the Green Man, bridging Dionysus, Pan, and Adonis, from the sacred waterfall of Afqa to the wyrd-laced woodlands of Albion, as well as explorations of global traditions such as Latvia's **Jāņi Song and Dance Festival** and Morocco's **Boujloud Festival**, tracing their pagan roots and evolving expressions in the modern world.





Different stations provided a wealth of information



Inside the museum gallery at **Clio**, three thematic sections unfolded: fertility figurines and temple rituals revealed the sacred cycles of birth, land, and agriculture; ancient masks and costumes illuminated the transformative power of theatre and disguise in Greek and Roman cultures; and the Neolithic “Revolution” section traced humanity’s transition from nomadic to settled life, honoring Earth goddesses and the dawn of cultivation. Each section, led by dedicated scholars and volunteers, invited reflection on humanity’s ancient bond with the Earth.



Discovering masks, one of the hourly museum tours



At **Erato**, right in front of Post Hall's timeless façade, Hakawati Chadi Saad from Hima Hammana, spun epic tales in colloquial Lebanese, weaving stories of the Earth's elements, creatures, and humans. His personal journey from hunter to protector embodied the event's theme of transformation and sacred stewardship.



Children captivated by the Hakawati

In the museum's southern garden, **Polyhymnia** became a lively workshop space where Lebanese University students guided families and students in crafting eco-costumes from local natural materials, banana leaves from Lebanon's south, ivy from Mount-Lebanon, olive twigs from the north, reeds, and wildflowers from the Bekaa Valley. Participants assembled masks, garments, and rhythmic instruments, becoming living embodiments of the festival's fusion of art, ecology, and ritual.

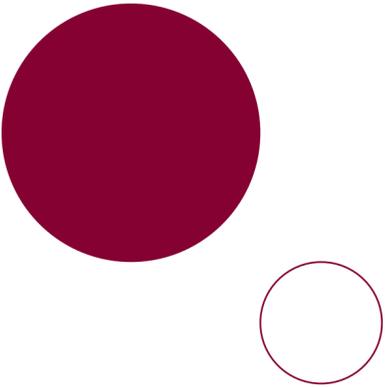


Creating carnival costumes from nature

Amid these experiences, a captivating presentation by Dr. Marc Beyrouthy and his team invited visitors to consider the intersection of botany and archaeology. From pollen forensics to the Ebers Papyrus, Ginkgo biloba fossils, traditional medicinal plants, and botanical iconography, this session grounded the festival in scientific inquiry and illuminated the deep-rooted relationship between humans and plants.



Dr. Beyrouthy explains botanical archaeology



Following our reception of the Earth and its Muses' wisdom, donning costumes bestowed by nature, Hakawati Chadi Saad as the Oracle gestured with his staff to museum assistant Hsein Sleiman who, dressed up as the Green Man, blew his horn summoning the ancient voices of the forest.

With love already abundant, all we needed was chaos. As German Philosopher Ludwig Klages wrote, "Eros without chaos – humanitarianism. Chaos without Eros – demonic devastation. Eros within chaos – Dionysus."¹ Thus, the Dionysian frenzy unfurled in song and dance, marking the commencement of the celebration of nature.

The participants spread throughout AUB grounds, transforming the campus into a lively ode to the gods and goddesses of the earth. Families, students, and the broader AUB community, adorned in vibrant costumes, danced and sang, played instruments, and waved staffs and sticks, circling the campus in a ritual unlike anything participants had witnessed before.



It marked a return to something primordial, a first step on the path toward the numinous where our botanical garden resonated to a different kind of music, with its birds and cats as silent spectators rather than singers and performers.



Let the celebratory march begin

¹Ludwig Klages, *Rhythmen und Runen* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1944), 265



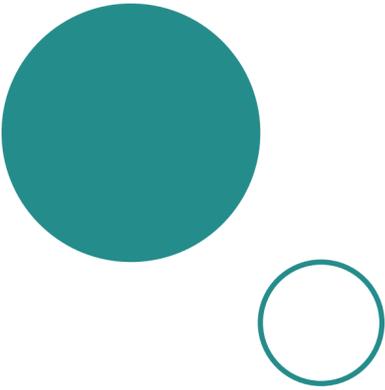


Marching, chanting and clapping in unison



Dedicated and enthusiastic, the team gathered outside the Museum!





BEIRUT ART DAYS 2025

July 9-11, 2025

During the second edition of ***Beirut Art Days***, the city was transformed into a vibrant stage for creativity and cultural dialogue. In the midst of Lebanon's emotional and security challenges, the festival brought together artists for several events, as a powerful statement of resilience through art.

Organized by *Agenda Culturel*, the festival activated spaces throughout Beirut, from museums and galleries to cultural institutions, and alternative venues. From Hamra to Gemmayzeh, Beirut pulsed with the energy of collective expression.





The 2025 edition was held under the patronage of the Lebanese Ministry Culture, with the generous support of the Dalloul Art Foundation, and Loubna Khalil Foundation

The Archaeological Museum proudly participated with two standout exhibitions:

- ***Acrobats*** by artist Hady Sy, a poetic exploration of balance and human vulnerability, offering a moving visual metaphor for Lebanon's enduring spirit.
 - A jewelry exhibition ***Beyond the Worn Object*** that highlighted the artistry and cultural significance of personal adornment, spanning both historical and modern creations.
- 

**BEIRUT
ART DAYS**

BEYOND THE WORN OBJECT



AUB MUSEUM,
HAMRA
ART

09
JULY
2025

9:00AM
3:00PM



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY
OF BEIRUT
Archaeological Museum



AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
MAROUN SEMAAN FACULTY OF
ENGINEERING & ARCHITECTURE
School of Architecture & Design

BEYOND THE WORN OBJECT

AN EXHIBITION OF STUDENT PROJECTS FROM
THE CONTEMPORARY JEWELRY DESIGN ELECTIVE
FALL 2024–25

The Contemporary Jewelry Design elective challenges students to reinterpret an object from the Archaeological Museum's collection into a wearable jewelry line. Emphasizing concept, narrative, and experimentation, the course explores jewelry as both adornment and identity marker, engaging with heritage through innovative design and materials.





Artist Hadi Sy presents Acrobats.



Acrobats (Ascending Souls) by Hady Sy (Text by Nadine Panayot)

Ascending Souls by Hady Sy is installed here in the Glass Gallery, a space stripped bare, yet charged with meaning. Once shattered by the Beirut Port explosion, this gallery's glass collection was meticulously restored, only to be displaced again by another wave of bombing.

In this unending cycle of destruction, restoration, and forced movement, the gallery becomes a fitting stage, mimicking humanity's persistent struggle to rebuild amid repeated devastation.

The sculpture itself forms a cage of nested boxes, each a symbolic prison confining human bodies. Within these bars, intimate scenes unfold: couples embracing, children at play, groups gathered, solitary figures. Yet despite these constraints, countless souls ascend. Though enclosed, the open-topped cages suggest boundless potential: a refusal to surrender hope.

In this wounded space, the work stands as a tribute to our enduring spirit, our shared vulnerability, and the unbreakable human drive to rise, rebuild, and reclaim meaning from ruin.



During Beirut Art Days: ***Imagination as a Path to Lebanon's Renaissance*** a roundtable moderated by Soula Saad, discussed Karine Safa's book "Pourquoi la Renaissance Peut Sauver le Monde" with Karine Safa, Nadine Panayot, Nayla Karamah and Charif Majdalani at Résidence Dagher – Gemmayze.

July 29, 2025

LA NUIT DES MUSÉES

In a night to remember, the AUB Archaeological Museum proudly took part in the long-awaited return of *La Nuit des Musées*, organized by the Lebanese Ministry of Culture after a six-year pause.





As the **third oldest museum in Southwest Asia**, the AUB Museum welcomed thousands of visitors for an unforgettable night celebrating history, culture, and community. Many arrived via the free shuttle buses connecting Beirut's participating museums, creating a dynamic city-wide cultural experience. The AUB Museum buzzed with activity throughout the night, bringing together students, families, art lovers, and heritage enthusiasts.

Visitors experienced a thought-provoking art installation titled **Acrobat** paired with a short film, merging contemporary expression with archaeological heritage. Guided tours, held every hour from 7:00 to 11:00 PM, offered guests in-depth insights into the museum's remarkable collections, hidden gems, and the region's ancient past.

The museum garden resonated with live music, providing a warm and welcoming atmosphere that encouraged reflection, conversation, and appreciation of cultural heritage under the stars.

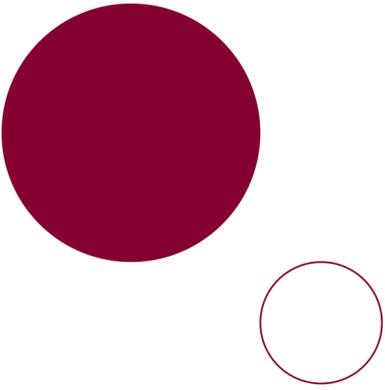


The animated, relaxed setting allowed visitors to gather, engage, and enjoy the summer evening.

We were delighted to welcome a diverse audience and we thank everyone who joined us in making the night a true celebration of art and history.



