

Beirut: Uncovering the Past/ Beyrouth: le temps retrouvé

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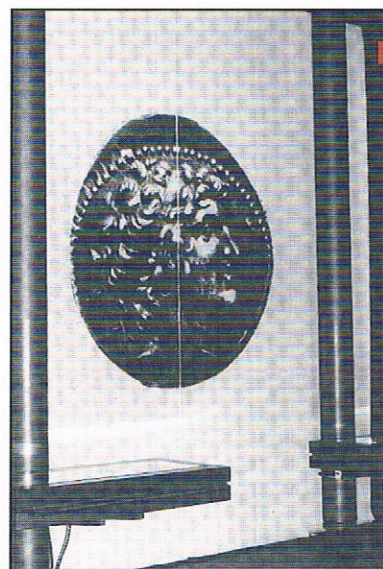
The archaeological excavations that have now been underway for several months – and that turned Beirut into the largest urban dig ever known – produced results that stretched far beyond expectations, even for those archaeologists and explorers involved in the project. Painful though it was, the destruction of the city centre made these discoveries possible and opened the way to a more comprehensive understanding of the city's history. Although noted by the European press and by specialised publications, very few people are aware of the scale of work undertaken in recent years. This was highlighted in London, at the British Museum where an exhibition on the history of Beirut was organised for the first time.

As a concerted effort between the Lebanese Ministry of Culture and Higher Education, the Directorate General of Antiquities, the Lebanese British Friends of the National Museum and of course the British Museum, a small exhibition entitled *Beirut: uncovering the past* was held. At the outset, it was to consist of informative panels, maps and photos, but subsequently, archaeological artefacts recently uncovered in Beirut were included in the display. Opened in March 1996 it was enough of a success so as to be extended until the end of October 1996.

In the autumn of 1998, the Institut du Monde Arabe will be holding a major exhibition of some of the National Museum of Beirut's collections. For this event a very large selection of archaeological objects will be leaving Lebanon for the first time.

As a preliminary introduction to current ongoing archaeological activities in the Lebanon, the London exhibition *Beirut: uncovering the past* will be moving in November to the I.M.A.'s museum under the new name of *Beyrouth: le temps retrouvé*.

It will in fact act as the prelude to the greater exhibition of 1998.



1-2-3. View of exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe.

