

Large print  
exhibition text



The Asahi Shimbun Displays

# **Shattered glass of Beirut**

Text on the wall to the left of the entrance:

## **Shattered glass of Beirut**

On 4 August 2020, the Lebanese city of Beirut was rocked by one of the largest explosions in history. A violent shockwave ripped through the city when 2750 tonnes of improperly stored ammonium nitrate ignited in the port. At least 218 people were killed and 7000 injured. On top of a crippling financial crisis and a raging pandemic, the explosion brought the city to its knees. It damaged buildings up to 10 km away, leaving Beirut covered in shattered glass.

The Archaeological Museum at the American University of Beirut was one of the many cultural institutions affected. A display case containing 74 glass vessels was smashed against the floor. Thousands of shards of ancient glass were mixed with fragments from the glass case and surrounding windows.

Staff at the Archaeological Museum and the British Museum have worked together to restore eight of these vessels in London. This is the story of that collaboration.

Central projection:

### **Explosion in Beirut's port and its aftermath**

There are sounds of an explosion and breaking glass.

Duration: 1 minute 10 seconds

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### **Large print guide**

Scan the QR code for a link to the large print guide.

High level quote:

'For 2000 years these vessels survived earthquakes, tsunamis and wars until 4 August 2020 when they shattered into thousands of pieces like our hearts and souls.'

Nadine Panayot, curator of the Archaeological Museum, 4 August 2021

Film to the right:

## **Responding to crisis**

Staff and specialists reflect on the rescue and restoration of the vessels from the Archaeological Museum in Beirut that were shattered in the explosion.

People can be heard speaking.

Duration: 3 minutes and 5 seconds

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Central display of objects, label to the left:

## **Healing after trauma**

The display case that collapsed at the Archaeological Museum during the Beirut explosion contained 74 ancient glass vessels, originally used for holding food, drink or perfume. Of those, 72 shattered into thousands of pieces. The scars on the restored vessels visibly reflect the healing process experienced by the people of Beirut as they slowly rebuild their lives and their city.

from nearest to middle of display case:

Roman bowl, AD 100–300

Byzantine cup, AD 500–700

Roman beaker, 1st century AD

Roman flask, AD 300–400

The glass vessels in their display case  
before the explosion

© AUB Archaeological Museum

Central display of objects, label to the right:

## **Eyewitnesses to history**

On the first anniversary of the explosion in August 2021 Nadine Panayot, the Archaeological Museum's curator, said: 'Honestly, restoring these objects as they were before the explosion doesn't mean much to me. But restoring them to give them a voice again, to bear witness to what was inflicted on Lebanon, now that makes a whole lot of sense to me'.

from nearest to middle of display case:

Roman bowl, AD 200–400

Roman bowl, AD 50–70

Early Islamic flask, AD 700–1000

Byzantine jug, AD 400–500

The Archaeological Museum at the  
American University of Beirut, Lebanon  
© AUB Archaeological Museum

Film to the right of the display case:

### **One broken piece at a time**

Watch one of the glass vessels being restored at the British Museum's World Conservation and Exhibition Centre.

This film is silent.

Duration: 1 minute and 30 seconds

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Text to the right of the film:

## **Find out more**

To find out more about the Beirut Glass Project, visit [britishmuseum.org/glassofbeirut](https://britishmuseum.org/glassofbeirut) or scan the QR code.

## **Events**

Explore the themes of this display through related events. For the full programme, visit [britishmuseum.org](https://britishmuseum.org)

For events related to 2022: UN International Year of Glass, visit [iyog2022.org](https://iyog2022.org)

To uncover more about the Archaeological Museum, visit [aub.edu.lb/museum\\_archeo/Pages/default.aspx](https://aub.edu.lb/museum_archeo/Pages/default.aspx)

## **Related galleries**

The Museum's collection of ancient glass can be seen in Rooms 42–43: The Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic world, Room 69: Greek and Roman life, and Room 70: Roman Empire (The Wolfson Gallery).

## **Acknowledgements**

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Middle East Airlines

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