



Francesco Saverio Sciortino
(1875 - 1958)

Arkitett Skultur Artist



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Hajr

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Qoxra quddiem: Ċimiterju tal-Addolorata, Malta

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Weight of
Dissolution

Dahlia

Il-Maltin jafu li minkejja ċ-ċokon ta' pajjiżhom għadd sabiħ minn huthom għamli għieħ mhux biss lilhom infushom iżda wkoll lill-belt twelidhom, f'dan il-każ Ħaż-Żebbuġ. Dawn il-persuni jkomplu jibnu fuq l-identità tagħna bħala Maltin u Żebbuġin. Minkejja li fid-dinja tal-lum ma baqax fruntieri jibqa' dejjem il-bżonn li wieħed iġorr 'il-karta tal-identità' li juri min fejn beda l-vjaġġ tiegħu.

Wieħed mill-għanijiet ta' din l-għaqda hu li tkompli ssaħħaħ l-identità ta' din il-komunità permezz ta' numru ta' attivitajiet matul is-sena. Dawn is-sensiela ta' tifikriet huma min-naħa waħda rakkont storiku dwar il-passat u min-naħa l-oħra jispirawna għall-futur. Huma ukoll ir-rakkont popolari ta' komunità għajjura għas-suċċess.

Din is-sena jaħbat il-mija u erbghin sena mit-twelid ta' artist Żebbuġi li ftit li xejn għadu magħruf. L-istorja u min jiktibha mhux dejjem ikunu ġusti ma' kulhadd bl-istess mod, għalhekk tinhass il-ħtieġa li jitfakkar Francesco Saverio Sciortino. Franġisk Saverju huwa eżempju ċar ta' wild Żebbuġi li hađem kontra l-kurrent u ma qata' qalbu minn xejn.

Għalhekk kien xieraq li din is-sena jiġi mfakkar dan l-arkitett, skultur u artist. Għal dan il-għan l-Għaqda Kazin Banda San Filep stampat dan il-ktejjeb bħala estensjoni tal-wirja fotografika kif ukoll ta' xogħlijiet originali ta' Francesco Saverio Sciortino. Din infetħet mis-Segretarju Parlamentari L-Onor Dr Ian Borg u l-President tal-Għaqda Dr Philip Sciortino nhar il-Ġimgħa 27 ta' Novembru fis-sala Mayfair tal-Kazin Banda San Filep, Ħaż-Żebbuġ.

Jixraq ħajr speċjali, lis-Sur Michael Bonnici li ha din l-inizjattiva, lil Joe P. Borg tal-fotografija lil Philip Balzan u Tarcisio Mifsud li flimkien ma' sħabi kollha għenu kemm felħu biex tirnexxi.

Dr Philip Sciortino
President,
Għaqda Kazin Banda San Filep

Weight of Dissolution, 1922, Royal Canadian Academy, Canada



Profil qasir ta' Francesco Saverio Sciortino

Michael Bonnici u Philip Balzan

Twieled Haż-Żebbuġ fit-12 ta' Novembru 1875, il-kbir fost sitt aħwa li kellhom Ġużeppi u Saverja Sant. Hutu kienu Antonio (1879–1947), Marian (1877–1955), Grazia (1880–1955), Filippu u Vitorin. Inġhata l-ismijiet ta' Frangisku Saverju, Anġlu, Ġużeppi u Filippu.

L-ewwel għalliem tiegħu fl-immudellar kien il-professur Vincenzo Cardona. Fl-1891 kuġinuh, il-pittur Lazzru Pisani laqqgħu mal-Professur Moschetti¹ li haġġru jmur jistudja f'Ruma. Pisani kien ha lil kuġinuh Francesco miegħu l-kunvent tal-Patrijiet Karmelitani tal-Belt fejn Moschetti kien rama' l-istudju tiegħu. Iċ-ċekjen Sciortino baqa' mibluh bil-ġmiel u x-xogħol fin tal-bust tal-Markiż Bugeja u dan kollu kompli żied fih l-entuzjażmu lejn l-arti u xtaq li Moschetti jaċċettah bħala student tiegħu. Moschetti qal lil Francesco li jekk irid isir artist tajjeb kellu jmur Ruma biex jistudja l-arti bħalma kien għamel hu.

Lazzru Pisani tah għajnuna kemm teknika u finanzjarja. Kien jgħaddilu xi kummisjonijiet sabiex iservuh ta' Prattika kif ukoll biex jaqla' xi haġa tal-flus. Fost dawn ix-xogħlijiet kienet l-iskultura fl-abbozzi tal-ventartal tal-fidda tal-artal maġġur tal-Knisja Parrokjali ta' Haż-Żebbuġ. Dan il-ventartal, li nħadem fuq id-disinn u d-direzzjoni ta' Pisani, tlesta fl-1895 meta Sciortino kellhu biss 20 sena. Irnexxielu jkseb għajnuna finanzjarja wkoll mill-Bugeja Art Bequest sakemm fl-1897 halla Malta għal Ruma.

Lazzaro Pisani rrakkomanda lil Francesco ma' Capt. Giuseppe Milo li haġġu hsieb li jagħtih id-dokumenti meħtieġa sabiex jiġi aċċettat fir-'Regio Istituto di Belle Arti' ta' Ruma fl-1897. Kemm dam Ruma kien ukoll imur għal-lezzjonijiet ta' filgħaxija tal-arti ornamentali fil-'Municipio' u fil-'British Academy of Art' f'Via Margutta. Wara li temm il-kors bl-ikbar unuri mar ikompli l-istudji f'Milan fl-'Accademia Brera' taħt il-Professur Eugenio Butti.

Dame de l'isle de Malte, 1906, Paris Exhibition, Pariġi

Is-suċċessi ta' Sciortino kienu mfahhira kemm f'gazzetti f'Ruma kif ukoll fil-gazzetti Maltin, Malta u Daily Malta Chronicle. Fl-1902 bix-xogħol tiegħu *Martyr of the Fort St. Elmo Siege* kiseb l-ewwel premju, kif tixhed ittra mibgħuta mir-*Regio Istituto di Belle Arti* fit-8 ta' Lulju 1902, fejn tgħid: “*una classificazione di dieci su dieci con lode*”. Bis-saħħa ta' Dr. Vincenzo Maria Pellegrini u ibnu Gabriel Pellegrini, li żamm id-dokumenti li kellu missieru fuq FS Sciortino, illum għandna ħjiel tajjeb tal-ħidma ta' Sciortino bejn l-1897 u l-1954. Tagħrif ieħor jinkiseb minn manuskritti li jinsabu fl-arkivji Nazzjonali kif ukoll minn ittri tal-uniku iben ta' Francesco, Joseph, li komplja jagħti anka dettalji fuq ħidmet missieru fil-Kanada.

F'Ruma, Francesco ltaqa' mal-qassis żagħżuġ min-Nadur Dun Martin Camilleri li kien qed jistudja hemm. Permezz ta' dil-ħbiberija Sciortino ħa għadd ta' kummissjonijiet fin-Nadur. Fl-1903 tqabbad minn Dun Martin biex jagħmel id-disinn ta' żewġ lanterni originali għall-fratellanza ta' San Pietru u San Pawl. Ispirat mill-bosta binjiet monumentali ta' Ruma, Dun Martin kien wera x-xewqa li jkabbar il-knisja tan-Nadur u jzejjinha b'koppla maestuża. Ried xi haġa ġdida u speċjali għal Malta. Dan kien proġett ambizzjuż ħafna u Sciortino, li kien għad għandu seba' u għoxrin sena, daħal għalih b'entużjażmu. Il-proġett kien jikkonsisti minn tkabbir tal-knisja permezz tal-bini ta' navi fil-ġnub, immudellar mill-ġdid tal-faccata u bini ta' koppla originali. Permezz ta' dal-proġett Sciortino rnexxielu juri l-kapaċitajiet tiegħu fl-arkitektura. Sa dak iż-żmien, f'Malta kienet għadha qatt ma dehret koppla li tiskorri n-nofs ċirku, u kienu jiġu mifruda bi dniefel jew ħajt oħxon ħafna biex jagħmel tajjeb għas-saħħa laterali li titfa' l-koppla. Ħafna drabi dan il-ħajt tant kien ikun kbir li minn barra, il-kurvatura tal-koppla ftit li xejn kienet tibqa' tidher.



Martyr of Saint Elmo, 1901, Regio Istituto, Ruma



Bażilika ta' San Pietru u San Pawl wara li nbriet fuq id-disinn tal-arkitekt F.S. Sciortino, 1907-1913



Il-Knisja originali tan-Nadur, Ghawdex

Għan-Nadur, Sciortino ddisinja koppla tawwalija li taqbeż in-nofs ċirku fuq stil rinaxximentali. Kif raw il-pjanta, periti u nies tas-sengħa tħassbu mhux ffit u lil Francesco ppruvaw iħassrulu kemm jifilhu. Huma spekulaw li l-knisja kienet se tinfetaħ bil-piż. Izda Sciortino kien jaf sew x'inhu jagħmel. L-aperturi kbar fit-tambur, barra li jdawlu l-bażilika, kienu maħsubin ukoll biex jitnaqqas il-piż tal-koppla. Il-proposta ta' Sciortino ntlagħhet u x-xogħol sar. Fl-24 ta' Settembru 1913, tpoġġa s-salib fuq il-quċċata u l-koppla bdiet tiddomina l-gżira tat-tliet għoljiet. L-incertezzi li tqajjmu kienu msikkta u Francesco Sciortino hareġ bl-unuri kollha. L-istil u s-sistema taċ-ċinturini użati minn Sciortino servew ta' mudell għall-koppli oħra li nbnew wara, fosthom tas-Siġġiewi minn Vassallo u ta' Raħal Ġdid minn Ġużè D'Amato. Fil-festa tal-inawgurazzjoni tal-koppla tan-Nadur fl-1915, fl-istess parroċċa ġie mżanzan ostensorju għar-relikwiji ta' San Pietru u San Pawl li nħadem mill-iskultur Pawlu Falzon fuq disinn ta' Sciortino.

