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roaring 20s at Kunsthaus Zürich

The Malta

artpaper. No:11

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Elisa Von Brockdorff, *Strategies*, limited edition signed photograph, 2020, exhibited at La Bottega Art Bistrot, 201 Merchants Street, Valletta, until 10 September



+

KENNETH ZAMMIT TABONA

OPINION

Should They Stay or Should They Go?

“Which public monuments can also be deemed to be works of art? And, should, calamitously, Queen Victoria be removed, what would we replace her with? Another man in a suit? There are far too many already.”

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LISA GWEN ANDREWS

Art after Lockdown



A detail from the first edition of Momentum at Casa Lucrezia, Isla, October 2019. Photo: Cyril Sancerreau

Plan B: Post-pandemic – the ‘new’ exhibition experience?

I don't buy into virtual experiences. Never have I watched a concert, dance piece, performance or even toured a museum or gallery online. Heck, I won't even read an e-book. Perhaps mine is an old school mentality, but I like to think of myself as one who enjoys authenticity.

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Manifesta 13
National Gallery, London
Paper Positions, Berlin
Athens Digital Arts Festival
The Museum of Cycladic Art,
Athens
The Parthenon Gallery, Athens

In this month's issue, we have optimistically included several articles that discuss our time now as 'post-pandemic', although in reality, it is not totally over yet. Whilst here in Malta we are trying to leave the episode behind us, returning to what we used to do before – including attending any art show on offer – the rest of the world does not look so rosy. In the meantime, however, artists and cultural institutions here and around the world are finding ways to keep themselves busy and assure audiences that they are 'alive and kicking'. An online Christies auction on the 10th of July raked in \$420.9 million in sales with live streaming, proving that, at least, the top end of the market isn't suffering, and the future of the world wide web will continue to prevail.

Lisa Gwen Andrews discusses the virtual experience of and how the pandemic has taught us how we need to stay connected; Margerita Pulè reviews the latest exhibition of photographs by Elisa Von Brockdorff in Valletta and interviews Maria Galea about her latest online project Artz ID, which aims to connect art professionals; Gabrielle Spiller reviews the Smoke and Mirrors exhibition at the Kunsthau Zürich, which celebrates the decade of the roaring 20s; and George Micallef Eynaud explores how Greek artists and cultural institutions are reacting to the COVID-19 crisis. Christine Xuereb Seidu discusses how international exhibitions have been bringing recognition to Ethiopian contemporary art within the last decade and Teodor Reljic talks about how Chinese museums have set the stage for the post-Covid art experience. Kenneth Zammit Tabona explains his reasons for which public monuments can be deemed to be works of

art, and why the statue of Queen Victoria should not be removed; whilst Konrad Buhagiar discusses how changing modes of representing the black female figure were instrumental in the evolution of modern art.

Dig in – there is lots to read inside. Do also keep an eye out for the launch of our website www.artpaper.press – coming soon!

We will be back with another issue of Artpaper in October 2020; until then if you would like to get in touch regarding editorial or advertising, contact us by email on info@artpaper.press, or call (+356) 9929 2488. You can follow Artpaper on Instagram and Facebook.

Lily Agius



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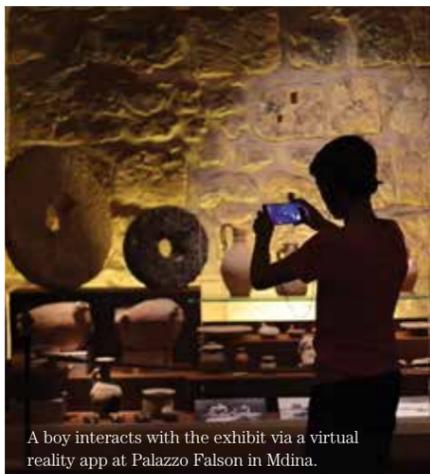
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A boy interacts with the exhibit via a virtual reality app at Palazzo Falson in Mdina.

Competition:

Collage by Bruce Eynaud

Go Figure! Can you guess the 3 artworks that make up this figure?
Send your answers by email to info@artpaper.press by 31 July 2020, with 'Competition' as the subject, for a chance to win:

First Prize: A month-pass to all Heritage Malta sites

Second Prize: €20 voucher from VeeGeeBee Art Shop



Winners from previous issue: (1) **Claudia Muscat** has won a month's pass to all Heritage Malta sites and (2) **Luigi Filletti** has won a €20 voucher from VeeGeeBee Art Shop

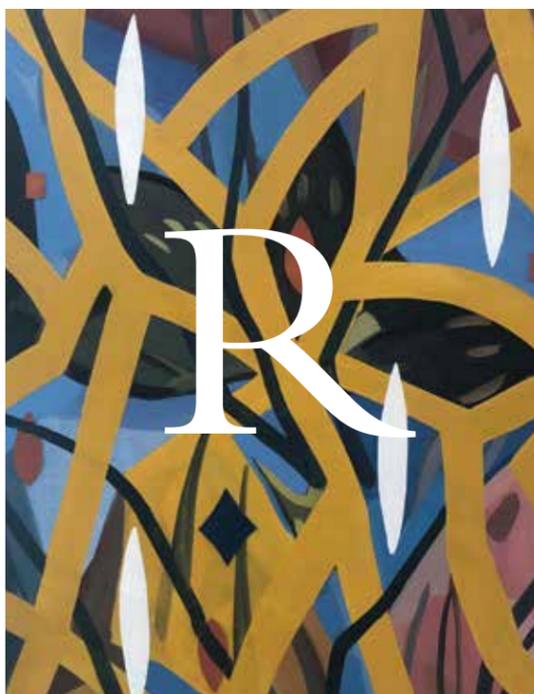
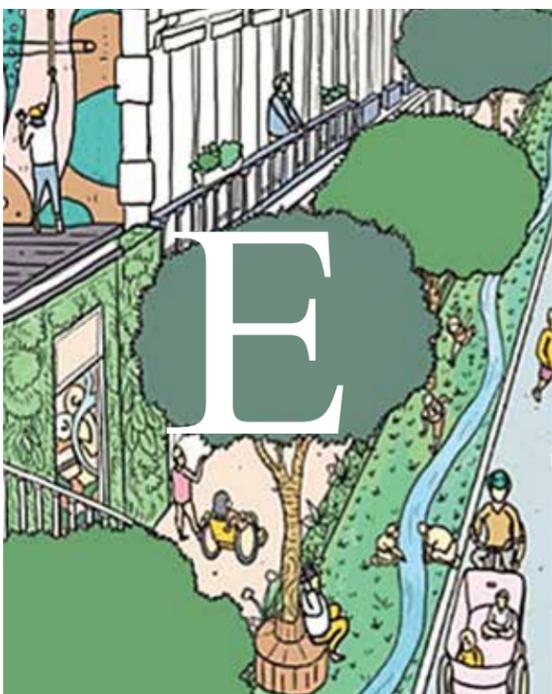
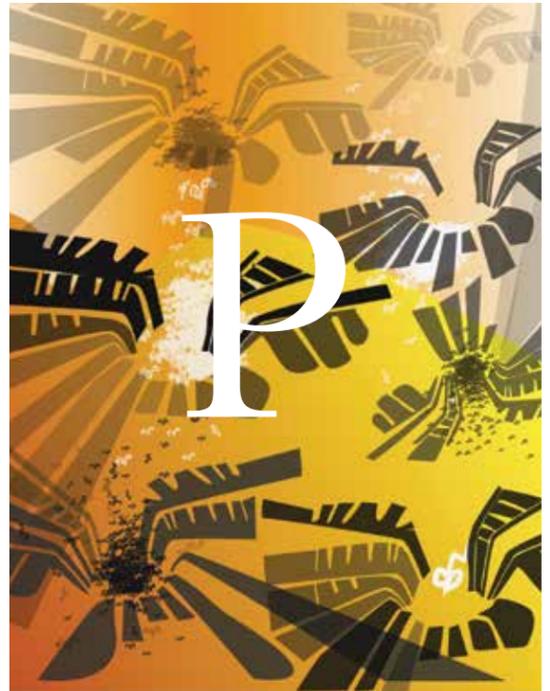
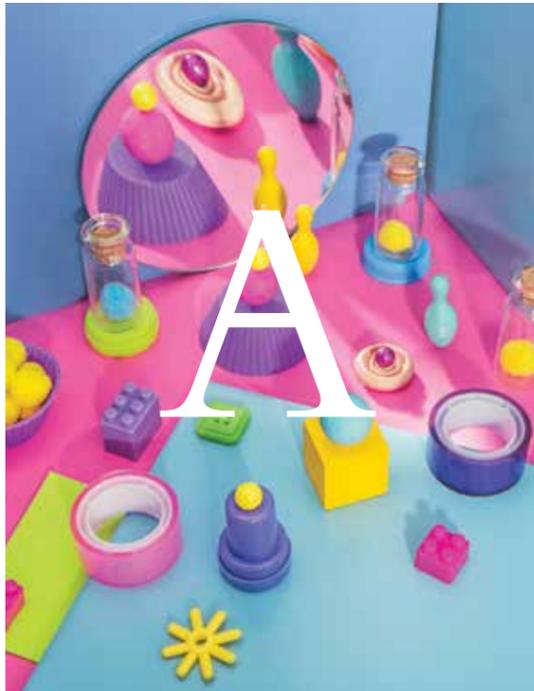
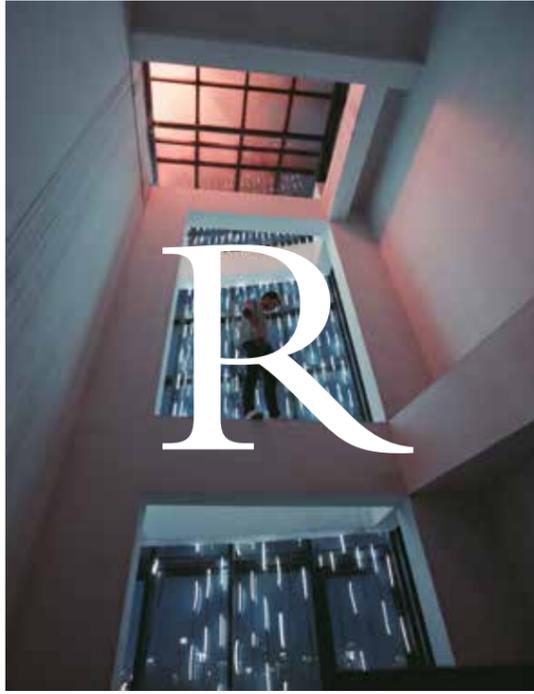
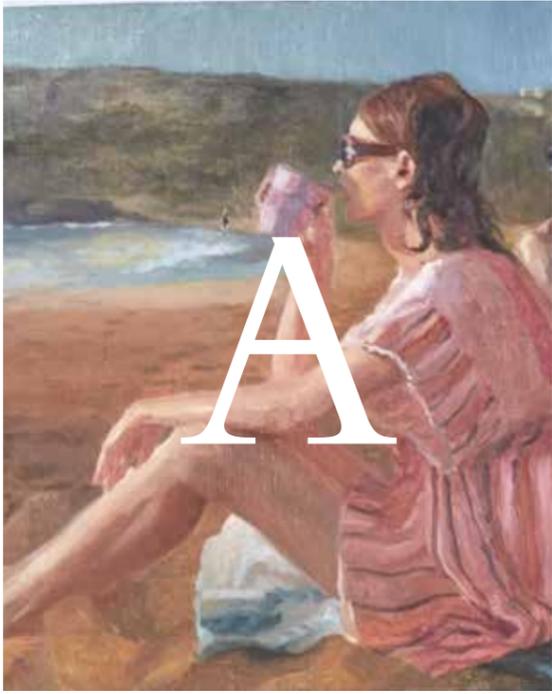


An exhibition dedicated to Colombian painter Botero at Seoul Arts Centre, South Korea
Ercos products are used to illuminate the paintings

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11

The Malta
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+ Art News / *On the Scene*
July - September '20

07.²⁰

+ **ON** *the* **SCENE.**

"For I had rather die in the adventure of noble achievements, than live in obscure and sluggish security."
Margaret Cavendish

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REVIEWS

01

The Mill's Anniversary

The Mill – Art, Culture and Crafts Centre celebrates its thirtieth anniversary this year. The late Gabriel Caruana, together with his wife Mary Rose Caruana, launched Malta's first contemporary art centre at The Mill in Birkirkara in June 1990, and the building (a scheduled Grade 1 building dating back to 1724), has long been home to exhibitions, classes, workshops and cultural activities. Since 2016, The Mill has been safeguarded and managed by the Gabriel Caruana Foundation, which continued to implement a creative and contemporary artistic programme.



The Mill exterior during the early 1990s. Photo from the Gabriel and Mary Rose Caruana Archive

Gabriel Caruana was a pioneer of modern art in Malta, drawing inspiration from popular art traditions and the architecture of the islands and working mostly, but certainly not exclusively, in ceramics.

www.gabrielcaruanafoundation.org

02

In Dark Times We Must Dream with Open Eyes



In Dark Times We Must Dream with Open Eyes, outside Blitz Valletta. ©Nico Vascellari & Blitz Valletta

Contemporary art space Blitz Valletta has embarked upon a public art project with Italian artist Nico Vascellari. The project takes the form of flags flown outside significant locations, manifesting a sense of unease with a proclaimed 'return to normal' and a neglect of the common-good principles and human rights. The flags symbolise solidarity and communicate hope and vision for the future.

The project's first chosen location is Old Bakery Street in Valletta, home to four organisations with a commitment to working with migrants, refugees, families with low income, and the homeless.

For the duration of the project, the general public and any interested groups are invited to purchase a flag, to hang it outside their building and to send a photograph with the street name to be included in a map that will be published on Blitz Valletta's website. Rome-based artist Nico Vascellari is also curator of the art space Codalunga in Vittorio Veneto, Treviso.

www.blitzvalletta.com

03

Uffizzi on TikTok

Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum and Madrid's Prado are among the few large museums on TikTok. But it is the Uffizzi Gallery in Florence that has caused the biggest stir, with irreverent videos made of images of some of its collection moving to the sound of pop music.



Image: Sandro Botticelli, 'The Birth of Venus (detail)', c. 1485

The video that garnered by far the most attention featured Botticelli's Spring, depicting Venus and her entourage to Todrick Hall's expletive-laden club track *Nails, Hair, Hips, Heels*, and jumping to parts of the Venus' body along with the song's lyrics. The clip is one of several on the Uffizzi's account depicting its collection of world-famous masterpieces as the museum attempts to attract younger audiences.

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MALTA

MATT THOMPSON

Commissions and discounted art for sale until the end of September

Matt Thompson is a photographer based between Malta and London, with a love of photographing people.

