Although Malta is a small island in the Mediterranean, with a population of less than half a million, one could find a fairly large number of artists working in various fields of art and craft. Most of the artists work as ‘Sunday’ artists, and very few pursue a professional career. The first modern art groups appeared in Malta in the early 1950’s. The Modern Art Circle was formed in 1950. Only five years later already young art students scurried up the methodology of the Malta School of Art, they were already thinking of freeing themselves from the traditional practice towards modernism.

The road to modernism was not an easy one. Some Maltese artists broke completely from the conventional approaches of ‘the covetous possession of the things seen’, in the 1960’s artists broke completely from the conventional approaches to the modernist impulses as stated by Kandinsky. One can say that today, in Malta, there are two types of artists: those who still work using the traditional modes of expression, painting, sculpture, poetry, and so on, and a few who use other postmodernist tools, like digital photography, video, digital media, and multimedia, and a range of ready-made objects and materials. The latter category of artists tend to move from the studio to the more public contexts of the political, the social and the environmental life.

In recent years we have seen a great change and growth by artists especially of the younger generation to pursue a career in creativity and art practices. Several private art galleries were established in the last decade and sponsorship for art exhibitions and other artistic events increased substantially. But the question of funding always remains an important issue for many Maltese artists. Although a number of local institutions embarked on the development of schemes to help artists, there is still the need for a proper plan so that more artists will benefit from such funding.

The Malta Council for Culture and the Arts (MCCA), which is a government entity, also funds artistic events including the fine arts. But unfortunately very few individual artists succeed to acquire funding to further develop their art practices.

In recent years APS Bank increased its funds to help Maltese artists and joined other local institutions to set up projects to promote local talent also in the fine arts sector. The philosophy of APS Bank is to assist in projects and initiatives that are significant to the local artistic scene, in order to contribute towards the development of creative talent (APS Bank, 2010, XII). Last year APS Bank sponsored various artistic exhibitions, including the exhibition organised by the philanthropic association ‘Friends of St. Luke’s Foundation’. This exhibition consisted of various types of paintings by established local and foreign artists mainly depicting Birgu. Other events were the Biennale of Contemporary Christian Art exhibition held last May in Malta, a photographic exhibition illustrating the fateful voyage of St. Paul to Malta by Peter Paul Barbara, and a personal art show entitled ‘Inspections’ by Gozitan artist Christopher Salla. Last year, APS Bank also sponsored the commission of the portrait of the Archbishop of Malta, Mgr. Paul Cremona by the young artist Philippa Bianchi.

As from this year, APS Bank embarked on a three-year programme to hold a collective art exhibition every year at its head office, which was opened in September last year. The objective of the bank is to give exposure to artists who come from different backgrounds, disciplines and disciplines. The fourth Malta’s ‘Foundation’ exhibition for the first exhibition are showing works in different media. These artists will be addressing themes related to ancient spirituality, identity and architecture and our environment. Other events were the Biennale of Contemporary Christian Art exhibition held last May in Malta, a photographic exhibition illustrating the fateful voyage of St. Paul to Malta by Peter Paul Barbara, and a personal art show entitled ‘Inspections’ by Gozitan artist Christopher Salla. Last year, APS Bank also sponsored the commission of the portrait of the Archbishop of Malta, Mgr. Paul Cremona by the young artist Philippa Bianchi.

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Although Malta is a small island in the Mediterranean, with a population of less than half a million, one could find a fairly large number of artists working in various fields of art and craft. Most of the artists work as ‘Sunday’ artists, and very few pursue a professional career. The first modern art groups appeared in Malta in the early 1950’s. The Modern Art Circle was formed in 1952. Way back in 1947, when young art students scoured up the methodology of the Malta School of Art, they were already thinking of freeing themselves from the traditional practice of the Malta School of Art, they were already thinking of freeing themselves from the traditional practice. Some artists, who studied abroad before the 1950’s were George Preca, Antoine Camilleri, Joseph Borg, Esprit Barthet, Frank Portelli, Carmelo Mangion, Josef Kalleja, Hugo Carbonaro, and Samuel Bugeja. These artists knew what was happening on the international art scene, that is, the changes toward modernism. Artists who explore visual investigations of the peculiarity of the self. The purpose of these exhibitions is to bring together artists especially of the younger generation to pursue a career in the arts except artificially. Contemporary artists are those who specialise in watercolour and so on, and a few who use other modes of expression, painting, sculpture, pottery, and so on. This exhibition consists of various types of paintings by established local and foreign artists mainly depicting Birgu. Other events were the Biennale of Contemporary Christian Art exhibition held in Malta, a photographic exhibition illustrating the fateful voyage of St. Paul to Malta by Peter Paul Barbara, and a personal art show entitled ‘Introspections’ by Gozitan artist Christopher Saliba. Last year, APS Bank also sponsored the commission of the portrait of the Archbishop of Malta, Mgr. Paul Cremona by the young artist Philippa Bianchi. This year’s exhibition brings together a tight set but varied team of artists. They express themselves in various media, but they focus on set themes for this exhibition. Except for Joseph Casha, who, after his demise in June, is being represented via different media.

Jacqueline Agius is an artist who specialises in watercolour and her favourite subject is the Maltese landscape. Joseph Casha who passed away last June was a veteran, established sculptor who worked in different mediums like wood, stone, concrete, and metal. Walter Vella, a well-acclaimed musician in Malta, is also a practicing artist and expresses his thoughts and feelings in glass sculpture. His unique shapes and structures made with an array of coloured glass are inspired by nature, the sea and the artist’s surrounding environment.

In recent yearsAPS Bank will also pay tribute to his important contribution to Maltese art. Liz Denaro is an emerging artist and she is relatively new in the Maltese art scene. Her forte in painting is the human figure. She works mostly in oils and acrylics and creates her female nudes with a distinctive style. Walter Vella, a well-acclaimed musician in Malta, is also a practicing artist and expresses his thoughts and feelings in glass sculpture. His unique shapes and structures made with an array of coloured glass are inspired by nature, the sea and the artist’s surrounding environment.

Walter Vella. The intention of the organisers is to present a combination of artists not only in terms of age and style but also in terms of artistic development. So there are artists who are at the peak of their artistic career and well-established in the style and medium, other artists who are in the middle of their artistic career and, yet others who are ‘emerging’ and, consequently, not well-known in the scenic art in Malta. This year’s exhibition brings together a tight set but varied team of artists. They express themselves in various media, but they focus on set themes for this exhibition. Except for Joseph Casha, who, after his demise in June, is being represented via different media.

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