Matul dan iż-żmien, Francesco kien ukoll għalliem tal-arti u d-disinn fl-iskejjel tal-gvern. F'dawn iż-żminijiet ħadem bosta monumenti għall-oqbra ta' nies importanti, fosthom dak ta' Sir Temi Zammit, u għall-familji nobbli bħal ta' Apap Testaferrata u Navarro. Huwa kien imqabbd mill-gazzetta *Daily Malta Chronicle* biex jagħmel il-monument tal-Markiz Giuseppe Scicluna fil-ġnien tal-Mall il-Furjana.

Fl-1911 ġie nkarigat biex jorganizza l-'Coronation Exhibition' ta' Londra. Għal din il-wirja, huwa esebixxa sitt statwi li jirraprezentaw suġġetti differenti flimkien ma'

disgħa ohra b'tema folkloristika. Fost dawn l-istatwi nsibu waħda bit-titlu '*Dame de L'le De Malte*' li tirraffigura mara bl-għonnella². Din l-istatwetta kisbet ħafna tiffir u giet esebita kemm-il darba f'wirjiet internazzjonali.

Fl-1914 emigra lejn Montreal fil-Kanada minħabba li x-xogħol f'Malta kien qed jonqos. Hemm malajr stabbilixxa ruhu u ħadem statwi ornamentali, dekorazzjoni fi swali u fi djar tas-sinjuri u xogħlijiet ta' arkitettura. Dawn iż-żminijiet kienu mill-aqwa fil-karriera ta' Sciortino u matulhom kemm ix-xogħlijiet kif ukoll il-fama tiegħu naxterdu minn Halifax sa Vancouver. Dan is-suċċess ma ġiex waħdu imma b'ħafna saġrificċji, kuraġġ u paċenzja.

F'Novembru tal-1921, waqt assemblea ġenerali f'Toronto, gie elett b'ħala *Associate of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (A.R.C.A)*. Dan kompli jzidlu l-fama li diġà kellhu, u ġibed aktar lejh l-attenzjoni tal-kritiċi tal-arti. Fl-edizzjoni 46 tal-esebizzjoni ta' din l-akkademja, Sciortino ppartecipa b'erba' xogħlijiet. Dawn kienu: *Martyr of the Fort St. Elmo Siege*, *Dame de L'le De Malte*, *Weight of Dissolution* u *Permanent Smile*. Fuq dawn l-esebiti, l-iskultur qala' bosta tiffir mill-pubbliku kif ukoll mill-istampa fejn dehru kummenti bħal: "*He is a high class sculptor*" u "*He is a sensible and vibrant artist*". Xogħlijiet tiegħu ta' din il-ħabta huma mferrxin ukoll fil-knejjes. Ta' min wieħed isemmi l-Via Crucis għall-knisja ta' St. Leo f'Montreal West.

Fl-1924 iżzewweġ lil Marguerite Grenier, li kienet armla ta' Armand Daoust, u kellhom iben li semmewh Joseph.

Sciortino ħalla l-Kanada u mar fl-Istati Uniti, l-ewwel f'Malone u wara f'it fi New York fejn dam erba' snin. Kemm dam hemm issieheb mal-*Union of Sculptors and Modellers* li kienet tagħtih ix-xogħol. Għal tmintax-il xahar ħadem ġewwa Boston ma' ħamsa u għoxrin artist internazzjonali. Minn Boston mar Hartford u Philadelphia fejn ħadem għal madwar sena sakemm reġa' lura New York fejn ħadem għal sentejn fuq statwi dekorattivi. Ħadem għal sentejn shaħ ġewwa Havana f'Cuba. Dawn kienu żminijiet ta' ħafna ġiri u incertezza minħabba s-sitwazzjoni politika imwegħra. Minħabba f'hekk ħafna mix-xogħlijiet ta' Sciortino huwa mxerrdin ħafna u mhux dejjem dokumentati.



Sant'Anna u San Franġisk t'Assisi, New York, Stati Uniti tal-Amerika

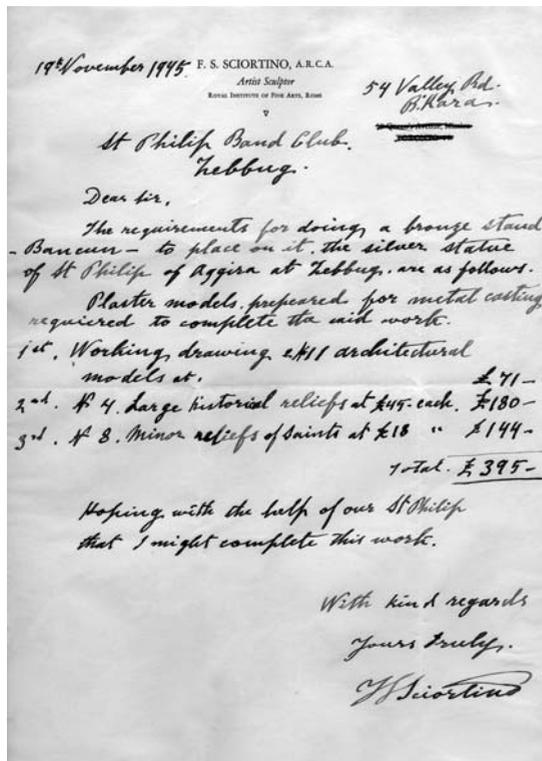
Biex jaħrab mill-kriżi ekonomika u bil-biża li jispiċċa bla xogħol, reġa' lura lejn Montreal u wara mar Toronto fejn sab xogħol go' funderija. Imma wara ftit żmien, din il-funderija flok kompliet taħdem fuq affarijiet artistici, bdiet tipproduci affarijiet militari. Għalhekk reġa' lura lejn Montreal fejn għamel erba' snin b'xogħol mill-inqas u għalhekk fl-1939 iddecieda li jerga' lura lejn art twelidu flimkien mal-familja.

Kif wasal Malta, Dun Salv Zammit ordna għand Sciortino l-abbozzi tal-ġibs għal erba' appostli li kellhom jintramaw fuq l-artal maġġur. Dawn saru tal-fidda aktar tard, fl-1953. Matul it-tieni gwerra, Sciortino hađem biss ftit affarijiet zġħar tal-arti principalment tiżjin fil-ġibs u bas-reliefs tal-bronz f'xi knejjes fosthom taż-Żejtun. Fl-1945 għamel id-disinn u l-abbozzi tal-ġibs tal-bradella ta' San Filep. Il-hlas għal dan id-disinn kien jammonta għal 395 Lira Sterlina u sar mill-Kazin tal-Banda San Filep. L-irċevuta tinsab fl-istess każin, f'Haż-Żebbuġ. Uħud mill-abbozzi tal-ġibs jinsabu f'kollezzjonijiet privati. Dik is-sena Sciortino għamel ukoll l-istatwa 'Fidi, Tama u Mħabba' għall-faċċata tal-Knisja tan-Nadur.

Fl-1949 reġa' ġie mqabbađ mill-Kapitlu tan-Nadur biex jaħdem il-gallerija tal-orgni. Ix-xogħol inhađem kollu Malta fid-dar ta' Sciortino ġewwa Birkirkara u minn hemm inġarr lejn Ghawdex.

Fl-1954, reġa' lura lejn il-Kanada fejn irtira mix-xogħol tal-iskultura minħabba li l-vista kienet marritlu lura ħafna. Huwa kien joqġhod f'Oka, raħal zġħir fi Quebec, 35 mil bogħod minn Montreal. Kien iqatta l-hin liberu tiegħu fil-kampanja minħabba l-interess li kellu fin-natura. Miet hemmhekk fl-1 ta' Settembru 1958, fl-eťa ta' 84 sena.

Fost xogħlijiet oħra li għandu f'Malta ta' min insemmu 'La preghiera nel Dolore' u 'Giustizia', it-tnejn fuq oqbra privati fiċ-Ċimiterju tal-Addolorata, 'Mosè' u 'Isaia' għall-knisja tad-Dumnikani fil-Belt Valletta, żewġ



L-irċevuta maħruġa minn F.S.Sciortino lill-każin Banda San Filep, tax-xogħlijiet fuq id-disinn u l-abbozzi tal-ġibs tal-bradella ta' San Filep

reliefs tal-irĥam għall-knisja ta' San Pawl, ukoll fil-Belt Valletta, bustijiet ta' Ashfar u ta' Alfons Maria Galea li jinsabu fl-Oratorju tas-Salesjani f'tas-Sliema, disinn tat-tabernaklu tal-fidda għall-Kolleġġjata ta' Sant'Elena f'Birkirkara, 'Il Nome di Ġesù' chapel of *tal-herba* also in Birkirkara and others.

