



Annual Report

Arts and Culture Programmes 2022 - 2023



About us

The British Council builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language.

We work in two ways – directly with individuals to transform their lives, and with governments and partners to make a bigger difference for the longer term, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We help young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities. We support them to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications. Our work in arts and culture stimulates creative expression and exchange and nurtures creative enterprise.

We connect the best of the UK with the world and the best of the world with the UK. These connections lead to an understanding of each other's strengths and of the challenges and values that we share. This builds trust between people in the UK and other nations which endures even when official relations may be strained.

We work on the ground in more than 100 countries. Last year we reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications.

Our purpose

Although we receive a government grant in aid, the British Council is operationally independent from the UK government. All our work contributes to our purpose and [Royal Charter](#) aims:

'[to] advance, for the public benefit, any purpose which is exclusively charitable and which shall

(a) promote cultural relationships between the people of the United Kingdom and other countries;

(b) develop a wider knowledge of the English language; and

(c) encourage educational co-operation between the United Kingdom and other countries, support the advancement of United Kingdom education and education standards overseas, and otherwise promote education.'

Acknowledgement

The Annual Report for the Arts and Culture Programmes of 2022 – 2023 presents a comprehensive overview of a year-long journey filled with diverse and enriching initiatives. These initiatives have been tirelessly championed by the team at British Council Lebanon in our ongoing commitment to foster growth in the Cultural and Creative Industries sector.

This report serves as a testament to the remarkable contributions of our extensive network and underscores the outcomes of our productive partnerships; in various forms, these collaborations have played a pivotal role in shaping our endeavours, as we sought to address the pressing needs of the sector.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the exceptional experts and practitioners who generously shared their knowledge, insights, and resources, contributing significantly to our mission of innovation and the sustainability of our work.

We are thrilled to present this report as a commemoration of our achievements over the past year.

Annual Report - Arts and Culture Programmes 2022 - 2023 is prepared by Rabih Koussa and Marc Mouarkech.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2022-2023, British Council has exponentially expanded its strategic partnerships and impact in Lebanon, working with 25 partners on 35 programme components.

In 2021-2022, British Council Lebanon commissioned an Impact Evaluation of the previous work we have done. The study offered insight into three main themes – cultural exchange, responding to local and global challenges, and creative economy, drawing recommendations for enhancing our working culture and building internal capacities and skills geared towards developing informed and long-lasting strategic partnerships and impact with the cultural sector in Lebanon. This was followed by the Build Back Better initiative that brought together 30 key stakeholders to propose purposeful ideas to aid artistic practitioners in Lebanon to create new opportunities to present their work and to find new spaces for positive cooperation between them and relevant local and international entities.

In response, we have designed and implemented a primary programme - CATAPULT, thought of as a talent and professional development programme in collaboration with pre-existing hubs in four different creative sectors: Dance and Performing Arts, Music, Games, and Visual Arts, with each initiative paired with a podcast episode to discuss the respective sector.

Our work in the cultural heritage sector was also elaborated. In addition to the renewed round of the Cultural Protection Fund (CPF), through which British Council supported four projects to continue to safeguard at-risk cultural assets, the local office sought the partnership of two organisations for a new endeavour: Situating Heritage is composed of a set of activities that aim to map the threats, opportunities and future directions of the sector while engaging with public authorities, experts, students, and the general public.

The different grant schemes supported six new proposals, with the Digital Collaboration Fund encouraging collaborative projects between Lebanon and UK-based entities, and MASARAT supporting the production of Art projects on the local level. In addition, the regionally supported initiatives Mudawanat I & II aim to build a living archive of podWcasts that document the contemporary cultural realm, and Digital MAPS enabled the conducting of mapping to understand how issues of identity, social cohesion and inclusion manifest on and are shaped by social media.

In line with British Council's Strategy 2025 and the Impact Area Theory of Change, our programmes this year build on the work we started during the past one. In 2022-2023, we continued to refine our shift from an emergency response toward a well-planned strategy for recovery, understand our attitude, modes of engagement and agility in response to the local context; and maintain a productive balance between our global vision and the local context by building strategic, active, and sustainable partnerships. While reiterating our commitment to existing partner relationships and building on the outcomes of the projects we have developed together, we have expanded our base; we have developed suitable collaborations with emerging and established organisations and practitioners who share our core values to create partnerships that align our objectives.



Building Trust through Our Long-term Commitment to Lebanon

Foreword by Mayssa Dawi Hachem, Country Director Lebanon & MENA Schools Lead

Forging pathways has been at the heart of the British Council's work in Lebanon for the past 5 years. These pathways symbolise the diverse approaches, programmes, and initiatives we have implemented to promote education, non-formal education, and arts and culture. They represent our organisation's remarkable journey, paving the way for growth, learning, and transformation.

The trust we have built through our unwavering commitment to Lebanon spans a history of 79 years. Since 1944, the British Council has played a vital role in providing international opportunities for organisations from the education, English language and cultural sectors and in fostering new partnerships with UK institutions and organisations.

In education, we seek to contribute to developing high-quality, inclusive education systems by supporting the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to create more inclusive schools

through our Global Schools Connect programme. We also work in non-formal education to empower young leaders and influencers through skills development to contribute to trust-building, cohesion and stability in their societies and to represent their communities locally and nationally.

Our work in the arts and culture sector focuses on developing creative skills and cultural expression, fostering collaboration with UK organisations, and protecting cultural heritage.

In Lebanon, we deliver a range of UK qualifications, including IELTS and Cambridge English Assessment and provide access to UK higher education and professional qualifications.

We are thrilled to celebrate our work's remarkable impact and reiterate our commitment to building trust and contributing to creating a better future for Lebanon.



Our Work in Arts and Culture

Foreword by Marc Mouarkech, Head of Arts - Lebanon & Syria

Creative Economy

British Council is dedicated to fostering sustainable and inclusive creative economies through diverse programs and initiatives. Here's a snapshot of our goals and achievements in Lebanon:

1. CATAPULT, Our talent and professional development programme focuses on four creative sectors. We collaborate with cultural leaders to identify potential and develop components that meet the needs of creative practitioners. The programme aims to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and capacity building while establishing strong ties with the UK. In our 3-year commitment to CATAPULT, we aimed to promote the holistic development of artists and practitioners and maximise the impact of what was achieved in previous years. Highlights include:

CATAPULT.sonic

Training 30 musicians and producers in digital music marketing, resulting in 24 music videos and 16 live acts.

CATAPULT.visual'arts

Empowering 23 artists through capacity-building modules and mentorship, leading to 11 exhibitions.

CATAPULT.body

Addressing sustainability challenges in the dance and performing arts sector through an extensive study and micro-forum.

CATAPULT.digital

Supporting the Arabic Games Conference, uniting 13 game development communities for showcases, talks, and workshops.

We look forward to the diverse future outcomes encompassing various aspects of the creative journey. These include generating new research, establishing a system for knowledge sharing and mentorship, facilitating practical experience, and creating opportunities for production and showcasing.

2. IN BETWEEN, a dynamic cultural festival held from November 16-20, 2022, showcased multi-disciplinary activities and aimed to spark thought-provoking conversations on the creative economy and global challenges. With themes of conversations and spaces, it encouraged experimentation and openness. The program featured exhibitions, performances, and talks in 9 unique spaces in Beirut. The festival is being re-imagined as a biannual regional offering by the British Council, expanding its impact.

3. Masarat Grant: In 2021, 9 projects from Lebanon received our grant, supporting diverse and creative expression through production, training, and showcasing. Outcomes included 3 music training sessions, 2 concerts, a fashion capsule collection, a shadow theatre work, and 6 video clips addressing societal and political challenges.



Culture connects

Our culture connects work aims to build bridges and create impactful collaborations in the world of culture. Here's an overview of what we do:

1. Multidisciplinary Delegations: We have organised and facilitated a consistent stream of professional delegations over the past two years. Notable examples include:

Momentum: An international delegate programme that allowed participation in the Edinburgh International Festivals.

IN BETWEEN Delegate Programme: Bringing together 12 UK-based professionals in Beirut.

Spotlight on Culture: A delegation for Peace and Beyond 2023 in Belfast.

2. CATAPULT Exchanges: Our CATAPULT programme has played a vital role in empowering emerging artists. Through residencies at prestigious visual arts institutions in Scotland and participation in significant events like the London Games Festival and Sonica, artists and art practitioners from Lebanon have created new works, accessed valuable resources, and forged partnerships with UK organisations.

3. International Collaboration Grant: This grant has been instrumental in fostering international partnerships and promoting innovative ways of working together. Since 2021, we have supported 5 collaborations between 11 organisations. Notably, 2 projects from Lebanon received grants from the Digital Collaboration Fund, adapting to virtual collaboration amidst travel restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Online Engagement: We have established outlets to strengthen our online engagement locally and regionally, including the CATAPULT and Mudawanat podcasts and Selector Radio.

3. ARTIVATOR: Our latest initiative, the Art Management Incubator, empowers cultural practitioners from the MENA region through training, mentoring, and networking opportunities.

Art responds to global matters

Our work promotes connected and equal societies while protecting and promoting cultural expression, diversity, and heritage. Here's an overview of our previous and current work:

1. Cultural Protection Fund (CPF): Since 2016, the CPF has supported more than 12 projects focused on protecting cultural heritage at risk from conflict and climate change. These projects have resulted in training programmes, symposia, toolkits, preservation of restoration techniques, and multimedia documentation of intangible heritage forms.

2. Situating Heritage: Our country-level program aimed to consolidate the efforts and resources of cultural heritage professionals in Lebanon. It assessed sector priorities and positioned the CPF as an opportunity to address challenges. Key components included focus group debates with professionals, focus groups with students, and a national survey to gather public opinions. The program culminated in a symposium presenting findings and engaging the broader community of heritage experts.

3. Cultural Examination: This captivating series included panels and performances exploring arts and culture practices within local, regional, and international contexts. With experienced panellists and facilitators, we discussed equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) principles and highlighted approaches that merge art and activism.

4. From Ink to Action: A new collaboration with the Lakes International Comic Art Festival, bringing an exhibition and an anthology of 13 commissioned comic works by artists from 6 MENA countries addressing the climate crisis and environmental threats. These will be showcased at this year's festival edition and presented at COP28 in Dubai.

By nurturing talent, fostering creativity, strengthening connections between Lebanon and the UK, promoting connected societies and addressing global challenges, our work strives to contribute to the growth and vibrancy of the cultural and creative sectors in Lebanon, create positive change and inspire impactful dialogue.



FESTIVALS

The British Council's Festival programmes aim to establish prominent cultural platforms, focusing on collaboration with various actors. Their impact is multifaceted, including expanding professional networks and access to international markets for creative professionals, facilitating intercultural exchanges with the UK across various domains, sharing knowledge to support the development of creative sectors, and fostering long-term bilateral relationships and cultural connections through collaborative efforts and showcasing.

This year, British Council Lebanon launched the IN BETWEEN Festival in a pilot edition with plans of building on its success to evolve it into a flagship programme.

In 2022-2023, British Council Lebanon initiated and supported a total of four festivals:

- 01 IN BETWEEN Festival
- 02 Rural Encounters on the Environment and Film (REEF)
- 03 Al-Bustan International Festival
- 04 Beirut and Beyond International Music Festival (BBIMF)

01 IN BETWEEN FESTIVAL

The ever-shifting local and global landscapes have produced complete liminality, with projections unclear and boundaries undefined. As a result, new spaces have emerged – ones for perception and creation – as they echo newfound opportunities to rethink how Arts and Culture can contribute to moving forward. In response, the first edition of the IN BETWEEN, from November 16 to 20, 2022, expanded on a yearlong programme of professional capacity-building initiatives in the Visual Arts, Dance and Performing Arts, Music and Games sectors to including Theatre and Literature, and invited the audience to think of the possibilities in the spaces in between.

The IN BETWEEN Festival aimed to instigate challenging conversations around the creative economy and global matters, and place in limelight the achievements of our programmes in 2021 – 2022. Overall, it convened 23 activities from 5 creative sectors in 9 spaces across Beirut.



