

# NATIONAL Museum

**“ A mapping of the  
Lebanese Design  
from Bronze  
until Iron age ”**



**O**n October 7, 2016, the National Museum of Beirut inaugurated, and opened to the public for the first time since 1976, the newly rehabilitated basement at the presence of the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Tammam Salam, and then Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paolo Gentiloni.

The Italian Cooperation funded € 1 million to the project, including the involvement of Italian museology experts, as a second phase of the 2010 initiative aimed at the renovation of the Roman frescoes and the setting of the Tomb of Tyre.

The General Direction of Antiquities (DGA) of the Lebanese Ministry of Culture shared with the Italian Cooperation the cultural project at the base of the rehabilitation of the 500 m<sup>2</sup> basement, which hosts the Tomb of Tyre, the unique sarcophagi and other marvelous funerary artifacts.

The project includes the modern presentation and valorization of the funerary art collections. Specialized technical assistance was also

guaranteed to the Directorate General of Antiquities in order to ensure adequate renovation of the exposed objects, with particular regards to the mummies of Assi El Hadath caves. In addition, training sessions were carried out in favor of the personnel of the Museum, as well as the

implementation of promotional cultural activities. Since the basement's opening, the monthly average number of Museum visitors doubled.

The underlying theme of the basement is the Lebanese funeral art, through a chronological pathway that starts



from prehistory and arrives until the Islamic period, enriched by the 521 artifacts exposed. The pathway has four important steps: the 11 meters display case shows the potteries originating from all the archeological sites in Lebanon. This display case can be explained as a mapping of the Lebanese “design” from the Bronze Age until the Iron Age. The most important collection of anthropomorphic sarcophagi in the world lays in a long gallery where the Italian architect Giorgio Capriotti installed special lights and a unique arrangement of mirrors to better appreciate the sculptures. The Tomb of Tyre, with the renovated frescoes, was inserted in the pathway of the visit. The three mummies coming from Assi El Hadath caves date back to the Mameluke period; they were cleaned, renovated, recomposed and lined by the EURAC Institute of Bolzano. The Institute also carried out on-the-job training to the personnel of the DGA and launched a scientific collaboration with the Lebanese Ministry of Culture on the study and conservation of Lebanese mummies.