Fil-Kanada għandu '*Via Crucis*' fil-bronz fil-knisja ta' San Leo f'Montreal Westmount, '*Weight of Dissolution*' fir-Royal Canadian Accademy, '*Motherhood*' (li d-disinn originali tagħha qiegħed fil-mużew tas-Santwarju ta' Haż-Żabbar), '*Herald in Stone*' fl-Università ta' Winnipeg, '*Addolorata*' fil-knisja ta' Santa Katerina f'Montreal, '*Christ the King*' f'Montreal u oħrajn.

Għandu xogħlijiet f'diversi pajjizi oħra fosthom: 'Santu Wistin' fil-Katidral ta' Ippona fl-Afrika, '*Faith*' u '*Hope*' fl-entrata taċ-Ĉimiterju Ellenberg, fi New York USA, '*Queen Victoria*' fil-British Academy of Arts, Ruma, *Project for monument to Giuseppe Verdi*, f'Milan, '*Study from Life*' fl-Istituto di Belle Arte, Ruma (1901), '*A Peasant Girl*' f'Ruma (1911), '*Decorative Head*' u '*The Saviour*' (1911) f'Londra.



Via Crucis 11th Station, 1936, Church of Saint Leon, Westmount, Kanada

Francesco jixraqlu jkun magħruf aktar min niesu l-Maltin. Haqqu monument. Waħda mit-toroq prinċipali ta' Haż-Żebbuġ hija msemmija għall-aħwa Antonio u Francesco Sciortino. Imma minhabba li hija magħrufa biss bħala Triq Sciortino, kulhadd jaħsibha li tfakkar lil Antonio Sciortino. Isem Francesco jidher minqux fuq il-monument li hu stess għamel fl-1950 għal fuq il-qabar tal-familja tiegħu fiċ-ċimiterju tal-qalb ta' Ġesù ġewwa Haż-Żebbuġ – għalkemm id-destin ried li ma kellux jindifen hemm!

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Referenzi:

- ¹ Il-Professur Moschetti fl-1891 ingab Malta biex jaħdem monument f'għieħ il-Markiz Bugeja.
- ² Fuq din l-istatwa hemm imnaqqxa l-firma ta' Sciortino. L-istatwa kien irregalaha lil ċertu Mikiel Buttigieg min-Nadur. Fuq ix-xewqa ta' dan Mikiel, V.M. Pellegrini kien ha din l-istatwa u poġġiha fil-knisja tan-Nadur fl-1984 meta miet Mikiel.

Museo Artistico Industriale
Roma



Dettaglio.

"Metopa greca."

Frances J. Scortino

P 9/10

The life and works of Francesco Saverio Sciortino

Philip Sciortino

“F. X. Sciortino is represented in a way that he can be estimated by his former work. He is a sensible and vibrant artist full of lyricism, ardour and enthusiasm, endowed with rare qualities of intelligence, comprehension and imagination, enhanced by a well acquired and solid technique. He has eloquence, drive and charm. He fascinates you by the purity and harmony of his lines. He impresses you by the profound thought that brings forth from the material used. He is a high class sculptor, whose undoubted value will give him the successes which he truly deserves”

La Revue Moderne Des Arts on the 15th of June 1925 about the works of Sciortino in the 46th Royal Canadian Academy of Arts Exhibition when he was elected Associate of the same academy.

Introduction

There are indeed few Maltese artists who managed to successfully pursue a career outside the small space literally and metaphorically afforded by the Maltese Islands. This is a particularly impressive achievement when one considers that these Maltese artists had to endure years of living on a shoestring not only as students but often well into their old age. They also had to face constant obstacles by virtue of competing as outsiders, even in their own home country.

This is particularly the case with Francesco Saverio whose hallmark, was his lifelong focus on being a first class artist often compelling him to make difficult choices and move around the world. This is the remarkable life history of an ambitious Maltese man who was born 140 years ago. He never settled for anything less than what he aspired to, and was described by many as persistent and thorough.

Ornament stil Grieg, Museo Artistico Industriale, 1898, Ruma. Kartolina miktuba fl-1910

He has produced works that include portraiture, religious *objects d'art*, decorative art, free standing monuments, bas-reliefs and architectural projects. His mastery of different styles and media in addition to the wide range of influences make him a resourceful artist. He was confident in secular as well as in religious themes. His career spanned for more than 54 years in three different cultural and artistic environments.

The early formative years: 1875 – 1903

Francesco Saverio was born on the 12th of November 1875 in Ħaż-Żebbuġ, to Giuseppe and Maria née Sant, the latter originally from Mosta. He was baptised the day after and given the names of Fran(cescus) Xaverius, Angelus, Joseph and Philippus. His godparents were Angelus from Mosta and his aunt Victoria daughter of Francesco Sciortino from Ħaż-Żebbuġ.

He spent his childhood living in the town's serpentine Mamo Street, the house then numbered 8 and 9.¹ Being the first born son, he was named after his paternal grandfather. Later in life Saverju is said to have recounted his role in his family's farm and his early attempts at stone carving.² Despite the family's humble background and the custom of those days, at least four out of the six siblings managed to attain an educational level beyond that of primary school which was then the level of education attained by a minority of boys and even less of girls. The school located in Vassalli Street was one of the first primary schools established beyond the cities and their suburbs. Further education was available only in Floriana and Valletta. His father Giuseppe, who was officially an *agricoltore*, as declared in the deeds of death of his son Antonio³, was listed on the 1880 electoral register as one of the only two Sciortino's from Ħaż-Żebbuġ.⁴ In those days voting was reserved to people who could prove a certain income and literacy. He was definitely not very keen to send his children to till the land or tend the herds all their life. In those days only highly motivated parents sent their children to school even more so to the post-primary school such as the Lyceum or other school away from the town, given the limited means of transport.⁵

By 1850 the Sciortino family had settled in two clusters, mainly at Ħaż-Żebbuġ or Attard and in Valletta. The Valletta branch was the cosmopolitan counterpart, some of whom in the legal profession with appointments at the law courts and various boards and at one point, one of whom, Paolo, was active in politics.^{6,7,8} It is not known if the two branches were in contact with each other.

Haż-Żebbuġ is one of the oldest towns in Malta which, despite its rural characteristic had for a long time, developed a mixed economy consisting of rural, skilled trade and business activities. During the 17th and 18th Centuries the town became the economic hub of the cotton industry leading to sustained population growth and urbanisation. The town was also growing with the construction of its first straight street, nowadays named after Bishop Caruana, connecting the town square with Notabile road.⁹

This economic activity attracted and supported a small core of learned families that must have surely been in contact with the wider world through trade and social networks. It is perhaps no coincidence to note that in the latter third of the 19th century, Lazzaro Pisani, Dun Karm Psaila, and the Sciortino brothers roamed the same streets and went to the same school.¹⁰ In the same period, the townfolk were proud of the successful commissioning of the silver statue of St Philip, the enlargement of St Philip's Parish Church and the final stages of its embellishment.

There were two important figures that must have been particularly inspiring in his early life. In his earliest days Vitorina Sciortino, his aunt and godmother was certainly a big influence on the whole family. She was appointed in 1859 as the headmistress of the town's girls' primary school.¹¹ It has been part of the oral narrative that she has been later instrumental for the Governor to grant Antonio Sciortino's scholarship to Rome.¹² There is no direct evidence that she had a similar role for Frangisku Saverju however one can safely assume that she was an important figure for the aspiring artist. His early school years could have included drawing lessons as part of the ordinary curriculum of the elementary schools of those days.¹³

More directly and at a later stage, Lazzaro Pisani, his maternal cousin¹⁴, who by then was already an accomplished artist, must have mentored Francesco. Lazzaro was a student of Luigi Fontana (1827–1908) and Domenico Bruschi (1840–1910) at the Accademia di San Luca, also attending in the evening the life classes at The British Academy of Arts in Rome.¹⁵

In 1890 Lazzaro was already appointed as master of lineal drawing at the Technical and Manual School of Valletta and the Young Ladies Secondary School of Valletta with an annual pay of £55.¹⁶ He was by then already residing in Valletta where he also had his studios after leaving a smaller studio in his home in Żebbuġ. Francesco, as a young man featured as a model for one of Lazzaro's paintings depicting the slaughter of Abel by Caino. He was also teaching art on a private basis. The Sciortino brothers were hosted and assisted in other ways by Lazzaro.¹⁷ Later both of them were to partially follow his itinerary in Rome.

Vincenzo Cardona¹⁸ was another influential figure, at the time of Francesco's studies. He was the headmaster of the Technical and Manual School. Cardona was first appointed by the governor in February 1893 as master of woodcarving and cabinet making with an annual remuneration of £100. Vincenzo was a neoclassical ornamental sculptor who hailed from Reggio Calabria and is said to have re-founded the school and the art of decoration in the Maltese islands, particularly in the stucco technique. He was later commissioned by Marquis Scicluna to work on Palazzo Parisio which was being redecorated in that period.¹⁹

At the Technical and Manual School students could opt for classes in Cabinet Making, Marquetry, Modelling in Clay, Plaster Casting, Wood and Stone carving.²⁰ The school was situated somewhere in Merchants Street near Fort Saint Elmo. It was reopened in that period and Franġisku Saverju must have been one of his earliest apprentices.

In this respect some interesting details came out in March 1899 when Franġisku Saverju wrote from Rome to the Chief Secretary reporting about the progress in his studies. In a brief report minuted in the Chief Secretary General's file, one can read the following, dated 21st March 1899 and written by an official from the Department of Education.^{21,22}

From the note one can immediately surmise that he started his apprenticeship at the age of 16 and that he was receiving lessons in drawing from Lazzaro Pisani himself apart from other lessons in drawing at the Lyceum. He must have done a lot of commuting unless he was living in Valletta. He is described as one of the best apprentices.