The IN BETWEEN Festival was launched with the opening of three exhibitions at Abroyan Factory. ‘Anatomy of a Fall’, ‘Beirut Narratives 2.0’ and ‘Imagine that Tomorrow’ presented a floating time capsule – torn between past, present and future.

ANATOMY OF A FALL

In partnership with Hammana Artist House | Part of CATAPULT.visual’arts

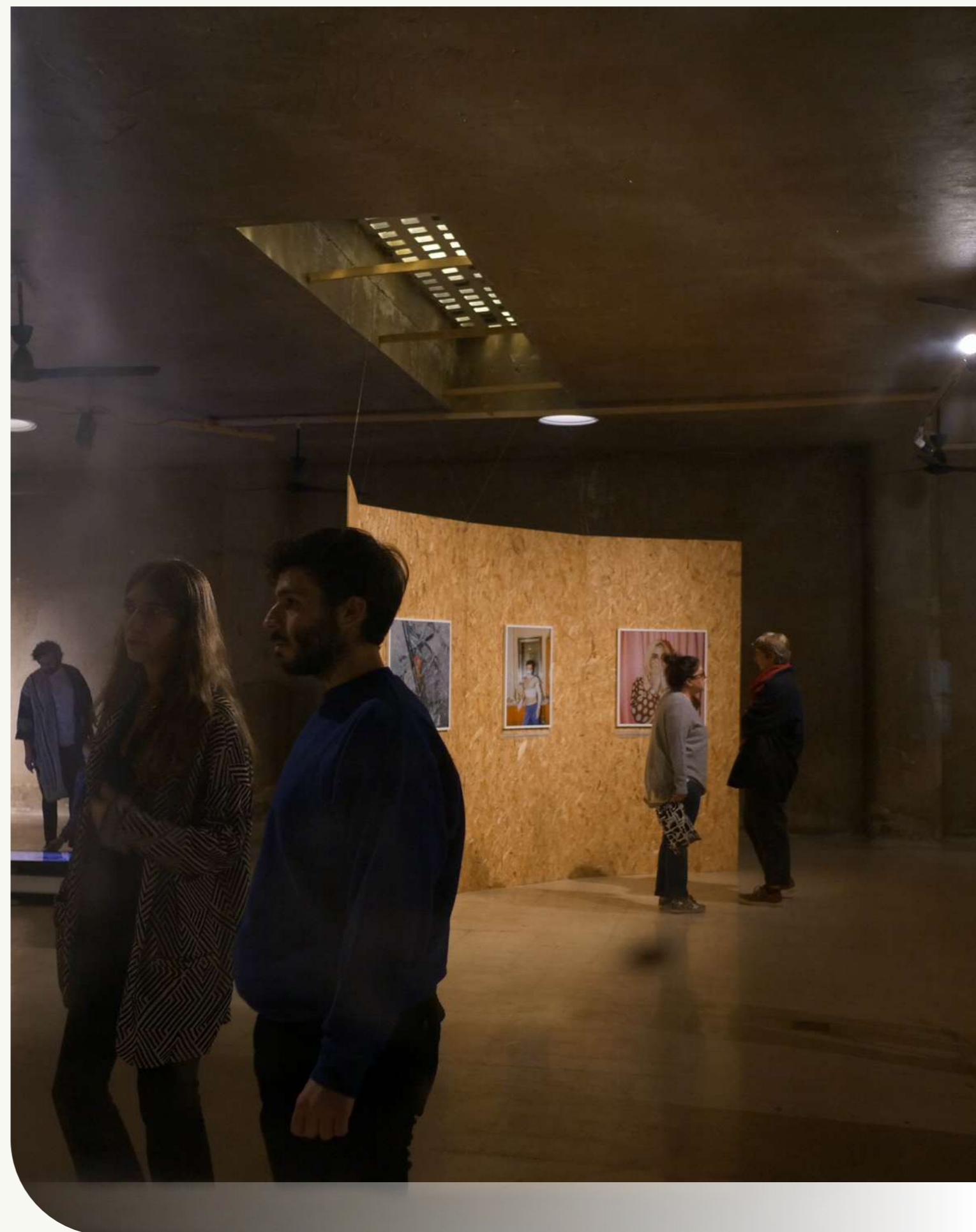
‘Anatomy of a Fall’ retraces the thresholds that have constituted the reality of the past few years and the key moments which propelled the shift from past normalcy. In this fourth iteration of the exhibition, Collectif 1200 presented a new reading of the works of 11 photographers, transforming the exhibition into a landscape of experiences and emotions reminiscent of a never-ending cycle of recurring crises. Over 100 works transiently inhabited the space, leaning and hanging on wooden boards [...]; steadiness was met with fragility, anchored moments met with fleetingness.

Presented by British Council Lebanon and Hammana Artist House, the exhibition builds on the partnership that brought about the show’s third iteration in September 2022, and follows the collective’s first solo show in Lebanon, ‘Echoes from a Crowded Room’, realised through the CATAPULT.visual’arts programme.

The exhibition was curated by Ieva Saudargaite Douaihi and Tarek Haddad, and featured the works of Betty Ketchedjian, Elsie Haddad, Ieva Saudargaite Douaihi, Laura Menassa, Manu Ferneini, Myriam Boulos, Omar Gabriel, Paul Gorra, Rima Maroun, Roger Mokbel and Tarek Haddad.

‘Anatomy of a Fall’ is the result of 2 years of ongoing and unfinished conversations between the artists using the medium to reflect on their surroundings and their daily lives. Diverse subjects such as the intimate and the socio-political, all come together as an amalgamation of experiences to enrich a single holistic narrative – that of an ongoing loss, struggle, resistance, hope, love, change, stillness, death and life in Lebanon.

“Everything is on the verge of shifting and falling into something else.”



BEIRUT NARRATIVES 2.0

A poignant reminder of the impact of the devastating port explosion that took place on August 4th, 2020, Beirut Narratives was conceived by Celine and Tatiana Stephan as a participatory, public installation that aims to recognise stories of loss, grief, and resilience. The first phase of the installation invited people to share testimonials of their experiences. Imprinted on fragments of fabric, words and sentences – along with illustrations, drawings and sketches – were collected, stitched together into oversized cloths, and displayed across the city like billboards of memory.

In hopes of commemorating these testimonies, British Council Lebanon commissioned the duo to instate a second phase of the project. For the duration of the festival, 'Beirut Narratives 2.0' invited the public to revisit the stories and respond to questions about their emotional, mental, and physical states two years after the explosion. This engaging component explored the transient state in which we currently live, and implored reflections and projections: "How does it feel? Did you heal? What's next?"



'Beirut Narratives 2.0' presented itself as a forum, evolving as people came together and expressed their emotions. It highlighted the power of silent speech, unifying the voices of the heard and the unheard, and offering a gesture of collective healing for the city and its inhabitants in the face of adversity.

IMAGINE THAT TOMORROW

Part of CATAPULT.visual'arts

While the rest of the world hash out pertinent projections for the future, Lebanon continues to be subsumed by escalating threats to lives and livelihoods – a cycle that has confronted every musing and whim about the future. The exhibition 'Imagine that Tomorrow' invited 11 emerging artists from the CATAPULT.visual'arts programme to present imaginative and speculative visions. From a suspended cage plastered with photographs of current food production methods to a barely functional fountain and a spinning zoetrope that mouths 'words', the presented works engaged the wider public in challenging conversations about critical global matters through the Arts. The artists took part in numerous feedback sessions with the team at British Council and received financial support for realising the works.

The process adhered to the ambitions of the CATAPULT programme, and followed a professional development methodology that encouraged process-driven and experimental propositions. Each artist was provided with a large wooden frame panel, and was encouraged to mediate new environments, installations, and structures that introduced artworks, objects, film, and graphics as experiential outcomes.

Despite being heavily imagination-driven, the proposed works instigated critical conversations about the future. In turn, visitors were invited to travel through images – and imaginations – that induce reflection. 'Imagine that Tomorrow' was curated by Marc Mouarkech and Rabih Koussa and featured new works from Ahmad Ghaddar/Renoz, Alaa Itani, Assadour Garvanian, Bahaa Souki, Elias Nafaa, Gabriella Choueifati, Goshia Beshlyan, Laetitia El Hakim, Mia Baraka, Shams Safieddine, and Walid El Mays.



In 2021-2022, CATAPULT.visual'arts engaged 23 emerging visual artists to celebrate the plurality of artistic expression and introduce the Lebanese Art scene to emerging vibrant and raw talent. The programme responded to the needs and ambitions of the artists, aligned with their practices, career positions, and long-term goals, offering a 5-day talent and professional development workshop to unpack the process behind organising a solo gallery exhibition and equipping the artists with an extensive practical skillset pertinent to today's creative industry. This was coupled with a ten-part exhibition series at Artlab, allowing them to present their first solo show. This year marked the

completion of the series, with the final three shows running for a month each.

The artists were also presented with numerous opportunities, including the 4-week CATAPULT.visual'arts Residency in partnership with Hospitalfield and Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop. In August, two selected applicants to the follow-on open call had the chance to explore their research interests in Scotland, facilitated both critically and practically, partook in studio visits and activities that involved sharing of practice, attended exhibitions and events across the UK, and had access to the facilities and guidance that both institutions offer.

The first night of IN BETWEEN also marked the re-opening of Cinema Royal with the launch of a theatre programme curated by Neighbourhood. Renovated in a record time frame, Cinema Royal is the latest addition to the budding cultural infrastructure in Bourj Hammoud, and was realised as a result of Marc Hadife's will to activate spaces for the Arts.

SHE-WOLVES

In partnership with Neighbourhood

In 'She-Wolves', the first act of the festival, British artist Laura Careless commanded the stage in an outstanding 60-minute, one-woman performance that tells the stories of the forgotten female rulers of England before Elizabeth I. Adapted from the book and BBC series by historian Helen Castor, 'She-Wolves' acknowledges that power in the medieval world was inescapably male; Yet despite all obstacles that stood in their way, a handful of extraordinary women did attempt to rule. 'She-Wolves' immersed the audience in the paths that five extraordinary royal women have paved to the golden age of Gloriana: Matilda, Lady of England, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Isabella of France, Margaret of Anjou, and Mary I.

In an exhilarating blend of dance, theatre, song, illustrated projections and original sound design, the act narrates shocking, delightful and gripping tales from a feminist lens, while raising old and yet unanswered questions about gender and power.





LEATHERFACE

In partnership with Neighbourhood

Then, wrapped by a stunning set, actors Dana Dia and Mohamad Yassine brilliantly explore violence and the cruelty of reality in *Leatherface* by Dana Mikhail.

Written in 1994, the play introduces “He”, a writer and poet who loves to dress as the hero of the Texas Chainsaw Massacre. He is an avid lover of horror films and is interrupted by the untimely return of “She”. When he tries to conceal his antics, the cruelty of reality interferes with his game.

Helmut Krausser’s two-person play *Lederfresse* is, as critics rightly judge, a “slightly macabre, essentially rather normal love story”. Although love is probably the central theme, the play is also about violence exercised by a power that sets itself as sovereign, or, to use Foucault’s terms, about a collision with the legal systems of sovereignty.

Excerpts taken from “Re-dramatized Eros” by Spela Virant.

BEFORE YOU GO

In partnership with Yaraqa | Part of CATAPULT.body

On its second day, the IN BETWEEN festival kicked off with a walkable trail of performances that expand on the experience of being a stranger in one’s hometown. Beyond enactments, ‘Before You Go’ explores the roles and spaces that shape our social dynamics and interactions. Created by Yaraqa, this artistic intervention invited the audience to encounter pockets of site-specific dance performances that provoke, accentuate and elevate their day-to-day relationship with their surroundings and each other.

Have you ever felt like a stranger in your own hometown? Like the spaces you were so used to - be it a house, a neighbourhood street, or garden - no longer felt the same?

