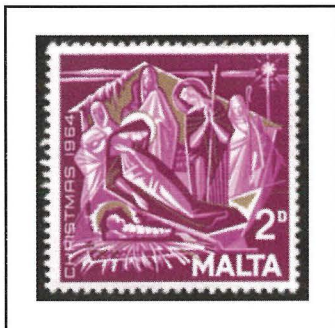


Christmas 1964

Issued: 3rd November 1964

Designer: Chev. E. V. Cremona

Watermark 7



Christmas 1966

Issued: 7th October 1966

Designer: Chev. E. V. Cremona

Watermark 6



*"She gave birth to her firstborn son
and wrapped him swaddling cloths
and laid him in a manger..."*

Luke 2, 7



Painting by Amadeo Brogli, Loreto Sanctuary, Italy

Emvin Cremona

(1919 - 1987)



EMANUEL VINCENT CREMONA was born on 27th May 1919, in Valetta. His parents, Giuseppe and Maria Assunta neè Mizzi had no artistic connections whatsoever. When young Emvin started to show his strong inclinations towards art, his parents became preoccupied. They believed that it was impossible for anybody to earn a living in Malta by being an artist. But Cremona's artistic disposition towards art was something natural which he was born with and this made him continue with his aims of studying art and becoming an artist.

Cremona was educated at the Umberto I College until 1936. This school was totally dominated by Italian influence and culture. In 1933 he was sent to Rome through an educational programme organized by this college. This visit left an immense impact on young Cremona artistic mind.

In 1935 Cremona started attending the Government School of art. He found himself sitting in the same class with some of Malta's future artists such as Willie Apap, Esprit Barthet Anton Inglott and others. These students were tutored by two art professors of totally different characters. Edward Caruana Dingli had a harsh character and Karmenu Mangion, with his gentle character made Cremona meet for the first time with the authentic teaching and profound training in art.

When still a teenager of sixteen Cremona had the satisfaction of seeing his works chosen to be publicly exhibited in a collective exhibition organized yearly by the Malta Amateur Art Association.

Between 1937 and 1940, Cremona managed to attend a study course at the renowned Regia Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome. His professor here was the well-known Carlo Siviero. For this course there were also other future Maltese artists, Barthet, W. Apap, A. Inglott, V. Diacono, Giorgio Preca and Carmelo Borg Pisani. These students were to leave their imprint on the artistic history of their country for at least these last 50 years.

Emvin Cremona had to leave Rome in 1940. World War II had started and he was advised by the British Counsel in Rome to return to Malta. During the war Cremona joined the King's Own Malta Regiment. Due to his known artistic talents he was given the duty to do some camouflage work and to paint scenes for The Entertainment's National Service Association of the army. During his stay in the army Cremona was engaged to do restoration work on several works of art at the Main Guard and other military posts. He always served his duty in those difficult years of war, so he was promoted sergeant.

(to be continued in the next issue)

Christmas 1964

The first Malta Christmas set of stamps was issued on the very first year since our nation gained its independence. In fact this set of stamps was the second issue after attaining Independence from Britain on the 21st September 1964. It is one of the very first sets of Christmas stamps to be issued around the world. From then onwards Malta always issued a Christmas set of stamps to commemorate the annual festival, held on December 25th, to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The first Christmas set consisted of three stamps with a common design but different in colour and with a touch of gold. Each stamp shows a crib made of straw. The Christmas star in one corner of the stamp is shining over and illuminating the crib and its personages. The whole scene consists of the shepherds trying to get a glimpse of the promised Messiah. Saint Joseph is standing, resting on his staff and gazing on the little Child while Mother Mary is seen almost lying on the straw-covered floor looking protectively at her Son. The just-born baby is wrapped and lying in the manger. He gazes towards his earthly parents and the heavenly star. The whole scene is peaceful and serene.

This set of stamps was designed by the master artist of the Malta stamps, Chev. Emvin Cremona. The stamps were issued on 3rd November 1964. The denominations were 2d in bright purple and gold, 4d. in bright blue and gold and 8d in deep bluish-green and gold. The stamps were watermarked with Maltese crosses (watermark 7 on the J.B. Stamp Catalogue). The words *CHRISTMAS 1964* are printed on the right hand side of each stamp.

Christmas 1966

This set was issued on 7th November 1966. It consists of three stamps with a common very modern design. The scene is a typical Christmas one. The artist Chev. Emvin Cremona, presents the Holy family looking straight at us, almost coming out of the stamp, while shepherds are seen at the back. Mary and Joseph are both standing while Baby Jesus is in his little manger. The values of these stamps were the 1d. turquoise, grey, black and gold; the 4d. blue, grey, black and gold and the 1/3d purple, grey, black and gold. All stamps were watermarked with Maltese Crosses (watermark 6 on the J.B. stamp Catalogue). The printing was done by De La Rue using the photogravure process. The perforation of each stamp is 13.3 by 13.7 comb. The stamps were printed in sheets of 60 and the last day of sales was the 6th January 1967. The 1d value was the most sold stamp of this set with more than two million and ninety six thousand stamps sold on the last day of sales. Varieties can be found on the 1/3d value in the form of missing gold. Many more minor varieties can also be found on all 3 values in the form of shades. The words *CHRISTMAS 1966*, were printed on the right hand side of each stamp.