The other comments have to be evaluated in the light of the second hand information received by the official writing the report on a subject of which he was unfamiliar. The same official was also keen to push another young man despite that the request was about Mr. Sciortino.²³

In any case Franġisk Saverju survived his first hurdle and was eventually granted in April 1899 a subsidy of £40 for 1900. The same sum was a year later granted to his younger brother Antonio.²⁴

Lazzaro himself, in 1891, introduced Franġisk Saverju then 16 years old, to Professor Giulio Moschetti (1849–1909)²⁵ who was invited to Malta to model a marble bust of Marquis Vincenzo Bugeja. Moschetti was a regular visitor to Malta and resided for long periods of time depending on the commissions at hand.

During this visit the artist was hosted at the Carmelite Priory in Valletta where he was given a room to work on the project. Sciortino was reported to have been inspired by what he saw and asked Lazzaro to help him seek an apprenticeship with the artist. The latter gave him the right advice; “If you want to become a really good artist, go to study art in Rome as I did”^{26,27}

The relationship with Lazzaro certainly predated and went beyond the Technical and Manual School classes. The young artist, now just 20 years old worked closely on Lazzaro’s projects most notably in 1895 on the main altar antependium of Saint Philip’s Parish at Ħaż-Żebbuġ, their home town.²⁸ This was facilitated by the fact that Lazzaro had already set up his first studio at his parents’ house in Our Lady of Sorrows Street, Ħaż-Żebbuġ.²⁹

In April 1894, together with Emmanuele Xuereb he won the first prize for ornamental sculpture in plaster in a competition organized by the Society of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce. Both of them were commended for their remarkable progress in modelling techniques achieved in a period of 11 months. They were given the prize which consisted of £1.0 Sterling³⁰ each.³¹ Again in November 1896 Frangisku Saverju submitted a sculpture in wood and marble. This time it is notable that his younger brother Antonio took part *fuori concorso* as a simple amateur by means of a painting.³² This could be due to the influence of Lazzaro as primarily a painter on Antonio who was still 16 years old and Cardona on Francesco Saverio as a sculptor.



Antependium for the Church of St.Philip of Agira, Ħaż-Żebbuġ, Malta. Designed by Lazzaro Pisani and modelled by F.S. Sciortino

The Eternal City

By 1897 at the age of 21 Francesco Saverio left for Rome to study at the Regio Istituto di Belle Arti accompanied by a letter of recommendation from Lazzaro Pisani to Captain Giuseppe Milo who in a couple of hours secured him a place at the Istituto.³³ He also attended classes at the British Academy of Art in Rome and at the Municipio which was officially known as the Museo Artistico Industriale, taking evening classes.³⁴

The Municipio, situated in Via del Corso, was the institution which catered for his principal interest at this stage of his formation. Its course dealt with decorative and ornamental art which featured so much later on in his artistic life. The students are exposed to the different styles of decoration and encouraged creativity in the use of these elements.

It consisted of a museum and a school which, to a large extent was a continuation of the Technical and Manual School he attended in Malta. Here he studied under the supervision of Raffaello Oijetti (1845 – 1924) who was a leading architect and co-founder of the Museo Artistico Industriale. His first successes came from here in the form of a first prize. He refers to it in his correspondence to the Governor as the silver medal awarded by the Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry. The three schools were within walking distance from each other and some students attended them concurrently.

He kept the pace of his studies where he gained a top ranking in the first year examinations at the Regio Istituto di Belle Arti.³⁵ Two Maltese young men Dr Giuseppe Mizzi (1873–1937)³⁶ and Dr Zaccharia Roncali³⁷ who were living in Rome studying law, traced him to make an interview which they did and later published in two leading papers of the time, Malta and the Daily Malta Chronicle.

In those days Sciortino was living on a very tight budget, having to survive on £20 sterling for a whole year.³⁸ This probably was the initial support he received by means of a grant from the Bugeja Art Bequest but this was not enough for him to continue his studies.

On the 8th of March 1899 he wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary to Government, Sir Gerald Strickland about his progress in his studies making a subtle suggestion for help.³⁹

On the 3rd of April 1899 His Excellency the Governor directed that a provision of £40 be inserted for the purpose in the Draft general Estimates 1900. At least Frangisku



Studies from Life, 1898-1902, Istituto di Belle Arti, Rome

Saverju started the 20th century with some respite from his longstanding financial insecurity.⁴⁰

Judge Pullicino and Dr Roncali petitioned the Government for a subsidy, however it was refused. They then launched a public appeal for funds, an initiative that was deemed to be a success. The funds were administered by the society of Arts Manufacturer and Commerce. At a later stage, Judge Pullicino wrote to the Society on May 1901 presumably for more funds, as the President of the Society remarks that the Sciortino Fund has almost been exhausted. Judge Pullicino has also attached photographs of Sciortino's works and a certificate from sculptor Aureli⁴¹ of Rome. This certificate described the merits of the young artist's works and his progress in the course of his studies. The President suggested that the society should support Mr. Sciortino as it has supported his younger brother Antonio a year before. His proposal for a grant not exceeding £40 sterling was accepted unanimously.⁴²

In a subsequent meeting held on the 20th of May 1901 the grant was reduced to £18 as payment for works done and deposited in favour of Mr. Sciortino in the Sciortino Fund. This was attributed to the Treasurer's report which showed a balance for the Society of £50 and therefore it was not prudent to grant £40 out of it.⁴³

In the same year he was awarded £5 for a plaster *medaglione* to the Society of Arts Manufacturers and Commerce. It was shipped from Rome soon after.⁴⁴ No wonder that the young man admitted that he was completely run down after he finished his studies.⁴⁵

In 1902 he concluded his studies at the Istituto di Belle Arti in Rome with a first prize *cum laude* for the nude study on a free subject which he entitled 'A Martyr of the Fort Saint Elmo'. This remarkable work which he kept on using as his tour de force earned him praise later in life. It was a classical masterpiece in academic *verismo* which was by then a mature artistic movement in the whole of Italy.

His next move may have been related to this success. He may have envisaged a promising career in monumental works which was perceived to be the most prestigious artistic achievement by the young man.

After the summer holidays and a mandatory rest upon the advice of a doctor in Rome he went for a relaxing cultural tour along Via Appia up to Viterbo.

Monumental Art at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Milano at Palazzo Brera

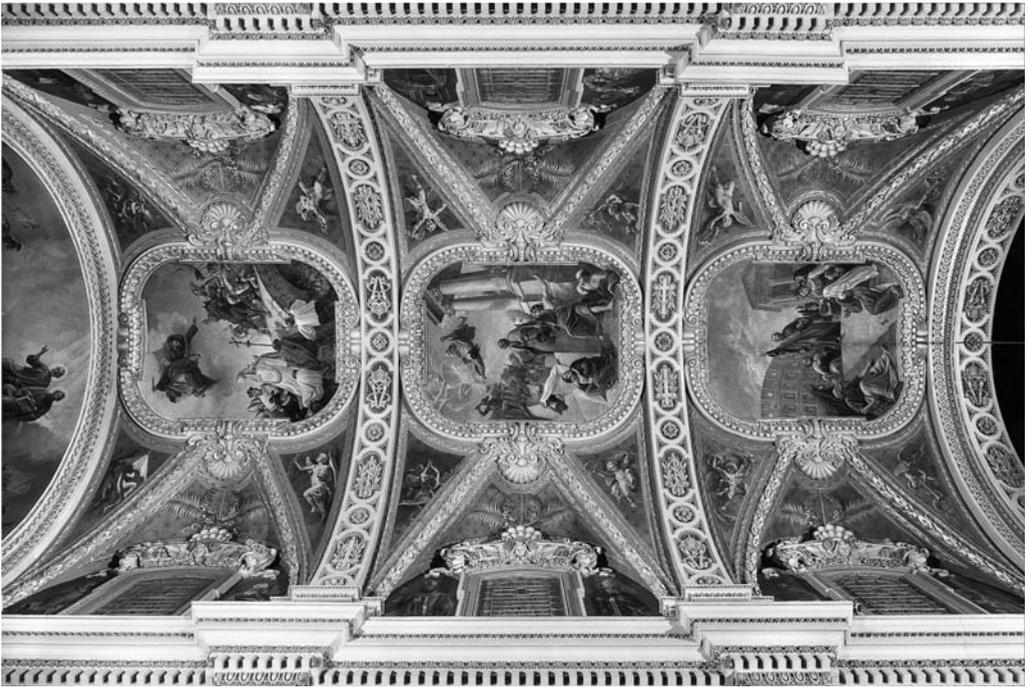
At this point Franġisk Saverju felt that he should pursue further studies at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan under the care of Professor Eugenio Butti. The Brera Academy of Fine Arts was founded in 1776. It had a large collection of casts of old and classical works in sculpture to support the teaching in the classes of architecture, painting, ornamental art and particularly sculpture. This collection and the classes of Professor Enrico Butti (1837–1932) were particularly attractive to Sciortino. Enrico Butti was considered to be among the best among Italian sculptors when in 1893 he became a professor at the Brera Academy of Sculpture where he kept this Chair until 1913. His works in classical monumental sculpture are still cited among the best works in Italy. At a later stage in his career his works show the influence of the *verismo* and *realismo* popular in the last decades of the 19th century. It can be claimed that at this point Francesco Saverio was a mature young artist who had already developed a keen sense of his worth and was making concrete plans about his future.

