

## AGENDA

## LEBANON

## FILM

**'Videomappings: Aida, Palestine'**

Beirut Art Center,  
Jisr al-Wati

May 12, 8 pm  
+961 1 397 018

A re-screening of one of the film programs from Home Works. Till Roeskens' movie explores the Aida refugee camp using drawings on white paper. Preceded by Wael Shawky's "Larvae Channel 2" – both films in Arabic with English subtitles.

## MUSIC

**Khaled Jubran**

Sunflower Theater,  
Tayouneh

May 12, 8:30 pm  
+961 1 381 290

Palestinian musician Jubran, one of the most eminent contemporary players of the oud and the bouzouki, plays at the Sunflower Theater as part of the Spring Festival.

## PERFORMANCE

**'Closure'**

The Dome, Downtown  
May 13, 8:30 pm

www.feelcollective.com  
Twin exhibitions "In a Sea of Oblivion" and "Missing" end with a performance from dancer Alexandre Paulikevitch, musicians "Scrambled Eggs" and a final gesture by the Feel Collective.

## Just a thought

It is impossible to walk rapidly and be unhappy.

Mother Teresa

## REVIEW

## The long walk to Marjayoun

Hana al-Hibri's new book documents her journey along the Lebanon Mountain Trail

Matthew Mosley  
Daily Star staff

**B**EIRUT: Anyone who has taken a life-changing trip will understand that travel writing is a difficult genre to pull off. Experiences that felt transcendent at the time often sound insipid and insignificant to the ears of those who stayed at home.

Bill Bryson uses zany humor to maintain interest in his ( hugely popular) travel tomes. Occupying a slightly higher intellectual plane, William Dalrymple uses travel writing to delve deep into the history of the region. In "To the Holy Mountain," for example, he looked at Eastern Orthodox communities of the Middle East.

Hana al-Hibri takes more of a multimedia approach with her debut book, "A Million Steps." The story of her 29-day journey along the Lebanon Mountain Trail, "A Million Steps" is liberally adorned with photographs from veteran photojournalist Norbert Schiller, whose work graced the pages of Michael Karam's "Wines of Lebanon."

Stretching 440 kilometers from Qobaiyat in the north to

Marjayoun in the south, the Lebanon Mountain Trail (LMT) was established in 2008. Hibri and Schiller were among the first groups to hike the entire trail in April 2009.

"A Million Steps" is not something that hikers will want to carry around in their backpack – apart from anything else, this glossy volume is a substantial weight. Hibri has not

### Hibri and Schiller were among the first groups to hike the entire trail

attempted to produce a guide to the trail. Rather, she has composed a chatty journal of her trekking experience, documenting the day-to-day joys and woes of walking the LMT.

For a debut book, "A Million Steps" is an impressively slick operation. The flaw-free text suggests that someone – whether Hibri or her publisher – has taken a (these days sadly rare) interest in editing the text. An attractive design incorporates Hibri's text with thoughts from such mountain lovers as Khalil

Gibran, Colin Thubron and Albert Einstein. The liberal use of Schiller's wonderful images makes "A Million Steps" a handsome coffee table volume.

Hibri positions her narrative in the tradition of overcoming adversity. "Excitement and anxiety have kept me awake for most of the night," she begins the text, "but the adrenaline compensates for the lack of sleep."

While hiking the length of Lebanon in a month is undoubtedly an achievement, it doesn't match the more extreme ends of the genre – Ellen MacArthur's tearful video diaries as she performed the fastest solo circumnavigation of the globe, for example, or "Blind Courage" the story of blind hiker Bill Irwin's journey along the Appalachian Trail.

The drama of Hibri's account is provided by somewhat more sedate mishaps like stomach upsets, cold showers and steep descents.

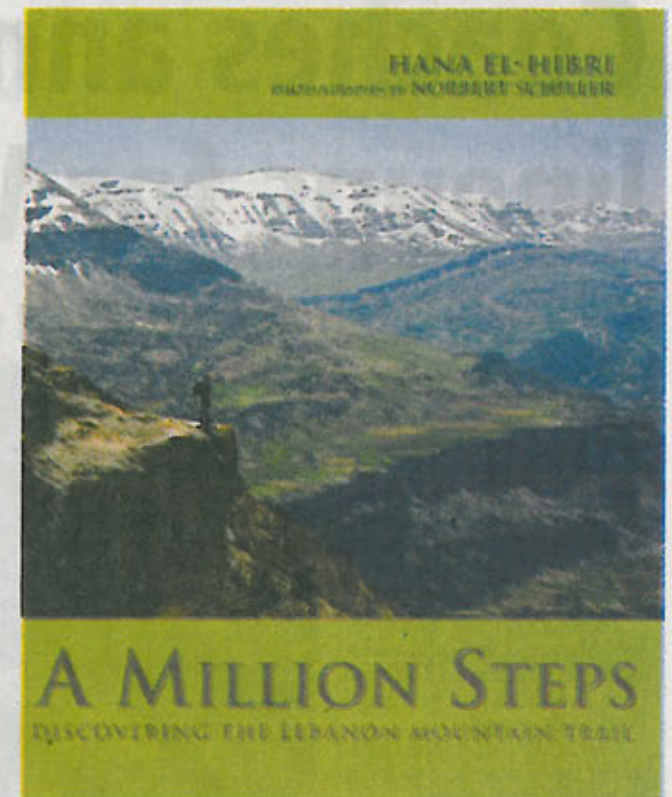
Although Hibri's petulance over the occasional lack of hot water can be a little trying, her overall tone is winsomely confiding, as though relating her experiences to a friend. Hibri also does a fine job of describ-

ing nature which, after all, is the point of the LMT.

"Silhouettes of bare trees, soaked dark brown, peep out from the eerie mist," she writes in a passage about Kfar Dibiane. "Stubborn blades of grass and vibrant spring blooms push out through a thick layer of hail, as if protesting the unseasonal intrusion."

The reader gets to know the characters who accompany Hibri on her journey. Schiller's capacity for booze is a running joke, as is Hibri's incapacity. The group encounters an array of village people along the way. Most of them are appropriately hospitable, begging the group to spend the night in their humble abodes. Sometimes, however, Hibri becomes a little mordant in her descriptions of the characters of her Odyssey.

In Aqoura the groups encounters Josianne, the daughter of a guesthouse owner who, it is implied, is something of a seductress – a couch in the guesthouse provides "interesting vantage points of Josianne's low-cut neckline." For intrigued readers, there's even a photograph of the "well-endowed and friendly college student."



and other scenic delights.

A portion of the proceeds from the sale of "A Million Steps" is to be donated to the LMT Association but – if it weren't for the positive impact the Association has in conserving rural Lebanon – they should probably be paying Hibri. If anything is going to make you want to hike the LMT, it is this glossy volume, with its stunning views of Mount Hermon, Tannourine

For those whose closest brush with hiking is rising from the sofa to make a cup of tea, "A Million Steps" gives a flavor of the experience, without any of the cold showers.

"A Million Steps" is distributed by Turning Point and available in discerning book outlets. For more information visit [www.tpbooksonline.com](http://www.tpbooksonline.com).