Graduating from the London College of Communication in 2009, Matt's clients include Saville Row Fashion designer Oswald Boateng, National dance company ŻfinMalta, online market place Etsy, The Guardian newspaper & UNICEF. His last personal project 'Helen's Story' was featured as a cover story in the Guardian's Sunday paper the Observer.

Matt has recently won an award to be exhibited this summer in France by the prestigious British Journal of Photography in collaboration with the historic Galerie Huit Arles, as part of OpenWalls 2020. Matt will also be presenting a solo show of unique

sculptural nudes entitled 'Passivation' this autumn on Malta.

Passionate about what he does, you can trust Matt will work with imagination, creativity and integrity on every private or commercial commission.

To explore his limited edition prints visit his online gallery at www.mattthompson.co.uk/galleryshop where Matt is offering his artworks at a 10 per cent discount until the end of September with the code 'Artpaper'.

For a chat about your photography needs you can contact Matt directly on (+356) 9936 3600 or by email on mail@matthompson.co.uk.



Actress Marama Corlett © Matt Thompson

EUROPE



A boy interacts with the exhibit via a virtual reality app at Palazzo Falson in Mdina.

Museums Re-opening

Many museums and art spaces around Malta and the rest of Europe have begun to re-open following closures to the public due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Heritage Malta recently announced the re-opening of its museums, offering free entry to many venues, while Spazju Kreattiv in Valletta and Palazzo Falson also announced their reopening. Performing arts venues are still facing uncertainty with regard to distancing directives, but visual art spaces, for now, appear to be re-opening cautiously.

Museums are also opening around Europe; in Italy, the Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel are welcoming visitors; while in London, Tate's four venues have announced re-opening at the end of July. The Prado Museum in Madrid has also re-opened with 'Reunited' – a large selection of its permanent collection, while the Louvre in Paris is also open to visitors.

All venues have implemented social distancing regulations, in line with local and regional guidelines.

MALTA

Violet Kulewska



Place of Seclusion No. II



Troodos Motifs

Painter and designer Violet Kulewska has issued a new body of work, combining vivid pictorial flatness with elaborate motif layers, using fabric cut-out reliefs and plumes of background colour. Kulewska's painting practice is pan-European in its influence, from the Polish fauvism in which she trained, to Levantine religious painting and Russian suprematism. She finds inspiration through an intense engagement with her subject matter, often through the study of natural phenomena under close studio observation. Her figurative painting shifts between intimate representation and abstraction while her design roots bring emphasis to the pleasure of form, shape and colour in oils. This new collection is vividly diagrammatic, using block colour symbol forms on a geometrically segmented canvas.

www.wiolettakulewska.com

The Malta Creative Collective

Founded in 2017, the Malta Creative Collective is an independent, purpose-led movement that brings together like-minded creatives based in or connected to Malta, with the aim of elevating the local creative community and visual literacy.

It counts some of the most talented and innovative creatives, organisations, and brands with connections to Malta as members, each sharing one thing in common with each other – an expression of excellence.

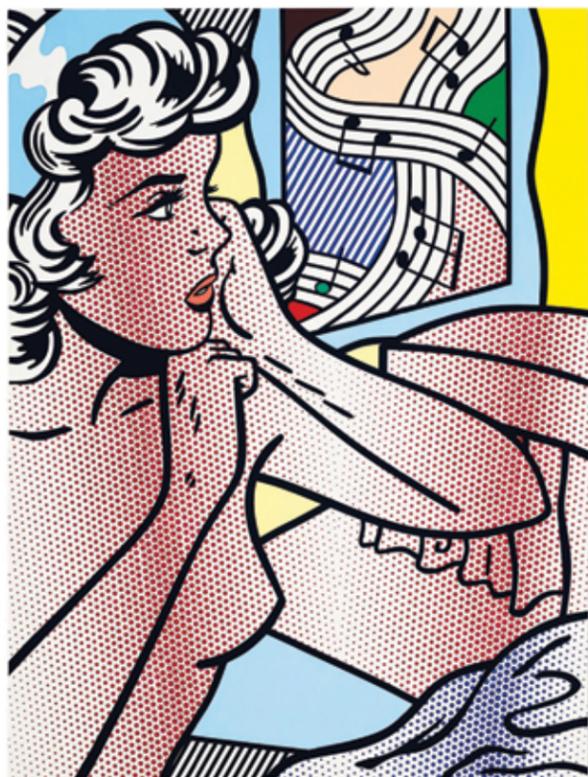
Since its inception, meet-ups and events have played a fundamental role in expressing its commitment to bringing the creative community closer together. From social gatherings to educational workshops and informative panels – both offline and online – its events are open to all and seek to create a positive, neutral, and welcoming space within which to share and exchange ideas.

To find out more or to become a Collective member, visit www.maltacreativecollective.com.



Photo: A Malta Creative Collective event. Photo: Maria Galea

ONLINE



Roy Lichtenstein, *Nude with Joyous Painting*, 1994, oil and magna on canvas. Property from an Important Private American Collection. Sold for: \$46,242,500 on 10 July 2020 at Christie's in New York

Christie's Hosts Online Relay Auction

Christie's Art Auctioneers have held their first live-streamed global relay auction, beginning in Hong Kong, covering eight time zones to include Paris and London, and finishing in New York. The event, titled ONE, used technology to replace the traditional physical auction model and achieve high-value global sales – the global auction replaced the company's live auctions of contemporary, Impressionist and modern art in New York and London. The event proved successful, netting \$420 million through the sales led by principal auctioneers in four cities.

"This hybrid-format concept sale is a way to adapt and innovate," commented Christie's chief executive officer, Guillaume Cerutti. "We wanted to stage something that accommodates the current situation and serves our clients wherever they are and however they wish to participate."

The top price of the ONE sale was achieved by *Nude with Joyous Painting* (1994), a late-career tour de force by Roy Lichtenstein, which realised \$46,242,500. Painted in Lichtenstein's signature 'Ben-day' dot style, the landmark canvas features a blonde American beauty alone in her bedroom, wearing nothing but a blue headband and red lipstick.

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MALTA

Teatru Manoel *Prepares to Re-open*

Along with other venues, Valletta's Teatru Manoel is preparing to welcome back its audiences. The theatre has kept its essence alive largely through innovative online initiatives, with a weekly *Streaming Series* sharing several operas, plays, musicals and concerts previously staged at the theatre. Alongside these online events, the *#StreamTalks* series saw cast and crew sharing their experiences of working on the productions. Theatre management also took advantage of the lockdown, by continuing maintenance and restoration works.

The theatre is currently accepting proposals for projects that can be staged whilst respecting COVID-19 restrictions.

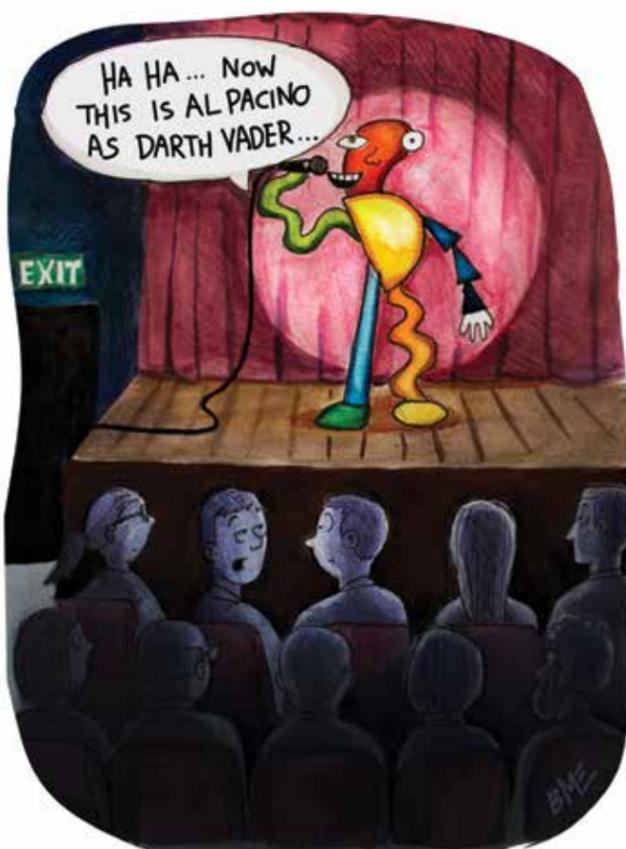
For more information visits
www.teatrumanoel.com.mt



APS Teatru Unplugged at Teatru Manoel. Photo: Shaun Spiteri

COMIC

BRUCE MICALLEF EYNAUD



"He's an abstract impressionist."

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ONLINE SOON!

FRANCE

Notre Dame Cathedral Spire

French President Emmanuel Macron has announced that the Notre Dame Cathedral Spire will be rebuilt as it was before it was destroyed in a fire in April 2019. The restoration has been the centre of some controversy, with some speculation that it would be built in a contemporary style, with the cathedral's chief architect Philippe Villeneuve speaking out strongly in favour of a restoration faithful to the previous, 19th Century design.



Image: The fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, 2019, via Wikicommons

The cathedral's first spire was built in the 13th Century, but due to extensive damage it was removed in the late 18th Century. Its replacement – designed by architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc – was built in the mid-19th Century, and was the spire that the world mourned when it was burnt down last year.

The spire is planned to be rebuilt in time for the Paris Olympics in 2024.

USA

Water Vapour Protest

The activist art project, In Plain Sight, has protested against US anti-immigration detention practices using sky-typing planes. On the weekend of 4 July – Independence Day – the protest, organised by Los Angeles-based performance artists Cassils and Rafa Esparza, sent the planes over sites including detention facilities, immigration courts, borders, sites of former internment camps and other landmarks. The messages, written in water vapour and visible for miles, included phrases such as 'STOP CRIMMIGRATION NOW', '#SHAME #DEFUND HATE', and 'NO MORE CAMPS'. Each message was chosen by an artist, many of whom have experienced either immigration detention or systemic violence, or have a personal connection to it in some way. The messages express solidarity with those housed in the – often overcrowded, unhealthy and unsanitary – detention centres themselves.

www.xmap.us



USA

James Murdoch Acquires Share of Art Basel's Parent Company



Art Basel in Basel, image Courtesy Art Basel

Lupa Systems, an investment company founded and run by James Murdoch – younger son of media mogul Rupert Murdoch – has acquired an anchor share in MCH Group, the Swiss company that owns Art Basel. Through the deal (due to be approved in August) Lupa Systems will acquire a one-third share in the company.

Art Basel has experienced some challenges following the cancellation of Art Basel Hong Kong and Art Basel in Switzerland in 2020 following to the Covid-19 epidemic, holding alternative online events. The 2020 and 2021 editions of its Baselworld watch fair – for years the company's highest-grossing event – have also been cancelled.

The investment will offer a cash-injection, as well as business and tech savvy and business experience to Art Basel's parent company.

Since its founding in 1970, Art Basel has grown to host art fairs in Basel, Switzerland; Miami Beach, Florida; and Hong Kong, and has become one of the world's most prestigious art fairs.



Q & A / Malta / Artzid
July - September '20

MALTA

Connecting the Creative Community

We talk to ARTZ ID founder and director Maria Galea about her vision for the future of the visual arts industry in Malta.

Maria Galea at The Malta Society of Arts.
Photo by Tarunima Sen Chandra



Artpaper: What is your role within the arts and how does your experience reflect it?

Maria Galea: I am not a big fan of titles – I never manage to fit into a specific role! However, if I had to define myself, I would say I am a creative entrepreneur. I have been selling art for the past 11 years – I started working in my family's framing business and commercial gallery, where I worked alongside interior designers and hoteliers on a day-to-day basis. But I started my professional career in the arts as an artist at a very young age, and I still exhibit my work internationally.

I opened my first gallery five years ago, aiming to help local artists exhibit their work on an international level. During our first year we exhibited works in New York, Miami and Dubai. That same year, we formed a partnership with hospitality company Iniala, opening a cluster of galleries and hosting up to two exhibitions a month.

My role within the arts allows me to connect artists with new networks and opportunities, helping them bring their work to market. I have always been conscious of a lack of infrastructure in the art market in Malta, and when I opened the galleries I realised that my role in the arts should take on a bigger purpose, contributing to the growth of the industry as a whole.

Artpaper: When did you come up with ARTZ ID and why?

MG: I was actually on the underground in London, travelling for work, when I

started thinking about ARTZ ID. It began with the idea of creating a space that acted as a support system for the arts industry. It was triggered by the struggles and experiences I went through both as an artist and gallerist. I had always wished for a space where I could find the feedback and advice I needed, but it didn't exist. Then I thought – why not create an online space that acts as a centralised network where people in the arts can connect, collaborate, get feedback and find new experiences? At the time, however, I was busy managing a cluster of galleries with ongoing exhibitions and projects. Then one fine day I realised that if I don't focus on this project it will never happen and so that's what I did. It was a very hard decision, but I followed my gut. I closed the galleries and dedicated a full year to researching and developing the first iteration, which will hopefully start evolving soon.

Artpaper: Who is ARTZ ID for?

MG: Whenever I speak about this project many refer to it as a platform for artists, but it is much, much more than that. It's a platform for professionals within the industry, which also includes artists. In Malta, the public has very little knowledge of how the art industry works because we don't really have a fully developed industry. Many art spaces are publicly managed, therefore the private-public creative industry is almost non-existent. ARTZ ID is aimed at firstly creating awareness about the community as a whole, which will attract art lovers and the general public to engage under a centralised platform. It was built specifically for identities and institutions within the arts to showcase their professional portfolio, connect with other professionals in their network and the public in general. So, it has a space for everyone. However, our main target audience is the visual arts community; which includes, artists, curators, critics, auctioneers, cultural managers and more.

Artpaper: What are your plans for the years ahead?

MG: Our journey has just started and will be a long one, but, so far, we are on the right track. For the first few weeks, we've been focused on actually building

the community and its members – promoting their work and their professional identity is the first step towards creating awareness of the community in general. We are currently working on strategies to create different support mechanisms for our community. In the near future, we will also have some events geared up that will act as workshops focused around professional development and business strategies.

Artpaper: Who are your collaborators and why are they important?