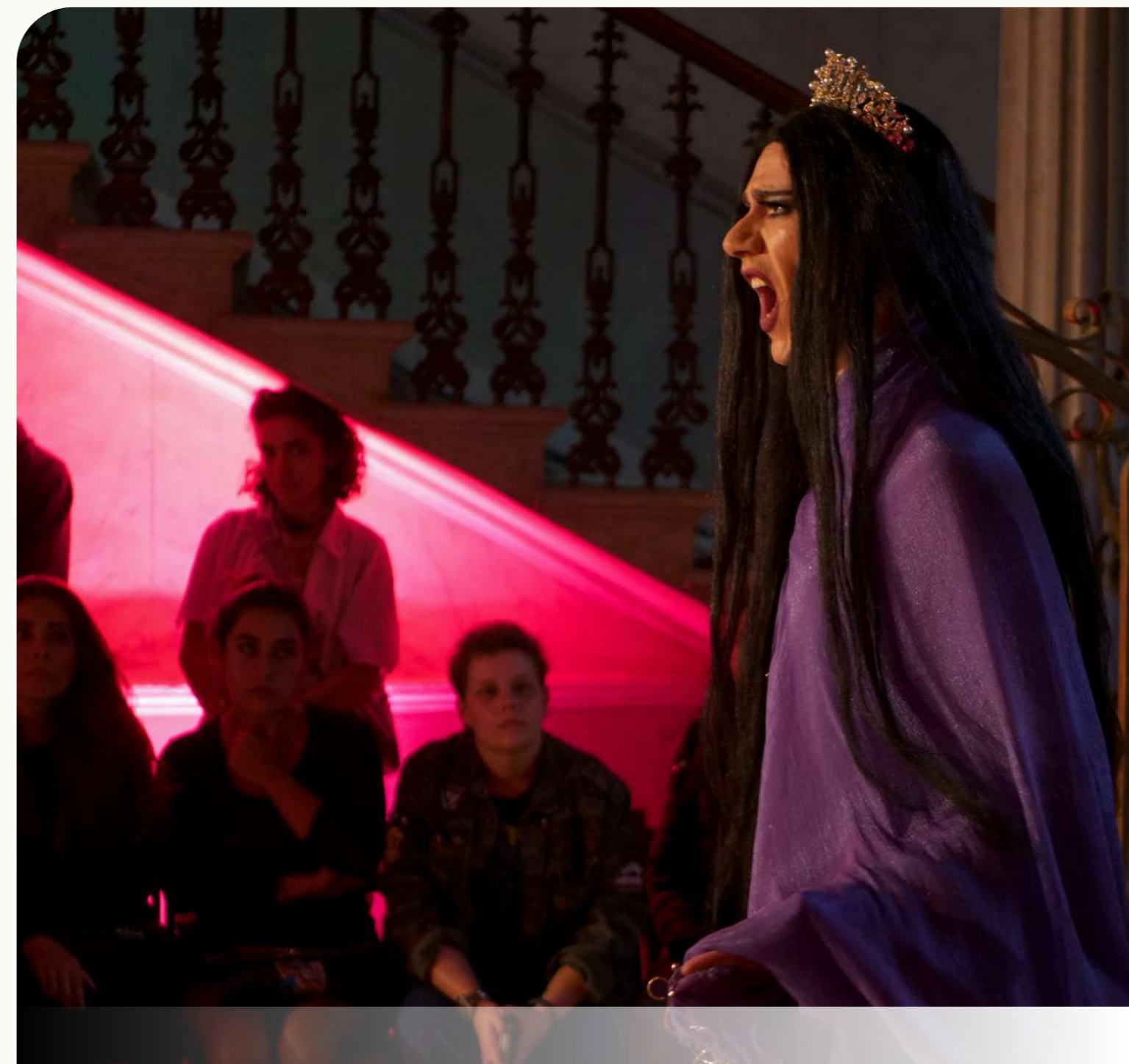
An extension of the pilot completed in August 2022 during the Network for Cultural Alliance Framework, *Before You Go’s* adaption was held at the enchanting Sursock Palace, a severely damaged historic residence in the Heart of Gemayze. With previously limited public access to the premises, visitors were welcomed through

the Palace gates and intercepted with a series of 6 site-specific performances that guided them through the discovery of the gardens leading into the Palace halls.

Stemming from different dance and movement genres, the trail was graciously hosted by Jadd Tank, and featured performances from Bassam Abou Diab and Eyad Al Ayass, Hoedy, Kawkab Zuhail, Alice Massabki, and Alex Truglio and Reem Naamani. In its inception, *Before You Go* engaged the artists to co-create the experience, drawing in works that range from Ready-Made Performances

which were adapted to the space, Process-Oriented presentations of works that were in the making, and Hypothetical Performances which engaged the audience’s imagination through storytelling.

Roughly 100 minutes in duration, ‘Before You Go’ was repeated thrice throughout the festival, and hosted a unique cohort of guests through the Palace – from room to room, from performance to performance – before being bid farewell. Between reality and fiction, the common was transformed into an open field of possibilities.



FETCH YOUR MOTHER'S HEART

In partnership with Haven for Artists

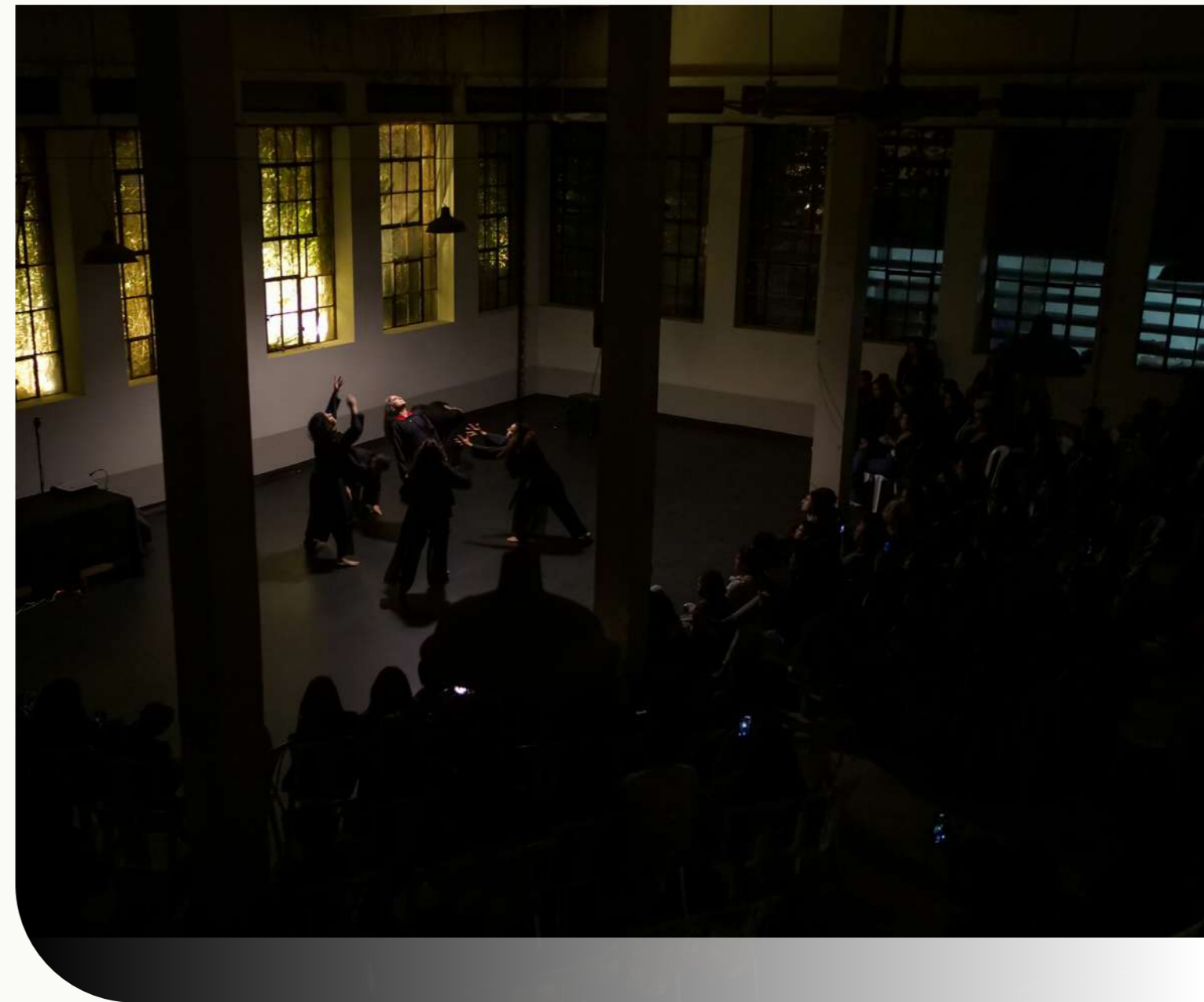
Across the city, another garden was animated.

Underneath the trees at Haven for Artists, an audience settled in for the Beirut launch of 'Fetch Your Mother's Heart', the debut poetry collection from lisa luxx. 'Fetch Your Mother's Heart' is a searing examination of the tender violence that pools in all our states of wanting; from our intimacies to our uprisings. It examines longing as a type of grief from the eyes of displacement – in politics, family, romance and mortality; carrying luxx's experience in foster care, adoption, and as a mixed-heritage daughter of the Arab diaspora. The poems in the collection follow a lesbian love affair as revolution erupts around and within. Drawing on old Arabic folk tales such as Majnun Layla, luxx reimagines them through a queer lens. The poet

tries to understand her gendered capacity to love, as she takes a feminist gaze to the role of sons and mothers, inspired by a brutal attack she witnessed where she found herself asking 'What does it mean to recognise yourself in the beast?'

Before a meet-and-greet with the audience, in an invigorating, hour-long reading of selected excerpts from her book, luxx employed powerful imagery, narrative, the dinner table and the gods — this is a potent response to our political epoch. Displaced from gender, displaced from country; what becomes of her capacity for love amid gentleness and fury?

Fetch Your Mother's Heart ultimately grasps for what is beyond our reach.



AL MOUHAQ - A NEW MOON

In partnership with Al Sarab Dance Company; In collaboration with Rust

A new multi-disciplinary and collaborative performance between Al Sarab Dance Company and Rust, Al Mouhaq – A New Moon is a continuation of Laetitia El Hakim's *Domestica (f.) | Maga*, the second chapter of the work that investigates the domestication of women's knowledge through the erasure of their discoveries and the side-lining of their inventions. *Domestica (f)* leans on her mother's "borrowed recipes" as a trigger for reflection, and attempts to dismantle the limits, guidelines and rules set by ingredients and instructions.

For centuries, witches have inhabited popular imaginaries, following a systematic witch trial that terrorised Europe with the most gruesome happening between the 16th and 17th centuries. While research has uncovered that substantial knowledge was lost through the witches' persecutions, Al Mouhaq revisits attempts to think beyond their demise. The performance studies rituals, transformation, and erasure through movement, and deploys an hour-long conversation on womanhood between several female bodies. By going through the witch's tale, it aimed to raise several questions: Can the lost be brought back? Can the forcefully erased be rewritten? Can a new cycle emerge after annihilation?



THE SPECTACLE OF WAR

In partnership with Dongola Limited Editions and Ambit Magazine

The IN BETWEEN Festival presented the Beirut launch of the 248th edition of Ambit Magazine (UK), a special issue co-edited with Dongola Limited Editions (Lebanon).

“During these times rife with conflict and war, we seek a form of refuge [...] through art, poetry, and stories that express different emotional, mental and geopolitical rhythms [...]. In this issue [of Ambit], contributors revolt, grieve, refute, process, mourn, love, and express the unsimplifiable mixture of feelings that come with war.”

With a heavy heart, and acknowledging that the theme of this issue echoes clearly with artists from the CATAPULT programme, British Council Lebanon realised a targeted call for a Lebanon-centric interpretation of the theme that encouraged interdisciplinary submissions that tackle the tangents, multiplicity and permanence of war, and create resonances beyond its violent, singular image. The issue asserts the urgency to dissect the experience of back-and-forth reverberations

which result from the condensation of thoughts before, during and after the actuality of war.

As a result of the call, 13 original contributions have confronted the limitations of literary journals and attempted to push the implications of print media beyond the confines of paper. Although accessible online through the magazine’s mark-ups, the featured artworks, poems and stories composed a primary component of the Ambit launch during the festival. ‘The Spectacle of War’ was an inspection of the tangents, multiplicity and permanence of war, and kicked off with a conversation between Ambit’s Kirsty Allison and Dongola’s Sarah Chalabi about the theme, and was followed by a spoken word performance from Allison.

