

# BEIRUT NATIONAL MUSEUM :

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## PROJECT FOR THE OPENING OF ITS UPPER GALLERY

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On the 25th of November 1997 the Museum re-opened its doors to the public. One hundred objects from the largely stone collection are now on permanent display throughout the Museum's ground floor. Since the re-opening an increasing number of visitors, both Lebanese and foreign and including large numbers of school parties, has been visiting the Museum to see the collections that have been hidden away for so long. Encouraged by this success and supported both financially and morally by the National Heritage Foundation presided over by the First Lady, Mrs Mona Hraoui, the Directorate General of Antiquities was able to proceed with the second phase of its project to fully re-open the National Museum. The refurbishment of the Upper Gallery was undertaken as soon as the structural work on the building was complete and these are now ready to accommodate nearly 887 m<sup>2</sup> of display cases.

A deliberate effort was made to emphasize the wealth and beauty of the Museum's collections. Bronze figurines from Byblos, some of which are veiled with a gold leaf, will also be on exhibit. One display case will be entirely given over to the faience animal figurines from the Temple of Obelisks at Byblos and which include hippopotamus, apes, etc... The jewellery, including necklaces and rings found at Magharet Ablun near Sidon from the Persian period and an unusual collection of Roman glassware largely from around the city of Tyre and its surrounding area should prove particularly interesting. Also on display will be a selection of objects from the more modern Roman-Byzantine period uncovered in the recent Downtown excavations in Beirut. In fact most of Lebanon's history dating from the Neolithic to the Ottoman period, will be represented.

The D.G.A is also currently preparing a large national heritage exhibition in collaboration with the I.M.A (*Institut du Monde Arabe*) in Paris from October 1998 until March 1999. Although several rather exceptional pieces from the Museum will thus be abroad on loan, the beauty of the Museum's collections as a whole inevitably allays any disappointment in those objects that will remain on display at home. Those particular pieces chosen for the Paris exhibition will of course return to be put on prominent public display in the Museum.