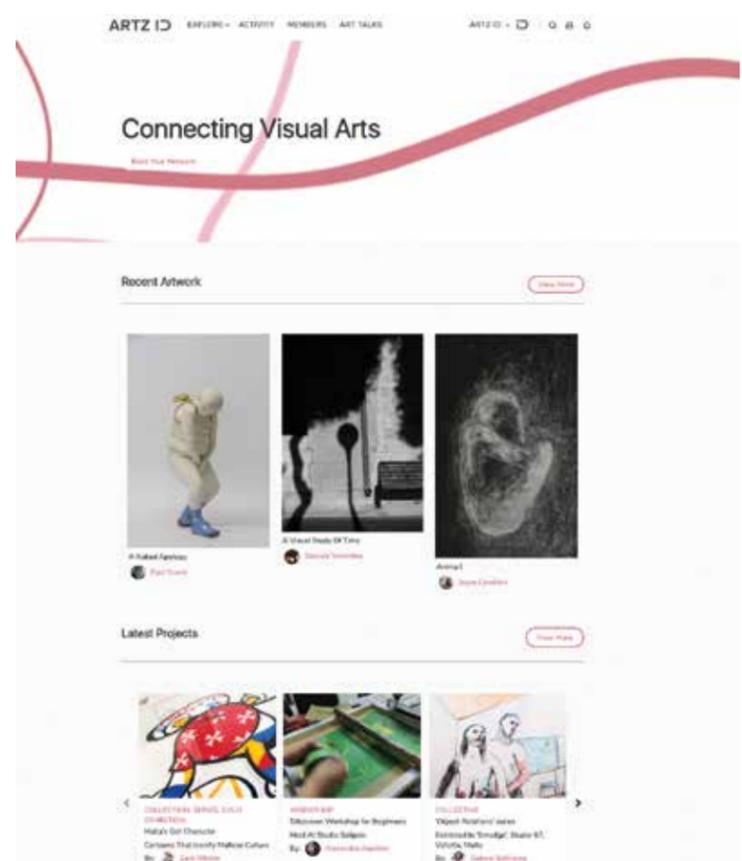
MG: We collaborate with both public and private entities as long as they add value to our community. Creating meaningful collaborations is at the core of what we do, as they create both engagement as well as new ways for our community to access networks. One thing I have learned along the way is that networks are possibly the most important elements in my professional career – they have allowed me to grow both locally and internationally. Creating the right networks and connections can open so many doors, and being a professional within the arts is never a straightforward path. Therefore, we believe our collaboration will help our community connect with the right networks of people, companies and audiences.

Artpaper: Why do you think something like this is beneficial in Malta?

MG: To begin with, our community is very fragmented – something that doesn't allow us to create impact and awareness amongst the public in general. Having a space which acts collectively is essential. An online art space is definitely the way to go, especially during the unique times we are living in. It creates accessibility, which again is something we haven't had in the past. Finally, I also believe that in the near future, ARTZ ID can act as another support system for the community, which is currently highly dependent on public funding. One of our goals is to create that balance and encourage a creative entrepreneurship mindset within the industry, as well as acting as a connecting point between the professional and the market place.

Artpaper: What is your main goal?

MG: I want to see our online creative community grow professionally and sustainably on a local and international level. Nothing less, nothing more. 📍



Q Interview / Malta / Anna Calleja
July - September '20

MALTA

MARGERITA PULÈ

Bright Young Thing

The pandemic has had an impact on all our lives, not least final-year art students. Their graduation is usually characterised by an intense period of preparation for the degree-show with which they'll make their mark on the public. Young graduate Anna Calleja was one such student – instead of spending her final months working towards a public show at the Falmouth School of Art, she found herself back in Malta, working towards a virtual exhibition.

Undeterred, however, she used her time productively. With a determination that comes from youth, she has since created a strong body of work for her degree show, is working towards a solo show at the Mal-

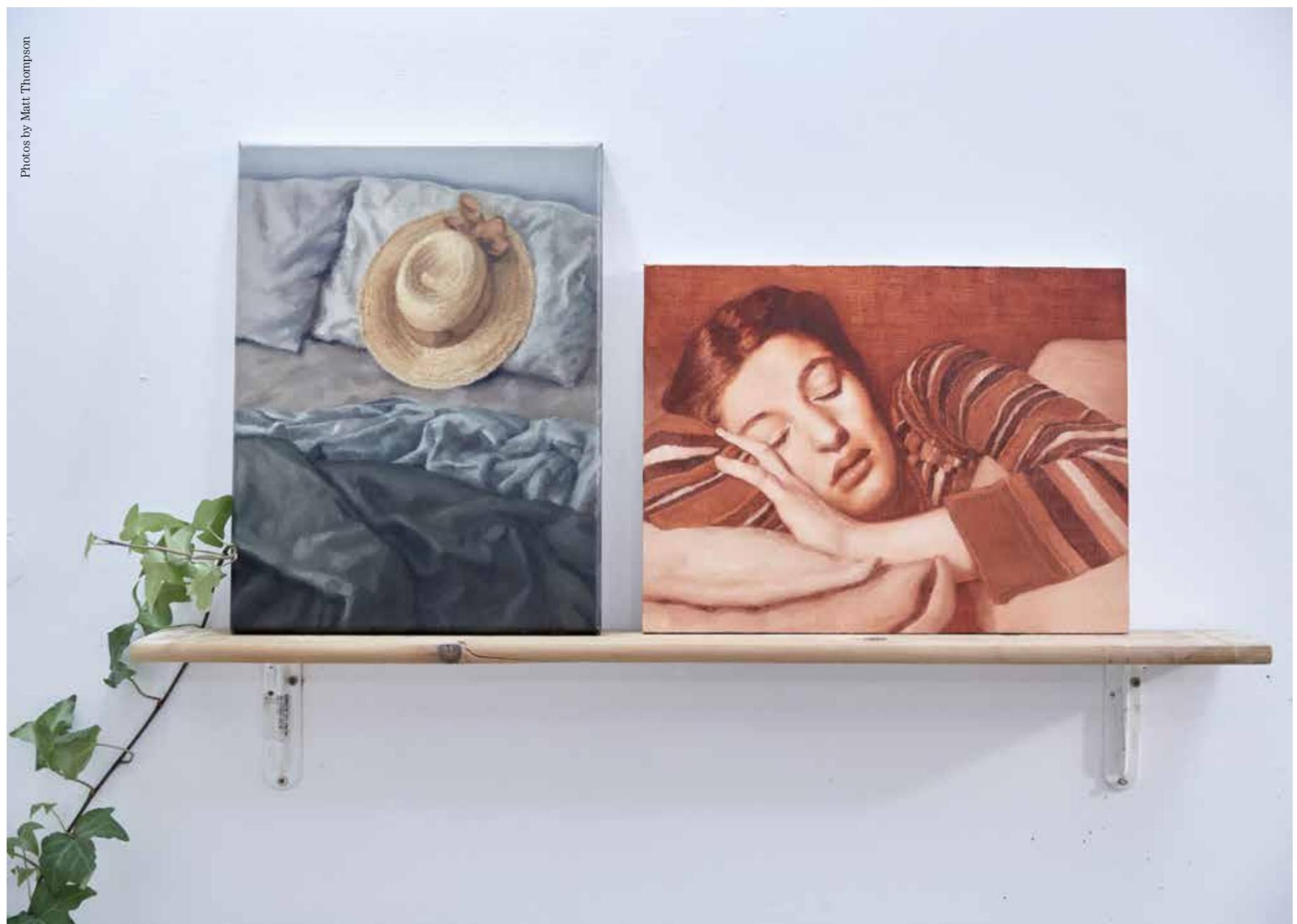
ta Society of Arts in March 2021, and, in June, won ARTZ ID's Young Emerging Artist Call.

Although she works in various materials and has experimented with installation, printing and three-dimensional work, Calleja's current practice sees her working mainly in oils, on relatively small, realist works. Her intense domestic scenes, reveal a sense of quiet and melancholy that strangely suits this time, when the home has become so central to all our lives.

Sleeping figures, abandoned clothes, and household pets are depicted in a subdued palette and a natural light – there is a stillness around them that seems to suspend them in an eternal silent space. To Calleja, the scenes represent a passivity and a feeling of de-activation – an absence of movement and action – that is important in each one. So, a child's woolly jumper abandoned on a bed becomes a portrait of its absent wearer; a dog sleeping on a mat seems to be waiting to be called by its owner.

But while the works reflect an absence and a waiting, they are not disheartening – rather there is a tenderness in sleeping figures and a sense of vulnerability in their lack of awareness of the viewer.

Bodies – hands and feet - speak of the presence of their owners too; a pair of feet resting against the taps of a bath, is titled *Man in Bath* – in Calleja's work, the parts speak for the whole.



Photos by Matt Thompson

Q Interview / Malta / Anna Calleja
July - September '20

MARGERITA PULÈ is an artist, writer and curator, with a Master's Degree in Fine Arts, and founder of Unfinished Art Space. Her practice and research are concerned with the contradictions of politics and social realities.



MALTA

Calleja is comfortable with the fact that she has returned to painting. She tells me that following an intense period in the UK of experimenting with many different techniques, she found that painting best articulated what she had to say. Here she is not alone – as she herself points out, many of her fellow students have ‘returned’ to painting in an almost reverse-rebellion of contemporary art.

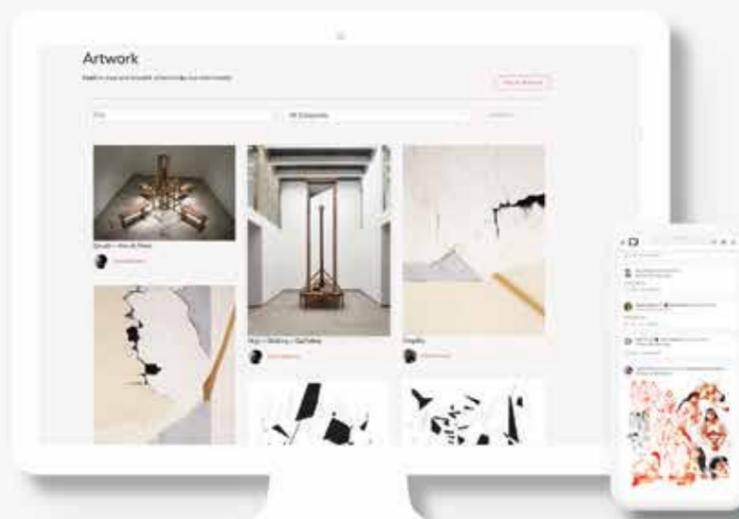
As a young artist, Calleja is at the beginning of her journey. Her practice is quietly mature and promises much more. Hopefully the introspection of recent months will provide her with the strength to follow her chosen path – we look forward to seeing how a bright talent unfolds. 🎨

Anna Calleja is winner of ARTZ ID's Young Emerging Artist Call in collaboration with Lily Agius Gallery, Artpaper, Intervisions and photo ink. Her solo show at the Malta Society of Arts will run from 4 - 25 March 2021 at the Malta Society of Arts.

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☆ Review / Malta / Little Things
July - September '20

MALTA

MARGERITA PULÈ

It's the Little Things in Life

The bright colours and almost plastic aesthetic of Elisa Von Brockdorff's work are familiar to many in Malta. But her deceptively simple, pop style hides a painstaking process and a meticulous attention to form that are not always obvious at first glance. Her new work takes the form of a homage to small items – although tiny, they have the potential to become something big, bright and beautiful.

The little things was born out of the restrictions of lockdown – with limited space and access to materials, Von Brockdorff turned to her practice for strength. What started out as a determination to keep working grew to become a compact body of work, offering a much-needed counterpoint to the seriousness of our times.

It's the little things that you miss – hugging a friend, or popping out to the shops – that only become important when you don't have them anymore. Similarly, tiny objects – chess pieces, marbles, clothes pegs and toys – take on a heightened significance. Upon imposed close inspection, they expand to take up space in our consciousness, and develop characters and meanings of their own. Placed meticulously within a highly stylised composition, they become important in their own right.

Those that are familiar with Von Brockdorff's work will notice a slight shift in dimensions however. This new collec-



Photo: Matt Thompson

tion includes the depth of a mirror, that reflects a distorted image, as well as a crisp line of light.

A further development from her usual work are some images containing water, and – notably – flowers and petals,

which create a textural and painterly quality. Her signature bright colours and tiny objects are still there, but the surface of the petals and the depth of the water mark a departure from her previous work.

However, even the more organic form of the petals – with a seemingly soft surface – is structured in its composition. It is clear that composition is always important in Von Brockdorff's work, as are balance, colour and texture, and the repetition of shapes which creates a rhythm within the image as a whole.

As she speaks about her work, Von Brockdorff compares her use and re-use of objects to the use of language – she's speaking through their placement and repetition, much as we use words to build sentences and meaning. Each object alone remains silent, but placed alongside others they form a secret narrative and a depth – both in space and in meaning.

Von Brockdorff speaks modestly about her work. She has a solitary way of working – a sort of thinking-through-doing that requires time, contemplation and meticulous placement. The lightness in this collection belies the monotony of lockdown with an intense appreciation for small details. She has participated in several group exhibitions over the past few years and has collaborated on many projects. She is now contemplating a larger solo show, but in the meantime, her new body of work at Bottega provides us with a glimpse of what's to come. 📍

The little things runs until 10 September at La Bottega, 201 Merchants Street, Valletta. For more information call +356 9929 2488 or view www.art-sy.com/lily-agius-gallery





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KENNETH ZAMMIT TABONA is Artistic Director of the Valletta International Baroque Festival and of Malta's Teatru Manoel. He is also one of Malta's best-known visual artists and illustrators.



MALTA

KENNETH ZAMMIT TABONA

Should They Stay or Should They Go?

When people are angry about a malaise like racism it is almost to be expected that statues of controversial figures like Leopold II of Belgium, notorious for the atrocities against the Congolese in the 19th century, should become targets on which irate demonstrators verging into mobs should vent their frustrations.

The brutal murder of George Floyd unleashed this backlash everywhere, with demonstrations being held internationally. The focus then shifted to monuments to public figures like Churchill and Baden Powell who were perceived to have any racist stain on their character. When you stop to think that George Washington owned slaves one is at a loss to explain when to stop.

The world has always been a cruel place. Much as we artists try to create a world of beauty to lift us out of our human bondage to greed and lust, it is very difficult to escape the fact that it is a dog-eat-dog world and minorities will sadly always be preyed upon and racism will continue unabated. Such is the way we are.

In sunny, happy Malta our connection with overt slavery ended with Napoleon who freed all the Barbary slaves that the Maltese corsairs dealt with as a regular above-board business in their raids all over the Mediterranean. Indeed by all accounts it was a lucrative trade; the first Count Preziosi created the lovely Villa Preziosi (Francia) in Lija on the proceeds of his astronomical profits in the slave trade.

Not to be left out of the latest trend, there is now a public outcry in Malta to remove Queen Victoria from her time-honoured place in front of the Biblioteca where she has presided over our lives, singularly unamused, since 1891 when the Valenti masterpiece wearing Maltese lace was placed - paid for by public subscription on the occasion of the Queen's golden jubilee. The ostensible reason as to why people now want the Widow of Windsor removed is that she symbolises colonialism, which is utter rubbish, as from the time when Dido ruled Carthage to 1964 Malta was always part of something else - usually Sicily from the Roman period till 1530, the Knights of St John till 1798 and after the two year Blockade, Great Britain.