This fruitful exchange between disciplines and geographies works towards placing Arts and Culture from Lebanon at the frontline against the realities of war and its tangencies. We are moved by our network of partners and practitioners from the CATAPULT Programme who have contributed to Ambit 248 and continue to create in the face of hardship.

SHURUQ LAUNCH CONCERT

In partnership with Station Beirut | Part of CATAPULT.sonic

SHURUQ, Arabic for dawn or sunrise, represents new beginnings. Music, like the sun, transcends borders and languages, bringing people together in celebration.

SHURUQ is a new talent development and discovery platform for music from Swana and its diasporas. Initiated by Station Beirut in collaboration with several partners, the programme offers career development pathways for Lebanese and regional artists through its capacity-building and music showcase activities. British Council Lebanon is thrilled to have partnered on SHURUQ as part of CATAPULT.sonic, to respond to the needs and potential of the music sector through providing capacity building, content creation and international visibility for artists while instigating collaborative exchange with the UK. After a first round of training on digital music marketing with UK-based Music Ally, SHURUQ has launched a

dedicated YouTube music channel, releasing a series of live performance performances that feature a constellation of Beirut-based artists transmitting original sounds to global audiences.

In an exciting official launch for the channel, the IN BETWEEN Festival boasted the first SHURUQ live concert and featured a diverse line-up of the latest rising talents from Lebanon. The evening kicked off with R&B soul and pop artist Sarah Mansour, whose dreamy songs and soulful voice set the tone for the rest of the night. Next up, electro-pop artist Kye Akoun took the stage, playing his new EP of playful electro-pop tracks under the Shuruq Sun. The concert concluded with the live premiere of the new electro-oriental project Yalla Yalla Habibi Habibi, featuring lead singer Nader Mansour alongside Oussama Abdel Fattah, Nidal Abi Samra, and Ahmad Al Khatib. In addition to a public that was eager to re-engage with the venue and discover new talents, the SHURUQ concert brought together a professional delegation of local and UK music professionals.



A night of celebration, the SHURUQ Launch Concert was followed by a series of 4 club nights and 9 live sessions that highlighted 16 different acts. In addition, the programme presented meet-ups, talks, online events, and enabled residencies for 11 artists. While engaging with over 1800 members of the public, the SHURUQ live sessions are available for streaming on various platforms.

IN BETWEEN LEBANON & THE UK

The first of its format in Lebanon, and taking advantage of the wealth of experience abound by the invitation of a UK-based delegation to the festival, IN BETWEEN Lebanon & the UK presented a unique networking opportunity to initiate fruitful exchanges between emerging artists and over 30 Lebanese and UK professionals. Offering representation for numerous disciplines and role profiles – including cultural producers and leaders, agencies and institutions – 22 professionals participated in up to 10, 10-minute ‘speed-dating’ sessions with 48 emerging practitioners who hoped to introduce their practices and initiate conversations about collaborative projects.

IN BETWEEN Lebanon & the UK was launched with a call for artists in collaboration with Agenda Culturel and MYM Agenda, and offered the participants the possibility to sign up for meetings with up to 5 professionals of their choosing. British Council is

thankful for the motivated participation of Amanda Abi Khalil (Temporary Art Platform), Kirsty Allison (Ambit Magazine), Romy Assouad (Yaraqa), Nabil Canaan (STATION Beirut), Sarah Chalabi (Dongola Limited Editions), Gabriel Chamoun (Fondation Liban Cinema), Sarah Fadel (Al-Sarab Dance Company), Cicely Farrer (Hospitalfield), LJ Findlay-Walsh (Take Me Somewhere), Karl Hadife (Neighbourhood), Fielding Hope (Café OTO / Counterflows), Kirsteen Macdonald (Creative Scotland), Kim McAleese (Edinburgh International Festival), Emmie McLuskey (Counterflows), Tarek Mourad (Beirut Printmaking Studio), Yara Mrad (Beirut and Beyond), Taher Qassim (Liverpool Arab Art Festival), Reem Risk (Ashkal Alwan), Julie Tait (The Lakes International Comic Arts Festival), Farah Wardani (Laban), Hiba Zibaoui (Ishbililia), and Aurelien Zouki (Hammana Artist House). Their openness and enthusiasm have made this opportunity truly remarkable.



FIELDS OF POWER

In partnership with Art of Change, Beirut Digital District (BDD), and Open/Close Dundee. Supported by Tinol Paints and La Tourba

IN BETWEEN Lebanon and the UK was followed by the reveal of the collaborative mural ‘Fields of Power’, commissioned to artists Samer Bou Saleh (Lebanon) and Lauren Morsley (UK). Located at the heart of Beirut Digital District’s outdoor amphitheatre, ‘Fields of Power’ acts as a symbol of friendship and cultural exchange between the two countries, and was realised through a fruitful collaboration between British Council Lebanon, Art of Change, Open/Close Dundee and Beirut Digital District.

The mural reflects on the power of urban street art in affecting our experiences of the public realm, and raises challenging questions about two themes

of local and global relevance: environmental awareness and women empowerment.

“The whole festival is a testament to what makes Lebanon so special in this region, that they include so many diverse issues - from gender and LGBTQ issues to emigration and the environment.” - HMA Hamish Cowell

After a few words from British Ambassador to Lebanon HMA Hamish Cowell, British Council Global Arts Director Skinder Hundal, British Council Lebanon Country Director Mayssa Dawi, and Art of Change Director Imane Assaf, attendees proceeded to engage with the artists, and participants of the speed-dating continued their conversations with the invited professionals over brunch and music entertainment.



NINE EARTHS

In collaboration with Maya Chami

'Fields of Power' was also accompanied by the inauguration of the digital installation 'Nine Earths' by D-Fuse in Beirut. An innovative environmental documentary about global consumption patterns, 'Nine Earths' employs visual ethnography, imagery, sound, and candid interviews to present perceptions of consumption and reveal lifestyle choices that, often unwittingly, impact our planet. Featuring a mosaic of day-to-day life, the work took the audience on an audio-visual journey through multiple locations, highlighting individual voices and stories. Instead of presenting overwhelming scientific data and stereotypical imagery of climate emergency, 'Nine Earths' applies the lens of climate justice to take a closer look at routines of people across the world and draws attention to the accelerating consumption – the driving cause of climate change.

For IN BETWEEN, British Council showcased a revisited version of the work, previously presented at COP26 as part of the Creative Commissions for Climate Action, highlighting the work of Maya Chami from Lebanon and including Arabic text.

THE PHILOSOPHER

In partnership with the Lakes International Comic Art Festival

As-Safir Newspaper wholeheartedly welcomed 'The Philosopher' into its iconic headquarters. Written and illustrated by Bernard Hage (The Art of Boo), 'The Philosopher' follows a character on his morning walk, and illustrates an inner monologue about the individual's attitudes toward community, in theory and practice.

'The Philosopher' was written in the Lakes District (UK), during a two-week residency hosted by The Lakes International Comic Art Festival (LICAF) and supported by Comic Art Europe, being selected as one of five winners of the Comic Art Europe 2022 open call on the theme "Living Together".

The launch was accompanied by an exhibition of the work, and followed by an amusing and enlightening conversation between Bernard Hage and Journalist Jorn Decock – the Middle East Correspondent of the Belgian Newspaper De Standaard, and was moderated by Julie Tait, Director of LICAF.





FATAYER BI BANADOURA

In partnership with Neighbourhood

Another captivating performance graced the stage of Cinema Royal during the week of its grand reopening; In 'Fatayer bi Banadoura', Hiba Najem welcomed the audience to join her in making a tomato-based pastry unique to her mother's village of Beit Chabeb.

The culinary performance is part of a series that sheds light on forgotten or unknown rural dishes, and skilfully interweaves the long conversations that the artist held with some of the village's

women with extensive research into the history of tomatoes – particularly in Lebanon.

'Fatayer bi Banadoura' elevates the rather mundane pastry-making experience into an interactive journey along the road of love, toxicity, and death. Essential ingredients, besides flour and salt, were acknowledgement and gratitude that participants shared as they sat around the communal workstation. Najem's charismatic presence, not only encouraged the audience to connect with the process, but formed as air of intimacy that transcends spoken language.

ECHO IN THE DARK

In partnership with Hospitalfield and B018

Commissioned by Hospitalfield, 'Echo in the Dark' is a collaborative project directed by Hanna Tuulikki that investigates echolocation, a complex navigation system made from emitting ultrasonic pulses that allows bats to build an intricate picture of their environment. In collaboration with music producer Tommy Perman, Tuulikki created beats and melodies that were made by processing and manipulating recorded sonar samples. Detailed clicks, buzzes, rhythms, and warbles, which are generally inaudible to humans, were transformed into a set of electronic dance music tracks synthesized with Tuulikki's distinct voice to create an ephemeral human-bat hybrid world.

Halfway through an unforgettable weekend of arts and culture, 'Echo in the Dark' presented a unique sonic experience that captivated a crowd, already eager to hit the dance floor. Against a backdrop of bat-related popular culture animations that filled the screens of B018, along with samples of spoken word from renowned philosopher Timothy Morton – whose experience of being part of a mass of

dancing bodies informs the project's ideas about ecological awareness – Hanna Tuulikki and Will Dickie weaved together music and live participatory performance to explore interconnections of raving and bat echolocation.

Can tuning into hidden sounds help us access new ways of feeling and being that nurture our relationships with nonhumans? Can dance music and raving offer a space to come together to harness radical hope in the dark?

'Echo in the Dark' exemplified how art can bring people together and encourage us to think outside of our own experiences. By incorporating the sounds of the natural world into electronic dance music, the work allowed for a new perspective of the world, one that was both otherworldly and grounded in reality. As a reminder that we are part of a much larger system and that we have a responsibility to coexist with the natural world, the evening was simultaneously thought-provoking and thrilling, and has left a lasting impression on all who attended.