The implication of his decision to study at Brera under Enrico Butti was a significant re-orientation as he was now focusing on monumental art rather than decorative art, as was his original choice. By 1902 his brother Antonio was already in his second year, and making an impact as a student of monumental art. Was he influenced by his brother's achievements or given his own successes he taught that he can make the grade to a monumental artist? The reason behind this late re-orientation may have had a bearing to his decision later on to move towards the Americas, beyond the limitations of a small island attracted by the booming Canadian economy of the 1920's.



During this period he was commissioned from Malta to do several works including two lanterns for the confraternity of Saint Peter and Saint Paul of Nadur for which he received a certificate of merit from the Society of Arts Manufacturers and Commerce.⁴⁶ He was also working on a monument to Marquis Giuseppe Scicluna situated at the Maglio Gardens in Floriana. This last commission was acquired thanks to his influential friends at the Daily Malta Chronicle.

Marquis Giuseppe Scicluna, 1904, Floriana, Malta



Main Vault, Basilica of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Nadur, Gozo

The first Malta phase

After one year at Brera he returned to Malta where he was employed as a part-time teacher in design and modelling at the Government secondary schools of Cospicua, Floriana and Hamrun. He did not like the rigid art curricula and soon resigned the post because the teaching went against his expressionistic training whereby students are encouraged to express nature as they see it at that point in time.

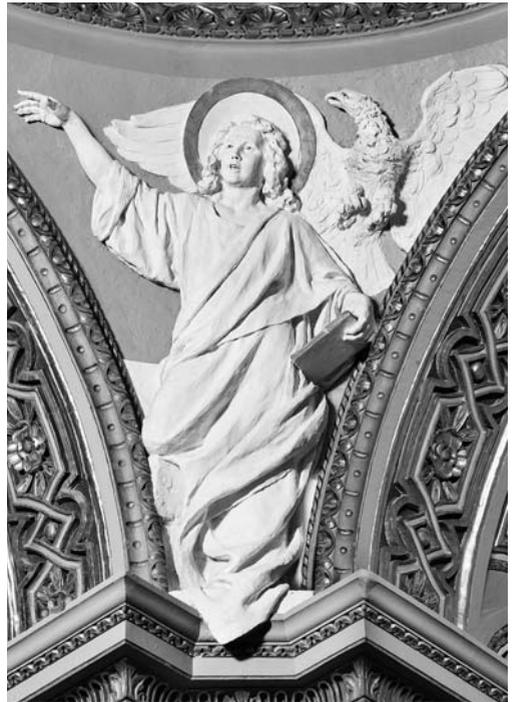
The Nadur Project

In 1904 at the age of 27 he received a letter from his friend Dun Martin Camilleri asking him to consider taking on a major project. It consisted of the reconstruction, enlargement and embellishment of the Nadur Basilica. This early work was to be his largest architectural commission and will perhaps remain the one synonymous with him among his compatriots. This commission came about as a result of his acquaintance during his studies in Rome with Rev. Father Martinu Camilleri.⁴⁷ Rev. Camilleri was also studying Canon Law in Rome at the Università Pontificia Gregoriana and lodging together with Sciortino at Prati di Castello.⁴⁸ They were next door neighbours and

often spent their leisure time together visiting many of the splendid churches in Rome. Francesco Saverio took it upon himself to guide the young priest amongst the Roman artistic landscape. This must have left a lasting impact as later, during the commissioning phase, Dun Martin in simple words asked Francesco Saverio to enlarge his home town Church “like one of those we have visited together in Rome”. He also told him that this church must be unique for the islands. Dun Martin, knowing about Sciortino’s abilities took the risk and asked him directly to submit the plans for the whole project. Rev. Camilleri who hailed from Nadur had already introduced Sciortino to the Nadur Parish while they were still in Rome. This occurred by means of the commissioning of the two lanterns for the Confraternity of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Dun Martin could only pay for the plans once the actual construction begun! For the rest of the project he could only rely on his trust in God.⁴⁹ Sciortino agreed to these terms.

This baptism of fire consisted of an extension of the church which included the replacement of the old baroque façade with a new one, the building of new naves and a dome. After taking the necessary measurements and having studied all the options he was happy to produce twelve detailed plans from all the possible sections. It took him three months of intensive work in his house at 9, Mamo Street Ħaż-Żebbuġ.

Initially not everyone was happy with the plans. The sceptics did not take these elaborate detailed plans as a sign of professionalism but saw a profiteering motive while they still claimed that it was an impossible task. The dome was singled out for criticism because no one had ever seen anything like it. This dome was an innovation in our local architectural landscape making use of the pointed arch (the long axis of an ellipse) to transfer the weight onto the vertical axis and thus allowing an elongated dome to dominate the external appearance of the church. This was a particularly elegant solution because Sciortino was restricted by the available footprint of the older structure. A hemispherical dome would be an understatement in an enlarged Church. His solution verticalised the Church making an unmistakable presence on the landscape while he showered the interior with a greater amount of light through the elongated large windows. In addition, the latter decreased the weight of the whole structure. The alternative hemispherical dome would require considerable buttressing which would obscure the already diminished cupola even more. It took all of Dun Martin’s authority to proceed. At the end, Sciortino felt vindicated by making the claim that not a single stone had to be removed and thrown away. This achievement was also due to his patience by making actual size drawings on the walls of the old oratory beside the church so that the stone masons could simply visualise each element and take all the measurements directly from the drawing!⁵⁰ The first stone of the dome was laid down in 1907 by the Parish Priest Canon Giovanni Curmi, uncle of Dun Martin and the whole project was finished by 1914.



Four Evangelists, 1906, Church of Saint Dominic, Valletta

Before the reconstruction, Sciortino described the interior of the old church as a modest mixed arrangement based on the classical Vignola orders. Its pilasters were excessively short and the ornamental sculpture was bulky and in bad taste. For the reconstruction Sciortino chose to use the 1600 renaissance classical style to harmonise the church with his new naves. During the second phase of the works, (the works on the naves) and after changing the stone mason three times it was completed by 1951. To maintain the desired quality of work, he took it upon himself to sculpture the first templates for the ornate elements.

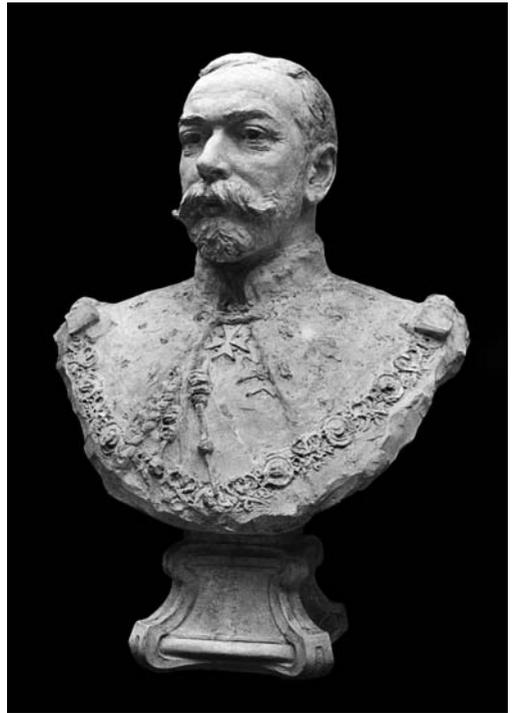
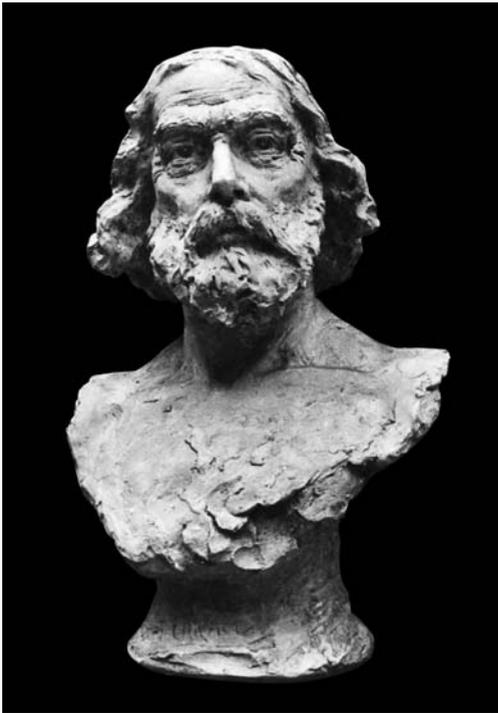
Before leaving for Canada works on the façade was still at the level of the cornice above the arch. When he came back from Canada, this time as an old man, he designed the Cantoria or singing gallery.

Other works of this period

His many private and public commissions included funerary monuments particularly the ones for Sir Temi Zammit (microbiologist), Fr. Emmanuel Magri (archaeologist), and the noble families of Apap Testaferrata (1905) and Navarro (1906), and sacred art commissions such as high reliefs of the prophets in the Domenican church of Valletta (1905), the marble bust of Archpriest Xuereb in Mosta Parish Church (1908). The four evangelists in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament and other ornamental work in the Church of the Dominicans at Valletta (1909) and the base relief panels of the side chapels of the Collegiate Church of Saint Paul in Valletta are all from the same period. As often happens Sciortino was criticised in the press, this time for unfair competition by means of insiders helping him in acquiring the commissions for the six silver statues intended to decorate the main altar during the Feast of Saint Philip. We find him answering in kind, giving details of the arrangements with the notorious Cellini and defending his reputation against the presumed authors of the article, a certain Spampinato and Archpriest A. Dalli of the Parish of his home town, Haż-Żebbuġ.⁵¹ Here he asserts his status as that of a professional figurative artist. This controversy must have stalled the project for years as the works were cast only in the fifties.

