

For Immediate Release



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Curators of world museums gather **for international colloquium at AUB**

On the occasion of the American University of Beirut (AUB) Archaeological Museum's 150th anniversary, representatives from nine of the world's leading museums came to AUB for an international colloquium on June 11, 2018.

“From Collection to Museum” was organized by the AUB Archaeological Museum and the Society of Friends of the AUB Museum. It gathered representatives from the British Museum (London), the Louvre (Paris), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Royal Museum of Art and History (Brussels), Vorderasiatischen Museums (Berlin), the Egyptian Museum (Cairo), the National Archaeological Museum (Athens), Bogaziçi University (Istanbul), and the National Museum of Beirut.

Dr. Lina Choueiri, associate provost and professor of English, represented Provost Mohamed Harajli at the opening session and gave a warm welcome to all. She noted the special place of the AUB Museum as the third oldest archaeological museum in the Near East, after Constantinople and Cairo, and talked about the educational dimension of this and other great museums.

“Museums are well placed to provide transformative experiences to the 21st century young university student,” said Choueiri. “They have the potential to be great educational institutions, in addition to having an important cultural and social impact. As a repository of our collective history and knowledge, museums can also be powerful sites for learning about diversity, complexity, and change.”

Dr. Leila Badre, director and curator of the AUB Archaeological Museum since 1975, explained that the museum began with a collection of Cypriot artifacts from General Cesnola that was augmented over the years by gifts from alumni and friends of the university, but lacked any systematic approach to the selection process. This changed in the mid-20th century when

Museum Director Dimitri Baramki began taking a more selective approach and only acquired artifacts with educational and scientific significance, a trend which continued under the curatorship of Leila Badre.

“My main concern was to reconsider the strategy of our collecting practices and to focus essentially on filling the gaps in our museum collections,” said Badre, adding that she also modernized the museum by presenting the artifacts in a way that emphasized the “relationships between the items in the collection, rather than merely looking at the objects themselves.”

The complete renovation and modernization of the museum was accomplished in 2006, with financial support from the Society of Friends and a major donation from the Joukowsky Family Foundation. Several members of the Joukowsky family were on hand at this event, with Dr. Martha Sharp Joukowsky (MA '72) giving the keynote address.

Joukowsky is a trustee emerita of AUB since 2010 as well professor emerita and trustee emerita of Brown University in the US. A renowned archaeologist who excavated and rediscovered the Petra Great Temple in Jordan, Joukowsky recalled how she discovered her passion for archaeological fieldwork as a master's student at AUB. She also talked about her long-time affiliation with this university and its archaeological museum.

“I would like to thank the AUB Board of Trustees for their interest, respect, and loyalty in supporting and maintaining the AUB Museum,” said Joukowsky. “Otherwise, this precious resource would surely have been lost.”

The colloquium continued throughout the day with addresses by each of the museum representatives from around the world. They addressed topics ranging from the curatorial to the historical and the scientific, with a focus on the art and archaeology of this region.

Jonathan Tubb from the British Museum, for example, discussed how he helped curate their Levant Gallery in order to represent “the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the region in all its spatial and chronological complexities.” Edhem Eldem from Turkey looked at the Imperial [Ottoman] Museum in its socio-political-historical context, and Eric Gubel from Brussels talked about new technologies and devices being used in museum settings such as 3D animations.

On the day following the colloquium, Dr. Leila Badre was honored for her years of outstanding service, not only to AUB but to the entire nation, as she was presented with the National Order of the Cedar, Officer Rank, by Lebanese President General Michel Aoun in a ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Baabda.

In addition, the international guests for the colloquium were invited to choose from a variety of excursions around the country: to visit museums in Beirut, archaeological sites in Tyre, or the ancient city of Byblos. The two-day event ended on the evening of June 12 with a gala dinner for 200 persons held at the AUB Museum Gallery.

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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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