The large Marble statue of Queen Victoria by Giuseppe Valente (1891) on Misrah Ir-Repubblika, in front of the National library in Valletta, Malta. Wikimedia Commons

Therefore, using the colonial excuse to get rid of a work of art does set a horrendously dangerous precedent, which if left unchecked may leave us with possibly just Hagar Qim!

But this is not the main reason for this essay.

Which public monuments can also be deemed to be works of art? And, should, calamitously, Queen Victoria be removed, what would we replace her with? Another man in a suit? There are far too many already.

There are, in Valletta - besides the wonderful Sciortino works on Great Siege Square and in the garden in front of the Phoenicia - the magnificent *Neptune* in the Palace Courtyard, the half-hidden monuments to Dante and grandmaster Vilhena and the totally hidden *Attardi Aeneas* in the Lower Barrakka. The statue of Sir Paul Boffa has artistic merit, but as we progress down the line we reach the level of competence without genius. There are the two composite monuments to events; *Sette Giugnio* and the execution of Dun Mikiel Scerri that are not exactly comparable to the

their palaces with wonderful statuary; amazing discoveries like the *Farnese Hercules*, the *Apollo of the Belvedere* and the *Laocoon* would influence sculptors for centuries.

In Malta our statuary was mostly religious as the Order was more Catholic than the popes and the cardinals and were untainted by the excesses of the Borgia, Medici, Borghese, Barberini and Della Rovere clans, which were so extreme as to spark off the Reformation. Anyway, during the Renaissance the Order was too busy crossing swords with the Turks to think of something as frivolous as monumental statuary. They only started thinking of it when the grandmasters had an ongoing competition as to which of them would leave the greatest and most lasting memento of himself in St John's Co Cathedral, the then Conventual Church.

Look to Rome, which was totally transformed by Lorenzo Bernini, who was sacrilegiously to melt the bronze on the dome of the Pantheon for Urban VIII to create the Baldachin in St Peter's. Still today, art historians harangue the pope by quoting "*quod non fecerunt barbari fecerunt Barberini*". Mind you, when you see the stunningly theatrical colonnade and the fountains of Piazza Navona I think you could forgive both Urban and Bernini.

Therefore, controversy over public monuments has always existed because no living person is universally admired or universally hated. There are no absolutes where real historical figures are concerned, and somewhere in Slovenia a statue of Julius Caesar was vandalised too! God knows why! I remember the time when the Nerik Mizzi bust on St John's Square kept disappearing - it became a national joke.

Therefore, we have to be so careful about how we create and place our monuments and statues and - in the same way that the Maltese paid an Italian sculptor to carve out Queen Victoria with such felicitous artistic results - we should consider international, as well as Maltese artists. I simply cannot see one more politician in a suit popping up when you least expect it without getting the heebie-jeebies. Maybe they could wear a Roman toga instead... 4

Farnese bull but will just about do.

Our sculptors had not moved with the times - Henry Moore, Louise Bourgeois, Igor Mitoraj, to mention just three, remained unknown in Malta. When Austin Camilleri placed his *Zieme* in front of the Piano parliament it was soon removed for reasons unknown. We need to break this mould.

We don't have to look far to gape at the stunning beauty of a Mitoraj sculpture. Just across the sea is Agrigento and juxtaposed against the marvellous Greek temples are a number of Mitoraj bronzes that look so amazingly right.

The beauty of the human figure as caught by the great Greek and Roman sculptors of antiquity was revived again during the Renaissance when the popes went back to Rome after their little holiday in Avignon, dragged back kicking and screaming by the intrepid Caterina Benincasa - also known as St Catherine of Siena - to start off a building frenzy that would have put Ramses the Great to shame. The popes and cardinals had no compunction about appropriating marbles from Ancient Rome and decorated



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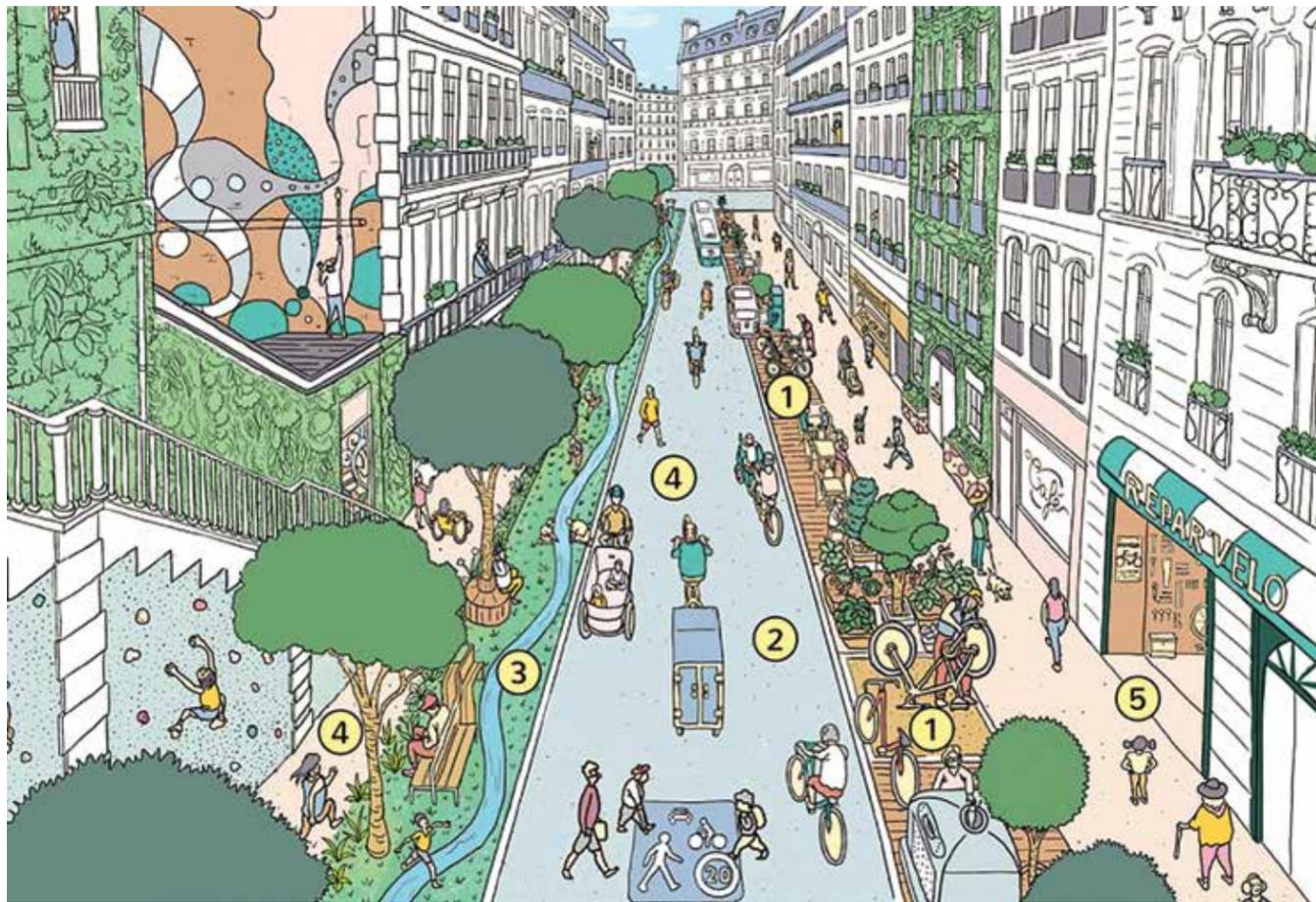
ERICA GIUSTA is Director of Innovation at architecture firm AP Valletta. She read for an MA in Architecture, and has a Post-Graduate Master from the Sole24Ore Business School in Milan. She contributes regularly to academic journals and international architecture magazines such as A10 New European Architecture and Il Giornale dell'Architettura.

A Architecture / Post Pandemic
July - September '20

ERICA GIUSTA

Opportunities of a Post Pandemic City

Time to re-awaken our spatial imagination and question design's priorities.



From Anne Hidalgo's manifesto *Paris en commun*, illustrating the '15-mins-city' model that will reshape the streets of Paris, which will become pedestrian priority areas (2) where car spaces will be turned into public terraces (1) and urban gardens (3), with children-friendly infrastructures (4) and a neighbourhood-based network of services and small shops (5).

A great number of traditionally sleepy (if not embalmed) European city centres are currently witnessing radical changes that seemed almost utopian just a few months ago in the world before Covid-19. Administrations have promptly accelerated the pace of their urban reforms in an exceptional effort to adapt to post pandemic scenarios. Earlier this year Milan announced an ambitious scheme to transform 35km of central streets into permanent cycling and pedestrian priority areas to protect its citizens as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. Meanwhile Parisians have re-elected climate change champion Anne Hidalgo as their mayor. As part of her manifesto, Hidalgo plans "to turn the French capital into a myriad of neighborhoods where you can find everything you need within 15 minutes from home" – obviously, accessible on foot. The so-called '15 minute-city' has also been promoted by architect Stefano Boeri, presented as one of his nine key strategic actions for a post pandemic 'Italian renaissance', at the 'Stati Generali' national consultations. Amsterdam has gone even far-

ther, announcing that a new economic model, based on Raworth's Doughnut Economics, will be adopted in order to mend post Covid-19 economy in a truly sustainable way, both environmentally and socially.

What all these measures have in common is the questioning of pre-Covid urban priorities, mostly revolving around the use of private cars, the hegemony of historical city centres and the maximisation of corporations' commercial profits. The car has been one of the main parameters for the organisation of urban spaces since its appearance and, in this moment of general crisis of the status quo, it has automatically been among the first to be questioned: the pandemic emptied the streets and car parks and, especially during the first days of lockdown, the splendour of car-free squares was rediscovered by us all – like sleeping beauties freed from the spell of a globalised, consumerist and car-dependent lifestyle, waking up to a world we had almost forgotten about. The possibility of breaking the spell permanently

is real, as the proposals of so many cities demonstrate.

The opportunity to dismantle the hierarchy of urban centralisation, traditionally focused on the privileged (and, in the case of many historical cities like Valletta, the disneyfied) city centres, is also a great starting point for testing new models of economic growth based on flexibility, cross-programming and self-sufficiency. A democratic decentralisation process would make the '15 minute-city', in which each neighbourhood or small town aims at emancipating its residents from the dependency on the city centre or bigger town, viable. It would also contribute to regenerating peripheral areas that are very often taken over by cars in an organic way.

In the process of re-imagining the city as a network of self-sufficient neighbourhoods connected mainly by public transports and green corridors, architects and urban designers will need to re-imagine their own role too, prioritising aspects of the profession that tran-

scend the technical and the commercial. As prominent architecture theorist Jeremy Till recently said in an online lecture for the '100 Day Studio' series of the Architecture Foundation (available on YouTube and highly recommended to everybody) – architecture is, and has always been, a manifestation of society's progress and growth; these two parameters require dramatic confrontation due to the current health emergency, and the climate emergency before that. Architects and urbanists therefore need to firstly investigate what the new parameters that will, or should, define us and our built environment are: the number of cars that our cities can accommodate or the capability of our country to offer temporary shelter to people in need (be they Covid front-liners or migrants)?

Alternative scenarios are possible and it is crucial to explore them now, through a collective effort of imagination that will prevent us from regressing to where we were. **■**

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Photo: Kris Micallef
Design: Lorraine Lewis

KONRAD BUHAGIAR is a founding partner of Architecture Project and has been responsible for numerous restoration and rehabilitation works in historic buildings and urban sites. He has lectured in Malta and several countries abroad, published numerous historical articles and has been the Chairman of both the Heritage Advisory Committee and the Valletta Rehabilitation Committee.



KONRAD BUHAGIAR

Black Lives, Parisian Picnics and Art Matters

From time to time unexpected things happen. Sometimes they make news. Even if they do, they can go by unnoticed and are often forgotten. On rare occasions, however, they break new ground and serve to bring issues to the surface that lay hidden behind the opaque and deceiving façade of normality. When this happens, the world is encouraged to change. The recent killing in Minneapolis of George Floyd while in police custody is one such event. The tragedy stirred the world but, more importantly, it brought to the fore the insidious racism that runs through every aspect of our lives – whether social, economic or political. None of us is untouched by it, as can be witnessed by the attention received by the incident on social media and the global reaction to it.

There is no period of history that has not been influenced by the migration of peoples and ideas, and no society that has not evolved as a result of it. In spite of this, African migrants in Malta today struggle to be treated as an integral part of our national community, and can be perceived as a faceless mass of anonymous people with no life stories and no names – a mere exotic feature in the concrete landscape. They hang and hop off the backs of garbage trucks, walk alone or in pairs on the edge of major motorways, or stream solemnly out of building sites at sundown, dusty and scruffy and adjusting their backpack full with the day's material necessities. Their plight goes by unnoticed.



Édouard Manet. *La Nègresse*. 1862

Black lives matter, no matter what. The stories of innumerable black migrants who travelled across the world – of their own volition or not – and who contributed irreversibly to the economic and civic growth of the West, are only a small fragment of the distressing overlap of two destinies, one that continues to haunt us. Black presence in the urban landscape of Malta today, for example, is not unlike that of Paris during the 1860s, when Haussmann was building the boulevards and parks that were to change irrevocably the identity of the metropolis and when new suburbs were springing up all around the old city.

The comparison came to my mind when, last October, during a visit the National Gallery in London, I stumbled by chance upon a lecture that was being delivered on the presence of black people in the Parisian landscape of the Second Empire. The speaker, Denise Murrell, a Postdoctoral Research Scholar at Columbia University, was curator of an exhibition held at the Wallach Art Gallery, New York, called *Posing Modernity*, which closed in February 2019 before being transferred to the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. Her doctorate thesis, a painstaking study of African models depicted in Impressionist paintings had, as starting point, the black servant holding up a bouquet of flowers in Manet's *Olympia* (1863). By scouring the notebooks of the painters themselves and studying a contemporary census of the city, she was able to uncover the composition of the community that had taken up residence in the new, bohemian suburb of Batignolles in Northern Paris and to locate the names and addresses of the black models who sat for the young, radical artists who were their neighbours. In this way, she was able to confirm that Laure, the young black woman in *Olympia*, is also the black model of *La Nègresse* and the servant featuring in *Enfants aux Tuileries*, two other paintings by Manet of the same period.

Her thesis is illuminating. It shows how changing modes of representing the black female figure were instrumental in the evolution of modern art. The legacy of Édouard Manet's *Olympia*, according to Murrell, is that it was a turning point from a traditional portrayal of the black figure as an exotic 'other' towards



Édouard Manet. *Olympia*. 1865

modernist depictions of black people as active participants in everyday life. For the first time ever, the attention of the viewers' gaze, especially the male one, has shifted from Olympia's white naked body as a symbol of women of this kind that, formerly confined to the edges of society, had usurped the limelight to regenerate the city in her own image. This time the focus is on the hitherto ignored figure of the black servant, who, rather than being perceived as a mere decorative backdrop, engenders a more inclusive view of the society of the time. This was ultimately the mission of the nascent 'painting of modern life', as Baudelaire described the avant-garde, with its predilection for ordinary everyday life staged in domestic interiors and during the outdoor activities of the new bourgeoisie: boating expeditions, *déjeuners sur l'herbe*, and picnics of all kinds, modern life in its entirety, without the desire to select and edit, or to discriminate for that matter.

