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Archaeological Museum
NEWSLETTER
Introduction

As the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed life as lived across the globe, each and every sector scrambled to find ways to cope, adapt and even survive. While the full effects of the economic, social and cultural damage have yet to be assessed, it is fair to say that it will take years for the world to recover.
With no sector of society left unscathed, the plight of many of the world’s most important cultural institutions, and in particular its museums great and small, is a matter of concern. Under the auspices of its new curator, Dr. Nadine Panayot, our beloved AUB Museum has confronted the challenges of the new reality across a series of initiatives designed to engage and indeed augment the museum’s dedicated constituency.

Following a warm and appreciative handover ceremony thanking Dr. Leila Badre for her indefatigable years of dedication to the museum, the Society of Friends of the Museum continued to hold their monthly meetings with Dr. Panayot, albeit on Zoom, to explore a range of strategies to promote the museum and showcase its priceless collection.
In this, our first newsletter since COVID-19 emerged, and later when the tragic port explosion of August 4 shook the very foundations of the museum and Beirut as a whole, we have collated what we hope you will agree is a remarkable chapter in the museum’s history against all the odds, including the tragic destruction of its priceless glass collection in the Beirut blast.

The plight of the glass collection created its own wide, impact-engendering interest from experts and museum aficionados alike. We have dedicated a special section entitled “Shattered” to the saga of the glass recuperation and ongoing restoration efforts by world experts.
Until August 4, 2020, the AUB Museum, like the rest of the campus, gave the impression of being in a deep and eerie slumber under the mantle of COVID-19 restrictions. Then at 6:07 pm that day, along with the rest of Beirut, the museum suffered a rude and terrible awakening as shock waves from the gigantic port explosion slammed into its windows and walls, wrenching the showcase housing the priceless ancient glass collection off the wall and carelessly tossing it onto the floor.

This was the “baptism of fire” that kick-started Dr. Nadine Panayot’s tenure as AUB Museum Curator, as chronicled below:

AUB Museum staff and Physical Plant staff lifting the broken glass showcase at the AUB Museum after Beirut blast.
August 8, 2020:

**AUB Museum after Beirut blast:**
Architectural damage detailed in Martin Asser’s article on AUB’s website: [click here](#)

September 7–10, 2020:

A first collaboration with the French Institut National du Patrimoine (INP) in September 2020, oversaw thousands of glass fragments from the mixed debris, which included glass from the display case and surrounding windows, the shelves, and the archaeological artifacts, painstakingly sifted through, collected, identified and packed with proper material which was flown into Lebanon by Claire Cuyaubère, the glass expert from INP. Initial work took place between September 7–10, financed by the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (ALIPH).
Many volunteers from AUB, University of Balamand, and the Lebanese University worked under Claire’s guidance. That first phase of the project turned out to be a learning case study since it was dealt with forensically, picking up the fragments as if they were on a field archaeological excavation, using horizontal stratigraphical layers. That strategy facilitated the identification of the fragments with their original inventory number and catalogued most glass vessels as shattered beyond repair with only eighteen being salvageable.

Shattered glass plate inventory # 3653.
video 1 AUB Museum case recovery - Phase 2

video 2 AUB Museum case recovery - Phases 2.2

video 3 AUB Museum Case recovery - Surprise Visit

video 4 AUB Museum case recovery of broken glass artifacts

AUB Museum staff with Claire Cuyaubèrè, glass conservator (INP).
June 1–31, 2021:

A second mission was organized in June-July 2021 with Claire Cuyaubère, and INP intern Cécile Rodier, which saw hundreds of the glass fragments pieced back together, and eleven glass vessels restored by the INP experts and the AUB Museum team with the support of archaeology students, which led to the design of a new field course in partnership with the Department of History and Archaeology at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS), AUB: Fadia Abou Saleh, Lynda Ajam, Marya Soubra, and Nathan Azar and the AUB Museum team: Aimée Bou Rizk, Nesrine Aad, Reine Mady.