Hundreds of people from all over the city came to explore the third oldest museum in Southwest Asia



February 1 – 5, 2025

TRIP TO ALULA

Simply enchanting: a small group from the Society of Friends spent four days exploring the wonders of Saudi Arabia's legendary AlUla. Marie-Noelle Fattal describes the trip from the moment of take-off from Beirut.

Saudi Arabia is today embarking on the conquest of its own vast territory. This is no small feat for the largest country in the Middle East, whose 39-year-old Crown Prince, Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS), has a set of grand ambitions. This shift is happening on all fronts: cultural, societal, economic, and technological.

AlUla, the Kingdom's brand-new tourist destination, is at the heart of the "Vision 2030" plan, which aims to develop tourism and promote the rich but little-known historical heritage of Saudi Arabia.





Located in the province of Medina, AlUla is the destination for our small group of Friends of the American University of Beirut (AUB) Archaeological Museum. This unique destination sits in an ocean of sand, where erosion has sculpted extraordinary landscapes and, as a key stop on the ancient incense route and the path to Mecca, AlUla also holds impressive archaeological treasures.

Our journey begins with the traditional “Welcome to Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut” announced over the loudspeakers of our small airport.

Saturday, February 1, 2025

Riyadh

The plane ascends, and we gaze with wonder at the snow-capped peaks of Lebanon disappearing below. A few hours later, as the plane descends over Riyadh, the Arabian desert unfolds beneath us. At King Khaled Airport – modern, spotless, and well-organized – we meet Abdelraheem, our French-Jordanian guide, who will prove to be a model of patience throughout the trip. He explains that, here, “one must





be patient and never get upset” as the tourism industry is still in its infancy. Saudi Arabia faces a labor shortage, and many foreigners seeking a better life come here to work, like our Egyptian bus driver.

On either side of the impeccably maintained highways, palm trees and a variety of other trees grow, irrigated by large amounts of desalinated water. In some areas, the Kingdom’s capital looks like one huge construction site, with cranes as far as the eye can see. Our first stop is at *Al Yasmeen*, a picturesque traditional restaurant where we eat with our hands, seated on the floor.



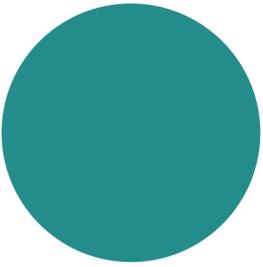
Next we head to Dariya, northwest of Riyadh, a historic city dating back to 1446 AD, the ancestral home of the Al Saud family. Recently restored, its impressive mud-brick structures and narrow alleys are lined with houses decorated with traditional patterns. Saudis come here to learn about their history, visit the site and its archaeological museum, stroll with family or friends, sip coffee or tea on terraces, while their children enjoy the rides. For first-time visitors, the beauty of traditional Saudi garments is striking, even if the full-face veil still worn by many women is somewhat unsettling.



Next, we head to the National Museum, which we unfortunately won't have time to visit but we admire the building from the outside and stroll through the beautiful gardens of the King Abdul Aziz Historical Center, where children play among the green spaces and water features.

We visit Murabba Palace, the residence of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Built around a stunning inner courtyard with a palm tree at its center—a national symbol of prosperity – it was first occupied in 1938. In its Diwan the King received dignitaries, foreign heads of state, and advisors to discuss national affairs.





Sunday, February 2, 2025

Arrival at AIUla and Mont Harrat

The next day, February 2, we boarded a packed Boeing aircraft to AIUla. We learn that most passengers are from various nationalities who have come here to work. The small airport, with its single baggage carousel, struggles to handle the influx of passengers. Those lucky enough to get their luggage early are greeted by a musician playing the oud as they wander through this brand-new, charming airport. Everything is still small-scale here, though the ambitions are massive. Outside stands a golden sculpture, *Clio Dorado* by Manolo Valdés, a female head with hair made of tubes, resembling a tree. We discover beds with a type of basil we didn't recognize. Onboard our new bus, which will serve us throughout our stay, we meet our driver – a young man from Medina who remains silent with neither a hello, goodbye, nor thank you. Our guide keeps his word, remaining extremely patient as the landscape of lush palm groves and striking sandstone and basalt formations unfolds before our astonished eyes.





At the top of Mount Harrat.
© Marie Noelle Fattal

Our first stop is the delightful restaurant *Somewhere*, nestled in a palm grove, where everything is luxury, peace, and pleasure. Several jeeps transport us up Mount Harrat, situated 1,744 meters above sea level, in a volcanic field where dark rock stretches as far as the eye can see.

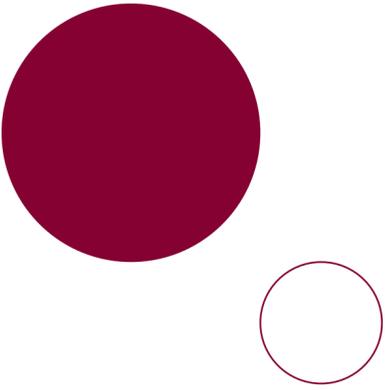
The region has over 500 volcanoes. The winding, impressive road overlooks the entire valley. The highlight is the view from *Okto* restaurant, offering an exceptional panorama of the surrounding landscape, set ablaze by the sunset! As it starts to get cold in the desert, we're handed luxurious fur-lined abayas as we head to our camp.

Monday, February 3, 2025

Ancient Dadan and Jabal Ikmah, The Oasis Heritage Trail, Sharaan Nature Reserve and The Elephant Rock



At Dadan, the lion tombs seen from afar.
© Marie Noelle Fattal



On the morning of February 3, we left our camp for Dadan. Located in the heart of the vast AlUla oasis, it's one of the main ancient cities of northwest Arabia. Arriving at a perfectly curated small museum we are welcomed by local guides, who tell us about Dadan's history – an important stop on the caravan route since the end of the second millennium BC – nestled at the foot of a cliff carved with tombs.

Our guide is a woman, surprising in her traditional black Saudi attire – completely covered, gloved, showing only her eyes. Yet she speaks perfect English and is totally at ease, her voice strong and clear. Under her long robe, we spot white sneakers; behind her veil, we can see her smiling eyes.

Following this introduction, we're taken to admire, through a telescope, tombs carved into the rock, flanked by two lions on each side – perhaps to protect the deceased. We also visit the archaeological excavations of Dadan.





Discovering the archaeological excavations
of Dadan.

© Marie Noelle Fattal

Jabal Ikmah

We continue on to Jabal Ikmah, where we admire rock carvings dating from the 6th-3rd century BC. These carvings are a valuable source of information about the origins of Arabic language,

beliefs, and customs. It's incredibly moving to discover depictions of animals, caravans, and everyday life from millennia ago, preserved through these inscriptions. We pause at a stone carving workshop to try our hand at reproducing, in our own way, the works of Dadan and Jabal Ikamah's ancient residents.



Jacquot and Nadia admiring the inscriptions at Jabal Ikamah.

© Marie Noelle Fattal

The Oasis Heritage Trail

Next, we head to the old town in the heart of a palm grove, once a summer retreat for AlUla residents seeking cooler weather. We're tired, so we're thrilled to find the Eric Kayser Café and rush in for cappuccinos and croissants on its lovely terrace overlooking the oasis. This well-deserved break is a prelude to a walk through the lush Oasis Heritage Trail, which winds through a picturesque setting shaded by palms, where old houses blend harmoniously with the dense, airy, and serene vegetation.

Lunchtime!

Our French-Jordanian guide takes us to a very unusual restaurant where we eat in small private rooms for 5 or 6 people lining a hallway. He wants to show us how traditional Saudi families dine – the women should not be seen. We're not fully convinced by the experience, but we have fun and enjoy our meal.

Sharaan Nature Reserve



In the Sharaan Nature Reserve.
© Marie Noelle Fattal

That afternoon, we went on a 4x4 excursion to explore the Sharaan Nature Reserve. At the Pangaea Adventure Club, we wait for jeeps and drivers who are late, but we make the best of it, playing archery and chatting. Finally, they arrive, and we head into a breathtaking natural sanctuary.



Covering 1,540 km², the reserve aims to protect and regenerate the biodiversity of AlUla's canyons, valleys, and deserts. The vast landscapes offer visitors a spectacle of dunes and rock formations with changing hues – red, green, and an infinite palette of ochres that fill the eyes and soul. Here, the greatest sculptors would pale in comparison – or be struck by inspiration – nature and time have sculpted a truly divine and unique masterpiece.

The jeep drivers, true experts, maneuver their vehicles skillfully knowing how to accelerate and decelerate to avoid getting stuck in the sand. Dressed in traditional attire, never without their sunglasses, they are unfailingly welcoming and proud to show off their desert.



The Elephant Rock

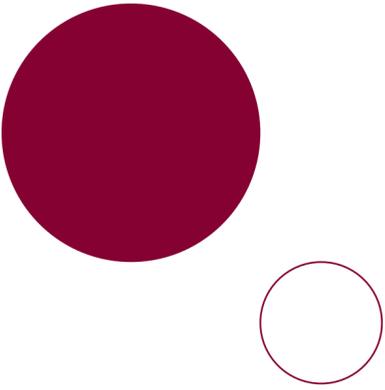
We absolutely want to end the day by seeing the famous Elephant Rock. Around this natural formation, visitors can sit, have drinks, and dine. We stop for photos before heading to the hotel and collapsing into sleep.