During this time and later on in life he was teaching modelling to members of the Art Amateurs Association, he also gave private lessons as he did later when he emigrated to Canada.

In 1911 he was entrusted with the organization of the Maltese stand in The Coronation Exhibition on the occasion of the coronation of King George V. It was held at the



Permanent Smile, Fun, Old Actor and King George V, 1911, Coronation Exhibition, London



Isaiah and Moses, 1904, Church of Saint Domenic, Valletta

Crystal Palace in London. The exhibition was meant to be a showcase about each participant country's artistic and artisan output. The Maltese pavilion was to project the country characteristics and folklore.⁵² His contribution consisted of six statues and nine busts displaying various folkloristic themes. He may have even displayed the famous statue *'Dames de Ile du Malte'* dated to 1906.⁵³

During this period of time he worked in two important Parish Churches in Valletta. In Saint Domenic Church he was commissioned by Majister Portelli (who later became a Bishop) to make two reliefs of Moses and Isaiah beneath the organ in the chapel of the Holy Sacrament and four reliefs representing the Evangelists and four Cherubs. In the Church of Saint Paul he was commissioned to decorate the Chapel of Saint Michael by means of four Cherubs and two reliefs. One which represented Moses being shown the Promised Land from Mount Pisgah and the other representing Jacob's fight with the Angel. Francesco Saverio also made two reliefs for the Chapel of Saint Crispin representing the Holy Family and Jesus disputing the doctors in the temple.

In Vittoriosa, in the Church of the Annunciation, he made 24 Cherubs on the windows and two prophets under the organ all of which were destroyed during the bombing of the Second World War.



Moses and Jacob, 1913, Church of Saint Paul Shipwreck, Valletta

The Canada Years

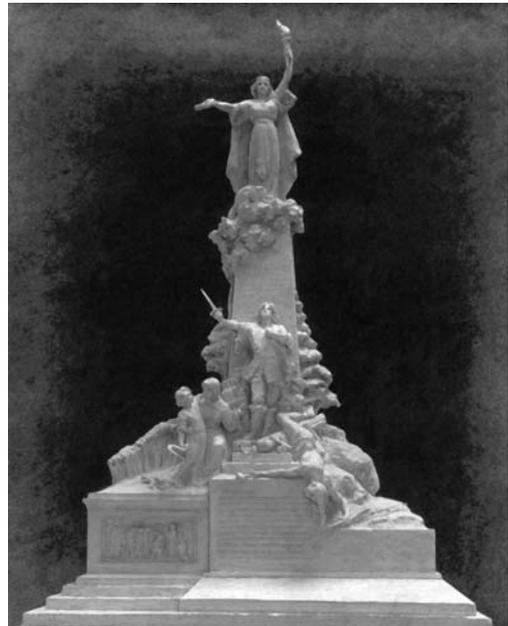
By 1914 the artist, now approaching 40 years made a bold decision to look for greener pastures abroad by sailing to Canada. A personal communication from his son states that while Sciortino was working in Cuba, the Canadian ambassador Emile de Vaillancourt befriended him suggesting to seek work in Canada. The stated reason for his departure from Malta is attributed to the meagre artistic environment in Malta.⁵⁴ This was likely to be the case, especially when one compares what the Islands had to offer him and the monumental works and successes that his brother Antonio had already achieved from his studios in Rome. There is no evidence that Frangisk Saverju was not busy enough with small and medium sized work, but his apparent ambition for monumental works was simply not available to him in Malta. Returning to Rome, after 11 years to set up shop, was not really an option for several obvious reasons, therefore he must have taken the opportunity of a lifetime and leave for the Americas even when his Nadur project was still in its final stages. He was probably also in contact with the international network of artists which were moving from the old continent during and after the First World War.

Canada was the promised land of those days. He became part of the huge immigrant wave which was emigrating from Europe looking for better economic opportunities, like many other European immigrant artists like Guido Casini (1892–1956) and Italo Balboni (1860–1947) both of whom were to work and compete with him in Canada.⁵⁵ In Canada he was very busy working all the time and perhaps better paid for all kinds of works. He was constantly on the move but eventually settled in the city of Montreal where he set up his studios and was also teaching privately whenever this was possible. In ten years he changed his postal address four times.⁵⁶ Initially most of his work was subcontracted from local artists like Guido Nincerì (1855–1973) and his family, also immigrants but who had already dominated the market. Sciortino has worked with Nincerì at the Saint Leon de Westmount Church.⁶⁰ Besides the expected difficulties of an emigree, life was not easy for the newly arrived artists. Other local artists tried to ridicule the newly arrived like with the case of Bolboni and Sciortino who were amongst their victims.⁵⁷ On the other hand Sciortino was given good to modest reviews.^{58,59}

In 1918 he submitted a proposal for a monument to Dollard, the legendary French soldier of New France. This was an attempt to revive French Canadian nationalist narrative. He was competing with the dominant artists of the day such as Luis Philippe Hebert and Alfred Laliberte. His proposal did not achieve much acclaim.⁶¹ It consisted of Dollard, the hero perched on top of four columns. According to his notes he seems to have submitted a second version a year later, this time for a monument in Montreal, Lafontaine which he named ‘The sacrifice of Dollard’.



Project for Monument to *Adam Dollard*, 1914-1918, Montreal, Canada



He took these competitions seriously and at least on one occasion, he took to task the organisers of a competition for the monument of Dollard des Ormeaux. Apparently they did not follow the procedures as understood by the participating artists and he was one of the most vociferous protesters.⁶²

He exhibited in the Spring Exhibitions of the Art Association of Montreal in 1915, 1916, 1918, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1924, 1925 and 1927 with the following works.

- 1915 Dame de L' Ile du Malte and Fountain sketch and detail.
- 1916 Sculpture of Mgr. Archambeault and of His Majesty Edward VII when he was awarded a prize of \$100 for the latter.
- 1918 Sculpture of Montreal to Adam Dollard des Ormeaux.
(An international competition postponed because of the war)
- 1920 Plaster Cast Aurora and a Plaster Cast of a base relief portrait.
- 1921 Views of a Cemetery Monument to Sir Wilfred Laurier. Plain pencil drawings.
- 1922 Relief. Sacrifice of Aaron and Sculpture Cain and Abel.
Weight of Dissolution – R. Canadian Academy.
- 1923 Relief panels. At the Sepulcher
Contemplation of the Cross
Towards Jerusalem
Consolations
- 1924 Sculpture. Fragment of a Church memorial. Won him \$50.
- 1925 Col. Plaster. Jason from sketches by Percy E. Nobbs.
- 1927 Sculpture. Tabernacle Saint Catherine's Church.
Unknown – Veteran Actor

He also regularly exhibited in the Royal Canadian Academy of Art and was elected as an Associate of the Academy in 1922. The reviews describe a number of works he exhibited in its 46th exhibition. These included Weight of Dissolution, a Detail from a Fountain, permanent Smile, and Dames de L' Ile de Malte. There is also reference to works like Prophet Moses and Prophet Isaiah, The Guardian and a monument to the Canadian heroes who died in the First Great War. About some of these works we only know of their existence. Soon after, in 1924 at the age of 49 he married Marguerite Grenier widow of Armand Daoust from whom he had a son, Joseph, born in 1930.

In 1935 he was commissioned to model the fourteen Stations of the Cross at the Saint Leon Church, Westmount, Quebec. He also executed the doors to the two confessionals and of the altar rail doors. In this particular case he worked in collaboration with Guido



Detail in stone, 1920, Londone Globe and
Liverpool Insurance, Montreal, Canada



Sierra Fountain, 1916, Montreal, Canada



Saint Bartholomew, 1920, Montreal, Canada



Motherhood, 1931, Toronto, Canada

Nincheri (1885–1973) who was responsible for the whole project. Guido considered this decoration project as his lifetime masterpiece. The Church is now regarded by Department of Canadian Heritage as a “National Historical Site”. Sciortino was specifically chosen because he was an able colleague of Nincheri from the Academy of Fine Arts.⁶³

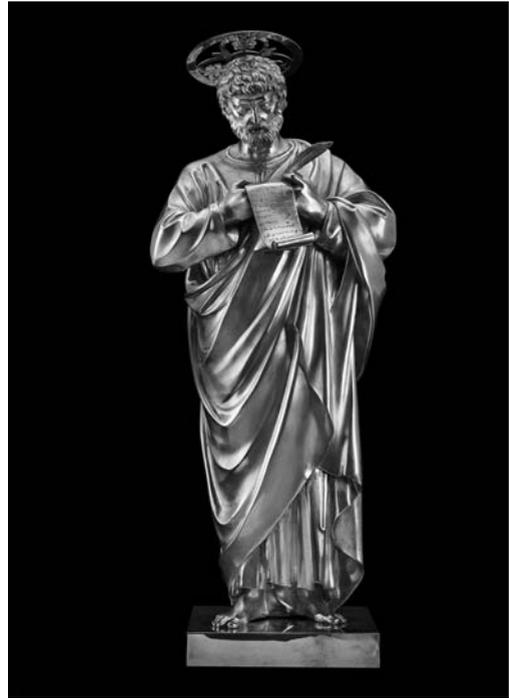
Virtually nothing is known about his activities in the USA except for the works listed in appendix section and the works in Massena, New York where you can find Saint Louis Gonzaga, Saint Anne, Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Agnes. He was certainly working in Malone and also in New York where he enrolled in the Union of Sculptors and Modellers which was an important recognition as well as a source of commissions. For eighteen months he worked in Boston on a large decorative contract with twenty five other sculptors. During an earlier period of time he spent two years working in Havana, Cuba, but little else is know about this period of his artistic life.