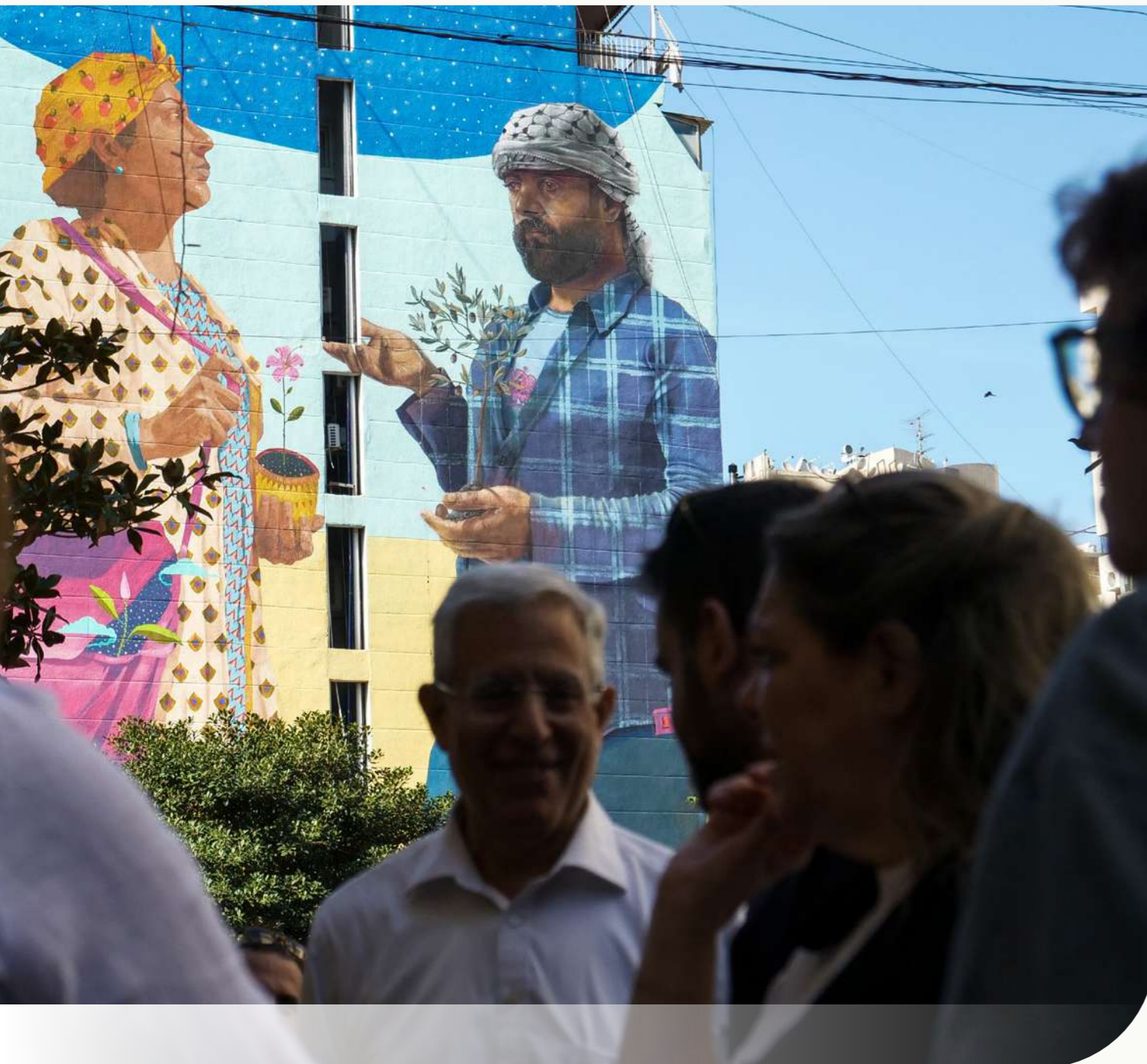


URBAN ART TOUR

In partnership with Art of Change

On the fifth day of the trip, the Urban Art Tour, organized by Art of Change, kicked off with an early start in the heart of Beirut on Hamra Street. The tour, which boasted over 12 murals, one of them towering to an impressive 8 floors in height, took a group of thirty participants on a captivating journey through the city. Following this urban exploration, the tour continued to the mountain region, specifically the city of Aley, where both Lebanese and UK street artists had left their creative imprints.

The Urban Art Tour was not merely an artistic endeavour; it had a broader mission to raise awareness about urban art and to rejuvenate the cultural essence of Beirut's streets. It emphasized the collaborative efforts of Lebanese and international artists and underscored the transformative potential of street art in breathing new life into overlooked areas and fostering a positive and joyful atmosphere.



IL'AAB GAMES SHOWCASE

In partnership with Lebanese Game Developers, Gaming Academy and Arabic Games | Part of CATAPULT.digital

As a follow-on component to CATAPULT.digital, the Il'aab Games Showcase introduced audiences to an immersive world of games and interactive experiences from Lebanon. Organised by the Lebanese Game Developers, Gaming Academy, and Arabic Games, Il'aab delivered an inspiring session of interactions with developers, designers and creators; At the same time, the event presented many opportunities, its relaxed format allowing both new-comers and experts from the sector to try out game demos and talk about visions of exciting new projects.



The 2022 Arabic Games Conference, as a part of the ongoing CATAPULT.digital programme, proved to be a significant milestone. With 38 prominent speakers and mentors, a rich program featuring 32 talks spread over 25 hours across two days, and an impressive attendance of 200 in-person participants, the event stood as a testament to the growing significance of the gaming industry. Simultaneously, it reached a vast global audience with 5,000 real-time online following.

The conference placed a strong emphasis on celebrating and highlighting the creative work of Arab game developers, with 31 games taking the spotlight, 13 of which were physically exhibited. It provided these developers with a valuable platform to showcase their talents and gain exposure.

Beyond being a showcase, the conference also played a pivotal role in professional development, offering 50 mentorship sessions, where participants could receive guidance, portfolio reviews, and resume critiques. This commitment to nurturing talent and fostering industry growth reflects the conference's dedication to advancing the standing of the gaming community; it particularly highlights CATAPULT.digital's goals of connecting professionals, promoting local and regional talent, and contributing to the overall growth and recognition of the sector in the Arab world.



FLED

In partnership with Neighbourhood

The closing night saw a fully booked theatre at Cinema Royal for the Fled by Karim Chebli and Katy Younes. The play is a hybrid commemorative monodrama based on the directors' previous production 'Flee', a theatrical performance and screening of a play within a play, which sheds light on two aspiring actors rehearsing and co-directing Ionesco's 'Hunger and Thirst'.

In 2018, Ionesco's "Hunger and Thirst" accidentally brought Karim and Katy together. They planned to stage the play and had chosen it at a time when buried anxieties were resurfacing within many people, because of the political, economic, and social context, along with the two-sided dilemma: accepting the present or fleeing the crumbling

reality to somewhere else that might or might not feed our desires for a better living. While rehearsing, the two find themselves unconsciously inheriting their characters' anxieties which transmute into their thoughts, making them realise their irreconcilable differences and disrupting their project.

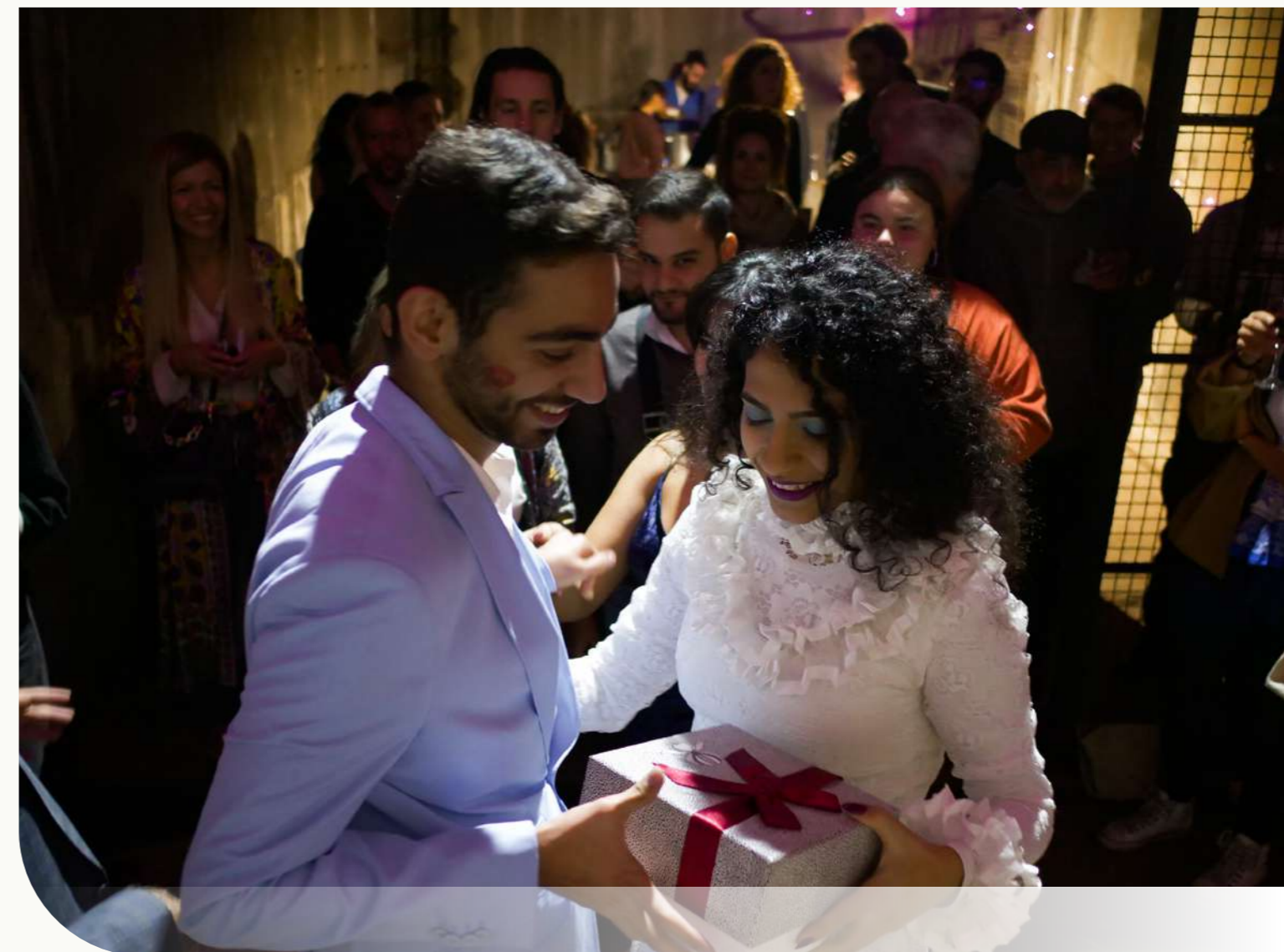
After translating and rehearsing the text, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted Chebli and Younes' initial plan. With all that has happened in the past years, the two artists decided to reinstate their project and integrate into their adaptation the rehearsal process, their personal fears, and their struggles as young artists residing in Lebanon.

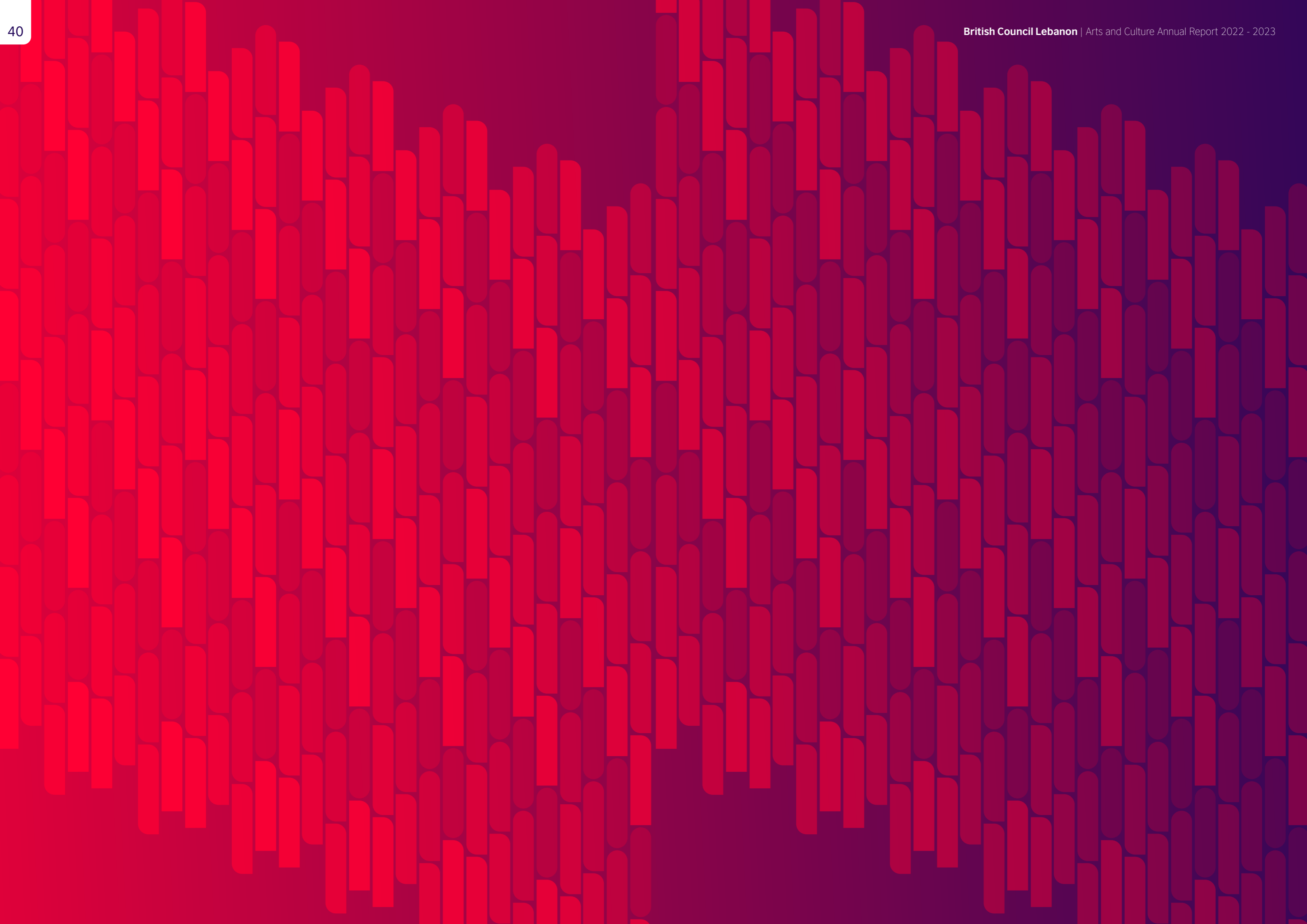
FARHA

In partnership with Neighbourhood

Farha, a transliteration of the word 'Joy' in Arabic, served as a fitting and joyful conclusion to a remarkable festival. This interactive and immersive play by Neighbourhood's Julien Boutros and Karl Hadifeh transported the audience to a different time and place, inviting them to explore the intricate lives of residents within a four-floor building dating back to the 1930s in Bourj Hammoud. Spectators embarked on a unique journey, wandering through various apartments, bearing witness to the inhabitants' daily lives while also catching glimpses of their enthusiasm and preparations for a neighbouring wedding unfolding in the courtyard below. Farha provided a favourable build-up of enthusiasm before the play's performers and audience joined the festival's closing celebration, making it a truly memorable end to the festival.

