

BEIRUT ART FILM FESTIVAL – BAFF
Edition 12



National Museum: Defying Oblivion (documentary film by Bahije Hojeij, 41 min, 1998-2016, Arabic)

This film invites you to step through the doors of the National Museum of Lebanon not merely as visitors, but as heirs to a shared memory.

Directed by Bahije Hojeij between 1998 and 2016, ***National Museum: Defying Oblivion*** takes students, in its first part, to the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War. Through the eyes of a woman returning to the National Museum, they discover a place scarred by conflict, standing on the former Green Line that divided Beirut. Its treasures tell not only the story of ancient civilizations, but also bear the wounds of a nation torn apart.

In its second part, the documentary reveals the extraordinary effort that brought the museum back to life. Curators, conservators, restorers, architects, and craftsmen demonstrate that beyond preserving stones and artifacts, it is a collective memory and a shared identity that have been preserving.

By bringing together these two chapters of the same story, ***National Museum: Defying Oblivion*** offers young generations a powerful lesson: destruction takes only a moment; reconstruction demands years of patience, dedication, and unwavering determination.

Conceived as a genuine educational tool, this screening encourages students to understand that heritage is not only the legacy from the past; it is a responsibility they will, one day, carry forward.

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Bahij Hojeij studied philosophy and theater in Beirut, then cinema at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Louis-Lumière - Université Paris VIII. Since 1990, he has taught cinema (screenwriting and directing) at the Institute of Fine Arts of the Lebanese University.

His career began in 1980, with the production of magazines, programs and documentaries for television. With the end of war in Lebanon, he produced and directed several feature-length documentaries, including *The Green Line* (1987), *Beyrouth, dialogue ruines* (1993), *Le Musée National, défi à l'oubli* (1996), *Beirut Unveils its Treasures* (1997), *Kidnapped* (1998), *Liban message d'une terre sainte* (2000), *Les moissons de la mémoire* (2001), *Cités d'Orient, Beyrouth* (2001), *La Future B.N de Beyrouth* (2002), *The Bridge of Maameltein* (2007), *100 Years of the Press in Lebanon* (2007), *Beaufort Unveiled* (2014), *The Sursock Museum Revisited* (2015) and *La Bibliothèque Orientale: un patrimoine révélé* (2024). Between 2004 and 2019, he produced and directed three feature films: *Zennar El Nar / Ring of Fire* (2004), *Chatti Ya Dini / Let the Rain Come* (2011) and *Good Morning* (2019); all awarded several Arab and international prizes.