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Hegra and AlUla old town.



Group photo in Hegra.
© Marie Noelle Fattal

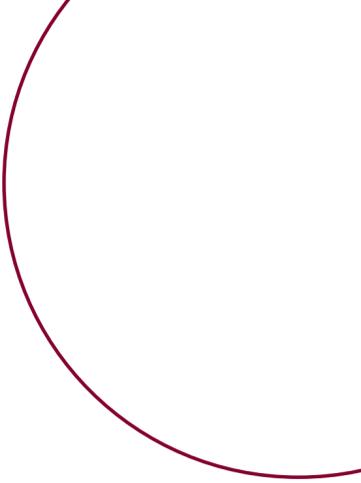


The next morning, we visited the Nabataean city of Hegra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with a necropolis extending over about twenty kilometers around AlUla. The Nabataeans, who came from Petra, founded their southern capital here in the middle of the 1st century BC, following the Petra model. Hegra's monumental rock-cut funerary heritage is one of the most remarkable legacies of mankind. The tombs are impressive and fascinating.

All our guides are women, including the one driving the small electric cart through the site. They are warm and charming, and though we are genuinely curious to see their faces, that remains a mystery.

Next, we head to a farm set deep in the desert, where we have lunch. There are all kinds of plants and fruit trees and even goats that we get to feed. It's Nayla's birthday, and she blows out her candles under the shade of palm trees and lush greenery.





In the afternoon, we tour AlUla's Old Town, which dates back to the 13th century and was once used as a winter residence. We enter the village in a brand-new, fully electric, self-driving bus. The nearly 900 homes, dominated by a fortress, were inhabited until the 1980s. Today, the Old Town has been fully redeveloped for tourism. We explore the souks, which are nothing like what we're used to: because of the desert climate, you must step inside the rock-carved shops to see what they offer. It's a bit odd for us, being used to inviting storefronts, whereas here, we really don't know what lies behind each door. It's even more surprising when we walk into often dimly lit shops, greeted by saleswomen who are almost entirely veiled.

We stroll through the winding alleys of the old village, with incense burning on some street corners, filling the air with a pleasant fragrance. We climb the steps leading to the citadel, where we enjoy a panoramic view of the city, the Oasis, and the desert rock formations.





Nadia and May at the farm, after picking carrots.



Climbing up the citadel in the old town.

Hegra After Dark

In the evening, we travel by carriage to *Hegra After Dark*, a live performance held in the heart of the Hegra site, illuminated by thousands of candles. This immersive, multisensory experience—featuring actors in Nabataean costumes—brings to life the everyday scenes and markets of ancient times. A recreated old souk and costumed performers bring history alive. We leave the site by carriage, under the magnificent moon of the Arabian desert.



Reconstitution of the souks at Hegra by night.
© Marie Noelle Fattal



Wednesday, February 5, 2025

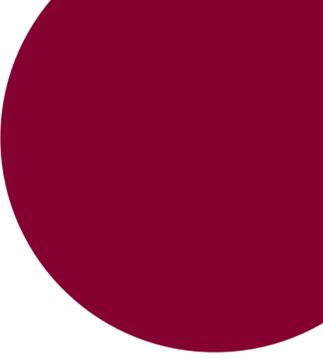
Maraya and the Habitas Hotel.

It's our last day! We head to *Maraya* and take pictures in front of this entirely mirror-covered building, where the surrounding dunes and cliffs are endlessly reflected. Outside, workers perched on a lift, clean the building's glass panels by hand. Inside, is a concert hall and several conference rooms. Many international stars have already performed here, and the concert hall is nothing short of amazing in terms of acoustics and architecture.

We decide to have lunch at the famous *Habitas* hotel. Sculptures by renowned artists line the road along the way, and we are thrilled to recognize works by Lebanese artist Nadim Karam, which fill us with pride.

The hotel's luxury accommodations are scattered across the desert. The highlight is the pool, set in the middle of a stunning rocky landscape.





Women in full veil cross paths with women in bikinis, and Chinese influencers pose for photos. We order lunch by the pool. But suddenly, just as the food is served, a strong wind kicks in, and sand burrows into our clothes, hair, and covers the food—only for the wind to stop as abruptly as it began. We dash inside, where we're served fresh dishes. This little incident reminds us that the desert follows its own laws: man may try to tame it, but will never fully succeed.

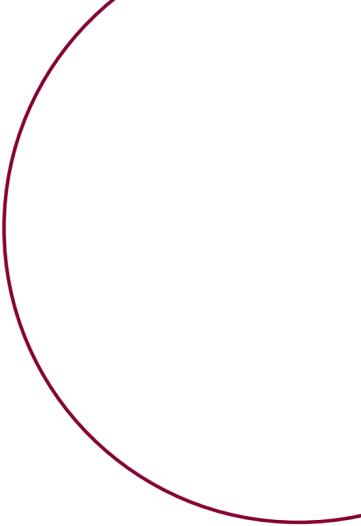
It's time to return to AlUla airport for a layover in Jeddah before heading back to Beirut. We bid farewell to this beautiful desert, our eyes filled with archaeological wonders and breathtaking landscapes. We will also never forget the kindness and hospitality of the Saudis, who hold Lebanon close to their hearts and look forward to visiting it again. The AlUla of 2025 is the embryo of what this destination will become in the years to come, and our little group of Friends from the AUB Museum was delighted to discover this unique place before mass tourism takes hold of the wonders of the Arabian desert.





The clash of civilizations around the pool of Habitas hotel.

© Marie Noelle Fattal



Safeguarding the Past in Times of Crisis

Emergency Preparedness, Innovation, and Regional Engagement at the Museum

1. Conservation and Emergency Preparedness

As the conflict in Lebanon escalated in October 2024, Beirut quickly came under heavy bombardment. In response, the Museum activated its emergency plan to protect both its staff and its collections. Access to the premises became difficult for many team members, prompting the implementation of a rotating staff schedule to ensure a safe yet continuous presence on site.





Significant challenges emerged: the proposition of reinforcing the infrastructure was rejected to avoid alarming the public, while the campus lacked underground spaces suitable for securing artifacts. In response, a representative selection of the collection—from Prehistory to the Ottoman era—was carefully packed and relocated to a designated safe space within the Museum. In the absence of a usable basement, an improvised bunker was set up in the museum's premises.

Thanks to these measures, sixty percent of the collection was protected under revised protocols, all high-risk items were assessed and either reinforced or relocated based on their vulnerability. These adaptive strategies have since been recognized as a model for emergency heritage protection and will be presented at the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (ALIPH) exhibition at the Louvre Abu Dhabi in March 2026.



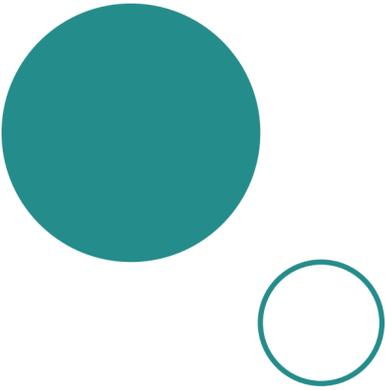
2. Digitization and Technological Innovation

Despite the disruptions caused by the conflict, the Museum remained committed to digital innovation and public accessibility. While digitization efforts slowed due to emergency priorities, ongoing documentation of artifacts, acquisitions, and archival materials continued. A notable increase in access requests from local and international users reaffirmed the importance of digital infrastructure already in place.

The Museum also continued its partnership with the Honor Frost Foundation under the grant **Strengthening Regional Training and Capacity-Building Resources in Maritime Archaeology**. Activities under this grant progressed uninterrupted, supported by remote platforms that enabled learning and collaboration even in the midst of crisis.

3. Capacity Building and Regional Engagement

Staying true to its mission as a regional hub for heritage expertise, the Museum deepened its involvement in capacity-building across the Middle East.



One of the year's highlights was its contribution to an 8-week training program for Iraqi heritage professionals, led by the Smithsonian Institution, the World Monuments Fund (WMF), and the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage.

Following a new Memorandum of Understanding between WMF and the American University of Beirut, Dr. Panayot. was invited to help shape the course curriculum, aligning it with best practices in post-conflict museum recovery. Her expertise in conservation, curatorship, and museography contributed directly to supporting the rebuilding of the Mosul Museum, an effort that reflects the Museum's broader commitment to regional recovery and knowledge sharing.



August 15, 2025

Iraqi Workshop



Tour at the Archaeological Museum



Guided tour with Dr. Anne-Marie Afeich at the National Museum



Visiting the exhibition *Remembering the Light* at Sursock Museum



Workshop at the AUB Museum



Meeting with Iraq's Minister of Culture
H.E. Ahmed Fakak Al-Badrani and
Lebanon's Minister of Culture H.E. Ghassan Salameh



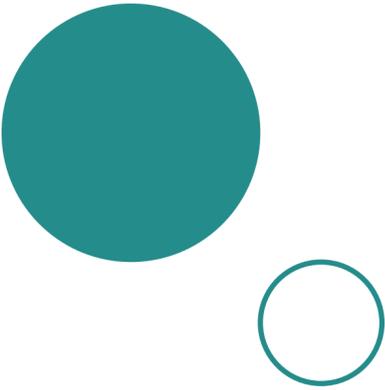
As part of the Mosul Cultural Museum Rehabilitation Project, Iraqi museum professionals gathered at the AUB Archaeological Museum for an intensive training on Post-Conflict Museum Skills Development, developed by the Smithsonian Institution in consultation with Dr. Nadine Panayot and implemented by the World Monuments Fund (WMF) and the Louvre Museum, with support from the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (ALIPH). Dr. Nadine Panayot visited the city of Mosul and the museum, initiated this training at the Erbil Training Center, and subsequently conducted and accompanied the three-month program through to its conclusion in Beirut.