We reflect on the IN BETWEEN Festival - five days of exploration and celebration of art, culture, and creativity. The festival's diverse programme, spanning nine spaces in Beirut and in partnership with 28 entities, has taken us on a journey through the spaces in between, where boundaries blur, and new possibilities emerge. From captivating visual arts exhibitions to thought-provoking plays and performances, IN BETWEEN offered a multitude of opportunities for connection, inspiration and discovery.





02 RURAL ENCOUNTERS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND FILM (REEF)

From September 1 till 4, 2022, and under the 'Zero Waste REEF' title, different creative tools were put into action in exploring themes related to 'trees' and 'solidarity'. A first-of-its-kind in Lebanon and the Arab world, the Rural Encounters on the Environment and Film is dedicated to rural life and its representation, and took place at the Silk Factory in Quobayat, and expanded into the nature of Akkar.

British Council Lebanon is thrilled to have supported the 2022 edition and reinforced our shared values with the Council of Environment and Beirut DC so that the arts can become drivers for social

and environmental change in Lebanon. Through film screenings, the production of short videos, debates, and the discovery of the environmental resources and cultural heritage of Akkar, REEF highlighted the diversity of the region and its rural culture through cinema.

A diverse programme that spanned four days included several hikes to explore the exceptional trees of the region – their stories, properties, and role in preserving life, climate and soil – followed by a panel discussion that highlighted their endangerment and discussed solutions to restoring responsible behaviour. Several training courses and creative workshops were started before REEF and continued throughout the festival, intending to encourage sharing narratives about prominent environmental and rural issues. For the youth, an animation workshop on Trees; for women, a workshop to create short one-minute films that were presented during the festival; and open to everyone, training on the implementation of 'Zero Waste' principles. Aiming to raise awareness of 'Zero Waste' and implement it directly within the festival's structure, the Climate Story Lab invited a group of storytellers and environmental experts to imagine how Cinema can contribute to shifting the narrative around the climate crisis. Finally, as music has a special place in REEF, the Lebanese choir Al Fayha'a brought a touch of magic to the festival.

We are particularly excited to have supported the realisation of the Short Film Competition. Following an open call, Lebanese actress Christine Choueiri, Egyptian filmmaker Amal Ramsis and Spanish producer Felipe Lage Coro shortlisted 9 short films that reflect on the theme of Solidarity and



how individuals effectively work together to adapt to emerging socio-ecological disruptions and how collective initiatives reposition, support and sustain communities.

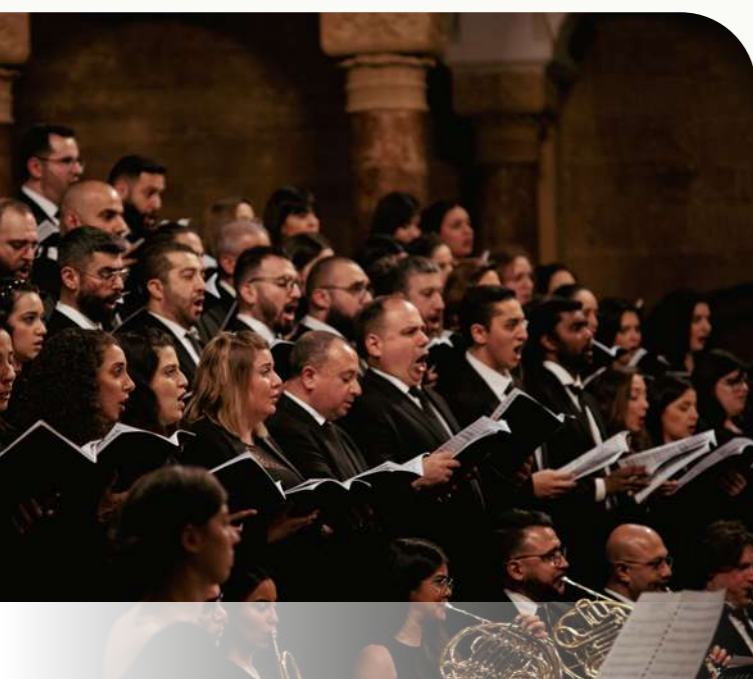
The shortlisted films were: Strings of Hope, by Ghenwa Mroueh; Souls on the Other Bank, by Majd Khalil and Samuel Sakhiya; Roots of the Sky, by Raed Al-Shami, Rami Shaheen, Dima Mabsout, Farah in Napoli, and Maurizio Yazbek; Circular, directed by Ali J. Dalloul; Del O'na, by Mhamad Hamadan Edy; Our Room, by Safa Makkah; Baptized in the Soot,

by Rami Salloum and Joseph Ibrahim; and Nohye Al Ard: The Birth of a Community Garden in Saida, by Hiba Yassine and Rana Moussa.

The selected films were screened at the silk factory and were followed by an awards ceremony honouring two of the films: Circular and XXXX. They were also made available to stream on Aflamuna online streaming platform during September, to entertain, inform and inspire broader conversation about nature and community.



03 AL-BUSTAN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL FOR MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS



From February 23 until March 19, 2023, the 29th edition of the Al-Bustan International Festival for Music and Performing Arts embodied the message of the theme “Harmonies of Peace”. The festival featured 18 delightful performances from around the world, showcasing emerging and renowned talents from classical, opera, jazz, and oriental music genres, in 4 cities across Lebanon. This year, more than ever, the festival engaged with schools, opening up their rehearsal sessions and creating opportunities for exchange between the participating musicians and pupils. In addition, the festival offered free access to a public masterclass and 10 additional events.

In the first concert, ‘Canzone d’Amore’, Natalie Clein graced the audience with her mesmerizing cello performance and shared her thoughts on returning to Lebanon after 23 years since her last performance. Conducted by maestro Piero Romano and the Orchestra della Magna Grecia, Clein presented a starkly changing ambience: from the sweeping romanticism of Puccini to the introspective melancholy of Elgar and the playful exuberance of Nino Rota.

‘War and Peace - Missa in Tempore Belli, Haydn’, Mass in Time of War, was simply moving. With a skilful cast of international musicians who joined the Lebanese Philharmonic orchestra and the Notre Dame University choir, the concert featured bold orchestration, stirring choral passages, and intense emotional contrasts, from moments of joyful exultation to sombre reflection.

The third concert, ‘Jazziyat’, delivered a diverse and exciting range of original and arranged pieces by composer Faris Ishaq, and was held at Khan Sacy, an Ottoman caravan serail in Sidon. Including solo and duo pieces and musical dialogues between instruments like the Nay and Harp rendered the concert experience dynamic, offering a carefully curated mix of musical styles and moods designed to captivate and engage the audience.

The three concerts drew in a combined audience of 1162 people, all of whom were treated to a truly memorable programme of performances and had the opportunity to experience the Al-Bustan International Festival as a celebration of the harmonies of peace that demonstrated the power of music to unite.



04 BEIRUT AND BEYOND INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL (BBIMF)



The British Council's partnership with the Beirut and Beyond International Music Festival (BBIMF) celebrated extraordinary music that transcends borders and deepens the connections between Lebanon, the region, and the UK. From February 2nd to February 5th, 2023, BBIMF wowed audiences with an impressive lineup featuring 16 unforgettable performances that encompass a wide range of musical genres. This eclectic showcase not only highlighted the dynamic music scene in Beirut but also served as a cultural bridge connecting diverse artists from around the world.

BBIMF went beyond the stage; the festival's professional program brought together over 33 industry experts, including four from the UK, offering invaluable insights and learning opportunities for music professionals across various sectors and actively seeking emerging Lebanese talent. Over four days, BBIMF fostered invaluable connections through a diverse offering of panel discussions, masterclasses, workshops, and mentoring sessions, each designed to address the current challenges and opportunities within the music industry.

This edition not only marked a triumphant return to the festival's original format but also showcased its commitment to inclusivity and growth. It featured an artistic program that spanned local, regional, and international talent, complete with a captivating "club night" featuring numerous talented DJs. It masterfully struck a blend of familiar favourites and exciting new discoveries.

BBIMF 2023 left an indelible mark, reinforcing its position as a dynamic bridge between diverse music scenes and reinvigorating audiences that have longed for excitement.



DELEGATIONS

The British Council is dedicated to fostering artistic and professional exchanges between Lebanon and the UK through various delegate programmes. We recognise the immense value of cross-cultural collaboration and the transformative power it holds for artists, cultural practitioners, and the wider arts community. Our initiatives aim not only to facilitate the exchange of creative ideas and artistic practices but also to cultivate meaningful connections between the two countries.

In 2022-2023, the British Council arranged for two Lebanon-UK delegations:

01 IN BETWEEN Delegate Programme

02 Momentum International Delegate Programme

01 IN BETWEEN FESTIVAL DELEGATE PROGRAMME



As part of the IN BETWEEN Festival, British Council Lebanon extended invitations to 13 cultural practitioners from the UK, offering them a unique opportunity to participate in a delegation that was designed to introduce them to Lebanon's vibrant artistic and cultural scene. The festival provided an exceptional chance for delegates to engage with a diverse array of activities including exhibitions, performances, installations, concerts, trails, talks, launches, and a professional speed dating event.

With personalized itineraries tailored to their interests, the delegates explored potential opportunities to strengthen the relationship between Lebanon and the UK's arts and culture sectors.

British Council Lebanon had the pleasure of welcoming to Lebanon Kirsty Allison (Ambit magazine), Laura Careless (Artist), Norah Campbell (British Council Scotland), Will Dickie (Arts Practitioner), Cicely Farrer (Hospitalfield), Fielding Hope (Cafe OTO), Kim McAleese (Edinburgh Art Festival), Emmie McLuskey (Counterflows), Kirsteen MacDonald (Creative Scotland), LJ Findlay-Walsh (Take Me Somewhere Festival), Taher Qassim (Liverpool Arab Arts Festival), Julie Tait (Lakes International Comic Art Festival), Hanna Tuulikki (Arts Practitioner).



02 MOMENTUM INTERNATIONAL DELEGATE PROGRAMME

In August 2022, Edinburgh extended a warm invitation to three esteemed cultural practitioners from Lebanon, Imane Assaf, the Founder of Art of Change and Ahla Fawda, Julien Boutros, an Independent Theatre Practitioner, and Dayna Ash, the Founder of Haven for Artists. This invitation was a part of the renowned Momentum international delegate programme, jointly organized by Festivals Edinburgh, British Council Scotland, and Creative Scotland, with additional support from the City of Edinburgh Council and EventScotland. Each year, this program draws more than 30,000 arts professionals from across the globe, including producers, cultural leaders, entrepreneurs,

government representatives, festival programmers, and cultural/funding agencies representatives, to immerse themselves in Edinburgh's August festivals. It offers individually tailored schedules of activities, briefings, and meetings to foster collaboration, encourage new international partnerships, and promote investment in and collaboration with Edinburgh's festivals and the broader arts sector in Scotland.

