

# Nicolene Sagona - Gozitan Artist



Nicolene Sagona was born in Attard, Malta in 1979. She is a member of an artistic family, her father being Gozitan painter, sculptor, and decorator Joseph Sagona (b.1942), while her brother Mark (b.1976) is one of the leading new generation of artists. Nicolene was brought up in an artistic environment, receiving her first artistic training in her father's studio, which facilitated the development of an artistic inclination from early childhood. Over the years, she has assisted her father in various projects of stucco decoration, both in churches and in private homes.

From 1997 to 2001, Nicolene deepened her knowledge of art and art history by reading for a BA (Hons) degree at the University of Malta, presenting her dissertation on the artistic career of Esprit Barthelet (1919-99), one of the primary exponents of the development of modern art in Malta.

Sagona held her first personal exhibition in April 2004 which was entitled 'Female Icons: a colour spectacle'. As the title suggests, all of the works depicted female images. The human figure often acts as a source of inspiration for the artist, especially the female figure which the artist finds particularly intriguing. From a young age, Sagona developed a great affinity for fashion design, the colourful world of which, with its own artistic merits, often served as a springboard for her creations. While also working in other genres, including landscape painting, the artist's favourite remains the depiction of the female figure.

In spite of their common line of thought, the works in Sagona's exhibition may be classified into different categories, or rather, different styles of expression. There are, for instance, a group of highly expressionistic works dominated by bold and vigorous brushwork and which share the same idea of an outline figure in black, merging into bare areas of white canvas, with a kaleidoscope of vivid colour in the background. They are also highly charged with emotional content, as different from other works which are less turbulent and where the emphasis may be more on the sinuosity of line. Other works incorporate collage, with the artist employing either textile or paper to create an embossed effect to impart a three-dimensional aspect to the painting.

Besides being an artist and art historian, Nicolene Sagona is currently curator of the Ġgantija Temples with Heritage Malta, the National Agency for Museums, Conservation Practice, and Cultural Heritage.



**The Waiting**, mixed media on canvas, 60 x 40 cm, 2004