This hands-on course focused on building the future of the Mosul Cultural Museum through innovative exhibition strategies, museological planning, and community engagement, all rooted in post-conflict resilience and cultural heritage preservation. Over three days, participants explored museum storytelling, mission-building, and preservation practices through workshops, field visits, and expert-led sessions across Beirut's leading cultural institutions. A powerful step forward in reviving Mosul's rich heritage.



[Click the link to read the full article](#)



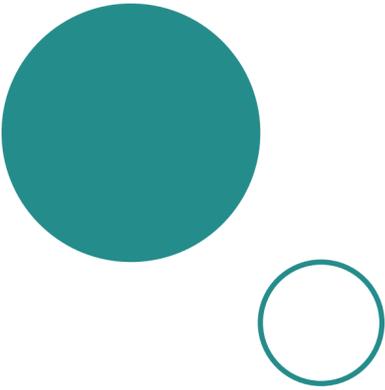
NEW INITIATIVES AND COLLABORATIONS

Learning, Inclusion and
Discovery: A Year of
Engagement at the Museum

Bringing Heritage into the Classroom

This past academic year, the Museum played an active role in university life by opening its doors, and collections, to students across disciplines. Through lectures and immersive, hands-on courses, students explored the stories of ancient civilizations, maritime archaeology, and cultural heritage in meaningful, tangible ways.





Collaborating with professors from departments as varied as health, politics, anthropology, gender studies, and design, the Museum helped weave heritage themes into courses across campus. These collaborations didn't just enrich learning, they also sparked new student research and made the Museum an educational hub at the heart of the University.

Inspiring Young Minds

The Museum also expanded its outreach to younger learners. Highlights included the **Earth Carnival**, which brought together over 500 enthusiastic children and families for a day of playful discovery, with the help of AUB and Lebanese University students and volunteers.

Throughout the year, the Children's Program hosted engaging activities that used storytelling, art, and real objects to bring history to life. Our new partnership with the International College introduced school-aged visitors to curriculum-linked themes, with plans to expand to the American Community School (ACS) soon.





We also took part in a special initiative with the **Lebanon and Beyond Association** to host 25 young adults from the Lebanese diaspora for a deep dive into Lebanon's ancient and medieval history, in our galleries. However, due to the regional escalations, the immersive experience was adapted into an online virtual visit via Zoom.

Opening Access for All

Making heritage more inclusive was another key priority. The Museum has instigated an initiative to design new programs for visitors with visual impairments, working closely with specialized NGOs to ensure a thoughtful approach.

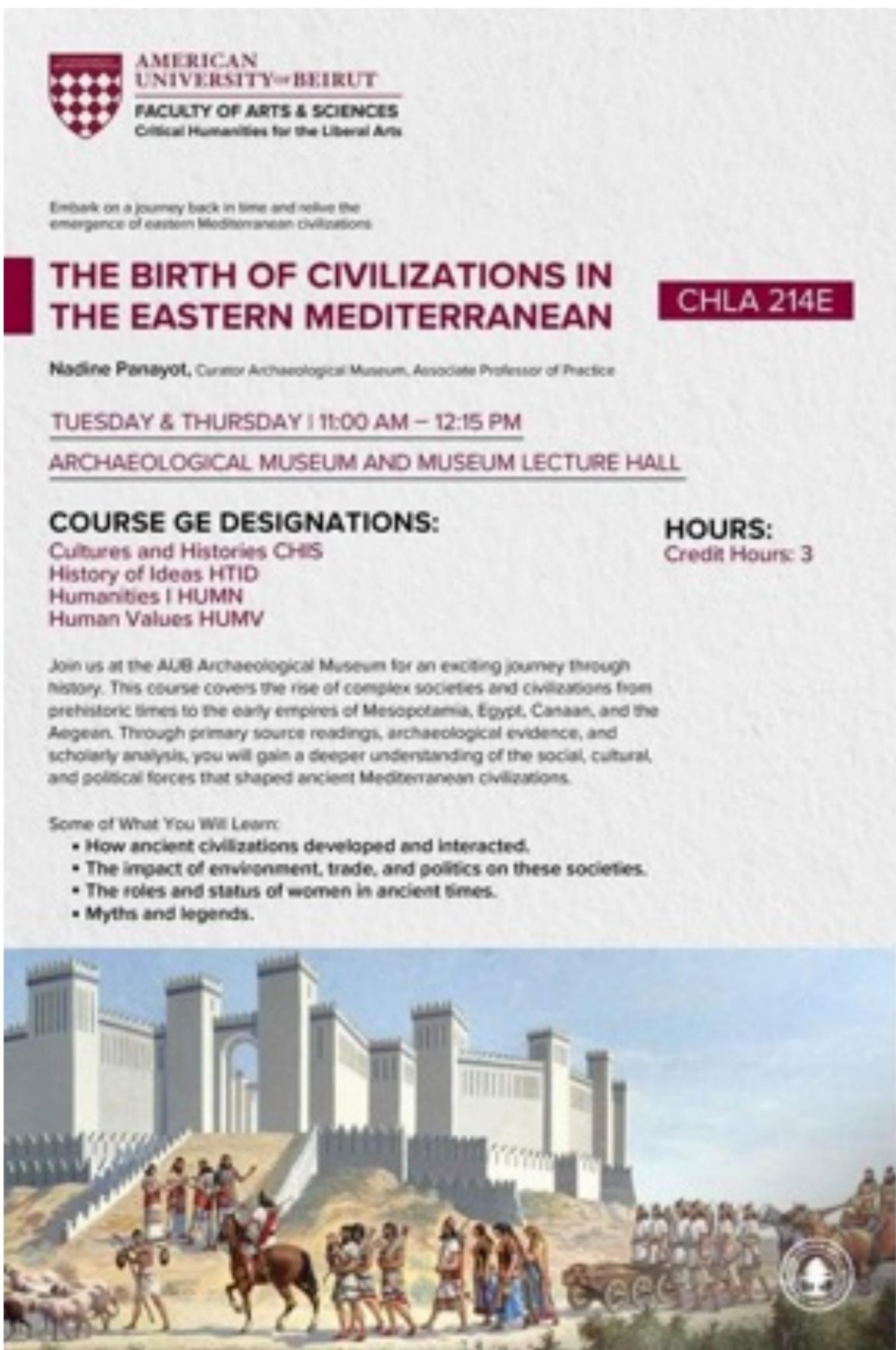
We have also begun building partnerships with private schools to help fund museum access for public school students, efforts that began after a landmark meeting with the Director General of Education, Dr. Fadi Yarak.



Among the courses developed:

Fall 2024

Course CHLA 214E **The Birth of Civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean** (an Immersive experience at the Museum) by Dr. Nadine Panayot



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCES
Critical Humanities for the Liberal Arts

Embark on a journey back in time and relive the emergence of eastern Mediterranean civilizations

THE BIRTH OF CIVILIZATIONS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

CHLA 214E

Nadine Panayot, Curator Archaeological Museum, Associate Professor of Practice

TUESDAY & THURSDAY | 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM
ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM AND MUSEUM LECTURE HALL

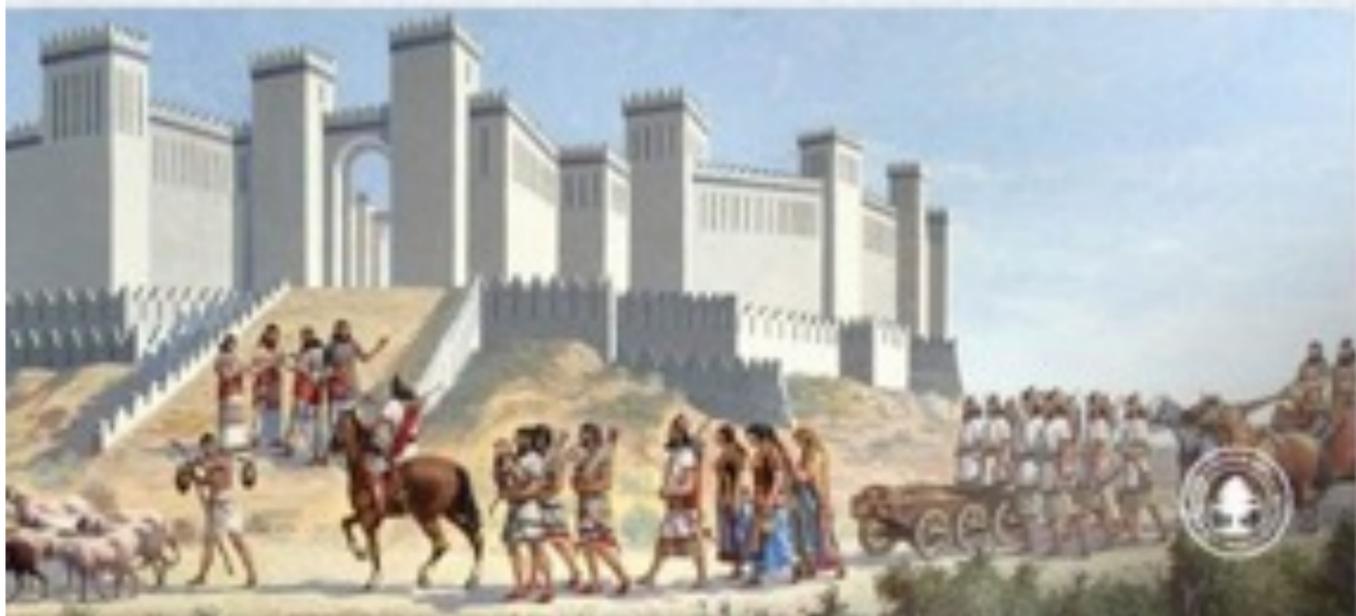
COURSE GE DESIGNATIONS:
Cultures and Histories CHIS
History of Ideas HTID
Humanities I HUMN
Human Values HUMV