From August 13th to 17th, the delegation was offered a unique opportunity to explore the Festival city and discover the potential for showcasing Lebanon's artistic and cultural talents. The 2022 programme aimed to offer insights into the Scottish context and facilitate connections between Edinburgh, Scotland, and Lebanon. This programme fosters partnerships and international collaboration with Edinburgh's festivals, relationships within the wider Scottish cultural sector, and connects delegates to the international arts and cultural community that converges on Edinburgh each August.

The Momentum programme paved the way for two distinct projects which received the MOMENTUM follow-up grant: 'Cultural Examination', a series of panels initiated by Haven for Artists, and 'Fake Plastic Tree', a partnership between Ahla Fawda (Lebanon) and The Scottish Storytelling Centre (UK), in collaboration with Theatre practitioner Julien Boutros.



CULTURAL EXAMINATION

Project initiated by Haven for Artists (Lebanon)

The Cultural Examination comprised a captivating series of four panels that explored the production, collaboration, and development of arts and culture practices within local, regional, and international contexts. Conceived and organized in partnership with Haven for Artists and the Momentum Programme, the panels were hosted at the Beirut Art Centre on January 25th and 26th, 2023, and were followed by live performances, offering an immersive experience to attendees.

Fourteen experienced panelists and facilitators shared invaluable insights on knowledge production, networking, and the tools they

acquired while navigating their respective fields. They also discussed the challenges that come with art-making in diverse socio-political contexts. The conversation brought about rich exchanges and learning around key points that inform the mainstreaming of EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) principles in future project development and highlighted approaches that merge art and activism.

The first panel instigated questions about the conception of festivals and focused on the themes of production and collaboration, discussing among other subjects equitable visibility, representation, and access to opportunities, and how to balance vision with the scale, structure, and reach of festivals.

Moderated by Lisa Luxx, with: Hania Mroue representing Metropolis; Sharif Sahnaoui representing Irtijal; and Amani Semaan representing Beirut and Beyond.

The second panel addressed cross-border/cross-culture production and collaboration from the perspective of musicians and sound producers. It explored the contrast and bridging of context-specific production with cross-cultural/cross-border collaborations, the safety of spaces with sound in times of uprisings and revolution, and individual work and collective practices.

Moderated by Fadi Tabbal, with: Nour Sokhn representing Heya Sound Collective; Renata Sabella representing Frequent Defect; Reda Eschker creator of the Al Moutanakil project; and Sandy Chamoun, artist and musician.



On the first day, Shatr Collective performed a spoken word and audio-visual piece.

The third panel focused on literary knowledge production and dissemination, their reality, advancement opportunities, and future in Beirut. The conversation was diversified and included opinions on interdisciplinary influences, co-writing and co-production, and the importance of social media.

Moderated by Rima Rantisi, with: Sara Huneidi representing Barakunan and Shatr Collective; Lisa Luxx, writer and activist; and Haig Aivazian representing The Derivativedia.

The fourth and final panel delved into knowledge production and archival practices within institutions and discussed the active relationship between archives and the questions that the present poses to the past. It was assembled under three main

themes: the materiality of archives, history-making and archiving, and the authority of archives.

moderated by Marie-Nour Hachem, with: Lara Saab representing Ashkal Alwan; Mae Moss representing the Glasgow Women's Library; Mona Hallak, architect and heritage preservation activist; Sasha Kastoun representing Ettijahat.

Nour Sokhn concluded the second day with a piece titled "Where do we go now".



THE FAKE PLASTIC TREE

Project initiated by Ahla Fawda (Lebanon) and The Scottish Storytelling Centre (UK), in collaboration with Theatre practitioner Julien Boutros



Through the Momentum initiative, British Council is supporting the realisation of 'Fake Plastic Tree', a partnership between Ahla Fawda (Lebanon) and The Scottish Storytelling Centre (UK), and in collaboration with Theatre practitioner Julien Boutros. The project aims to encourage civic engagement of youth through storytelling and theatre, and focuses on raising awareness around environmental issues.

While creating an opportunity for cross-cultural dialogue, 'Fake Plastic Tree' invites students to exchange stories that can be interpreted into a play. In addition to its educational capacity, the project aims to enhance creative thinking and equip the youth with the knowledge and empowerment to become advocates of a new paradigm on climate change resolutions.

The project has seen significant progress, and has encompassed two successful workshops with student participation from Lebanon-based schools International College of Beirut, American Community School Beirut, Wellspring Learning Community, and Ras Beirut School. The first workshop, attended by 26 students generated 20 scripts. The second saw 17 new students attend the acting performance workshop, where they received training on narrating stories before commencing practice sessions. While the play was being rehearsed, the students have exchanged thoughts with the group of youth from the UK.

We are thrilled that the 'Fake Plastic Tree' has culminated in a storytelling and theatre event on April 2023.

CULTURAL PROTECTION FUND

The Cultural Protection Fund is a fund that supports efforts to protect cultural heritage at risk. It aims to help to create sustainable opportunities for economic and social development through building capacity to foster, safeguard and promote cultural heritage.

In 2022-2023, three projects from Lebanon received the grant:

- 01 Safeguarding Endangered Oral Traditions and Minority Heritage in Syria
- 02 On the Tracks of Music - Folk Music in the Levant and Mesopotamia
- 03 Douroub: Promoting Syrian Intangible Cultural Heritage

One additional project received a follow-on relief fund:

- 04 Ahliyeh

The British Council's Cultural Protection Fund additionally supported:

- 05 Intangible Heritage for Sustainable Inclusive Society

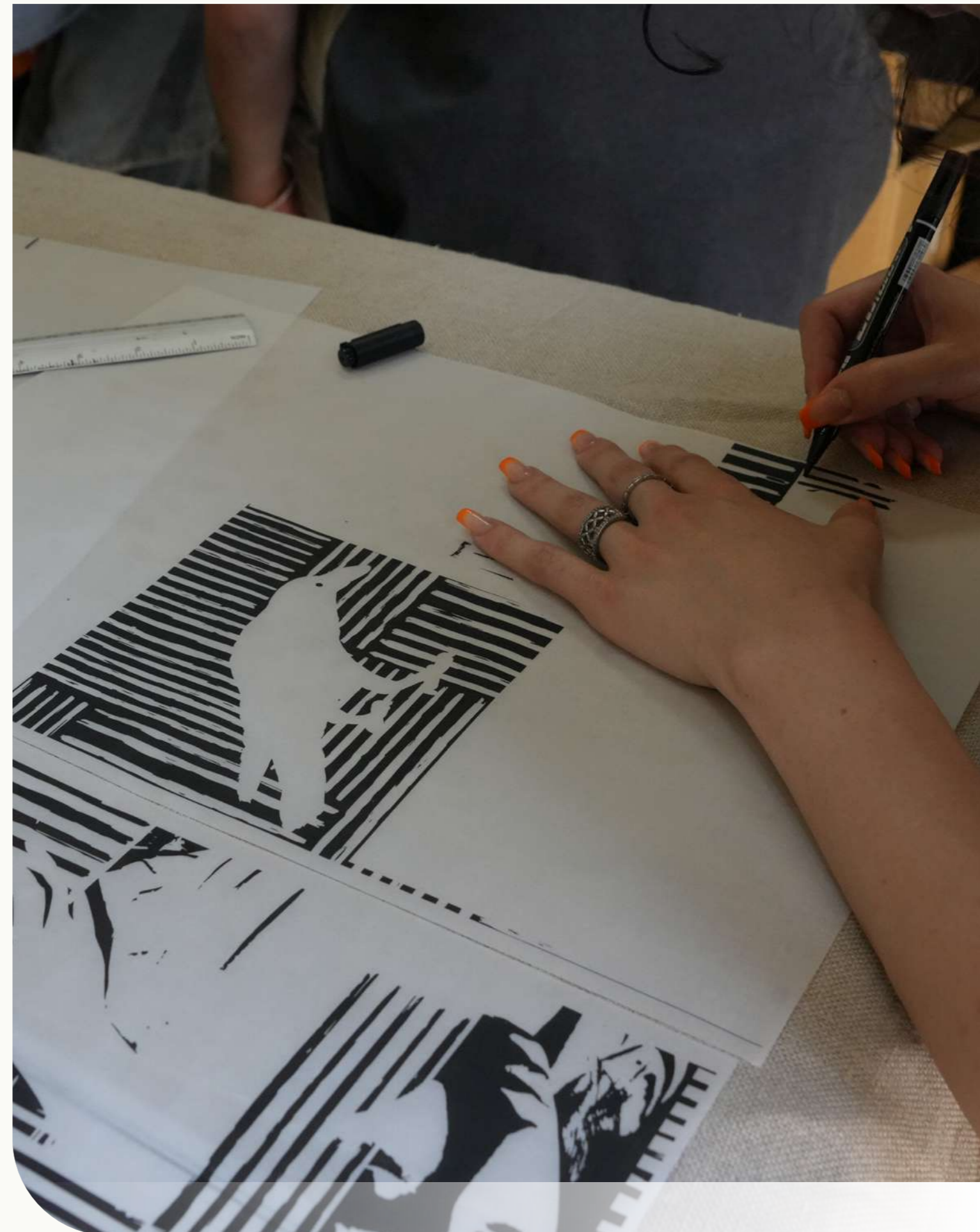
01 SAFEGUARDING ENDANGERED ORAL TRADITIONS AND MINORITY HERITAGE IN SYRIA

Grant recipient(s): Ettijahat - Independent Culture

This year, 2 projects related to phonetic heritage (Minority oral heritage and Folk music heritage) have received a 2-year grant from the Cultural Protection Fund (CPF). The first project 'Safeguarding Endangered Oral Traditions and Minority Heritage in Syria' led by Ettijahat – Independent Culture tackles the urgency in protecting minority folklore passed on to generations through language and storytelling, now even more endangered by rapidly deteriorating socio-political conditions and consequently the separation of minority communities.

This project aims to document ancient and endangered languages from the North-Eastern region of Syria through a podcast in partnership with 2 local organisations; aiming to reach a large youth-majority audience, 80 members of

the last “storyteller generation” are invited to share their folk stories, proverbs and histories. As a way to safeguard the Syrian epic storytelling heritage, the project also intends to produce an 8-part web series that recounts the saga of King Al-Malik Al-Zahir Baybars through documentary and performance. 10 cultural researchers will be engaged to create 10 publications that study new strategies for safeguarding minority heritage. The project will also provide 2 lines of training: 3 training courses for young talents, in partnership with 2 local organisations in Hama and Damascus, on hand-printing techniques with local folklore and motifs, and an intensive training course for 5 small Syrian institutions on the lessons learned and insights collected from previous projects with the Cultural Protection Fund.



02 ON THE TRACKS OF MUSIC - FOLK MUSIC IN THE LEVANT AND MESOPOTAMIA

Grant recipient(s): Action for Hope



Initiated by Action for Hope, the second project, 'On the Tracks of Music - Folk Music in the Levant and Mesopotamia', examines folk music as an oral heritage at risk of extinction, within marginalised communities such as Bedouin, Roma, and refugee settlements. The continuous and overpowering armed violence in the region, mainly in Syria and Iraq, has led to the displacement and dismantling of many rural communities, rendering their livelihood and safeguarding their folk life and traditions.

Implemented between 4 countries – Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – the project runs in three major phases: Research, Capacity Development, and Dissemination. In the first phase, 8 cultural researchers are engaged and trained to conduct extensive fieldwork. That includes documenting and recording 100 folk music pieces and 6 folk music instruments, including their making techniques, tools and materials, and relevant makers and musicians.

For Capacity Development, the project runs three lines of training: instrument-making training by masters offered to 30 participants, folk music training by local music teachers offered to 60 musicians, and a self-production and distribution

training by producers offered to 30 musicians, enabling them to promote their work through popular music platforms.

Most importantly, the last phase of the project seeks to put into effect the research and training produced in the previous phases. It implements an interactive website highlighting the documented material in folk instruments and songs and curates a touring exhibition of these instruments. 9 folk music videos are produced by trained musicians, and 6 concerts are organised in 2 countries with performances from the trained musicians, as a way to preserve, share and spread folk music in the region.