Christmas 1967

This was the fourth set in the Christmas series. It was issued on 20th October 1976 and was watermarked with multiple Maltese Crosses (watermark 7 on the J.B. stamp Catalogue). Chev. Emvin Cremona, the well-known artist who designed this set, surprised everybody with the uncommon shape of the stamps. To the great delight of all philatelists they now had a set not only of great beauty in its design, but also in the shape of each stamp and for the first time in a triptych set which showed the nativity séance. When describing in words it is impossible to imagine how anybody could produce a Christmas stamp with the colors used. Certainly gold, black, red and grey are not Christmas colours, but Cremona managed to produce an outstanding set which is so important in the philatelic world even today, that it is still quoted in international Philatelic magazines.

The set consists of 3 denominations and only in the middle stamp (8d value) is seen the figure of Mary together with Saint Joseph and Baby Jesus. To protect the Holy Family there is only a roof made of wood and over it one can see an angel of the Lord announcing to the whole world the good tidings of the birth of the Saviour and of Peace on earth. While the other two stamps of this Christmas set (1d and 1/4d values) depict two angels on each.

Christmas 1968

Emvin Cremona continued to show his artistic talents by producing another different shape of stamp. Each stamp was in the shape of a crib or a farm-shed. Only the 8d value (No 393 on the J.B. stamp Catalogue) showed Mary who is accompanied by St. Joseph and a shepherd. These three figures are all standing and looking down at baby Jesus who is seen sleeping in his little cradle on the floor. Right on top of Baby Jesus, Cremona depicted the Star in a most modern style. Here again the artist managed to transmit his message of a true Christmas. The figures are simple while the colours are matched to give a picture of humbleness and peace. After all that is what Christmas is all about, Christ, the son of God humbly becoming man and a son of a human to bring salvation and peace to all men of good will. The set of stamps was issued on 3rd October 1968 and was watermarked with multiple Maltese crosses (Watermark 7 on the J.B. stamp Catalogue).

Christmas 1969

This set was again designed by Emvin Cremona. It was printed by the Government printer of Jerusalem, Israel with the photogravure process. The set was issued on 7th November 1970 and each stamp was perforated 14 x 133 (comb). All 3 stamps are watermarked with multiple Maltese Crosses (Watermark 7 on the J.B. stamp Catalogue). The stamps carry a small surcharge which goes to local charity homes. In the background of each stamp one can notice a local church. On the 10d +2d stamp Cremona depicted the Holy Family and shepherds just in front of a Gozitan Church. Cremona could not find a more suitable church to act as a background for this Christmas scene. The parish Church of Gharb is dedicated to the visitation of Mary to Saint Elizabeth, both pregnant, one with the Son of God and the other with His Precursor, St. John the Baptist.

Christmas 1967

Issued: 20th October 1967

Designer: Chev. E. V. Cremona

Watermark 7



Christmas 1968

Issued: 3rd October 1968

Designer: Chev. E. V. Cremona

Watermark 7

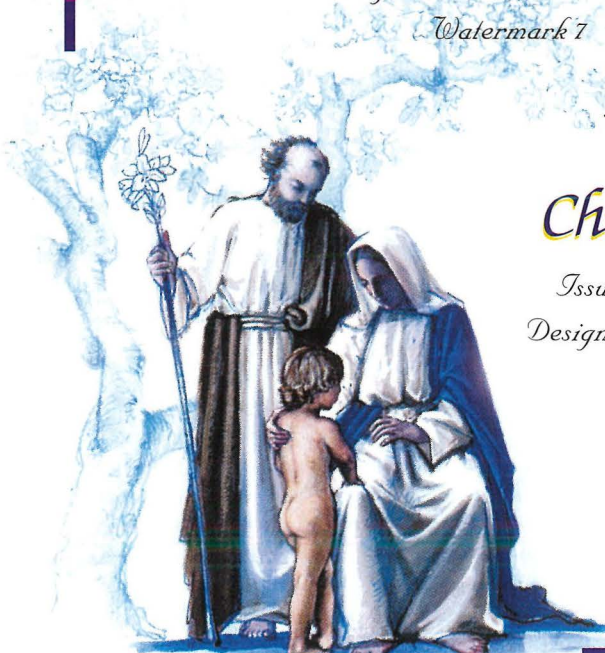


Christmas 1970

Issued: 7th November 1970

Designer: Chev. E. V. Cremona

Watermark 7



Painting by Amadeo Brogli, Loreto Sanctuary, Italy