HOURS:
Credit Hours: 3

Join us at the AUB Archaeological Museum for an exciting journey through history. This course covers the rise of complex societies and civilizations from prehistoric times to the early empires of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Canaan, and the Aegean. Through primary source readings, archaeological evidence, and scholarly analysis, you will gain a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, and political forces that shaped ancient Mediterranean civilizations.

Some of What You Will Learn:

- How ancient civilizations developed and interacted.
- The impact of environment, trade, and politics on these societies.
- The roles and status of women in ancient times.
- Myths and legends.



Teaching collaborations:

The Museum has launched new teaching collaborations across campus, inviting faculty to rethink and enrich their courses in partnership with the curator. By weaving the Museum's narratives and collections into their syllabi, professors are reimagining course content in creative and interdisciplinary ways. A few recent examples include:

December 2024

Course (MED1) by Dr. Beatrice Khater in collaboration with the Curator:

Women Through the Ages



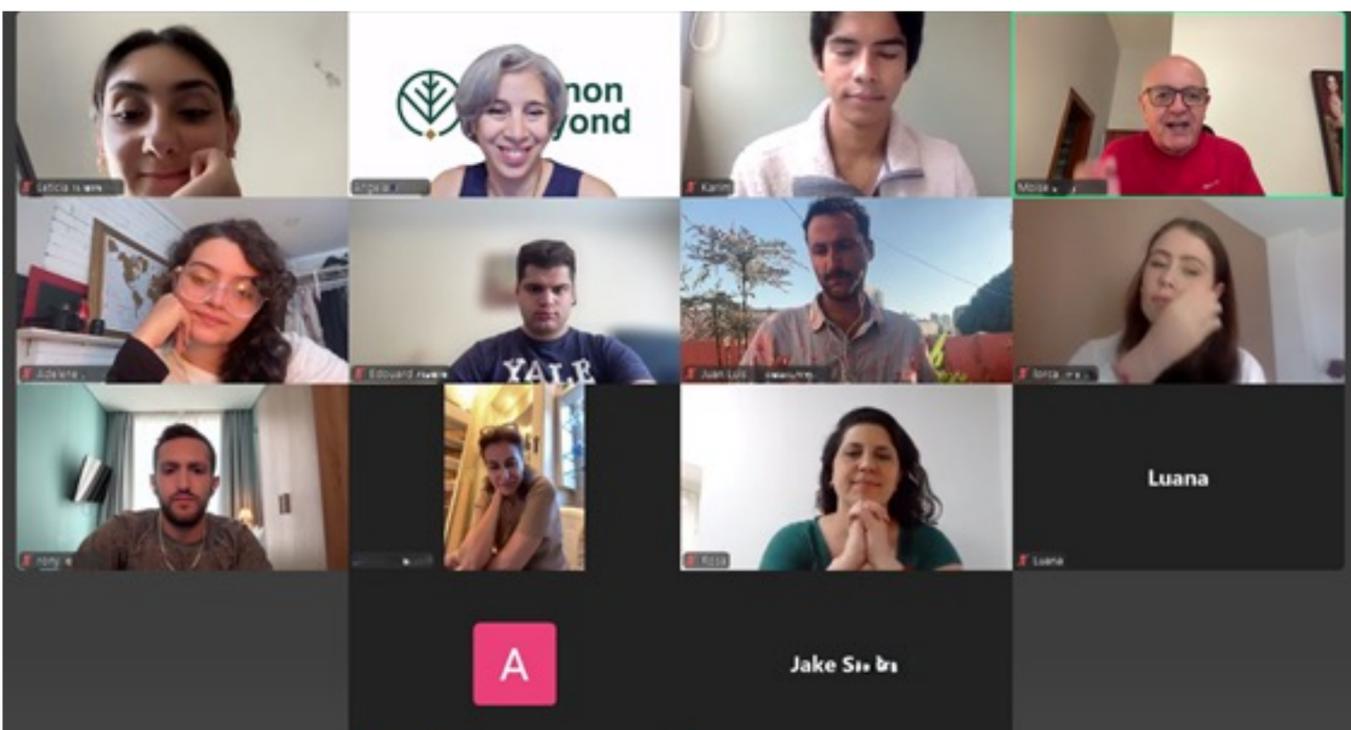
September, 17, 2024

Contemporary Jewelry Design by Margeritta Abi-Hanna course, in collaboration the Curator:

February 11, 2025

Matriarchal Societies by Nikolas Kosmatopoulos (Associate Professor in the Department of Political Studies and Public Administration and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies) in collaboration with the Curator. The seminar explored how women have been depicted from prehistory to Antiquity, from fertility figurines to roles as warriors, priestesses, and leaders. It questions the shift from a presumed gynocratic age to patriarchy, and how religion shaped these transformations.

Jouzour: Staying Connected to Our Roots, Wherever We Are





Jouzour means roots in Arabic—a fitting name for a program devoted to helping members of the Lebanese diaspora, and all those curious about Lebanon, to reconnect with the country's rich heritage. **Jouzour's** mission is to build lasting bridges to Lebanon's culture, history, and communities, affirming that Lebanon is more than a place: it lives in our language, our food, our stories, and our shared traditions.

This summer, **Jouzour** was set to launch its inaugural in-person program in Lebanon, bringing together nearly 70 participants from 15 countries for five weeks of cultural immersion. The itinerary was filled with exploration, workshops, storytelling, and opportunities to build meaningful connections with the land and its people.



However, in June 2025, the sudden escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran made it unsafe to proceed. Prioritizing the safety and well-being of participants, the Lebanon & Beyond team made the difficult decision to cancel the on-the-ground program.



Yet the spirit of *Jouzour* remained undeterred. Committed to its mission of building bridges, connection and understanding, the program swiftly adapted by launching an online edition. This new format included interactive workshops, guest speaker sessions, cultural lectures, storytelling events, and virtual community spaces, all designed to share, reflect, and grow together, even from afar.

The online series opened with a special presentation by Dr. Nadine Panayot, who offered participants a virtual tour of the museum alongside an engaging introduction to Lebanon's ancient history.

Jouzour is more than a program; it is a promise to keep our connections alive, to celebrate our identities, and to nurture our shared roots, no matter where we find ourselves in the world.





January 28, 2025

Heritage Yoga at the Museum led by Monique Chebli and Hania Rayess Boustani, followed by a guided tour. The Museum with Dr. Nadine Panayot

Members of Yoga Patrimoine entered the AUB Archeological Museum for an uplifting session to explore yoga wisdom in the union of the mind, the spirit and the body in this exceptional space. This marked the first time that yogis practiced inside a museum in Lebanon.

Monique Chebli describes the session.



We started by sitting in silence in the heart of the museum, where we felt we were not only visitors but also participants in a larger story. We felt ourselves present in a sacred place where history seemed to witness us, silently and reverently; connecting us directly to our collective memory.





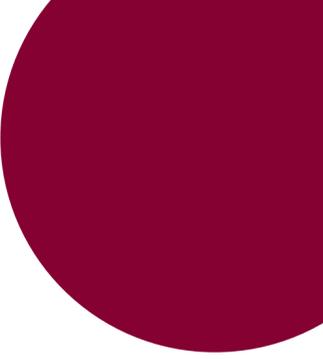
As we began the asanas (postures) in slow movements, listening to our breath, we felt this unique sensation of the body as mediator between past, present and future.

Though grounded in the present moment, we felt transported elsewhere guided by the invisible thread of shared heritage, suspended between time and space, strongly rooted, meaningfully present.

The museum is a space of sensory wonder, where the experience transcended time. Just as the spirit within the body is not confined to the limits of the mind and thoughts alone, yoga invites us to expand far beyond into a universal, unified consciousness. This is the essence of yoga's ancestral wisdom and discipline.

Breathing in the museum, moving our subtle energy around its unique vestiges, the yoga experience took on another dimension: we were in our 'temple' for few hours, a temple of connection and love rising from our hearts, while together composing and continuing the shared story of our Lebanese "human" *patrimoine*; participating as ONE, drawing on the





profound meaning of the word yoga, derived from the Sanskrit word *YUJ*, meaning to join or unite.