The three year period between 1934 and 1936 were difficult years for Frangisk Saverju because of the great depression years of the 1930's. This meant that most of the rich customers who patronized his works suddenly lost their wealth in the 1929–1932 Wall Street Stock Market crash. It created a wave of panic leading to the global economic great depression lasting the whole decade. He had to travel back again to Canada, this time he settled for a while in Toronto at 19, Queen's Avenue, Mimico before moving again to Montreal. During that period Mimico was in the middle of a building boom, however the recession reached the area too. People had little money to spare on art and in Toronto he ended up working in a foundry. Soon after it started working on military parts rather than art commissions. This was the result of the re-armament because of the impending Second World War. True to himself, even in this dire situation he concluded that this work, was not for an artist and he preferred to leave.

In 1938 while still in Canada, Sciortino was commissioned to work on a large project in Italy which took him more than a year to complete. During this time he asked his wife to travel and meet him in Malta. When they arrived he was still engaged on the project. Soon after he arrived home, the Second World War broke out and they were held in Malta until 1944 -5 by which time he felt that now it's too late for him to travel.

Back home

Despite problems with his eyesight and the turmoil immediately following the war he managed to keep a busy schedule. At the age of sixty five he set up a shop in Birkirkara



The Four Appostiles SS. Jacob, Jude, Bartholomew and Andrew , cast in silver, 1953, Church of Saint Philip of Agira, Haż-Żebbuġ, Malta

at 54 Valley Road, where he had his house and studio. From there he was commissioned to do several ecclesiastical works which were to prove to be his last but not necessarily his best works.

During the war years he hardly produced anything. Soon after the defeat of the Axis forces in the Mediterranean he took the opportunity to write to the Lieutenant Governor D Campbell.⁶⁴ In this letter dated March the 12th he asked to “be employed, even for a short time” in the “reconstruction work of valuable wooden groups and other valuable frames that are very badly damaged by enemy action”. In the letter he expressed his concern that his brother Antonio was the head of the said Department and that this might “create a certain unpleasantness having two brothers employed in the same department”. In the letter he defended himself that “it is very unfortunate that two brothers should have the same profession and therefore one has to remain idle.” For this purpose the Government already had planned a certain expenditure on restoration works in its estimates under War Expenditure. After considerable deliberation about the procedure, the works to be restored and the availability of materials for restoration he was given a commission of £150. After the identification of seven groups and statues to be restored, the whole project was approved in November 1943.

1. Wooden Group at the Ricasoli Chapel at the Addolorata Cemetery
2. Wooden statue of Saint Luke by Gafa Museum of Fine Arts
3. Fifteenth Century statue of Saint John formerly in the Grand Carrack of the Order of Saint John at Saint John's Co-Cathedral
4. Fifteen/Fourteen Century Crucifix at Saint Paul's Grotto Rabat
5. Two wooden Seventeenth Century statues of Roman Centurions at the Museum of Fine Arts
6. Two wooden Seventeenth Century wooden statues of shepherds at the Museum of Fine Arts
7. A marble bust of Queen Victoria by John Jones at the Museum of Fine Arts

His home town Parish did not fail to notice his comeback and the *procuratore* of the Feast of Saint Philip, Dun Salv. Zammit reviewed the project of the four plaster models of the Apostles. This commission stirred considerable local controversy as one can surmise from the published correspondence. After 20 years and due approval by the Vatican Art Commission, these were cast in 1953 and to this day decorate the main altar during the feast of Saint Philip of Agira.⁶⁵

For the same parish he was asked to prepare the design of the whole assembly of decorative works for the project of Saint Philip's *bradella* (pedestal). It took him one whole year of painstaking research until he submitted the designs.⁶⁶ It consisted of four



Aspects from the Life of Saint Philip of Agina, cast in bronze and plated in silver, 1946, Church of Saint Philip, Haż-Żebbuġ, Malta



Aspects from the Life of Saint Philip of Agira, cast in bronze and plated in silver, 1946, Church of Saint Philip, Haż-Żebbuġ, Malta

large and eight smaller base relief panels and the ornamental decorative elements all cast in bronze and plated in silver.

Soon after he executed the bronze funerary monument for the grave of Dun Philip Scerri who was his cousin and also personally involved in the project described above. He also designed the old niche for the statue of Saint Philip. Of particular note one can see his version of the Saint's emblem. During this period he also designed the marble floor scheme for the whole church. A proposed design of the main altar bronze gates was not executed by Sciortino.

In 1945 he was asked again by the Nadurin to design the stone statue of Faith, Hope and Charity for the façade of their Basilica of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. Later on in 1949 he was asked to design the organ balcony. It consisted of an assembly of reliefs representing thirty angels which depict Music, Singing, Prayer, Faith and Glory. The last recorded work to date is the base relief of Christ with the cross that embellishes the Sciortino family grave also at the Sacred Heart Cemetery of Ħaż-Żebbuġ. A year before, in 1949, his brother Antonio passed away and was buried in the same grave. In the same year he modeled the tabernacle of the Sacrament Chapel at the Birkirkara Bazilika on the design of Giuseppe Briffa. It was then cast in silver.⁶⁷



Organ Gallery, Basilica of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Nadur, Gozo



Organ Gallery, detail, Basilica of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Nadur, Gozo

In 1954 at the age of almost 80 years he and his wife were persuaded to go back to Canada to join his son Joseph who had already settled there.⁶⁸ Unfortunately his slowly deteriorating eyesight got so bad that it precluded him from doing any more work.⁶⁹ In his last years he retired to the small town of Oka, 50 kilometers out of Montreal on the banks of Lake of Saint Louis where he passed his last days enjoying the natural beauty of the surrounding landscape. He passed away at his home on the 1st of September 1958 and is buried in the cemetery of the same town.

He is recorded as an intensely personal man with a humble disposition. He was fluent in five languages and kept abreast of the literature on many subjects close to his heart. His loyalty to his artistic persona never dwindled, preferring to move and make further personal sacrifices rather than give up.

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- ² Ibid December 20th, 2005
- ³ Death Certificate of Antonio Sciortino Public Registry Valletta.
- ⁴ 1880 electoral list.
- ⁵ The only means of transport was the train with its nearest station being at Attard.
- ⁶ Francesco Sciortino LLD, Appointed Deputy Registrar Superior Courts. Bluebook 1892 page H26. National Archives, Rabat Malta.
- ⁷ The Hon Adolfo Sciortino, Receiver General and later Auditor General Bluebook 1899 page H19 National Archives, Rabat Malta.
- ⁸ Giovanni Sciortino was elected in 1875 by 518 votes in The Council of Government of Malta. Bluebook 1879 page L3 National Archives, Rabat, Malta.
- ⁹ Bluebook National Archives, Rabat Malta 1879.
- ¹⁰ Written communication from Toni Cortis August 2006.
- ¹¹ Ibid.1879 page M127
- ¹² Joseph Cardona, TOM
- ¹³ Bluebook 1899 N3 National Archives, Rabat Malta.
- ¹⁴ Giuseppa Sciortino was Lazzaro's mother and Francesco's aunt.
- ¹⁵ Keith Sciberras, BA dissertation University of Malta April 1992.
- ¹⁶ Bluebook National Archives, Rabat Malta 1892, page H82.
- ¹⁷ Rafel Bonnici Cali , Lehen is-Sewwa Sat. 26th November, 1988.
- ¹⁸ Bluebook National Archives, Rabat Malta 1899 page H85.
- ¹⁹ A. J. Leaver, Antonio Sciortino – Malta's outstanding sculptor.
- ²⁰ Ibid 1899 page N3.
- ²¹ See Appendix A
- ²³ CSG 323/99 National Archives, Rabat Malta.
- ²⁴ There is conflicting evidence to date about whether FS Sciortino actually received the money or not.
- ²⁵ A sculpture from Ascoli-Piceno who was working in Sicily during that period of time.
- ²⁶ V. M. Pellegrini Francis Xavier Sciortino STOM November 16th 1980.
- ²⁷ Gabriel Pellegrini Treasures of Malta Volume V No 2 page 57.
- ²⁸ Luret Vella, Storja ta' Ħaż-Żebbuġ 1986 page 100.
- ²⁹ Keith Sciberras; Lazzaro Pisani as an ecclesiastical artist. Univ of Malta BA Dissertation April 1992. Page 15.
- ³⁰ Society of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce Committee. April 19th minutes 1894.
- ³¹ Society of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce Committee minutes. April 19th. 1894.
- ³² Ibid Committee Minutes 1896
- ³³ V. M. Pellegrini op. cit.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Mark Sagona, The designs of Abraham Gatt, Francesco Saverio Sciortino, Emmanuele Buhagiar and Guiseppa Galea for the churches of Gozo. BA dissertation 1999 page 50.
- ³⁶ Dr Giuseppe Mizzi a Public Notary later to become the editor of Malta.
- ³⁷ Dr Zaccharia Roncali LLD: a Maltese Judge and early author in the Maltese language the contributor in this pro British newspaper.
- ³⁸ V. M. Pellergrini op. cit.
- ³⁹ See Appendix B
- ⁴⁰ LGO 1900 323/99 National Archives Rabat Malta.

