

ARAB NEWS

2022 Look Ahead:

The cultural renaissance sweeping the Gulf region

02 January 2022

Lebanon was once the region's capital of art and culture. But with the onset of the 2019 financial crisis, the pandemic, political paralysis, energy shortages and the collective trauma of the Beirut port blast, day-to-day survival has taken precedence.



Lebanese sculpture Nayla Romanos Iliya's artwork entitled 'On the Other Side of Time' on permanent artwork display in front of St. Elias church Beirut, Lebanon.

“The Beirut explosion was more powerful than COVID-19, and the country is collapsing at an incredible speed at all levels,” Saleh Barakat, a Lebanese gallerist, told Arab News. “Here you don’t have fuel, electricity or even water, because they can’t pump it. All we can do is go on.”

Even so, green shoots of cultural activity have somehow broken through the dense layers of despair.

“If you come to Beirut, you will be amazed at the quantity of exhibitions,” said Barakat. “It is not economic. It is the result of our desire to go on with life. This is how we fight.”

The decade may not be this century's Roaring Twenties as imagined or perhaps hoped for, but the same impatient urge to move on from past upheavals, embrace new aesthetics and make up for lost time is plain to see.