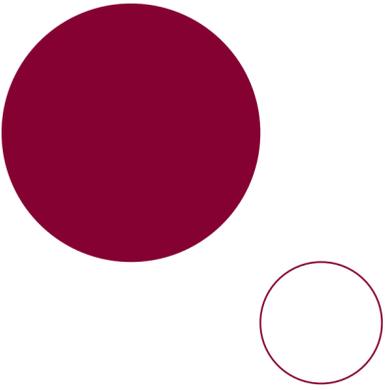
This exceptional session was followed by a guided tour led by the Museum's curator, Dr. Nadine Panayot. Always interesting and engaging, she readily shared her knowledge and her passion to reveal the history of our collective past.

We were deeply moved by the heartfelt messages we received from participants, messages of joy and gratitude. It was a moment of magic and connection for all. A special thank you to Dr. Panayot, who made this experience possible, readily sharing her knowledge and passion to reveal the history of our collective past.

Each edition of ***Yoga Patrimoine*** supports a meaningful cause. Proceeds from our 9th edition were donated to the AUB Archaeological Museum, in support of its vital mission: preserving cultural heritage and educating future generations through free, year-round activities.

Together for our beloved country we will organize and offer unforgettable moments with many other experiences to come.





Collaborations with schools

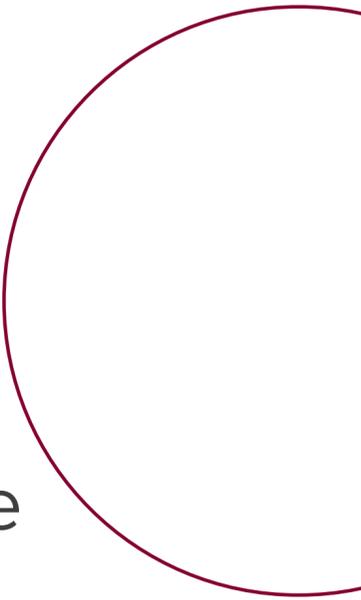
February 25, 28, 2025

Exploring the AUB Archaeological Museum Collections: IC Students introduced to the Neolithic and Phoenician periods

The AUB Archaeological Museum hosted an engaging, educational tour for Grade 6/6^{ème} students from the International College (IC). The visit was designed to introduce students to key historical eras, with a special focus on the Neolithic and Phoenician periods, two of the most formative ages in the region's ancient history.

As part of the immersive learning experience, students were guided through curated sections of the museum's collections highlighting life during the Neolithic era, including early tools, pottery, and worship practices. Students explored key developments such as the domestication of animals and the introduction of agriculture, which marked a major shift in human





lifestyle. They learned about the transition to a sedentary life and the construction of early houses. The use of clay was also introduced during this time, along with the first pottery techniques, such as the coil technique, and decoration using impressions and incisions. Additionally, students discovered the emergence of early religious practices, including female fertility figurines and forms of worship that reflect the spiritual life of Neolithic communities.

The tour then shifted to the Phoenician period and the seafaring Phoenicians known to have been skilled traders and navigators of the ancient Mediterranean. They learned that the Phoenicians were the first to produce the famous purple dye extracted from murex shells, a symbol of wealth and power in the ancient world. These shells were even depicted on Phoenician coins, reflecting their cultural and economic significance. Students explored Phoenician innovations in glass-making, including the invention of the glass-blowing technique, which facilitated the





creation of a variety of finely crafted glass vessels. One of the Phoenicians' most enduring contributions to civilization was the development of the Phoenician alphabet, a writing system, which laid the foundation for many modern alphabets used today.

The knowledge gained during the tours was reinforced with a treasure hunt, across the museum galleries, designed to encourage observation, teamwork, and critical thinking. Students searched for specific objects and answered questions based on clues tied to the exhibits.

The visit concluded with a hands-on clay modeling activity, where students were invited to recreate Neolithic or Phoenician artifacts using clay allowing them to engage directly with ancient techniques and convey their understanding of historical craftsmanship.



Overall, the program combined education, exploration, and creativity, offering IC students a memorable opportunity to connect with the ancient past in a dynamic and participatory way.



A moment of Creativity and Fun!



Proud of our modelling work!



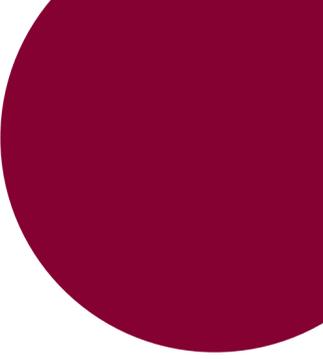
April 4, 11 and May 2, 9, 2025

Exploring Beirut's Layers: IC Students Journey Through Time with the AUB Archaeological Museum

This spring, the AUB Archaeological Museum collaborated with International College (IC) to offer Grade 7 students from both English and French sections an immersive journey into Beirut's rich archaeological and cultural heritage. Titled the "*Downtown Beirut Archaeological Tour*", the program transformed the city into a dynamic classroom, guiding 191 students through its historical core, from ancient Phoenician ports to Ottoman and Roman sites.

Led by the AUB Museum's expert guides, students walked a multi-stop trail that brought history to life beneath their feet. Key sites included Martyrs' Square, Petit Serail, Cardo Maximus, the Roman Baths, and the Cathedral of St. John / Al-Omari Mosque, Saint George Cathedral of the Greek Orthodox and its Crypt Museum, and the Roman baths, among others, each offering a window into different eras, civilizations, and urban developments.





Hands-on and multisensory, the experience encouraged the students to connect academic learning with the living history around them. They didn't just observe, they explored, asked questions, and reflected on the relationship between past and present.

Feedback from students and teachers was overwhelmingly positive. Many described seeing their city “with new eyes,” while teachers praised the program for enhancing civic awareness and classroom learning. The museum's guides adapted their approach to meet students' language and engagement levels, ensuring an inclusive and inspiring experience for all.

This initiative is part of the AUB Archaeological Museum's mission to make archaeology accessible and relevant, especially for younger generations. It exemplifies how educational partnerships can foster cultural awareness, historical curiosity, and a sense of responsibility for heritage preservation.

More than a field trip, the Downtown Beirut Archaeological Tour was a transformative journey, one that helped



students to better understand their city's past and envision their role in shaping its future.



Visiting Al-Omari Mosque



Exploring the rich history and frescos of Saint George Cathedral of the Greek Orthodox



Learning about Beirut's historical layers through stratigraphy at the Crypt Museum





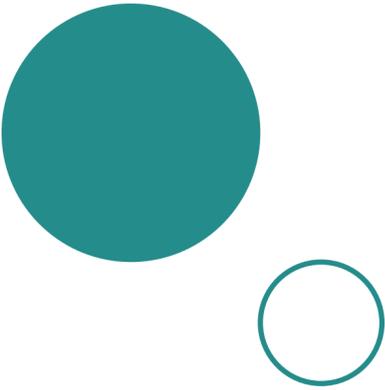
“Place de l’Etoile”

June 2, 2025

Special Children's Program for Public Schools in Lebanon

As part of its commitment to community engagement and inclusive education, the AUB Archaeological Museum continues to host and collaborate with local public schools through its ongoing educational outreach program. The initiative aims to make Lebanon's rich cultural heritage accessible to young learners from diverse backgrounds, especially those in the public education sector.

We were delighted to welcome 38 students from Jaber Al Sobah School (Grade 5) and 42 students from Amin Bayhom School (Grades 3, 4, and 5) for a specially curated children's program. The day began with an interactive, age-appropriate guided tour of the Museum, led by our dedicated educational team. Students were introduced to key highlights of the collection, including ancient tools, pottery, and everyday objects from different civilizations that once thrived in the region. The tour encouraged curiosity, dialogue, and observation,



helping the students form meaningful connections with Lebanon's ancient past.

Following the tour, students took part in a hands-on clay workshop, where they, along with their instructors, had the opportunity to create their own artifacts, inspired by the items they had just explored in the galleries. The activity was designed to reinforce what they learned through creative expression and tactile engagement. Under guidance, students experimented with basic modeling techniques and discovered how ancient people may have shaped their tools and vessels.

Each participant left with a handmade clay object, serving not only as a souvenir but also as a symbol of personal connection to the ancient world. This experience allowed students to step into the shoes of early craftsmen and understand history in a tangible, memorable way.



The AUB Museum remains committed to fostering a love for history and archaeology in Lebanon's youth and looks forward to welcoming more public-school students in future initiatives.



NEWS:

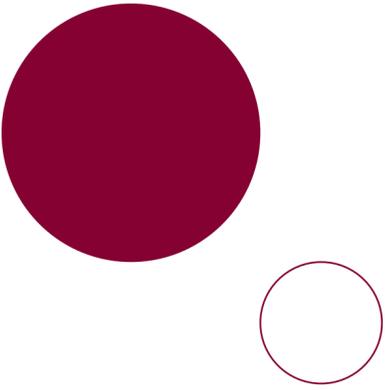
Insights into Recent Extra Mural Museum Activities

Staying Connected:

Leadership, Recognition and Research

1. Professional Engagement

This year, the Museum's reach and impact continued to grow through new leadership roles and international invitations. Dr. Panayot was honored to be named Co-Chair of the 2025 Lebanon panel for the American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR), and to join the editorial team of ICOM 2025. She also became a member of ALIPH's Scientific Committee, which supports heritage protection in crisis zones.