Video link: “Restoring our heritage, one broken piece at a time” click here

Restored glass pieces by INP experts after two months.
The British Museum (BM), supported by The European Fine Arts Foundation (TEFAF), announced an important project to restore eight ancient glass vessels, which were severely damaged in the Beirut port explosion in Lebanon on August 4, 2020. This important collaboration with the AUB Museum covers the restoration of vessels from the Roman and early Islamic periods. The glass fragments will be painstakingly pieced back together and restored at the conservation laboratories at the British Museum in London.

In its press release, the 2021 TEFAF Museum Restoration Fund announced “it was proud to support the project of the restoration of these eight vessels”: click here

The AUB Museum initiated a collaboration between the Institut National du Patrimoine and the British Museum to secure the proper packing of the eight vessels that need to be transported to the British Museum’s laboratory
Broken fragments packed by the French team and ready to be shipped to the BM.
The collaborative work between the AUB Archaeological Museum and the British Museum was featured by TEFAF through a live webinar, TEFAF Talks by Financial Times: “Restoring Public Masterpieces for Future Generations” was hosted by Financial Times’ Art Editor Jan Dalley in conversation with AUB Museum Curator Nadine Panayot, British Museum Curator James Fraser, and the National Museum of Wales Conservator Adam Webster.

September 10, 2021:

Announcement of TEFAF’s Talks with the Financial Times.
New Initiatives and Collaborations

With the museum still off limits and AUB campus facilities underutilized during the closure, Dr. Panayot explored a series of initiatives to enhance the work of the museum with professors from different faculties.
Dr. Daniel Asmar, Associate Professor, American University of Beirut, Mechanical Engineering Department agreed to collaborate with the museum’s curator *to reconstruct, virtually, some of the broken glass vessels* with:

- Photogrammetry of two broken pieces: that is photographing of each small shard then putting them together using Agisoft Metashape.

- The target of this workshop was the virtual reconstruction of selected items to be later used in the 360-degree Museum Tour and in a new Google Art application.


First attempts of 3D reconstructions of the broken glass vessels by AUB students Alaa Abboud and Amin Berjaoui from the Department of Mechanical Engineering (work in progress).
Material science and glass
A partnership with Dr. Malek Tabbal, Professor of Physics at the AUB Department of Physics, and the Science and Technology in Archaeology and Culture Research Center (STARC) at the Cyprus Institute, will conduct an analysis of the chemical composition of the fragments and shards originating from the shattered glass objects. Emphasis will be put on non-invasive analysis, with invasive sampling restricted to those fragments that cannot be restored.

Such a collaboration would serve as an exchange platform for students and researchers.
New Course at the Department of Archaeology - AROL 236 Fieldwork

As plans for the project to restore the broken glass vessels took shape, Dr. Panayot invited interested undergraduate archaeology students to assist the visiting overseas conservators from the Institut National du Patrimoine. Several students took up the offer of working with the experts. With the full backing of the History and Archaeology Department, it was agreed that this experience for the students would be formalized and in addition to them obtaining an insight and instruction in conservation theory and methods and the workings of a museum, they would receive academic assessment as a fieldwork course AROL 236.

This will take place under the direction of Dr. Panayot in her capacity as Associate Professor at the Department of History and Archaeology, with advice from the conservators.
Despite still being off limits to the public the museum continues to generate media attention.

**September 23, 2020**

Another era for AUB Archaeological Museum as it sees new curatorship: Article by Safa Jafari (September 28, 2020), [Attached Link](#)

The AUB Archaeological Museum has been handed over to its new curator, Dr. Nadine Panayot, replacing Dr. Leila Badre who served as the museum’s director for over 45 years.

