

25 NOVEMBER - 03 DECEMBER 2026 - LEBANON

Oaken Lab Byblos Festivals as Spaces for New Ideas

Open Call

Deadline to apply: 06/10/2026

Picture by Yoan Zoghbi

Call for application

Oaken and The Festival Academy invite up to **12 international festival leaders and artists** to apply to **Oaken Lab Byblos**, a unique immersive experience based at Oakenhouse in **Jbeil/Byblos, Lebanon**, from **25 November to 3 December 2026**. The Lab is conceived as a gathering within Oaken's wider cultural ecosystem, which brings together Oakenhouse, its year-round space, and Oakenfest, the annual forest gathering in Lehfed.

Why the Lab in Lebanon, and why at Oaken?

"For us, adaptability is not really a theme we chose; it has become part of how we work. Conditions around us can change very quickly – financially, politically, logistically and emotionally – and this affects everything from whether an artist can travel, to when we can announce a programme, to whether an event can happen in the form we originally imagined. Every year, and sometimes every month, we have to reassess, adjust and decide what still makes sense." - Thimar El Dahr & Elsa Saade

During the Lab, we will take these realities into a wider exchange between festival makers, looking at the practical process of adapting: when a format needs to change, how a new format takes shape, and how to make those decisions intentional without losing what matters at the core. Participants bring their own contexts, experiences and ways of working into this exchange. The Lab aims to confront these detachments and dualities, by providing the time and experience necessary for a **multifaceted, inclusive, and socially grounded artistic approach and exchange**.

About the Festival Lab

With **Oaken Lab Byblos**, The Festival Academy is building on previous Lab experiences in the SWANA region and the Mediterranean and focuses on strengthening relations between these regions. Oaken Lab Byblos centers the cultural understanding of the Levant region. The Labs are incubator hubs for stakeholders of The Festival Academy with the aim to activate the global knowledge of TFA's Alumni community and further deepen connections amongst festival makers worldwide, by providing spaces to catalyse thinking, inspire ideas, and incubate pilot projects that positively impact on society. Festivals are spaces for new ideas as to how we perceive our world and to experiment with different world views together with the communities that attend them and are an active part of them.

[**Apply here!**](#)

Deadline to apply: 06/10/2026

Festival Lab Programme

The Lab will be based primarily at **Oakenhouse** in Jbeil/Byblos, **combining facilitated peer exchange with informal conversations, shared meals, time for reflection and encounters with artists and cultural practitioners** connected to Oaken's wider network. Building on previous Labs and on the shared methodologies developed with long-term partner organisations, we will expand them into a new collective setting where we focus as well on **somatic and non-verbal forms of togetherness**. Participants engage in a range of immersive formats - from **silent walks and sensory explorations to collaborative work-in-progress sessions** - creating space for reflection, experimentation and communal time.

The programme remains intentionally open, allowing the group constellation to guide the rhythm, depth and direction of the experience, while creating space to exchange around new ideas, purpose, intention, care, curation, art practices, communities, cultural production, collaboration and the different ways festival makers reshape their work and world as conditions change.

Option to participate in Zoukak Festival

Following the lab you have the option to discover the **Zoukak festival** organised by **Zoukak Company**, until 2024 this was called **Zoukak Sidewalk Festival**. This year they organise a **6-day festival between 3 and 8 December** which is about re-imagining the festival. You can be part of this **pilot edition** which Zoukak adapted to the situation and new reality of Lebanon and take part in **an immersive reflection on what the meaning of a festival can be these days**.

Please let us know in the application form if you wish to stay for the festival and we can help with guiding you through the logistics of your stay. Zoukak offers free access to the programme for lab participants. Costs related to your stay in Beirut are at your own expense.

Support a Fellowship

Do you wish to support another festival maker? Contribute to the lives of upcoming festival leaders through the **Pass It On Fellowship** programme and donate this Festival Lab to another human.

Apply here!

Deadline to apply: 06/10/2026

Registration and conditions

The Lab is open to 12 international festival leaders, artists, curators, programmers, and cultural producers. If you are interested, apply now as places are limited. Participants should have an interest in curatorial practice, cultural programming, research or the wider questions around how festivals are built and sustained.

Festival Lab Fee:

- Reduced price for festival makers from Drosos supported countries*: **€250** (incl. international travel)
- Reduced price for EFA members: **€1.650**
- **€1.850** (shared room)
- **€2.150** (single room)

The fee includes:

- Facilitated **peer exchanges** between festival makers and cultural practitioners from local communities, and **immersion** in surrounding landscapes.
- Time at Oakenhouse to **reflect on and discuss artistic, participatory and audience-facing festival formats**.
- **Connection and networking**.
- Shared **local meals** and conversations with Oaken's team, artists and/or collaborators.
- Experiencing the local context and getting connected to the people of Byblos.
- **Accommodation** in Jbeil/Byblos for 8 nights (check-in 25/11/2026, check-out 03/12/2026).
- **Local transport**.
- The Festival Academy **programme coordination**

Oaken contributes its hosting, local coordination, curatorial input and expertise to the Lab in kind.

What is not included:

- National or international travel costs
- Visa costs
- Insurance (please do make sure to take personal travel insurance)

How to apply:

Please fill in the **application form**, explaining your motivation to take part.

Support:

* Drosos Foundation supports artists and festival leaders from *Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, and Syria*. Travel, visa, accommodation, and meals are covered.

Apply here!

Deadline to apply: 06/10/2026

Our Partners

Oaken

[Oaken](#) is an independent cultural ecosystem in Lebanon. It brings together [Oakenfest](#) – the annual forest gathering in Lehfed – and [Oakenhouse](#), the year-round home in Jbeil/Byblos for intimate concerts, listening sessions, artist residencies, conversations and smaller gatherings. Oakenstore forms the visual and material extension of the ecosystem through objects, posters, vinyls and merchandise that help support the wider work. Across these different formats, Oaken works through music, hospitality, shared space and long-term relationships between artists, audiences, collaborators and place.



[Zoukak Festival](#), organised by Zoukak Company, is a 6-day festival between 3 and 8 December which is re-imagining the Zoukak Sidewalk Festival.

drosos (...)

[Drosos Foundation](#) is an independent not-for-profit foundation dedicated to shaping positive futures for and with young people. They envision a world where all young people have the opportunity to realise their full potential and collectively contribute to a more equitable, sustainable, peaceful, and just society. By fostering skills development, economic independence, and social inclusion, they seek to create pathways towards positive futures and a life of dignity.



[The Festival Academy](#) believes festivals are bridging platforms with a direct link to people and civil society structures. We believe a critical reflection between artists, arts and cultural managers worldwide and cross-sectoral stakeholders can bring about positive change, informed awareness, ideas and proposals for actions through personal human relations and based on knowing, respecting and tolerating different value and belief systems. We are a global community of more than 1700 festival leaders from 140+ countries today.



The Festival Academy receives a grant of [Open Society Foundations](#) for 2026-2027.



The Festival Academy is an initiative of the [European Festivals Association \(EFA\)](#) and connects festivals and festival makers in an interactive and ever-inclusive network at the service of the arts and artists, ready to engage with the alliance of stakeholders surrounding festivals today.

For Oaken, sensitivity is not separate from production; it shapes the way we make decisions. - Thimar & Elsa (Oaken)