In the light of this, Murrell's most significant contribution is certainly the poorly explored interface between the avant-garde artists of nineteenth-century Paris and the post-abolition community of free black Parisians. Her book, entitled *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet to Matisse and Beyond* (the catalogue of the exhibition), which was voted one of the best art books of 2018 by the *New York Times*, goes on to trace the impact of

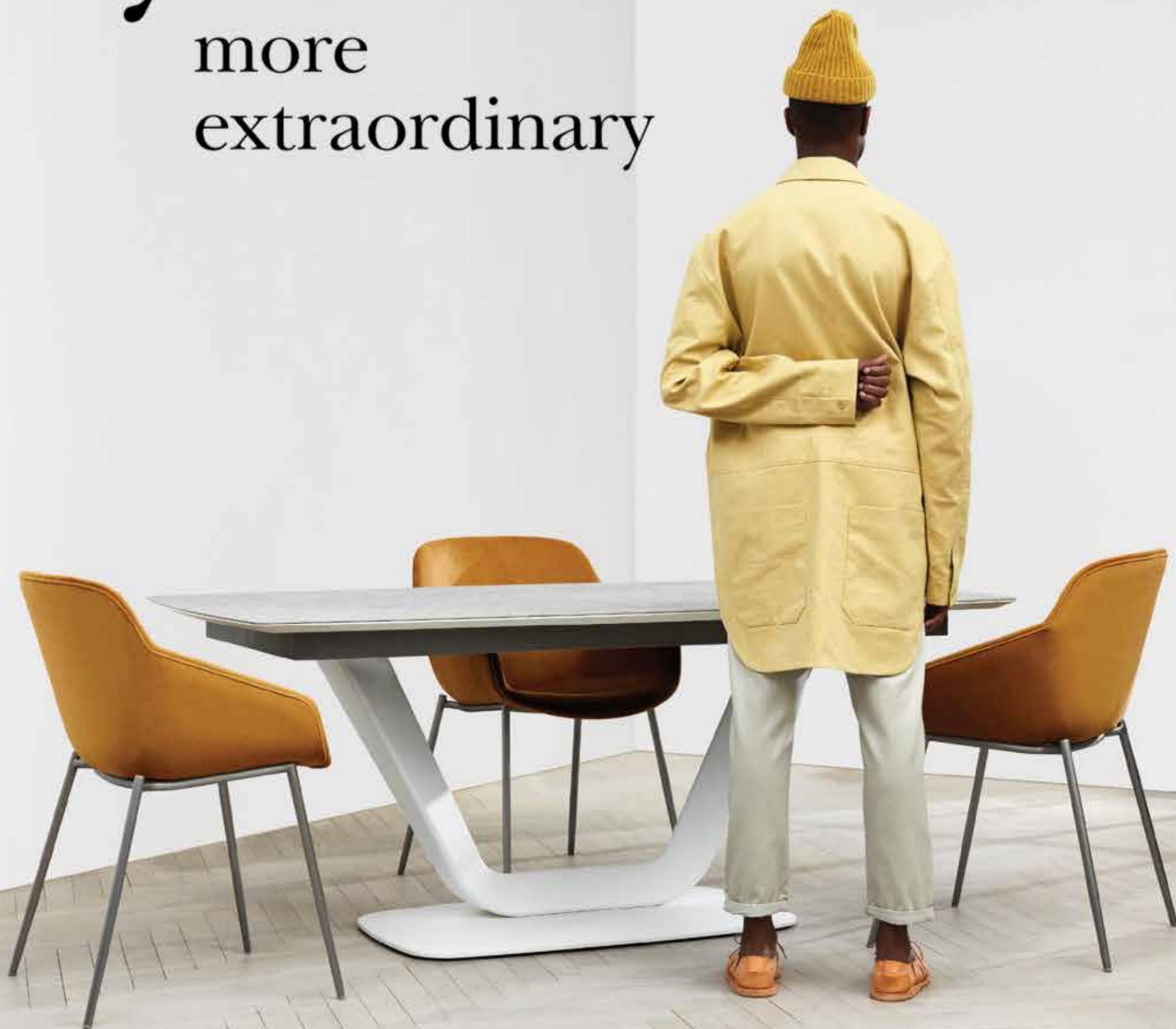
Manet's reconsideration and projection of the black model into the twentieth century and across the Atlantic, where Henri Matisse frequented Harlem jazz clubs and re-interpreted portraits of black dancers to transform them into icons of modern beauty. As the book review states: 'these and other works by the artist are set in dialogue with the urbane "New Negro" portraiture style with which Harlem Renaissance artists including Charles Alston and Laura Wheeler Waring defied racial stereotypes. The book concludes with a look at how Manet's and Matisse's depictions influenced Romare Bearden and continue to reverberate in the work of such global contemporary artists as Faith Ringgold, Aimé Mpane, Maud Sulter, and Mickalene Thomas, who draw on art history to explore its multiple voices'.

Murrell's suggestion that a history of modernism cannot be complete until it examines the vital role of the black female muse within it, is complemented with her most admirable and humane campaign to ensure that galleries change generic titles such as *La Nègresse* to include the name of the sitter. In this way, the mask of anonymity that since the creation of the work has deprived underprivileged subjects of their true identity, has finally – over a century later – been lifted. ■

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6 Opinion / Digital / Post-pandemic July - September '20

ANN DINGLI is a freelance art and design writer, content consultant, and media strategist currently living in London. She writes and edits for various cultural publications and runs her own design blog, I think I like it (think-like-it.com).



Image: Andrew Neel @andrewneel via Unsplash

Can an online experience make spaces for art more equitable?

In spring of 2020, the development of the digital art experience was shoved into overdrive. A global pandemic quickly ushered people out of the museum and gallery halls into the two-dimensional world of mobile phone and desktop virtual art tours. In the UK, as the public locked themselves away from the threat of Covid-19, online museum offerings seemingly hit a spike in popularity. People flocked to remotely walk through the corridors of well-loved institutions – some of which provided more intricate or innovative interfaces than others, all of which understood the importance of speed and adaptability.

It wasn't long before postulations began on whether the digital future of museums was bright or bleak – the outcome

of which has yet to be determined. Yet as audiences moved – cursor-led – through cultural simulations, the subject of 'access' seemed to take firm dominance in the conversation on a post-Covid art world. The point of 'representation' remained a different matter altogether.

The discussion on the merits of digital versus real-life art viewing is an important one. Can a digital tour ever replace the sights and sounds involved with visiting art galleries? It would be difficult to claim so on a purely haptic level. Could it, however, open collections up to groups that have historically stayed away, providing greater access and neutralising prevalent deterrents to attract a more balanced audience demographic? Possibly. But not if its focus refuses to shift from availability to engagement.

The point around whether digital tours have the potential for greater reach seems easy to argue when divorced from sensorial and intellectual impact. At face value, the immediacy of online visits has the potential to circumvent prevailing audience trends, obliterating visitor determinants such as age, physical ability and income. Yet what needs to shift in focus in an effort to draw people in, is not necessarily the mechanics of the experience – although this can certainly help – but the content.

As a discipline that has persisted in examining the human condition for as long as it has existed, the currency of art must be its power of representation. Now, with many of the world's cultural ceremonies converted to a plateau of sameness, forced to confine themselves to the dimensions of our hand and desk-

held devices, there is one principal way they can differentiate and enact progress.

That is to question more urgently what kind of art makes up the world's collections, fills its museum walls, and furnishes its catalogues. That is to ensure that while we build new technology that allows people from all contexts to explore art more freely than ever before, we also liberate the confines of curatorial canons. Both off and online, people will be drawn to art that they can identify with and that will speak to their personal histories and worldviews. Selecting a broader representation of art for world to explore – in whatever format – must be the priority. **4**

MALTA



The exhibition opening for Salyanne Morgan at Lily Agius Gallery June 2019

JOANNA DELIA

Of the Framers and the Framed

I am often asked, does Malta even have art galleries? A quick Google or Facebook search reveals a list of perhaps two dozen galleries that enjoy broad reputational recognition and prestige. In this article, I speak to a few gallery owners and focus on commercial galleries, discussing the importance of their relationship with artists as a catalyst for the public development of an art education.

There has been a strong culture of an antique art market in Malta for some time, run for the most part through dealers and auction houses, but with the new generations – just as we're seeing on an international level – interest is dwindling save for the odd exception.

Buyers are however seeing the exponential growth in value of some (real) modernist works by the Malta-based artists of the early to mid 20th century, like Antonio Sciorino and, more recently, ceramicist Gabriel Caruana. They are therefore, starting to appreciate the value of investing in art. We want, and need, to create an art market almost from scratch, and quality art galleries are pivotal in creating an art market.

When a gallery makes the right choices – the right choice of artist and their selection of work – the client is more likely to realise, in the long run, that the purchase was good in terms of value and investment, and subsequently buy more. The highest role of a gallery is to influence the art scene and create an art market that makes sure artists continue to produce. A professional gallery will also help guide the artist develop and a healthy symbiotic relationship should ensue. Being represented by a gallery means an artist is showing work on a regular if not permanent basis, with the financial risk mostly on the gallery. Gallerists are there to continually drum the artist's identities into their trusting buyer's heads. They have good contacts with the press and know the relevant collectors.

Pretty much all galleries in Malta send out custom designed personal invitations, write or commission informative press releases, and collaborate with physical and online publications to create good content in the name of the promotion of the arts and culture. In this way, a good gallerist would be once again be influencing the islands' art scene and art market through effecting

* Spotlight / Malta / Art Market
July - September '20

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MALTA

the public's perception of what art is or should be from magazines and social media content.

The gallerists should also pay for an opening reception, pay for the transport of the work, insure the works on transit, and on display and handle all requests. A good gallerist will also know to push to place work in significant art collections. In a nutshell, most artists simply do not have the time, nor the skills, to market themselves in this manner. And yet, very few galleries in Malta represent artists on an exclusive basis. Marta Obiols Fornell, originally from Barcelona, of Arthall in Gozo says "I think that I am not powerful enough as a gallerist to ask for exclusivity, and it's not my goal either. Instead, I ask for an exclusivity of six months with the art pieces I show in my gallery."

Lily Agius of Lily Agius Gallery says "Most of the artists I work with are exclusive to the gallery, tied to a contract, and some are long-lasting verbal agreements. All agreements vary, depending on whether they are already signed up to other galleries abroad or not and according to what they can commit to. My priorities lie with my contracted artists and those who I can trust and work well with – and I only work with artists whom I represent. It just doesn't work if artists do not want to commit to providing a

number of works a year to the gallery, or want to sell their art with various other galleries or alone – there are artists who respect and understand the significance of being represented by a gallery, which costs a lot of money, time and hard work."

A gallerist will collaborate with overseas galleries to widen the reach of their artists. Arthall, for instance have regular contact with Spright Art Gallery in the Netherlands and are also building up a project with the Art Collector Club, based in India.

A gallery can also be a community space. Many galleries double up as event and workshop spaces bringing the community closer to the art. Any artist who is supporting this by agreeing to be represented by a gallery therefore becomes a source of financial support for these endeavours. Justine Balzan Demajo of Studio 87 in Valletta has this concept in mind. "Part of my aim is to also act as a community space, whereby artists and the surrounding community are brought together by means of different events, activities and workshops, allowing ideas to be shared and ensuring inclusivity and accessibility at all times."

Finally, galleries reduce the stress and anxiety related to organising an exhibition and sales. As discussed above,



Arthall, Gozo

a gallerist should be seen as an artist's partner, handling sales through good connections. Christine Xuereb, who owns Christine X Art Gallery in Sliema, represents 18 artists and says; "Many artists don't enjoy having people at their studio, as it takes from their time working on their art and they also don't like to deal with pricing"

It is imperative that gallerists work to improve on their practices including striving to be selective with the works they sell and guiding artists to produce good work. I think gallerists should double their efforts to promote not just a

static body of work, or singular artists, but to lobby for more exposure of the importance of art in general. And I think Maltese and Malta-based artists should support this effort by being loyal to a gallerist through effective discussion and collaboration, while buyers and collectors should strive to buy through a gallery and support its progress even if they know the artist well. If a buyer believes in the artist and wishes them well, they should know that in buying through a gallery, they are ensuring the future of both the artist and the art market – this will certainly ensure a better return to their investment. ①



Christine X Gallery, Sliema

LISA GWEN ANDREWS holds a first degree in History of Art and a Masters in Cultural Heritage Management. She is a freelance curator and writer for art and design events.



MALTA

Continued from cover

LISA GWEN ANDREWS

Art after Lockdown

Plan B: Post-pandemic – the ‘new’ exhibition experience?

I need to feel moved by an artwork, recital or choreography; playing online spectator means that you're once, or even twice removed from that experience. Actually, what I don't buy is the selectivity – the framing, the direction, the light, the mood, the background music... online, the experience belongs to another. The viewer simply partakes, just as you would with a film or TV series. Physically, you make it your own, and that's what you take from it; that's what seals it.

I've long grappled with the notion of consuming art and culture online, and I've resisted it, vehemently. Truth be told, not even a pandemic could convert me. Admittedly, I was tempted – most especially when Tate started advertising virtual tours. Then again, I had been looking forward to visiting Tate Modern for their 20th anniversary celebrations, and watching art-filled yet empty gallery halls from my small screen simply wasn't going to cut it. Digitalisation and new technologies are tools generally used to enhance, support, create legacy and accessibility to the arts; but on lockdown, it suddenly became the only means available to maintain a semblance of a relationship between arts institutions and visitors. Overnight, the development of audiences turned virtual.

Despite the above rant, there is one huge plus point here. Online consumption is generally free – which is a huge selling point, not only because of the obvious, but also because of the possibility of attracting different portions of audiences who generally shy away from events of a cultural nature, ticketed or not. Online experiences actually have the possibility of whetting the appetites of those who would customarily opt for a different method of 'entertainment', and that could actually give those spectators a significant enough experience to warrant future cultural consumption and experiences. Moreover, the concept of 'on demand' is incredibly attractive. No queues, no need to travel, no need for a 'shared experience'; just a click and the spectator is propelled into another space, another country – into a curated and fabricated world based on a partic-

ular thematic or showcasing the work of a unique artist or performer.