In Lebanon, Dr. Panayot was invited to join the Orientation Committee for the newly launched Chair in Phoenician Studies at the University of St. Joseph. And on the global stage, she was invited by the Secretary-General of UNESCO to speak at the High-Level Forum for Museums in China, where she gave a talk on gender and inclusion in cultural spaces.

2. Grants and Research Highlights

Behind the scenes, we've also been working hard to grow the Museum's role as a hub for collaborative research and innovation.

Dr. Panayot also secured a new research grant from the *Chambéry Solidarité Internationale Association* for a meaningful local project: a fresh look at the Rachiine Spring and how water, memory, and community are connected.

This was achieved in collaboration with the Nature Conservation Center (NCC) and AUB's Department of Earth Sciences.



[**Click here**](#)

[**Click here**](#)

[**Click here**](#)

November, 15, 2024

Presentation: La Conservation du Patrimoine et la gestion des risques : Le contexte muséal, musée archéologique de l'AUB ; ALBA – INP

December, 13, 2024

Conference: Heritage Under Fire: The Growth of the AUB Archaeological Museum in a Challenging Context
online; Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, The University of Chicago.

January 2025

Geneva talk: Un patrimoine en équilibre : le musée sur le fil du temps,
by Nadine Panayot

February 5, 2025

Photographic exhibition and round table: Portraits of Women – Beyond the Stones



Dr. Panayot and the Museum team were honored in a remarkable international exhibition titled ***Portraits of Women – Beyond the Stones***, organized by the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH).

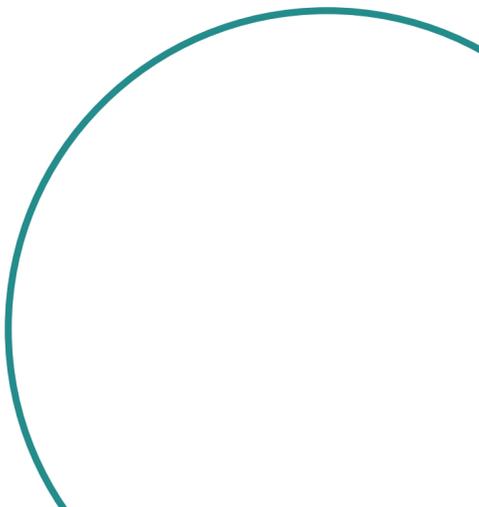
This poignant and inspiring exhibition pays tribute to exceptional women around the world who work every day to safeguard cultural heritage threatened or damaged by conflict, climate change, and natural disasters. These women, architects, archaeologists, museum curators, conservators, site guardians, art historians, and artisans are on the

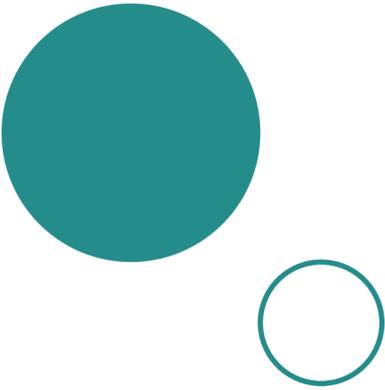


frontlines to preserve monuments, sites, museums, religious buildings, collections, and intangible heritage alike.

In honor of International Women's Day, ALIPH produced large-format portraits of these women, exhibited around the Lake Léman in Geneva, Switzerland, following a show at the Neimënster, Luxembourg Museum. The portraits will travel to all ALIPH partner countries, with their next destination at Louvre Abu Dhabi for ALIPH's 10-year anniversary celebrations, where our Museum's Mini Bunker Museum will be featured as an international best practice.

Dr. Panayot shares this recognition with her team, who are now honored for their tireless work restoring the Museum's collections after the devastating Beirut port explosion on 4 August 2020. Thanks to the support of ALIPH, the French National Institute for Cultural Heritage, and the British Museum, the ancient glass collection shattered into thousands of fragments was painstakingly restored.





More recently, in September 2024, ALIPH supported the Museum in constructing a secure bunker to store and display a selection of its most precious artifacts safely amid escalating regional conflict. This innovative Mini Bunker Museum has enabled the continuation of public access to Lebanon's heritage even in times of crisis.

In recognition of her leadership, Dr. Panayot joined the ALIPH Scientific Committee in October 2024.

The traveling exhibition is not only a tribute to our Museum team, but a global recognition of the courage, expertise, and dedication that women around the world bring to the protection of our shared heritage.

We invite all Friends of the Museum to join us in celebrating this achievement and to follow the journey of *Portraits of Women – Beyond the Stones* as it continues to shine a light on the guardians of memory around the world.

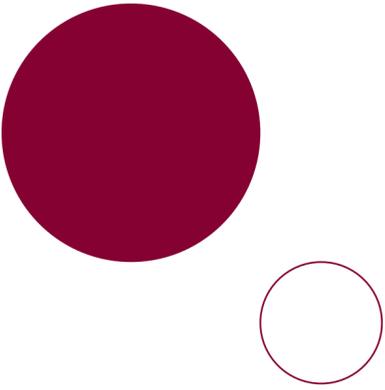




Dr. Nadine Panayot, Beirut, Lebanon, December 2024 ©
Tamara Saade
Lake Léman Exhibition, Geneva, Switzerland.



AUB Museum Team of Women, Beirut, Lebanon,
December 2024
© Tamara Saade



August 2025

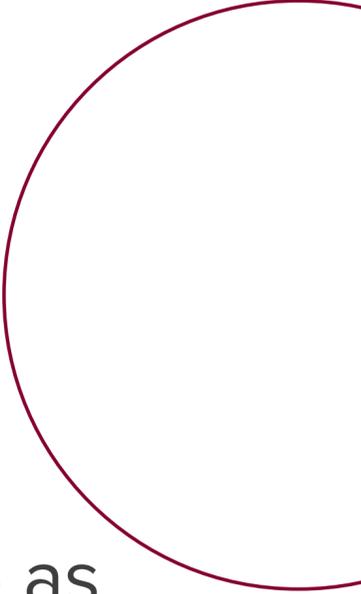
Members of AUB community appointed to Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO



AUB Archaeological Museum Curator Nadine Panayot is one of four members of the American University of Beirut (AUB) to have been appointed to the recently formed Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO, a body that gathers experts and public figures to advance education, culture, science, and communication in Lebanon, in line with UNESCO's mission.

Two of the commission's standing committees will be chaired by AUB faculty. Dr. Panayot, will preside over the Education and Culture Committee.





She described education and culture as “our true capital and a vital foundation for a sustainable Lebanon,” adding that she was honored to take on this role under the leadership of Minister of Culture Ghassan Salameh.

Dr. Shady Hamadeh, professor and director of AUB’s Environment and Sustainable Development Unit, will head the Science and Communication Committee. Commenting that “resilience is an innate Lebanese science to be widely communicated,” he expressed his gratitude for the appointment and the opportunity to serve.

The commission also includes Dr. Rachid El Daif, novelist and creative writing lecturer in the Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages at AUB, whose scholarship adds a humanities perspective to its work. He described his appointment as “an honor” and said he hoped “to contribute actively and usefully to the work.”





Meanwhile, Mona El Hallak, director of the AUB Neighborhood Initiative, who had previously collaborated with the commission in 2019 to launch the first Week of Sound in Lebanon commented, “I am excited to join this commission as a member and I am sure that, with AUB as a strategic partner, we will be able to implement educational, scientific, and cultural projects in Beirut and beyond.”

[Click here](#)

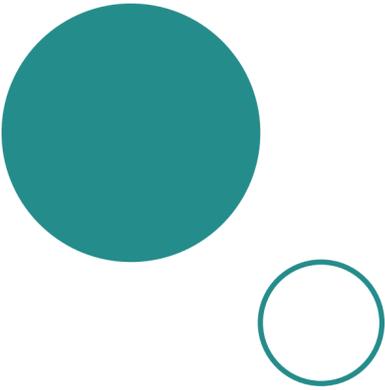


LATEST PUBLICATIONS

Scherben: Nachrichten aus der Archäologie der Jetztzeit Panayot Nadine in ***Resurrecting Beirut: Global Unity After 2020 Port Blast*** Ed. Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and Daniel Schönplug, 2024.

Digital Heritage Documentation for Protecting and Rebuilding Tangible Heritage in Natural Disaster and Conflict Zones, Nadine Panayot, Aimee Bou-Rizk, Mohamad Karim Yassine, Rabab Kawtharani, and Daniel Asmar in ***3D Research Challenges in Cultural Heritage IV. Risk Prevention and Monitoring Methods***. Marinos Ioannides, Giovanni Issini, Daniel Oliveira (Eds.), 2025.





ANNOUNCEMENT

Introducing a New Audio Guide Experience

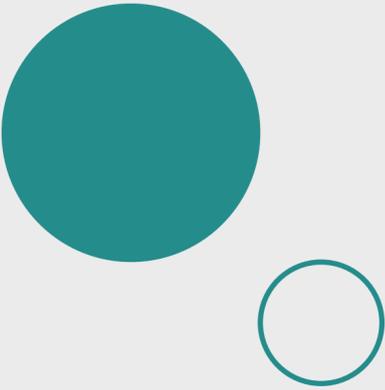
We are excited to share with you a new way of experiencing the Museum's audio guide. For many years, visitors could borrow iPods to listen to commentary on highlights of the collection. While this system served us well, it required constant upkeep and was not always convenient for visitors who prefer to use their own devices. Over the past months, Museum Assistant Aimée Bou Rizk, has rethought how to make the guide easier to access, more sustainable, and closer to everyday habits. She tested different platforms and formats, always keeping user-friendliness in mind.





