

For Immediate Release



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Film and exhibition showcase AUB's Archaeological Museum's 150-year history

A special film recounting the history of the American University of Beirut's (AUB) Archaeological Museum had its premiere on May 23, directed by Franco-Lebanese filmmaker Philippe Aractingi. The film was accompanied by an exhibition chronicling the museum's 150 years since its founding in 1868. The film and exhibition will be open to the public starting May 24.

In attendance at the event were AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, members of the Board of Trustees, representatives of the prime minister and minister of culture, members of the Society of Friends of the AUB Museum, and other invited guests from AUB and the community. President Khuri welcomed the audience and described the museum as a “treasure, not just of AUB and of Lebanon, but of the entire region.”

Beginning with archival footage of Beirut and the trolley that used to run along Bliss Street, this short documentary film transports the viewer back to the earliest days of AUB and its museum. Projected along two lengths of the wall within the museum's lecture hall, the effect is of being surrounded by sounds and images of the museum, its collection, and its history.

Award-winning director and producer Philippe Aractingi tells the story of the museum's founding in 1868 and follows its evolution under the leadership of its nine curators. The director also chose to focus on the pieces in the collection itself, allowing the viewer to (literally) hear their stories as well.

“You get to know the place, the object in-depth. Not only do you see them, but you know the story of them and you know how important it is to reveal these objects and to tell their stories,” explained Aractingi. “When you film them in close shots as I did here, you can sense them, you can feel them, you can live with them. And you can hear them; this is why I gave them voices.”

In the same room as the film projection, the exhibition on “150 Years of the AUB Museum” presents this same history in pictures and physical objects. Covering one wall, the history of the museum is displayed in sections corresponding to the periods of the museum’s nine curators. It focuses on the curator him or herself, the presidents of AUB that presided over the university during that time period, and the major milestones of the museum.

Nada Zeineh, who was instrumental in helping during the museum renovation, came up with the exhibition concept, which she explained as going “inside the memory of the museum.” In addition to the history, Zeineh chose to evoke the beginning of the museum with what she calls the “cabinet de curiosité,” showcasing parts of the collections of the original museum, which included archaeology, geology, and natural history.

The glass display cabinets show pieces from the Cesnola collection of archaeological artifacts from Cyprus; preserved remains of butterflies, insects, and small animals from the Natural History Museum; dried plants and flowers from the Post Herbarium; and pieces from the Geology Museum that is now located on the second floor of Post Hall.

Dr. Leila Badre, director and curator of the AUB Archaeological museum since 1975, thanked all the people who contributed to this exhibition and film celebrating the museum’s 150-year history. She singled out Aractingi and Zeineh, as well as the museum staff, Jafet Library Archives department, Provost Mohamed Harajli, and Comptroller Imad Dayya, among others. She also gave special thanks to the Society of Friends of the Museum that supports all of the museum’s work and was instrumental in bringing about this event.

The exhibition and film are open to the public for viewing from May 24 through July 24, 2018, Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm (until June 1) and from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm from June 4 to July 24.

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For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: (+961) 3-427-024
Office: (+961) 1-374-374 ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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