It has been months since the last exhibition launch. It's been so long that I struggle to remember the last show or even where it was held. Lockdown has been a strange and unique experience for all of us, to varying degrees. After the first exhibitions were cancelled, all the others followed suit. It was a veritable domino effect. Yet a couple of weeks after most of the social distancing measures were lifted, a small yet distinct number of events sprung up on my calendar. At the time of writing, there are four exhibitions showing / coming up, namely: *The little things*, an exhibition by Elisa Von Brockdorff showing at La Bottega Art Bistro; *Transition: A Silver Filigree Exhibition* by Kevin Attard, at Studio 87; *Momentum / Site N°02*; *Rendez Vous*, a collective exhibition being held in Senglea; and lastly, Gabriel Buttigieg who will be showing a series of works at The Splendid, previously exhibited in Gdansk, under the title of *The Beach*.

Some galleries haven't even begun advertising their shows – perhaps as a precautionary measure. Desko, for example, held an open call during lockdown, for a project-exhibition titled *Indoors*, which will be held during the last quarter of the year. Other exhibitions, meant to be held during the March-June period, were postponed and will be scheduled from September onwards. A short chat with gallery manager Nicole Parnis, revealed that she is being cautious with reopening the space, and that she's also using the lull of the summer period to plan out a vibrant programme for autumn/winter. With a small and intimate space, she's also considering adopting a measure that is being used in galleries abroad – that of a token system: on establishing the maximum ideal of visitors, a number of tokens will be made available at the door, and entry will only be consented by proffering said token. Once a visitor has ended their visit, it's placed back, and the next visitor can enter, a kind of 'one in-one out' system. Gabriel Buttigieg, on the other hand, whose exhibition opened on July 18, has decided against an exhibition launch altogether. Instead, he has chosen to make himself available at The Splendid for the duration of the show, in order

to tend to visitors, show them around and explain the nature of the work. This would also mitigate any form of crowds gathering, allowing them to maintain social distancing measures for a while longer. Whilst responsible, this initiative allows for a more personal and intimate reading and experience of the work.

Studio 87 founder and curator, Justine Balzan Demajo, has bravely decided to take the plunge and reopen her space with an exhibition of three-dimensional filigree pieces created by Kevin Attard, during lockdown. "We have to get back into it," she tells me, "if there was ever a time to support artists and creatives, it's now. It's also interesting to see what [artists have] come up with during the pandemic itself." Whilst limiting the number of invites, the distribution of plinths in the space has been designed to divide the space strategically.

Just like Nicole, during lockdown, Justine launched an initiative titled *Reimagining Valletta*, wherein those interested in participating, could select from a series of photographs captured by Malcolm Debono, and print any chosen image to use as a clean canvas, to recreate the city by means of painting, drawing, collage, or any preferred medium.

Finally, I also caught up with artist / curator and Blitz founder, Alexandra Pace, who has used the lockdown period in order to create an online space named: *OPEN*. In actual fact, she had been toying with the idea long before the pandemic broke. The online space was never meant to replace the physical space, but with lockdown, and with a firm concept already in place, she chose to use her time to experiment with new models. Split into two, the online space is designed both for public programmes as well as exhibitions. The *Blitz Kids at Home* programme was first to be launched; here, young audiences were invited to interact with artists Matthew Attard, Bettina Hutschek and Marinella Senatore by contributing to a series of co-created projects which resulted in a picture book or animation, for instance.

Moreover, beginning of June, Blitz also launched *The Eye of the Storm*, an online show, in which a series of 7 films and video works will unfold over the coming



Gabriel Buttigieg. 'Primordial' series (*Two Women and Orange Trees*) 180 x 90cm, acrylic on canvas, 2019

months. The participating artists/collectives each respond to the changes caused by the pandemic.

In reality, lockdown has taught us many lessons, possibly the main one being the need to remain connected – through one form or another; through one medium or another; physically or, at least, virtually. But it has also taught us that the one cannot replace the other. We've literally been left with multiple cravings, on every possible level – from hugging our friends in public, to travelling and physically experiencing any form of art/culture. I guess there is no Plan B, but rather a modified and holistic Plan A that caters for wider needs. A plan that is more accessible, which supports and enhances, and which offers additional insights and learnings. 6

☆ Review / Exhibition / Switzerland
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GABRIELE SPILLER is a Swiss-German author and journalist who lives between Berlin and Gozo. She looks forward to playing a part in promoting Malta's emerging art scene.



SWITZERLAND

GABRIELE SPILLER

Smoke and Mirrors

100 years ago, a fresh wind blew through the art scene. A new world order challenged populations after the 'Great War', but also increased their desire to live. At the Kunsthaus Zürich, the exciting decade of the roaring 20s is examined in detail.

Do you have a weakness for the roaring 20s? Do you enjoy the chic little dresses and cheeky dances of the flappers? Do you have a passion for Bauhaus design and Dada? Then you'll love the *Smoke and Mirrors* exhibition at the Kunsthaus Zürich. Open until 11 October 2020, it shows what was new and exciting a century ago. With around 300 exhibits, 80 artists are presented, focusing on developments in the major cities of Zürich, Berlin, Paris and Vienna. What was innovatively created back then often still has an impact today. For this reason, contemporary artists have also been invited to respond to the impulses from the roaring 20s with their own works. The subtitle of the show reads: *From Josephine Baker to Thomas Ruff*.

But first, one has to take a step back and look at the situation from which this explosion of lust for life resulted. The First World War (1914-1918) had escalated into the bloodiest conflict in living memory, a worldwide pandemic followed. Europe was marked by the destruction of imperialist structures and political instability. Moreover, people had experienced years of hunger, epidemics and destruction and found themselves in a new social reality. Young creative people responded and



Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, Grand Confort armchair, small model, exhibit from the Salon d'Automne 1929, formerly in the Pierre Jeanneret Collection. Tubular steel, enamelled; spring core upholstery on a network of wire cables; down cushions, c. 67 x 75 x 70 cm. Arthur Rüegg Collection. Le Corbusier: © F.L.C./2020 ProLitteris, Zürich; Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand: © 2020 ProLitteris, Zürich

experimented with gender roles, they played with language and created urban visions. A generational conflict broke space and empowered all genres of art.

Faster, higher, further

The 1920s were marked by acceleration, and in so doing promoted photography as a new art form. Artists like Man Ray or László Moholy-Nagy tried their hand at the emerging (black and white) medium, while Erwin Blumenfeld and Hannah Höch used photographic snippets for their provocative collages. A zoom on Höch's realistically painted picture *Die Journalisten* (1925) shows six deformed heads of reporters. They were the highly regarded critical mediators of the zeitgeist. They explained to their readers, in the popular reportage style, what was going on. But why are the body parts deformed? Perhaps they were war-disabled, perhaps the artist wanted to allude to the Cubist painting of a Picasso.

Exemplary for the liberated body feeling, especially of women, the exhibition shows a large number of original dresses. Here the makers benefit from the fact that Zürich has had a long tradition as a silk city and that valuable items on loan are available. The body-enhancing fashion, which includes wide 'Marlene trousers' and the 'little black dress' by Coco Chanel, conquered the dance halls in no time. To songs like *You Look like a Man, my Darling*, which described a woman in a ladies' tuxedo, the young people enjoyed themselves in the clubs and jazz venues.

On the theatre stages, the same image prevailed. Not only in musical revues did the skirt hems become shorter, but modern expressive dance also shed the



Ernest Neuschul 'Takka-Takka dances', 1926 Oil on canvas, 141 x 103 cm Private collection © The Estate of Ernest Neuschul

stiff ballet tutu. Half-naked women's bodies had previously only been seen in private, but now they were jumping around barefoot in flowing robes to the delight of the astonished audience. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, for example, captured the sexually charged mood, partly fuelled by drug consumption, in drawings. Paul Klee, Xanti Schawinsky and Oskar Schlemmer captured the movements in abstract constructivist pictures.

Design classics

All this was only made possible by the rationalisation of the working environment, especially the introduction of assembly line work. This gave people more leisure time – they became consumers, so that film could establish itself as a cultural product. The 'new living' in the functional, light-flooded housing estates, equipped with their own bathrooms and fitted kitchens, became the new standard. The bright rooms were furnished with light-footed tubular steel furniture, design classics by Marcel Breuer, Le Corbusier or Mies van der Rohe, which we still appreciate today. Of course, the Bauhaus School in Dessau must be brought into play, this interdisciplinary think tank that

has already made history with its own building architecture. The advertising poster art of the time, which reflects the new viewing habits, served the artists as an extended arm into everyday life.

The exhibition curators have made an effort to give female artists the voice they deserve as a matter of course. In this way, one can enjoy new perspectives on a decade that has been portrayed many times before. The different styles existing in parallel are not presented chronologically, but according to socio-cultural themes, which makes the tour entertaining. The question remains: are we currently experiencing *déjà-vu* as a result of the global economic crisis, the politically heated situation and social upheavals? Curator Cathérine Hug warns against jumping to conclusions. After all, history has always lived on inevitably in every present, she says. Instead, the exhibition aims to broaden the view and bring to the fore those phenomena of the 1920s that had a lasting aesthetic influence on society throughout Europe. www.kunsthaus.ch

CHINESE MUSEUMS SET THE STAGE

*for the post-Covid
art experience*

As the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to make itself felt all around the world, with various stages – or more accurately, ‘waves’ – being registered in different countries, China has always been a focal point of attention in this latest global development, for reasons that are both fully factual and debatable – a dichotomy that could be said to characterise how we perceive the virus as a whole. But despite the turmoil that surrounds the subject, some inspiring lessons can be learned from the way China’s museums have responded to the crisis – not least because they were the first world population to bear the brunt of it.

According to an informed source from Chinese Museums Association, the response of Chinese museums to the outburst of COVID-19 was “immediate,

emphatic and responsible”. The process was early and efficient: as soon as the pandemic was registered as a serious concern in January, the government moved quickly to ensure that museums were closed to the public, “one by one”. “So to minimise the effect of the closures, museums concentrated on remaining relevant and finding out new ways of reaching their audiences, wherever they may be,” the source said.

While the Chinese response has since found counterparts across the globe, it is worth noting that by dint of both necessity and an organised approach to marshalling available resources, they were the ones to seriously set the tone for what was to come.

“In the earliest stages of the process, it was all about promoting the online dimension of the museums – both in terms of exhibitions, and any other showcases and projects that the indi-

vidual museums would have going on at the time,” the source says. “However, as time went on, and while the pandemic-imposed restrictions were still in place, the museums set about creating online-only material that was tailor-made specifically as a response to the coronavirus pandemic,” they added.

This particular decision was not only a canny business choice; it was fully in tune with the day-to-day realities of how China was made to tackle the still-ongoing health crisis, from their ahead-of-the-curve vantage point. Being on full lockdown for two whole months meant that art lovers were deprived of the best possible way of enjoying the visual arts – the brick-and-mortar museum.

“For this reason, museums did their best to craft programmes that weren’t just of high quality, but that transmitted a sense of comfort and relaxation,”

* Spotlight / China / Post-pandemic
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CHINA



Photo © Touann Gatouillat Vergos via Unsplash

museums' online features and content. They were pleasantly surprised to find how 'well-stocked' and presented it all was. On the other hand, a large swathe of non-museum goers did log in, and were intrigued by what they saw," the source said. "We hope this means that traditional museum goers will emerge from this period with a renewed appreciation of cutting edge approaches that make full use of the online dimension, and that those who have rarely set foot in a museum prior to all this are now more encouraged to do so once they've had a chance to sample what's on offer through the internet," the source added.

The official numbers we have so far are certainly proof of some kind of early success coming to the fore. In fact, while the rest of the world was still deep into the throes of lockdown, on 18 May, China celebrated International Museum Day with no small amount of pomp and pride (albeit with an understandable degree of restrictions still in place), while an encouraging statistic lent a much needed feelgood factor.

"According to the statistics emerging from the National Administration of Cultural Heritage (NACH), in China more than 2,000 online exhibitions and educational projects were extensively accessed by over 5 billion visits while people were confined to their homes," the source says. This follows on from encouraging trends over the past couple of years, which were also quoted during the International Museum Day celebrations.

"By the end of 2019 we had a total of 5,535 registered museums in China, an increase of 181

museums over 2018. That is one museum per every 250,000 people," Director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration Liu Yuzhu said during the May 18th ceremony in Jiangsu province, which he attended remotely from Beijing.

"Among those 5,535 Museums, 1,710 museums were private, showing accelerating growth. In 2019, we had 28,600 exhibitions across the country, which attracted 1.2 billion visitors, which included 119 million visitors from private museums. 4,929 museums in China are free and they draw 422 million visitors per year. Free museums enable people who are protected or who come from low income backgrounds to enjoy museums' rich cultural products equally as others," Liu Yuzhu added.

Our source from the Chinese Museums Association is also buoyed by the positives of the situation and believes that all visual arts ecologies stand to gain if they respond to the current realities in an agile and intelligent way.

"The crisis has influenced the way museums tend to communicate to their audiences, both in the long and the short term. We are of course, still in the process of figuring out how best to calibrate our strategies to truly turn this crisis into an opportunity. Interestingly, in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is made up of two characters: 'crisis' and 'opportunity'. A profound philosophy for our times," they said. ¹

This article was made possible with the help of Sandro Debono

the source said, mentioning live broadcasting as one particularly popular format that gained traction during these difficult months. But legacy was given as much of a platform as novelty, with museums also 'opening up' hitherto shuttered parts of their physical spaces and showing off artworks and collections online that the public would not have previously had access to. "Some museums also invited curators to give guided online tours, and present fascinating stories about their collections, exhibitions and the museum venue itself," the source said.

Offering up an early assessment of the situation – one that they acknowledge would do well to be analysed with more in-depth studies further down the line – the source pinpoints two significant ways in which they've seen demographics react to China's museums adopting more comprehensive approaches to their online presence post-Covid.

"Regular museum goers suddenly gained a renewed appreciation for the



An exhibition at the Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China. Photo ©Yi Liu @stevenliuyi via Unsplash

ETHIOPIA

CHRISTINE XUEREB SEIDU

Socially Engaged *Art in Addis Ababa*



Elizabeth H Wold's latest digital work-in-progress based on the notion of knowledge. Photos courtesy of the artist.

Within the last decade, international exhibitions have been bringing recognition to Ethiopian contemporary art. Rosalie van Deursen from Urban Africans – an art historian and curator specialising in contemporary African art – speaks highly of the “small yet vibrant art scene in Addis Ababa”, a city “undergoing a rapid change”.

The ever popular Makush gallery and restaurant may give the stereotypical impression of Ethiopia through the artworks sold here. Once artists establish themselves, they move to more upmarket galleries or open their own where they no longer need to sacrifice their artistic integrity. Van Deursen tells me that most artists in Addis Ababa see art “not simply about creating aesthetic images but about raising consciousness on contemporary societal topics such as uprootedness, identity, tradition versus modernity, Ethiopian history and behaviour of people who have power and authority”. Elizabeth H. Wold, a conceptual contemporary Ethiopian artist herself, fills me in on the notion of ‘performance art’, which is embedded in the Ethiopian customary and ordinary way of living so “audience participation in the act of creativity and its process is not a new phenomenon – one can witness it in places of worship, in the celebration and festivity of birth, death and in everything in between”.

