

The Wistin Camilleri School of Fine Arts

JOE ATTARD

Introduction

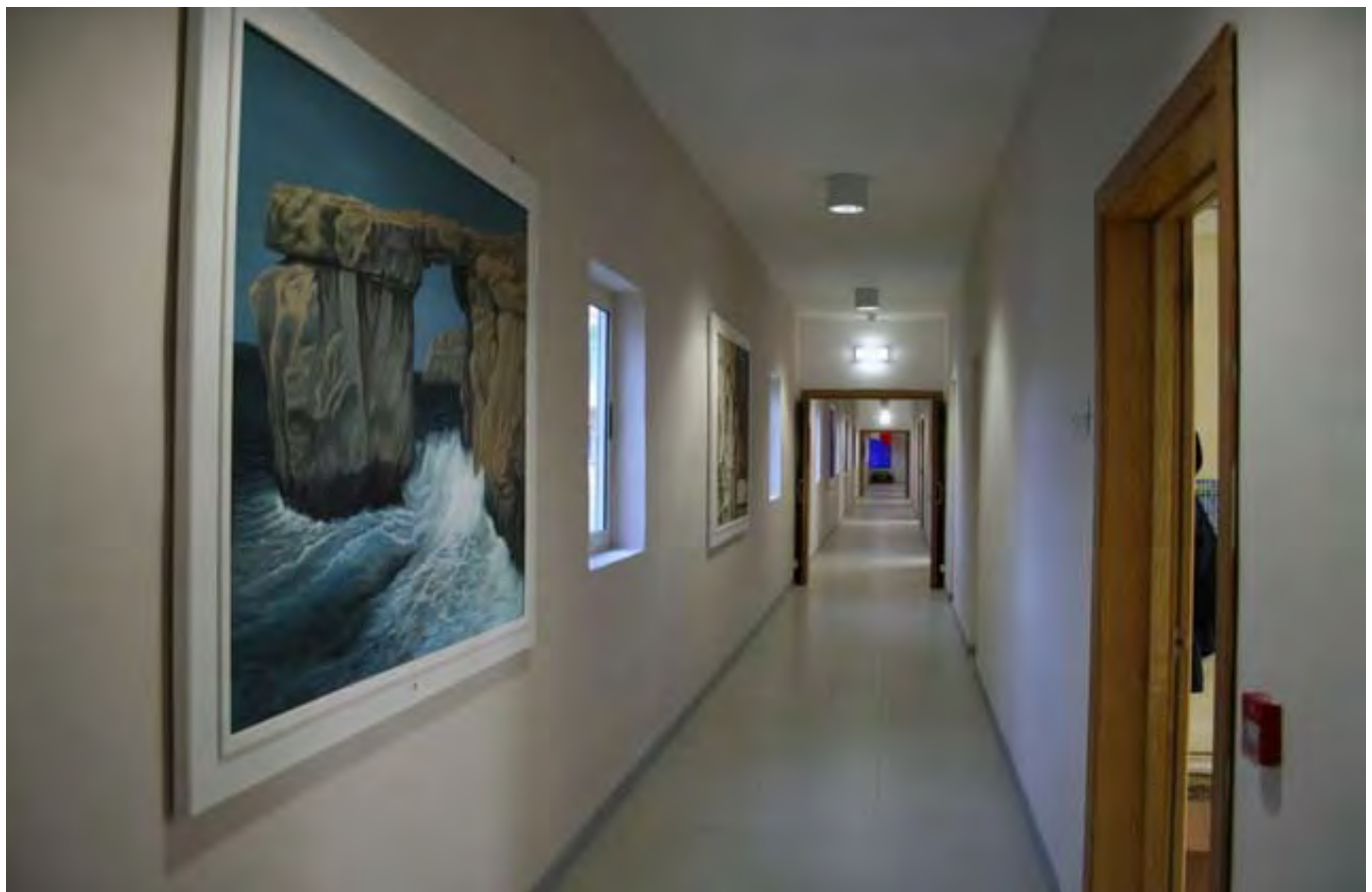
The Wistin Camilleri School of Fine Arts caters for approximately one thousand participants a year. There are 65 courses available at the school, spread over eight different sectors, these being: fine art, art for juniors, crafts for juniors, art and design, crafts, art for persons with special needs, design and craft techniques for secondary school students of around fourteen and fifteen years of age and also trade courses for clients of the Employment and Training Corporation. Because of the wide range of courses, participants from different backgrounds and of vastly different age groups enrol at the school.