Starting this September, the new audio guide will be available as SoundCloud playlists, which provide a reliable and mobile-friendly format, accessible directly from your smartphone. At the entrance, you will find two QR codes, one in English and one in French, that you scan to begin your visit with the guide. This new solution is simple, practical, and designed to improve your experience. An Arabic version is also under preparation and will be added soon, allowing us to better serve our diverse audience.





In Remembrance

In 2025, the Society of Friends lost Nour Majdalani, affectionately known as Minnie - a remarkable woman whose life was a testament to passion, dedication, and vision in preserving Lebanon's cultural heritage.

Minnie generously served the Society of the Friends of the AUB Museum, first as the Children's Program Officer from 1992 to 1996, nurturing a deep love of history and archaeology in countless young hearts and minds. She continued her dedicated involvement as an Advisor from 1995 until 2020, sharing her wisdom, warmth, and unwavering support for nearly three decades.

An archaeologist by training, Minnie was a pioneering voice and champion of ethnographic studies. Her devotion and tireless efforts led her to collect and safeguard invaluable rural and Bedouin artifacts and jewelry. She valued the simple things in life and taught others to appreciate them.





Her extraordinary collection was exhibited under the title Orient Revisited at the AUB Museum on December 15, 1995, bringing well-deserved recognition to this rich cultural heritage.

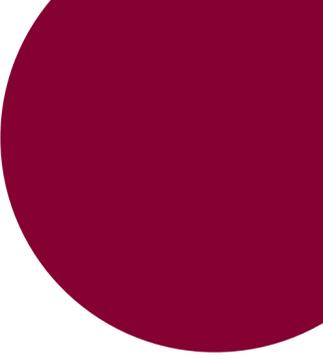
Minnie's visionary insights were also instrumental in shaping and developing Lebanon's ethnographic museums in Terbol and Ras Baalbek. On a more personal note, she inspired me to co-found the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Balamand.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Minnie's kindness, enthusiasm, and genuine spirit touched everyone she encountered. She was a beloved friend, colleague, and mentor whose warmth and generosity left a lasting impact on all who knew her. Her profound contributions to cultural heritage preservation and education will continue to inspire generations to come.

Rest in peace, dear Minnie. You will forever be cherished and remembered.

Nadine Panayot





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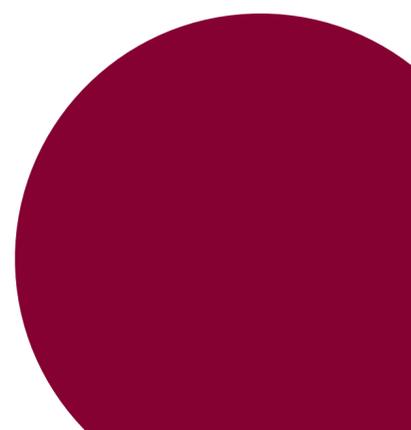


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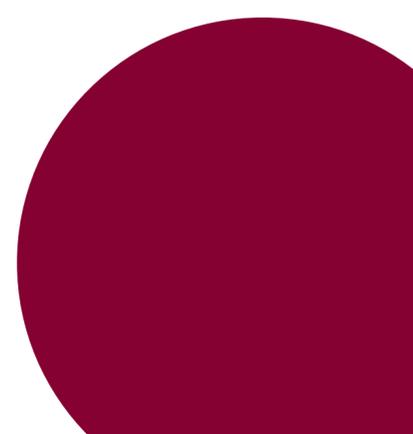




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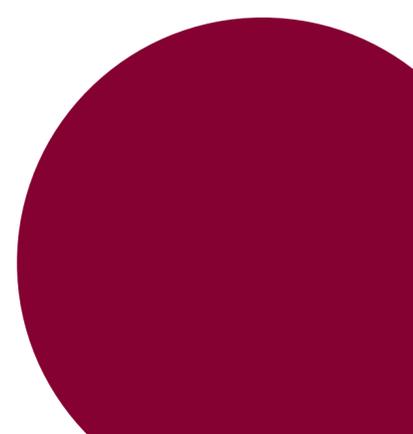
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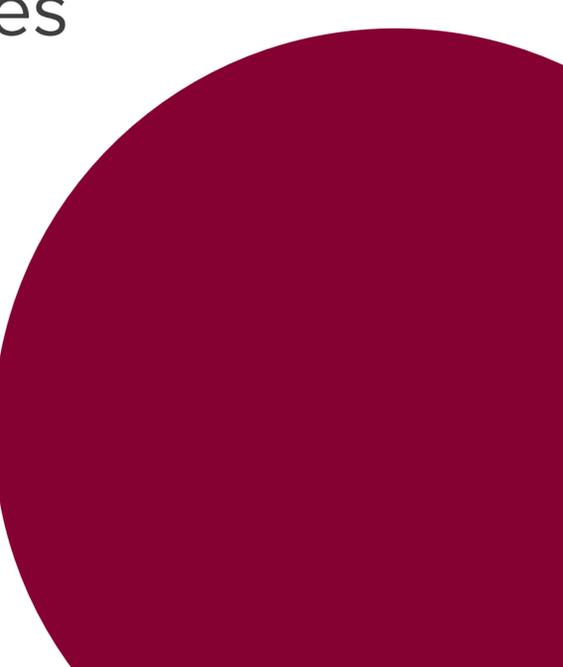
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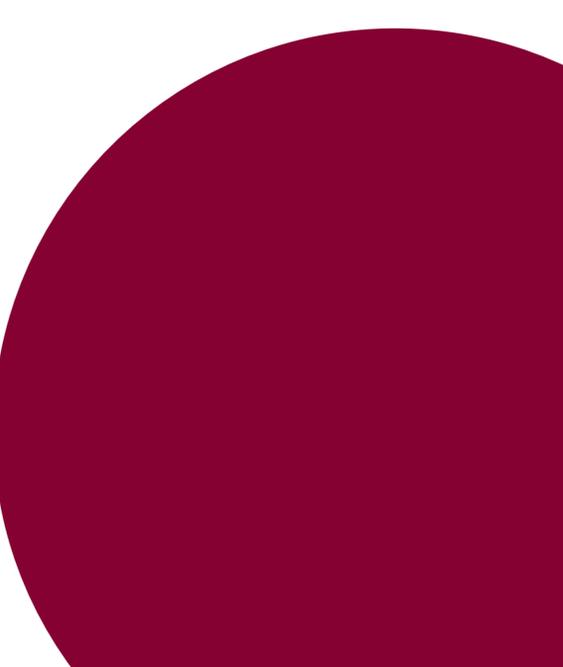
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About the Society

Founded in 1979 to encourage public support and use of the museum, members in the Society participate in many activities including lectures, children's programs, cultural trips, and excursions. All society members receive a subscription to the Museum Newsletter.

Dear Friends of the AUB Archaeological Museum,

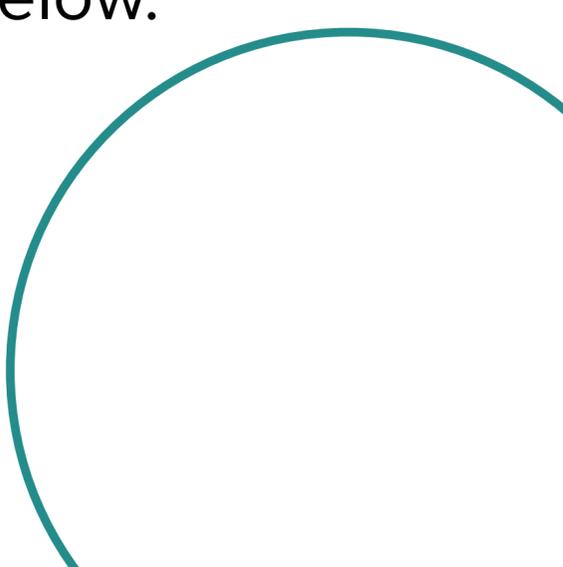
A new academic year has begun and we have resumed our activities after a quiet summertime break.

It's time to renew your memberships for 2025-2026!

We extend our heartfelt appreciation for your unwavering support.

Your membership enables us to offer a rich program of lectures, exhibitions, and cultural trips — and we have many exciting activities ahead that we look forward to sharing with you.

As part of our efforts to make membership contributions easier, we've now introduced a direct online payment option. you can do so easily by selecting the category that suits you best and following the relevant link below.



Name	Description	Price	URL
Society of the Friends of the Museum	Student Membership	\$10	<i>Click here</i>
Society of the Friends of the Museum	Members Membership	\$50	<i>Click here</i>
Society of the Friends of the Museum	Family Membership	\$150	<i>Click here</i>
Society of the Friends of the Museum	Contributor Membership	\$200	<i>Click here</i>
Society of the Friends of the Museum	Fellows Membership	\$500	<i>Click here</i>
Society of the Friends of the Museum	Patrons Membership	\$1,000	<i>Click here</i>



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