- ⁴¹ Presumably Cesare Aureli, 1842 – 1823. An important neoclassical sculptor from Rome.
- ⁴² Minutes of the 11th Council Meeting held on the 14th of May 1901 at the Palazzo Industriale. Archive of the Society of Arts Manufacturers and Commerce. Page 265
- ⁴³ Ibid page 267.
- ⁴⁴ Minutes SAMC, 10th October 1902.
- ⁴⁵ V. M. Pellegrini op. cit.
- ⁴⁶ Minutes SAMC February 18th, 1904.
- ⁴⁷ Personal Communication from his son Joseph August, 2006.
- ⁴⁸ Joseph Said, Dokument Storiku, In-Nadur, No 7, October 1987 page 6.
- ⁴⁹ Manuscript, handwritten by FS Sciortino dated August 1953 while he was still residing at 91, Valley Road Birkirkara.
- ⁵⁰ Manuscript Handwritten in Nadur Archives. Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Malta Taghna. September 19th, 1908.
- ⁵² V. M. Pellegrini op. cit.
- ⁵³ John P Portelli, L-Aħbar, Canadian Maltese Association, Based on an interview with Mr Joseph Sciortino.
- ⁵⁴ V. M. Pellegrini op. cit.
- ⁵⁵ Gerin, A. McLean, J. Public Art in Canada: Critical Perspectives
- ⁵⁶ Evelyn de R. McMann. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, formerly Art Association of Montreal. Spring Exhibitions 1880 – 1970. University of Toronto Press.
- ⁵⁷ A. Laliberte., Les Artistes de mon temps. (Monreal: Boreal Express, 1986), 130-131
- ⁵⁸ Wrenshall, A. S. The Art News, page 9, December 1st, 1923.
- ⁵⁹ American Art News. 40th Annual Exhibition of the Royal Canadian Vol 17 No 10 Deceber 1918, page 5.
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- ⁶¹ La Nigog, page 169-170, May 1918.
- ⁶² Odette Legendre. Alfred Laliberte. Mes Souvenirs. Les Editions du Boreal Express. 1978
- ⁶³ Maltais, Pierre *Saint-Léon de Westmount (1901-2001)*, Westmount, Paroisse Saint-Léon, 2000, ISBN 2-9806475-0-0
- ⁶⁴ LGO 1766 of 1943. National Archives, Rabat, Malta.
- ⁶⁵ Personal communication Rev. Salv. Caruana who was at the time taking over from the aging Rev Zammit as the procuratore of the Festa of Saint Philip.
- ⁶⁶ Personal communication from his son Joseph August 2006
- ⁶⁷ Kan. V Buhagiar, Tagħrif fuq il-Parrocċa Kolleġġjata Bażilika ta' Santa Liena 1984 page 4.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ John P. Portelli. op. cit.



A

PROF. ANTONIO
R. I. B. A.
SCULTORE.
- 1879 + 1947 -
MARIA SCIORTINO
· 1877 + 1955 ·

W

PROF. FRAN^{CO}. S.
A. R. C. A.
SCULTORE.
- 1875 + 1958 -
CRAZIA SCIORTINO
· 1880 + 1955 ·

Appendices

Appendix A – Note from Department of Education on CSG File

Honourable Chief Secretary;

Sciortino was one of the best apprentices in the Technical and Manual School, which he attended from October 1892 to January 1897. During that period he also attended the Class of Drawing in the Lyceum. When he left school, he proceeded to Rome to continue his art studies. Although not particularly gifted he is very industrious and painstaking. I am however informed that although he had pursued a five years course of studies in Malta, he repeated his course from the very beginning.

I think he deserves some sort of encouragement; but at the same time I feel bound to state that should Government decide on granting a subsidy to an apprentice in the Technical School to enable him to continue his studies abroad the person deserving such encouragement should be Emmanuele Xuereb, the young man who has been serving as assistant to Mr. V Cardona, the Headmaster of the Technical School.

Appendix B – Letter from Rome

Rome 8th March 1899.

I consider my duty to inform you of the results and profit in my studies here in Rome which I owe to the introduction you forwarded me before leaving Malta, as it enabled me to be admitted in several institutions above all the British Academy of Arts, which I regularly attend and in fact I am the only British subject who goes to the evening class.

From the Istituto di Belle Arti, I gained a Bronze Medal last year and a certificate, in the 'Scuola Serale Preparatoria alle Arti Ornamentali', a few days ago I was lucky in our examinations that I carried off a prize for proficiency conferred by the Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Industries; consisting in a Silver Medal; I was also awarded a cheque for Lt 100 from the Minister of Public Instruction for the same object.

Trusting you will be pleased with the result of my exertions to make my way in life.

*I remain,
Sir
Your Obrⁿ Servant*

Francesco Saverio Sciortino

*The Honourable
Sir Gerald Strickland
Count della Catena K.C.M.G.
Chief Secretary to Government.*

Appendix C – Known sculptures from this early period

1898	Study from life	Rome
1899	Drawing of a Rome Street	Rome
1901	Martyr of Saint Elmo	Rome
1902	Study from Life	Regio Ist. Rome
1900	Composition for a monument	Br. Acad. Rome
1898	Untitled	Regio Ist. Rome
1898	Ornamental Decoration	Regio Ist. Rome
1900	The Redeemer	Br. Acad. Rome
1903	Processional Lanterns	Rome
1904	St. Peter and St. Paul	Church of St. Philip, Ħaż-Żebbuġ
1900	St. Augustine, Cathedral of Hippo	Algeria
1903	Gen Grenfell. Governor Queen Victoria	Br. Acad. Rome

Appendix D – First Malta Period

1904	Moses and Isaiah	Church of St. Domenic, Valletta
	St. Dominic, relief	Church of St. Domenic, Valletta
	Marchese G. Scicluna	The Mall, Floriana
1905	Prayer in Distress	Navarro Tomb, Addolorata Cemetery
	Sacred Heart, relief	Siggiewi

1905	Giustizia	Apap Testaferrata Chapel, Addolorata
1906	Dame de l'Île de Malte	Paris Exhibition
	Four Evangelists	Church of St. Dominic, Valletta
	Sant Angelo	Church of St. Dominic, Valletta
1907	Charity, Liberty, Law and Justice	Torino
	Bozzetto per ponte	Torino
	In Nome di Gesù	Tal-Herba Church, B'Kara
	Sarcofago Sir Temi Zammit	Addolorata Cemetery
	Fr Manwel Magri	Addolorata Cemetery
1908	Bust Archpriest Xuereb	Mosta Parish Church
1909	Christ Redeemer	Luqa Parish Church
1911	Gozitan Girl	Coronation Exhibition
	Portrait	
	Permanent Smile	
	Pillow Fight	
	An Idea	
	King George	
	A Dream	
	Study from life	
	Untitled	
	Head from Life	
	The Sun	
	The Savior	
	The Star	
1912	M. P. Galea	Juventus Domus, Sliema
	Mr Ashfar	
	Maestro Buhagiar	
	Project for Malta Memorial to King Edward	
1913	Puttini	Church of St Paul Shipwreck, Valletta
1914	Nadur Parish Project	

Appendix E – Work identified in Canada

1914	Project for Dollard Monument	Competition
1915	The sacrifice of Dollard	Maybe as above
	Pro Patria	Halifax, Canada
1916	Marble Fountain	Montreal
1917	Faith and Hope	Ellenburg Cemetery, New York, U.S.A

1919	At the Sepulcher In the Streets of Jerusalem The last look at Cavalry The return home	St. Catherine Chapel, Montreal
1920	Relief B Archambault Relief on main altar Saint Bartholomew Decorative Panels Vision of ChristSaint	Joliette Cathedral, Montreal St. Michael Church, Montreal Montreal London Globe and Liverpool Ins. Catherine, Montreal
1921	Football and Industry Study and Music Boxing and Wrestling	St. Mary's University, Halifax St. Mary's University, Halifax St. Mary's University, Halifax
1922	Model for a monument	Sault Sainte Marie Ontario
1923	Aurora Model to a Poet Faith and Hope	
1928	Decorative Panels (bronze)	Ellenburg Cemetary, New York USA Sun Life Building, Montreal
1930	Fun	Royal Canadian Academy, Montreal
1932	John Cabot	Halifax
1937	Christoforo Colombo Frere Andre Mary Mother of God Jesus Christ Addolorata Christ the King	Montreal Montreal Montreal Montreal Saint Catherine Church, Montreal

Appendix F – Unattributed works

During this research the number of works attributed kept on growing. Many of these have been attributed on the basis of the local oral tradition. The effort to find documentary evidence backing these attributions goes beyond the scope of this publication.

Many have been mentioned in the text but may also include the Bradella of the Statue of Saint Paul, Valletta; Saint Joseph at Rabat; four apostles and the façade freeze at Rabat Saint Paul's Collegiate Church; Qalb ta' Ġesù at The Chapel of Conception at Wied Gerżuma and decorative statues at the façade of the Attard parish Church.



Rev. Fr. Philip Scerri Memorial, 1947, Sacred Heart of Jesus Cemetery, Haż-Żebbuġ, Malta