Courses for participants with special needs are held in a specially equipped hall fitted with ramps, appropriate furniture and the required sanitary facilities. As part of the conjunction

project which is being conducted by the school in cooperation with the Ninu Cremona Lyceum Complex, students from the latter attend design and craft courses at the school to increase their academic abilities. As from February of this year, courses in woodwork, welding, metal works and stained glass were offered to ETC clients following agreements between the school, the corporation and the Ministry for Gozo.

School Improvements

Formerly part of the Ghajnsielem primary school, today the School of Fine Arts is a separate and independent institution. It has embarked on a thorough embellishment of the whole premises. The already existent classrooms were upgraded with the purchase of new tools, necessary equipment and the latest software for the computers. New tables and chairs were



Paintings on display in the new block of the school.

also purchased to complete the upgrade. The kilns housed in the pottery workshop are now also being used as a drying unit where the heat emitted is utilized by fiberglass, spray painting and moulding activities which ordinarily need a heat source to complete the procedure. An air-compression chamber has also been added.

A very ambitious goal, which has been attained, related to the extension of the premises and establishment of an incubation room. This was made possible by the support received by the Ministry for Gozo, which financed the project through EU Funds. On the 27th February 2008, the Prime Minister officially inaugurated the project.

Five new large workshops have been set up on the first floor for the creation of art works by students attending classes in pottery, glass, metal, silver and goldsmith and wood and stone carving. The school's administration offices have also been transferred to the new block with the ones formerly utilized now being used to house the school's archive. A large conference hall has also

been constructed. Recently a projection system has been installed and the hall has been furnished with furniture made in the school's workshops by various students and teachers. Different entities can benefit from the facilities of this conference hall. In fact the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) and Staff Development Organisation (SDO) have already led a series of courses utilizing this Hall.

A new exhibition hall offers a unique opportunity for those who wish to display their work. A papier-mâché exhibition, an art exhibition set up by the special needs students' class, a Christmas exhibition displaying Christmas related exhibits, an international lace exhibition set up by the Artofil Lace School in Belgium, an Easter exhibition and a lace exhibition as part of the Leonardo Da Vinci Lace Project are a few of the most recent exhibitions which have made use of this location. The school also aims to promote Gozo as an 'Island of Culture' through participation in foreign exhibitions such as the ones which were set up in Spain, Portugal, Italy and most recently in Belgium.



The exterior of the new school of art.



An exhibition being held in the new exhibition hall.

Recent Activities

Recently the school hosted the International European Lace Conference. The event was part of the mobility activities incurred in the project, 'Lace – wealth for the rich, blessing for the poor', through the Leonardo da Vinci Programme. Gozo was represented by the school alongside Belgium, Italy, Germany, Spain and Slovenia, the other partners in the project. The project will be focusing on the design and pattern making of local lace by Computer-aided Design (CAD), a colour code system used in Europe but which is still new to the Maltese Islands.

School participants are encouraged to use recycled and biodegradable material for the production of artifacts. Our school was selected by the Training Centre for Waste and Water Management (BEW), Germany, to convey the Blended Learning Environmental Science (BLES) program for ECO Science in Gozo. BLES adopts the concept of eco-science regarding biodegradable material. The aim of this project is to create and evaluate a training level which is uniform in every European country. The final result expected to be achieved is that all participants in every partner country have the same knowledge and awareness about

the contest of handling and managing organic waste fraction.

Another project, which participants of the Mechanical Clock Restoration course have been enthusiastically working on, is the restoration of Kerċem's parish church clock. The clock was dismantled and brought to the school for restoration by the same students under the supervision of the teacher leading the course. All the existing original parts are being restored. Only those parts which are missing or too extensively damaged for restoration are being replaced.

The school seeks to follow contemporary art by offering participants a vast range of possible techniques in design through art. In crafts we seek to maintain local tradition while reviving those which by the passing of time have faded away. The School works hard to keep its motto alive: *Crafts create beauty, Art defines it.*

Joe Attard is Head of the Wistin Camilleri School of Fine Arts.