**October 31, 2020**

An-nahar article on AUB Archaeological Museum by Rosette Fadel:

جولة في متحف الجامعة الأميركية: النفح الحر من أعظم ابتكارات الفينيقين [click here](#)

**November 24, 2020**

L’Orient Le Jour article by May Makarem

Nadine Haroun Panayot veut donner un nouveau souffle au musée de l’AUB. [click here](#)

**April 17, 2021**

Interview with Dr. Nadine Panayot Haroun at “Nida al watan” [click here](#)

**June 23, 2021**

CNN International broadcast a piece on the AUB Museum glass recovery on Wednesday, June 23. Please click on the link below to watch it: [click here](#)
The announcement of the collaboration and ongoing work between the British Museum, TEFAF, and AUB Museum received wide press coverage.
British Museum Conservators Will Painstakingly Piece Together Eight Ancient Vessels Destroyed in the 2020 Beirut Explosion. The project is supported by a $29,500 grant from TEFAF. By Naomi Rea, July 27, 2021: [click here](https://www.artnews.com)

**The Art Newspaper**

British Museum to restore glass artefacts shattered in Beirut explosion

Eight vessels from the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut will undergo conservation thanks to €25,000 grant from Tefaf fund. By Hannah Mc Givern, 27th July 2021: [click here](https://www.theartnewspaper.com)

**ARTnews**

British Museum, TEFAF Team Up to Restore Glass Artifacts Damaged in Beirut Explosion.

By Maximiliano Duron, July 27, 2021: [click here](https://www.artnews.com)

**Republic world**

UK: British Museum To Restore Eight Glass Artefacts Damaged In Beirut Port Blast. By Dipaneeta Das, 27th July, 2021: [click here](https://www.republicworld.com)

**Opera News**

British Museum, TEFAF Team Up to Restore Glass Artifacts Damaged in Beirut Explosion

By artnews.com [click here](https://www.artnews.com)
Le British Museum va restaurer des antiquités brisées lors de l’explosion de Beyrouth


British Museum to restore glass vessels shattered in Beirut blast

BY FRENCH PRESS AGENCY - AFP LONDON ARTS ; July27, 2021 3:40 PM GMT+3.

British Museum to piece together ancient glass artefacts shattered in Beirut port explosion

By Adam Sherwin, July 27, 2021 2:30 pm:

TEFAF and the British Museum are Working Together to Restore the Glass Artefacts that were Damaged in the Beirut Explosion; By Special Correspondent July 27, 2021:

British Museum to restore ancient artefacts shattered by Beirut port blast; Jul 27, 2021.
8 antichi reperti distrutti a Beirut saranno restaurati al British Museum, grazie a TEFAF

BENI CULTURALI di redazione. click here

British Museum e TEFAF insieme per il restauro dei reperti danneggiati dall’esplosione del porto di Beirut del 2020; Scritto da Redazione. click here

Des antiquités détruites lors de l'explosion de Beyrouth vont être restaurées par le British Museum ; Par Le Figaro avec AFP, Publié le 27/07/2021, mis à jour le 27/07/2021: click here.

المتحف البريطاني يرمم ثمانية أوانٍ زجاجية أثرية تحطمته بانفجار مرفأ بيروت تموز 2021 click here

British Museum to Restore Ancient Vessels Shattered in Beirut Explosion, by Hakim Bishara, July 27, 2021 click here
British Museum, TEFAF team up to restore glass artifacts damaged in Beirut explosion, July 28, 2021: click here

Interview with Curator Nadine Panayot on August 3, 2021: click here

One Year on From the Deadly Beirut Explosion, The City’s Art Scene Continues to Face Challenges: Efforts to rebuild have been marred by economic and political challenges.

Dorian Batycka, August 4, 2021 click here
In a Sea of Broken Glass, Beirut Museums Work to Preserve Their Antiquities. A year after the blast and with help from abroad, a cadre of talent restores the past. By Lydia Wilson August 4, 2021:  click here

AUB partners with British Museum to restore artifacts broken by Beirut Port blast

By Robert McKelvey, August 23, 2021  click here

Life support for masterpieces on the edge. This year the Tefaf Museum Restoration Fund is helping a glass disaster in Beirut and an unusual Manet portrait in Wales

By Anny Shaw, September 3, 2021  click here

Putting Pieces of Beirut’s Past Back Together;

By Farah Nayeri; Sept. 5, 2021:  click here