This project aims to document ancient and endangered languages from the North-Eastern region of Syria through a podcast in partnership with 2 local organisations; aiming to reach a large youth-majority audience, 80 members of the last "storyteller generation" are invited to

03 DOUROUB: PROMOTING SYRIAN INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Grant recipient(s): *Ettijahat - Independent Culture*

'Douroub: Promoting Syrian Intangible Cultural Heritage' sheds light, through a 10-part web series, on the importance of identifying and safeguarding intangible heritage threatened by the destruction and uprooting of the social fabric in Syria. The series covers 7 topics of Syrian cultural heritage: Music, Dance, Cuisine, Social practices & rituals, Celebrations, Crafts, and Children's games, and introduces over 200 elements of the Syrian intangible cultural map, including more than 50 elements of intangible heritage. It starts with two episodes on the concept and categories of intangible heritage before delving into the specificity and richness of each.



Within Douroub, a new series titled Memory and Storytelling in Syria was developed. It produced 3 distinctive bodies of work in the context of revitalizing and transmitting intangible heritage, and plays a pivotal role in reconciliation with displacement and disconnection. In the first, 'Maqam', 13 musical pieces from the Syrian cultural heritage were produced in collaboration with the Ornina Syrian Orchestra, featuring the vocals of Rasha Rizk and Abou Gaby, reflecting diverse styles of traditional Arabic music such as mawwal vocals and the bashraf form, as well as folkloric medleys, religious compositions, and solo sequences of traditional oriental instruments. These works have been launched on several platforms and rendered accessible to the public. The second body of work, 'Defying the Odds: Research on the Social Value and Impact of Projects Aiming to Protect Syrian Intangible Cultural Heritage' is a research paper produced in partnership with British Council and authored by researcher and journalist Zeina Chahla. The paper outlines the impact of previous projects, the challenges shaping working conditions inside Syria, and the baseline for other heritage-protection projects. Released and discussed during an open webinar in October of last year, it has been made available for review on both websites. The third, 'Partnership with Sandouk Al Hakaya', initialised a collaboration with the design and printing house in Damascus to produce a card game titled 'Once Upon a Time', highlights allegorical folkloric elements such as characters, places, and stories that shape the obstacles and circumstances facing the characters. The game encourages players to enjoy performative storytelling techniques. 80 copies were distributed to local youth and cultural institutions in different regions of Syria.



A storytelling book by the name of 'Shall We Sleep, or Shall We Play?' was also published. 12 popular stories from different regions across Syria were written in local and original dialects, as well as formal Arabic, and accompanied by 12 visual adaptations -which have also been published separately. 500 offset printed copies of the stories and the images were also produced and distributed to local libraries, youth organizations, and civil entities.

Through its various initiatives, Douroub has made a significant contribution to preserving and promoting Syrian intangible cultural heritage, having introduced over 200 elements that have the potential to inspire future heritage-protection projects.

04 AHLIYEH - RELIEF FUND

Grant recipient(s): Ettijahat - Independent Culture and Action for Hope



Aiming to complement civil society efforts in alleviating the catastrophic humanitarian conditions that resulted from the earthquake in Northern Syria and Southern Turkey, British Council is supporting Ettijahat – Independent Culture and Action for Hope in a response framework that integrates arts and culture in developmental and humanitarian interventions.

The 'Ahliyah' project is a 6-month initiative aimed at providing direct support to 20 artists, producers, and social activists affected by the earthquake, as well as 6 Syrian communities, particularly women and children, who require basic needs and psychological services. The project also intends to empower 5 cultural, art, and civil organizations to play a significant role in aiding affected communities in 2023-2024. Additionally, the initiative seeks to develop the capabilities of individuals, groups, and organizations responsible for providing assistance on the ground and foster collaboration among various organizations for joint civil society action.

The toll of this crisis cannot be overstated, particularly for vulnerable communities in the arts sector and beyond. However, amidst the turmoil, there are stories of hope and resilience. We hope that Ahliyah will provide much-needed support to those most impacted by the crisis and support artists and creatives to continue finding ways to connect with and uplift their communities through their work. Through these collective efforts, both artistic and humanitarian, we can begin to rebuild and heal in the wake of this crisis.



05 INTANGIBLE HERITAGE FOR SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Organised by the Institute of Development Studies in collaboration with the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Inherit and funded through a British Academy grant to the Heritages for Inclusive Repertoires initiative



A conference on 'Intangible Heritage and Inclusive Sustainable Development' was organised by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, through support from the British Academy and in collaboration with the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund and British Council Lebanon, to raise the question of the importance and economic value of intangible heritage – in the form of oral histories of a people, music, dance, food, and social practices – often deprioritized in comparison to material heritage – the like of ancestral sites, monuments, buildings and artefacts. On February 28 and March 1, 2023, the event brought together civil society initiatives, universities, and research institutions, and aimed at exchanging knowledge and experiences on how the preservation of intangible heritage

has contributed to inclusive and sustainable transformations in communities.

Following the format of testimonials and shared experiences from a very diverse pool of participants, including a young Bedouin woman living in Lebanon, a Syrian refugee cello player, an Iraqi rowing captain, and a Moroccan olive tree planter, the conference supplied evidence of the power of heritage to enrich life and livelihood for groups and communities that have experienced acute marginalisation and life-transforming ruptures.

The conference addressed two main categories: the benefits of preserving the intangible heritage of marginalized groups for making development more effective, sustainable, and holistic, and the threats to inclusive development when the heritage of marginalized groups is targeted, erased, overlooked or neglected. The conference also covered 4 main topics of discussion, namely 'Development, rights and heritage are indivisible', 'The realisation of empowerment for youth is both a means and an end', 'The power of heritage repertoires engenders sustainable livelihoods', and 'Heritage repertoires play a critical role in sustaining the will to live', and included case studies of implemented projects.

Overall, it served as a valuable opportunity for individuals and organizations to learn from one another, with the hope that collective efforts can lead to more effective and sustainable development that recognises and respects the diversity of communities around the world.



INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION FUND

The International Collaboration Fund is designed to support artists to make and develop creative artwork with their international peers, and to encourage new international partnerships and innovative ways of collaborating. Selected projects demonstrate genuine international collaboration and an explicit benefit to individual artists and international partners, and address significant contemporary themes, from climate change to global challenges.

In 2022-2023, three projects from Lebanon were enabled by the grant:

01 Create Syria (£69,000)

02 Orchestra of Syrian Musicians (£63,145)

03 Precipitate (£72,251.05)

01 CREATE SYRIA

Collaborators: Counterpoints Arts (UK), Ettijahat - Independent Culture (Lebanon), Plymouth College of Art (UK) and Mozilla Festival (UK)

Create Syria seeks to increase the capacity of artists interested in arts and social change to develop stronger, more cohesive communities by designing and delivering community arts initiatives that focus on experience and artistic quality. In its lifespan, the programme has supported over 47 artists and cultural practitioners in producing and developing more than 20 socially engaged creative interventions, including in Lebanon and Syria. It also hosted several forums and webinars, gathering participants with more than 300 creative practitioners around the questions of communities and the roles that art can play in times of crisis.

Focused on international research, development, and cultural exchange, the fourth and final edition of Create Syria was developed to support 10 artists via in-person, digital, and hybrid online/offline events and activities, including tailored online workshops and artistic guidance from local and international experts, financial support of up to €4,000 for five artistic proposals (later extended to the end of June 2023 due to the devastating earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria), a mentorship program and access to online resources from Arts University Plymouth in the UK for 2 selected artists, showcasing and networking opportunities with Mozilla Festival, and participation in public dialogue events in Beirut, Brussels, and Plymouth.

The programme has also paved the way for developing the toolkit 'Arts and Uncertainty: Designing Creative Interventions in Stages of Crisis' by researcher and cultural manager Rana Yazaji. The toolkit captures the major challenges of artistic work in communities within the socio-political context of the Arab region and explores the fundamental approaches of socio-artistic interventions, with the aim of developing a meaningful rapport with targeted communities, and artistic projects that contribute to social change. The toolkit has also allowed for the sharing of lessons learnt from artistic experiences within the Syrian context, and how it relates to similar contexts in the Arab Region, UK, and Europe, and intersects with bigger questions related to social arts practices in an increasingly disconnected world.



02 ORCHESTRA OF SYRIAN MUSICIANS

Collaborators: Music Halls Project Ltd (UK) and Beirut and Beyond (Lebanon)

The 'Orchestra of Syrian Musicians' (OSM) celebrates cultural heritage in exile through music. A well-established collective that started with a series of concerts in 2016 and a live album recorded during these shows, OSM pays tribute to the remarkable Syrian music by sharing its power and joy with the world. Their first major exposure took place when Gorillaz' Damon Albarn played with them at the Damascus Opera House, and later on during the Gorillaz world tour.

Five years later, with the devastating situation in Syria still ongoing, these musicians reunite to record a studio album that featured selected guest vocalists and emerging artists including Hamsa Mounif, Basel Saleh, Rust, Mayssa Jallad, Mouka, Pol, Mona Hallab, Yara Asmar, Sandy Chamoun and many more. Damon Albarn is also in collaboration and working on a studio album.



03 PRECIPITATE

Collaborators: Dance Base (UK) and Yaraqa (Lebanon)



Supported through the British Council International Collaboration Grant, Dance Base (UK) and Yaraqa (Lebanon) launched an open call for 'Precipitate', a ground-breaking hybrid artistic exchange and bespoke creation lab that connects 6 movement artists from Lebanon and Scotland. Precipitate has marked a third milestone in a comprehensive partnership with Yaraqa on the CATAPULT.body programme. In 2021 – 2022, CATAPULT.body reinforced the dance and performing arts sector in Lebanon through a pilot programme of 2 preceding interlaced components that enabled professionals to identify and access opportunities for support, exchange and growth, engaging in conversations around contemporary themes and enhancing the existing modes of entrepreneurship- and capacity-building activities throughout. The programme was launched with a 32-question study that revealed the need for long-term development – from the desire to open up to new collaboration opportunities, connect with experts across new industries and sectors, develop cross-border relations, and experience new frameworks for creative thinking. The results were used to inform a 2-day hybrid micro-forum centred around the theme of sustainability.

'Precipitate' integrated the results of the study and micro-forum in a series of online and in-person encounters that aim to facilitate opportunities for movement artists in Lebanon and Scotland to create, collaborate, and exchange. The Lab culminated in an in-person residency that took place in Edinburgh.

The programme started with a selection process that shortlisted 6 final participants – 3 from Lebanon and 3 from Scotland. Followed by an introductory



group meeting and one-on-one encounters, the artists were paired based on their interests, approaches and expectations. To guide them in their endeavours, a list of experienced mentors was drawn up according to the requirements of each participant and their partnership dynamics, from which they selected the mentor they were most drawn to work with.

'Precipitate' oversaw the collaborations of Bassam Abou Diab (Lebanon) and Kathryn Gordon (Scotland), under the mentorship of Farah Salah (UK / Palestine), Jian Yi (Scotland) and Natasha Karam (Lebanon) with Lucy Suggate (UK), and Liz Strange (Scotland) and Sarah Fadel (Lebanon) with Lou Platt (UK).

A four-week online workshop covered 4 different themes raised by the artists during the previous meetings and culminated in a 10-day residency at Dance Base in Scotland, where the artists worked on their research individually, in pairs, and as a group. At the end of the residency, each pair had the opportunity to share their research and process with audiences from the field and beyond. A step further to secure sustainability in the dance and movement sector, the programme led to the development of career-enhancing collaborations that supported them in developing new skills and creative approaches, provided access to new markets, and forged new, long-lasting relationships between Lebanon and the UK.



This year, British Council Lebanon has relocated to the vibrant hub of Beirut Digital District (BDD) in the heart of the city.

Our suite of state-of-the-art offices is composed of modern, adaptable and collaborative workspaces that facilitate our maintenance of the same balance of face-to-face and remote working. In addition to being surrounded by start-ups, well-established entities, and many creative and cultural institutions that we partner with, our move provides a distinct opportunity to strengthen our connection with the communities we work with and serve. We are thrilled to be part of this dynamic environment and look forward to delivering more engaging and innovative initiatives from our new home.