Talented artists have been springing up from the art schools in Addis Ababa, with the Masters program at the Ale School of Fine Arts and Design having graduate students working and engaging in installation and conceptual art. Those artists involved in more contemporary arts such as installation art, video art, performance and conceptual art include, but are not limited to, Elizabeth H. Wold, Konjit Seyoum, Tamrat Gezahegn, Helen Zeru, Berhanu Ashagre, Mihret Kebede, Bekele Mekonon, Tesfahun Kibru, Tamrat Sultan, Elias Sime and Mulugeta Kidan. Although a few grants from corporate entities and non-profit organisations do exist for the purpose of encouraging creativity, most artists prefer the freedom and just take care of exhibition expenses themselves. Other Ethiopian artists, who focus more on two dimensional art, include Dawit Abebe, Wendimagegn Belete, Ermias Kifleyesus, Merikokeb Berhanu, Tizta Berhanu, Leikun Nahusenay, Tadesse Mesfin, Ephrem Solomon, Kirubel Melke, Nirit Takele, Dereje Shiferaw, Robel Temesgen, Tariku Sherifaw, Adiskidan Ambaye, Tegene Kunbi, Eyob Kitaba, Behailu Bezabih,

***** Spotlight / Africa / Ethiopia
July - September '20

CHRISTINE XUEREB SEIDU
founded Christine X Art Gallery
in 2004 after a university degree
in Art History and Anthropology.
She has returned to Malta after a
year in Ghana where she explored
African art and culture.



ETHIOPIA



Inside Dawit Abebe's studio. Image courtesy of the artist. www.urbanafriicans.com.

Abdallah Bashir, Ermias Ekube, Mulgeta Tafesse, Tewodros Bekele, Wosene Worke Kosrof, Tesfaye Bekele and more. Many of these are represented by local and international galleries.

In Addis Ababa one will find art exhibited at the gallery of the college of the Fine Arts School, the national museum, the Addis Ababa museum, the Gebre Kristos Modern Art Museum, the Netsa Art village, Guzo Art Projects as well as the Alliance Goethe cultural institution. Fine Art galleries include the Asni Gallery, St George Gallery, Lela Gallery, Laphto Art Gallery, Zoma Contemporary Art Gallery, Guramaile Art Centre, Addis Fine Arts Gallery and the Fedika Art Gallery.

There are ample places to view art in Ethiopia, but one would also come across some Ethiopian artists at the 1:54 African Art Fair and other international art fairs. Art lovers were looking forward to the 6th edition of the Addis Foto Fest in Ethiopia, a yearly photo festival founded by the internationally acclaimed Ethiopian artist Aida Muluneh, but that has now been postponed to December 2021. Elizabeth H. Wold is currently working on her solo show comprising of a fabric print display with a multimedia presentation, video art and animation. This solo show taking place in January 2021, is being organised at an independent studio space in collaboration with Konjit Seyoum who, besides being an artist, is also a curator and owner of Asni gallery. 📍



Elizabeth H. Wold's latest digital work-in-progress based on the notion of knowledge. Photos courtesy of the artist.

“There are ample places to view art in Ethiopia, but one would also come across some Ethiopian artists at the 1:54 African Art Fair and other international art fairs.”

G R E E C E

GEORGE MICALLEF EYNAUD



'Hypergradient' by Andreas Lutz at the Athens Digital Arts Festival

Art as Solace

how Greek artists and cultural institutions are reacting to the COVID-19 crisis

Almost six months down the line since the first widespread outbreak of the coronavirus, the current situation is in many ways as uncertain as it has ever been, with the bigger picture seeming to shift and fluctuate on an almost daily basis. In many ways, the decentralised, digitised, dematerialised and transient trajectories of contemporary art practice would suggest that perhaps the artworld is by its very nature better equipped than most other sectors to handle the restrictions imposed by quarantine, if not the

inevitable financial implosion expected to underline this period of commercial inaction and uncertainty.

Visual artists, at least, certainly seem to be better positioned than their counterparts active in other cultural spheres such as theatre, live music and cinema, which until a mere few months ago have traditionally relied on cramming together as many paying spectators as possible within a limited space to ensure business continuity.

A much wider picture of this situation is still waiting to properly emerge, and

while clarity on any subject still feels as scarce a commodity as antiseptic hand-gel, it seems pretty certain that the art infrastructure will not be able to avoid disruption over the long-term, beyond the temporary closure of museums, galleries and other such spaces that is only now beginning to lift. The real question is to what extent this situation will take its toll on the many interconnected machinations that enable the continued production, transportation, exhibition, selling and buying of art.

Is the contemporary art bubble – which has been steadily, if shakily, expand-

ing across two decades of terrorism, war, financial crashes, and an insidious rightward political shift in the face of a collapsing neoliberal superstructure – finally ready to pop?

In Greece, while most live cultural and recreational events have been cancelled or postponed due to a rigorous (and largely effective) state of lockdown, a slew of online events has been organised to take their place, filling in an otherwise very keenly felt void, providing something of an overview of how the Greek cultural scene continues to abide in the face of the enormous challenges it is facing.

Many commercial art galleries in Athens and beyond have turned to using online viewing rooms to provide an alternative way of displaying art and circumnavigating the cancellation of new exhibitions. This online solution enables institutions to provide a mobile, dynamic, and convenient way to see art in the place of the traditional gallery-going experience. Such initiatives have been taken up by a range of cultural organisations, both public and private, beyond the commercial gallery sector.

Google Arts & Culture, for example, has taken up the lead on an international scale, featuring content from over 2,000 leading museums and archives worldwide through a virtual presentation designed to replicate the museum-going experience, using cutting-edge technology to display extremely high-resolution images of artefacts. Viewers can, for example, zoom in on a photograph of a painting to the point that they will be able to discern individual brushstrokes.

As part of this initiative, Google has partnered with the Acropolis Museum to bring its iconic collection of ancient artefacts to a global audience, powered by Google Street View. Visitors to the Acropolis Museum page on the Google Arts & Culture website platform can, after an introduction to the museum, navigate their way through two of its most famous galleries, the Parthenon

“The real question is to what extent this situation will take its toll on the many interconnected machinations that enable the continued production, transportation, exhibition, selling and buying of art.”

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GEORGE MICALLEF EYNAUD studied Fine Art at the Camberwell College of Arts and is currently based in Athens



G R E E C E

Gallery and the Archaic Gallery, and access information about a number of the artefacts on display. The Museum of Cycladic Art is offering a similar online programme, making their holding of ancient art available through its website with high-resolution photographs and extensive information.

While, in theory, this functionality promises a highly convenient and free alternative to the museum-going experience, free from the hassle of crowds and queues, and one in which you can get 'closer' to the artwork on display than would be conceivable in real life, it, of course, can only remain a simulacrum, a mere shadow, of the experience of encountering art 'in the flesh'.

Institutions have had to become canny about these sorts of online displays in a very short amount of time, realising that while they cannot provide a viable alternative to the real-life experience, they enable users to benefit from the unique characteristics of the digital medium itself. By allowing the digital viewing platform to evolve as a unique concept in its own right rather than simply being a virtual imitation of external reality, curators, museum directors, gallerists and artists are finding new and engaging ways to satiate a growing appetite for creative content among a culturally deprived audience.

Greek director Elli Papakonstantinou provides one example of the ways in which local practitioners are taking a proactive approach, rising to meet the

many challenges presented by the lock-down. She formulated a new performance specifically tailored around the Zoom videoconference platform, which has emerged as the communication option de rigueur. The piece, entitled *Antigone Test*, is based on the play *Traces of Antigone* by Christina Ouzounidis, and will be performed by an international cast in English, Greek and Swedish, with English subtitles. Described as an "immersive digital experience inviting the audience to search for Antigone in the liquid rooms of the mind", it will explore ideas around what 'digital theatre' and what the 'theatre of confinement' might mean for a contemporary audience.

Likewise, the Athens Digital Arts Festival, an annual international festival for digital arts, is presenting a series of live digital art broadcasts through the ADAF online channels for adults and kids under the theme Singularity Now, featuring live video art and animations, video documentation of performances and installations, and tributes to artists and art currents, while the Thessaloniki International Film Festival is streaming short films online for free through its project Festival 2.0, with new entries being uploaded every few days which can all be accessed on the Thessaloniki Film Festival YouTube page.

Video as a medium has emerged as a strong contender for the most effective way to share art and culture with as wide an audience as possible in the most accessible and direct way – unless



Screenshot of Google Arts & Culture homepage accessed in June 2020

otherwise restricted by authoritarian censorship laws that remain an unfortunate reality in many regions, most people can easily access video-sharing websites like YouTube or Vimeo from their personal phone or laptop.

The Benaki Museum in Athens, for example, is currently hosting a new online project called Close Ups – a series of videos showcasing individual items from the museum's collection. The project aims to provide a greater sense of context by presenting the items alongside a recounting of their histories and those of people they are linked with. Specialists from across a variety of fields will discuss such objects as Black glaze pyxis, a bust of museum founder Antonis Benakis and an Augsburg cabinet.

In a lateral development, Onassis Stegi in Athens and Onassis USA have partnered to present ENTER, a collection

of newly commissioned works by artists from all over the world, who were given a total of 120 hours to create an artwork that was then uploaded on the Onassis Foundation's website.

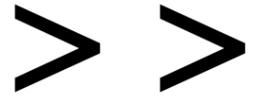
"The thought behind it," explains the introductory text on the Onassis Foundation website, "is that we need to include and understand the present, to learn from it, to narrate and banish it, at the same time creating a digital time capsule, which will preserve the memory of this period for future generations."

While a sense of democratic common ownership seems to be encoded within the medium itself, video is also defined by its nature as an edited sequence of images that have been selected, and reflect the perspective of, the individual or collective that arranged them as such, setting up an intriguing discrepancy between a subjective viewpoint and an objective drive towards documentation that will continue to come to the fore as a primary concern over the coming years.

Having already been played out in postmodern film and the blurring lines between fact and fiction documentary cinema, these issues will now need to be more fully addressed in the way in which institutionalised images are broadcast as pertaining to a particular ideology or worldview. Whose ideas are to be reflected, and whose voices need to be heard? These are all questions we will be grappling with as the artworld slowly, but surely, begins to shift more decisively into the online realm, creating new opportunities for a truly open dialogue around the questions that truly matter. 📍



Production still from *Traces of Antigone*, 2020, directed by Elli Papakonstantinou, written by Christina Ouzounidis. With the support of the Greek Ministry of Culture, and the Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet), the Embassy of Sweden in Athens. Under the auspices of UNESCO & The General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality



get with...

LOCALIST



The curated shortlist directory designed to help you find your way around 2020



LOCALIST



ART SUPPLIES

GALEA'S ART STUDIO

Galea's Art Studio was established in 1920 by Chev. Joseph Galea and today it is run by Pierre, Eddie and Heather. Apart from the studio which sells prints and artist materials they have also opened an art café on Strait St which provides a space for events such as poetry readings, drawing clubs and good coffee, and a third venue used for art lessons, drawing classes and creative workshops.

*Art Studio, 70 South Street, Valletta.
Art Gallery, 221 Strait Street, Valletta
M: 9943 8965
E: creativestore1920@gmail.com
W: www.galeasart.com.mt*

SISTINA ART SUPPLIES

Sistina Art Supplies offer high quality art materials for all artistic levels and needs: students, artists, restorers, and gilders, as well as framing services.

*8 Amery Street, Sliema
T: 2131 4453*

VEE GEE BEE ART

Vee Gee Bee Art represents leading art material brands such as Winsor & Newton, Liquitex, La Franc et Bougouis, Caran D'Ache, Unison, Arches, Saunders, and Bockingford as well as a varied range of art and craft products for children. Vee Gee Bee Art staff are specifically trained to help the artist and hobbyist get the most out of the products, which are also available online and by delivery across Malta.

*Bellavista Street, San Gwann
T: 2138 5584
E: art@vgb.com.mt
W: www.vgbart.com.mt*

ARCHITECTS

AP VALLETTA

AP Valletta is a research-based practice. Their vision is to create an architecture that is a place-maker, a container of meaning, a catalyst of myth and a producer of narratives.

*4 Sappers Street, Valletta
T: 2124 3981
E: info@apvalletta.eu & media@apvalletta.eu
W: www.apvalletta.eu*

CHRIS BRIFFA ARCHITECTS

Founded in 2004, Chris Briffa Architects' work is renowned for its distinctive and contemporary approach to context,

with a strong emphasis on detail and craftsmanship. In their quest to create sense of place, projects include various hospitality missions - such as the Reef Guesthouse in Bahrain and the local Valletta Vintage - places where many have recounted a timeless experience.

W: www.chrisbriffa.com

MJM|DA

Total design professional services and value - architecture, structures, building services, interiors, and project management.

*125 Naxxar Road, Birkirkara
T: 2747 7777
M: 9947 7777
E: info@mjm|da.eu
W: www.mjm|da.eu*

MODEL

The Malta Office of Design for Environments and Living (MODEL) is motivated by the underlying simple principle that through good design of our built and unbuilt environment we can improve the way we live.

MODEL is curated by architects Simon Grech and Alan Galea who seek to challenge and question existing working models in the creative and construction industry today, where no boundaries exist between art, science, business and technology, by adopting an interdisciplinary approach to design both within the MODEL office structure and through relationships with other talented individuals, continuously embracing the complexity of design today.

*42 Bisazza Street, Sliema
T: 2701 7337
E: info@model.com.mt
W: www.model.com.mt*

FRAMING SERVICES

PICTURE HOUSE

Picture House offers Profile Collections from Madrid, Bilbao, Naples, Florence, and London, and designs and creates its own collection every year. They offer three grades of conservation glass, museum paper and boards, custom coloured finishes and hand carved wood. Transport and installation service are also available.

*6 Triq Geronimo Abos, L-Iklin
T: 2141 6716
M: 7985 8054 (Diane) / 9946 2928 (Kevin)
E: diane@thepichouse.com / kevin@thepichouse.com
W: www.thepichouse.com*

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*8 Amery Street, Sliema
T: 2131 4453*

ART CONSULTANT

LILY AGIUS GALLERY

With over 15 years of experience, Lily Agius has a keen eye for talented emerging and established artists from Malta and abroad and offers a personalised service for anyone looking for one work of art or wishing to start a collection.

*54 Cathedral Street, Sliema
M: 9929 2488
E: info@lilyagiusgallery.com
W: www.lilyagiusgallery.com*

BESPOKE DESIGN

TOM VAN MALDEREN

Whilst exploring the intersections between art, design and architecture, Tom Van Malderen's work ranges from bespoke furniture to objects, installations and exhibition design.

*M: 7961 9391
E: tom@tomvanmalderen.com
W: www.tomvanmalderen.com*

CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

UNFINISHED ART SPACE

Unfinished Art Space Project is a management and consultancy for visual arts projects and exhibitions, large or small.

*M: 9943 1420
W: www.unfinishedartspace.org*

LIGHTING

DONEO LIGHTING

Doneo Co Ltd offers specialised services in Lighting Design and Control, from Lighting Plans and 3D lighting renders to intelligent lighting and home automation.

*Doneo, Park Lane Building, Mountbatten Street, Hamrun (by Appointment)
T: 2123 0741
E: info@doneo.com.mt
W: www.doneo.com.mt/lighting*

LIGHT DESIGN SOLUTIONS

Light Design Solutions offers a specialist lighting design service that enhances space. For LDS, light enriches the character and qualities of the designated area, whether

it is a house, a working environment, outdoor space or entertainment area, and in collaboration with their partners around the globe, offer good quality products that are in line with the latest lighting technologies and constantly revolutionising the world of light.

*38/1 Emmanuel Schembri Street, Birkirkara.
T: 2149 6843
E: info@lds.com.mt
W: www.lds.malta.com*

INTERIOR DESIGN

PIPPA TOLEDO

With over 30 years' experience in interior design, Pippa Toledo is one of Malta's best-known names in the field with a large portfolio of successful projects including numerous apartments in Portomaso and Tigne Point, Hotel Juliani, Zest restaurant, Barracuda Restaurant, Club 22 at the Portomaso Tower, EMD Offices at the Valletta Waterfront, The Dragonara Casino, the Grandmasters' Suite, The Drawing Room and the informal dining room at the President's Palace in San Anton, and Cardini Restaurant.

*Garden Terrace Court, Triq il-Baltiku, The Village, St Julians
T: 2132 3616 / 2134 1367
E: info@pippatoledo.com
W: www.pippatoledo.com*

VERA SANT FOURNIER

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*M: 7709 9194.
E: vera@verasantfournier.com
www.verasantfournier.com*

PHOTOGRAPHY

MATT THOMPSON

Matt is a photographer based between Malta and London, with a love of photographing people. Passionate about what he does, you can trust Matt will work with imagination, creativity, and integrity on every private or commercial commission.

*M: 9936 3600
E: email on mail@matthompson.co.uk
W: www.matthompson.co.uk*

To be listed here on the Localist email info@artpaper.press or call 9929 2488.



***** Spotlight / Events / Malta
July - September '20

**VISUAL ART
EXHIBITIONS**

A selection of curated events in Malta + Gozo

07.20-09.20
Events until October 2020



03.07.20
Until 4 August 2020

**ROSETTE
BONELLO**

Although Rosette Bonello was born in Malta, she has mostly exhibited in Italy. This is her first solo show in her hometown of Marsaskala. Over twenty abstract and informal paintings trace the development of her practice over the last four years. Rudy Buhler Art is the first and only contemporary modern art gallery in the south of Malta, opening its doors this summer. This exhibition is one of its first and will continue through the month of August.

Where: Rudy Buhler Art – The Colour Project, Marsaskala
Wednesday – Saturday, 10am – 1pm & 4.30pm – 8.30pm

www.rudybuhler.art

Image courtesy of Rudy Buhler Art



03.07.20
Until 31 July 2020

A SWARM OF TWO

Artist Aernout Mik presents his 2017 film as part of Blitz's first online exhibition, The Eye of the Storm. The film follows two pairs of police officers walking the beat on a shopping street of an anonymous town at night. They wear anti-riot uniforms and represent a common site since the decision of most European governments few years ago to extend security in response to increasing terrorist attacks. As the two-channel video progresses, their identity and behaviour fall out of synch and a sense of chaos kicks in.

Blitz online exhibition

www.blitzvalletta.com

Image: Aernout Mik, A swarm of two, 2017. 2 channel video installation, 27" 38" Exhibition view at cartier | gebauer, Berlin, 2018. Photo Trevor Good. Courtesy of the artist and cartier | gebauer, Berlin / Madrid



09.07.20
Until 23 July 2020

TRANSITION

Silver filigree is mostly known as a traditional Maltese craft. However, in his latest solo exhibition, Kevin Attard succeeds in creating innovative and technically challenging filigree artworks. This shift in his work is a transition in itself, turning away from the traditional by changing the subject matter and using more modern filigree techniques. Within the recent obligatory social transitions, the artist has embarked on an artistic transition of his own. Filigree workshops will also take place throughout the exhibition's two-week run.

Where: Studio 87, Liesse Hill, Valletta
Monday - Friday
10.30am - 6.30pm

Image courtesy of the artist and Studio 87



10.07.20
Until 31 August 2020

SPLEEN

Aware of the contradictions within ourselves, our feelings, wants, and rationality, artists Harrison Levi, Stiefnu De Battista, and Tomas Hed take their lead from Baudelaire and raise the concept of "spleen". During these times, when we all have been made to close our doors, and are greeted with gloves and smiles through masks. The artists expose the prison of our subjectivity and the endless but leave room for hope and a longing for new ways of communicating and connecting.

Where: Arthall, Victoria, Gozo
Wednesday - Saturday:
10am - 1pm & 5pm - 7pm
Sunday: 10am - 12 noon

www.arthallgozo.com

Image: Harrison Levi, Or Just the Words I Tell it With. Courtesy the artist



18.07.20
Until 25 July 2020

THE BEACH

This collection of works by Gabriel Buttigieg is reminiscent of deep primordial longings, so often present in his paintings. It is evocative of perennial motifs, which hauntingly strike into one's soul. The series moves from tribal elements to the artist's Mediterranean roots, which are always vividly evident. The series was previously exhibited at the Academy of Fine Arts, Gdansk in 2019.

Where: Splendid, Strait Street, Valletta
Monday - Sunday
10.30am - 2pm & 4.30pm - 7pm

www.gabrielbuttigieg.com

Image: Gabriel Buttigieg, 'Primordial' series (Two Women and Orange Trees) detail 180 x 90cm, acrylic on canvas, 2019



11.09.20
Until 11 October 2020

OUT OF TIME

This exhibition by Vince Briffa presents a collection of works on paper and mixed-media paintings selected from the last ten years of the artist's studio production. It includes new work produced during the Covid-19 lockdown. The exhibition centres on the artist's ongoing concern around our relationship with time and what it means for a human being to exist temporally in the stretch that we call our lifetime.

Where: Arthall, Victoria, Gozo
Wednesday - Saturday:
10am - 1pm & 5pm - 7pm
Sunday: 10am - 12 noon

www.arthallgozo.com

Image courtesy the artist

Lily Agius Gallery & The Alliance Française in Malta
Present

french collection

THURSDAY 15TH OCTOBER - SATURDAY 7TH NOVEMBER

Pascal Buclon
Bertrand Peyrot
Cyril Sancerneau
Julien Vinet

Vernissage on the Thursday 15th October from 19:30
at Lily Agius Gallery, 54 Cathedral Stret, Sliema

MALTA

Stone Made Flesh

Under the artistic direction of Paolo Mangiola, and challenged by restrictions caused by Covid-19, ŻfinMalta has embarked upon an exciting new project; a dance film. *Aħna*, choreographed by Paolo Mangiola, directed by award-winning director and filmmaker, James Vernon, and performed by ŻfinMalta's company dancers has been created especially for the camera and is inspired by Malta's limestone and its function.

We spoke to Paolo Mangiola and James Vernon about the creative process, as well as the challenges they met in bringing the work together.

Artpaper: Paolo, lockdown must have affected you intensely as a dance company. How did you, as ŻfinMalta's Artistic Director have to react, to keep your dancers' morale high?

PM: At ŻfinMalta we first sat back and reflected on the global situation. Instead of pouring content online, we tried to respond to the big question first – the question that is still out there in the art world: is culture essential? As an art organisation that works prevalently with dance, we wanted to highlight how dance and movement are indeed essential aspects of life.

However, the dancers did miss the studio, and even though we kept working from home by developing what we call a choreographic tool box – a sort of manual that allows everyone to make choreography through instructions – as soon as we had the chance to get back to moving, we did. That is where the idea of the film came about.

Artpaper: Similarly, how quickly (or not) did you adapt from working on stage, to working towards a film?

PM: When creating work for the camera you are somehow guided through the eyes of the filmmaker. Choreogra-



ŻfinMalta Artistic Director Paolo Mangiola



Film-maker James Vernon



Photo: Julia Boikova

phy works in a similar way, with the difference being that you give a bit more agency to the audience.

Artpaper: Could you tell us a bit about how you conceived the choreography for working in such a space that is seemingly so arid and desolate?

PM: The work emerged through the physical exploration of the stone and its qualities. We also worked a lot with the idea of how this material creates a space around us, protects and defines the body. We managed to find solutions that were different and we experienced

those beautiful moments in the studio where you set the conditions for something to emerge and suddenly it happens.

Artpaper: How did your dancers react to working in a quarry? What were the practical difficulties that you encountered?

PM: Dancers are the best people to work with - they are the most resilient beings that any industry can ever have. Of course, we had to take extra care in order to make sure they were safe first and foremost. But beside this aspect, we truly enjoyed getting back to work and

we hope the film reaches as many people as possible, starting of course with our local audience, which this season has been more loyal than ever.

Artpaper: James, what is the difference in your approach to a dance film as opposed to how you would work with a 'narrative' or more 'conventional' film?

JV: The main difference is that a dance film is a collaboration between mainly myself and the dancer, whereas narrative work typically has a lot more people involved. With dance, you're often dealing with the abstract, so it really gives you the freedom to experiment, especially if it's improvised movement.

That said, choreographed pieces require a more structured approach, to make sure you're capturing the dancers' movements from the correct angles, which means knowing where you need to be at all times.

Artpaper: Your work includes open spaces, intense light and a strong sense of the human body. How did the quarry – which is in a sense, simultaneously open, but also confined – influence this work?

JV: In my work, light and space are as important as the subject matter. Especially with dance, you want to find ways to accentuate the dancer's movement and form. The quarry, although beautiful, came with numerous challenges, including keeping the quality of light consistent throughout the film, and keeping the space 'fresh' for the film's entirety.

The quarry is a functioning one, so each day we'd arrive and the 'set' would be altered, sometimes quite drastically, due to the work being carried out on site that day. It definitely kept us on our toes! 📍

Aħna will be available to the public to view end of August and will premiere in Malta first before going worldwide

“We experienced those beautiful moments where you set the conditions for something to emerge and suddenly it happens.”

***** Spotlight / Events / Global
July - September '20



**PAINTING +
SCULPTURE**

A selection of art events from around the world

07.20-09.20
Events until November 2020



Until August 2020

CUTOFF

With galleries on the European continent re-opening, Buchmann Galerie in Berlin presents an exhibition of work by Bettina Pousttchi, William Tucker, Tatsuo Miyajima, and Tony Cragg. The title, referring to the point where something stops, or – in chemistry – the tolerance value of drugs, here applies its meaning to the creative process. The two- and three-dimensional works, include *Cat's Cradle IV Porte VI* by William Tucker, consisting of deep 6cm wide black grooves cut into the wall, forming a negative relief, while Bettina Pousttchi's wall relief *Framework* provides a spatial counterpart.

Buchmann Galerie, Berlin
www.buchmanngalerie.com

Image: Tony Cragg, Tatsuo Miyajima, installation view, Buchmann Galerie, 2020



Until 1 November 2020

199

In response to the 200th anniversary of the Greek War of Independence, Greek artist Kostis Velonis has conceived an immersive presentation of eight funerary masks of fighters of 1821 from the collection of the National Historical Museum of Athens. Designed as an intense visual and corporeal experience, 199 is an emblematic memento mori. The exhibition is based on juxtapositions and unexpected associations of this special historical material in the setting of the old slaughterhouse and the distinctive topography of the island of Hydra. The artist invites viewers to re-examine their relation to the historic event and restore the role of art and artists in the social and cultural processes as well as in the re-evaluation of historical research.

DESTe Foundation
Project Space, Slaughterhouse, Hydra
www.deste.gr

Image: The old Slaughterhouse on Hydra Island



Until 1 November 2020

ENTER THE VOID

Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Ursula Biemann, Paulo Tavares and the research collective Forensic Architecture meet in Enter the Void. The collective exhibition tracks down gaps in the transmission of events, in evidence chains or in case law, and zeroes in on our sensual and physical perception. In extensive research, by evaluating digital material, field research or interviews, the artists examine these gaps and make them accessible for us in their exhibition contributions. 'Voids' are gaps, holes, empty spaces, vacuums and thus vacant spaces or places where material is absent; the works on display prove their existence and how they are dealt with.

Kunsthalle Mainz
www.kunsthalle-mainz.de

Image: Forensic Architecture: Saydnaya, A detainee works with Forensic Architecture researchers to recreate elements of the prison in April 2016. Image & Courtesy Forensic Architecture



28.08.20

Until 29 November 2020

MANIFESTA 13

Manifesta 13 in Marseilles will take place slightly later than planned this year, with three main programmes: the central exhibition, Traits d'union.s; an education and mediation programme, Le Tiers Programme; and the parallel programme, Les Parallèles du Sud. Manifesta 13 speaks to the specific situation of Marseille, especially its histories and contemporary condition in this moment of transition, and connects the voices of its participants with those of its people. The Manifesta Biennale was created in 1994 and takes place every two years in a different city or region of Europe.

www.manifesta13.org

Image © Manifesta 13



10.10.20

Until 13 September 2020

PAPER POSITIONS

Paper Positions Berlin has been postponed and will now be taking place in September during Berlin Art Week. With a focus on drawings and works on paper, the fair rejects the traditional use of exhibition booths, and presents its exhibitors in a salon-like layout. The limited number of exhibitors contributes to an atmosphere of a more intimate experience than standard art fairs. The spatial design offers an open overview as well as the possibility to approach individual works. A comprehensive online version will also be produced.

www.paperpositions.com

Image: POSITIONS Berlin Art Fair 2018 © Clara Wenzel-Theiler



10.10.20

Until 22 November 2020

LOOP BARCELONA

The 2020 edition of LOOP Barcelona is tentatively being planned to take place later this year, bringing together artists, curators, museum directors, gallerists and collectors, to provide a platform to showcase the latest contributions to moving image creation, as well as to create a space for shared reflection on the (art)world that can be built in the future. Made up of a combined festival, fair, and conferences, LOOP Barcelona has become an international annual meeting point for video art, and is dedicated to the study and promotion of the moving image.

www.loop-barcelona.com

Image: Guido van der Werve, 'Nummer acht', 2007, The Bee Who Forgot the Honey, LOOP Barcelona 2019



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