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EVENTS
Highlights in Malta and around the globe

The Malta

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+

JOANNA DELIA

Art too!

Does the Maltese artist stand up to be counted?



Private: *Natural Body as a Fiction*, Charlene Galea in collaboration with Jana Frost

Art has always played a fundamental role in revolutions, and artists have always been on the forefront of every major philosophical and sociological upheaval. Interestingly, when it comes to the plight for gender equality especially but certainly not only on the local scene the artistic community and the art market have often been perpetrators rather than vehicles for change. Renaissance female painters had to pose as men, muses were treated like prostitutes, sketched, painted, and sculpted by men for men to buy and enjoy – even today, more than 80 per cent of work in commercial galleries are by male artists.

>> *Comment, pg. 18*

ANN DINGLI

Consented Subversion

“When I did the *Stations of the Cross* for Gloucester Cathedral, my pitch to the Dean was that I’m a practising Buddhist, but I would like to make the Stations accessible to atheists, by subverting the Christian message,” he explains, describing his work around the stalwart art historical and biblical subject, exhibited at Gloucester Cathedral Cloisters during the period of Lent 2006 in 2007. “I wanted to stretch it apart and make it a human journey of the cross by adding another station of my own – a secular audience would then be interested in that, whilst at the same time recognising the subversion”.

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Detail from *Reconciliation, Reretros*, Graeme Mortimer Evelyn. >> pg. 27

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This issue touches on a few thorny topics – chief of which being the sordid issue of sexual abuse and misconduct in the art world. As the holiday season approaches, and we each dwell on a year that has been difficult for many in varied ways, it may be easy to forget the ongoing social trials and tribulations that we are forced to contend with on a continuing basis – pandemic or not. Art can help us to do that. Art allows us to question our own positions, make public the injustices that still happen every day, and provide a platform for victims and the oppressed. This issue helps to promote the idea of art as a catalyst for social justice, and artists as its warriors.

Aside from this, this issue also looks at the work of Graeme Evelyn Mortimer – his use of contemporary art as a conversational tool in historic institutions. We look at Caravaggio and his role as a controversial and charismatic celebrity. We speak to Charlene Galea about the enduring role of clubbing in bringing people together in moments of heightened emotion. We also pay tribute to Ed Schembri – a talented artist whose life was cut short far too early, and who will be mourned by all those who knew him.

2020 has been a year of uncertainty, but we are proud to have been able to keep writing and making content around the art and artists whom we feel are vital to the fabric of our societies. As we head into a new year, we have full confidence that the world will begin to recuperate from the hardships of the pandemic. With that, we look forward to the vibrancy, passion and education that new art can bring into our communities. We look forward to bringing that art to our readers. Till then, we wish you a safe and healthy Christmas period and we'll see you in 2021!

We will be back with another issue of Artpaper in March 2021; 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, Facebook, Twitter and website www.artpaper.press

Lily Agius



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Competition:

Go Figure!
by Bruce Eynaud

Can you guess the 3 artworks that make up this figure?

Send your answers by email to info@artpaper.press by 19 January 2021, with 'Competition' as the subject, for a chance to win:

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Second Prize:

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Third Prize:

€20 voucher from Sistina Art Shop



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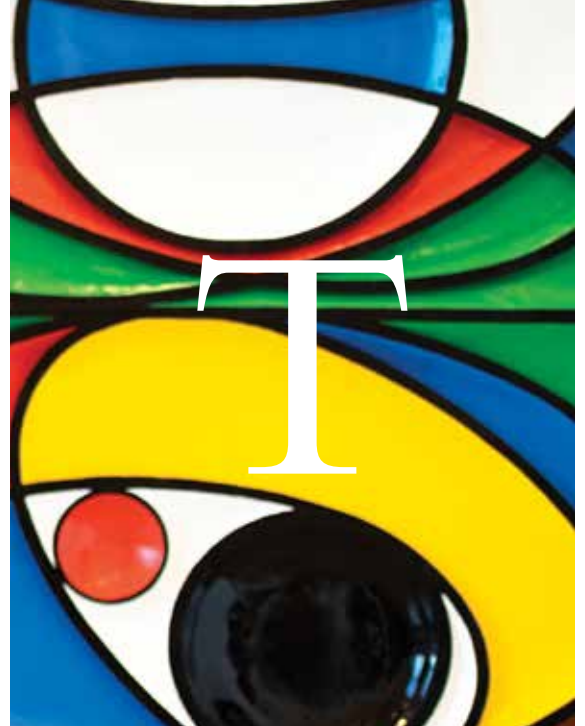
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+ Art News / *On the Scene*
December 2020 - March 2021

12^{.20}

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

“Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying, streams like the thunderstorm against the wind.”
Lord Byron

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REVIEWS

01

Final chance to see the exhibition Botanika

Image: *Have Friends That Bring You Books, Flowers, And Drinks When In Isolation*, Oil on Canvas Board, 40 x 60cm.



Botanika, an exhibition by the artist Ryan Falzon, succeeds in capturing and defining the essence of the typical plant patch one finds in a Maltese home, be it just a *bittha* or a rooftop terrace. With space being a dilemma on the island, and an ever-increasing thirst

for green within a concrete jungle being strongly felt, these urban patches grow into our sacred and intimate sanctuary. *Botanika*, 21 & 22 December, 3 – 7pm, Studio 87, Liesse Hill, Valletta. www.facebook.com/studio87valletta.

02

Creative Backstory Podcasts

Unable to bring everyone together for a (much desired) face-to-face catch-up, Malta Creative Collective has decided to join forces across the creative community and launch a mini-series of podcasts, titled *The Creative Backstory Series*, that uncover the true nature of creatives. Recorded at the Te fit-Tazza recording studios over in their new Valletta space, these short conversations have drawn inspiration from the Proust Questionnaire, which was originally a selection of 35 questions that French novelist Marcel Proust had popularised during the late 1800s.

They've selected 15 of these questions and sat down with Malta-based creatives – both within and outside of the Collective – for an honest, raw and spontaneous conversation. Through these chats, they hope to inspire, uplift, and share our common threads that bind us together – both as creatives and as humans.



03

Call for Exhibition Proposals + for Artists in Residence

MUŻA, the Malta National Community Art Museum, has launched its call for exhibition proposals and call for artists in residence. The museum is inviting interested applicants to submit challenging, curious, and immersive experiences to form part of the MUŻA creative programme.

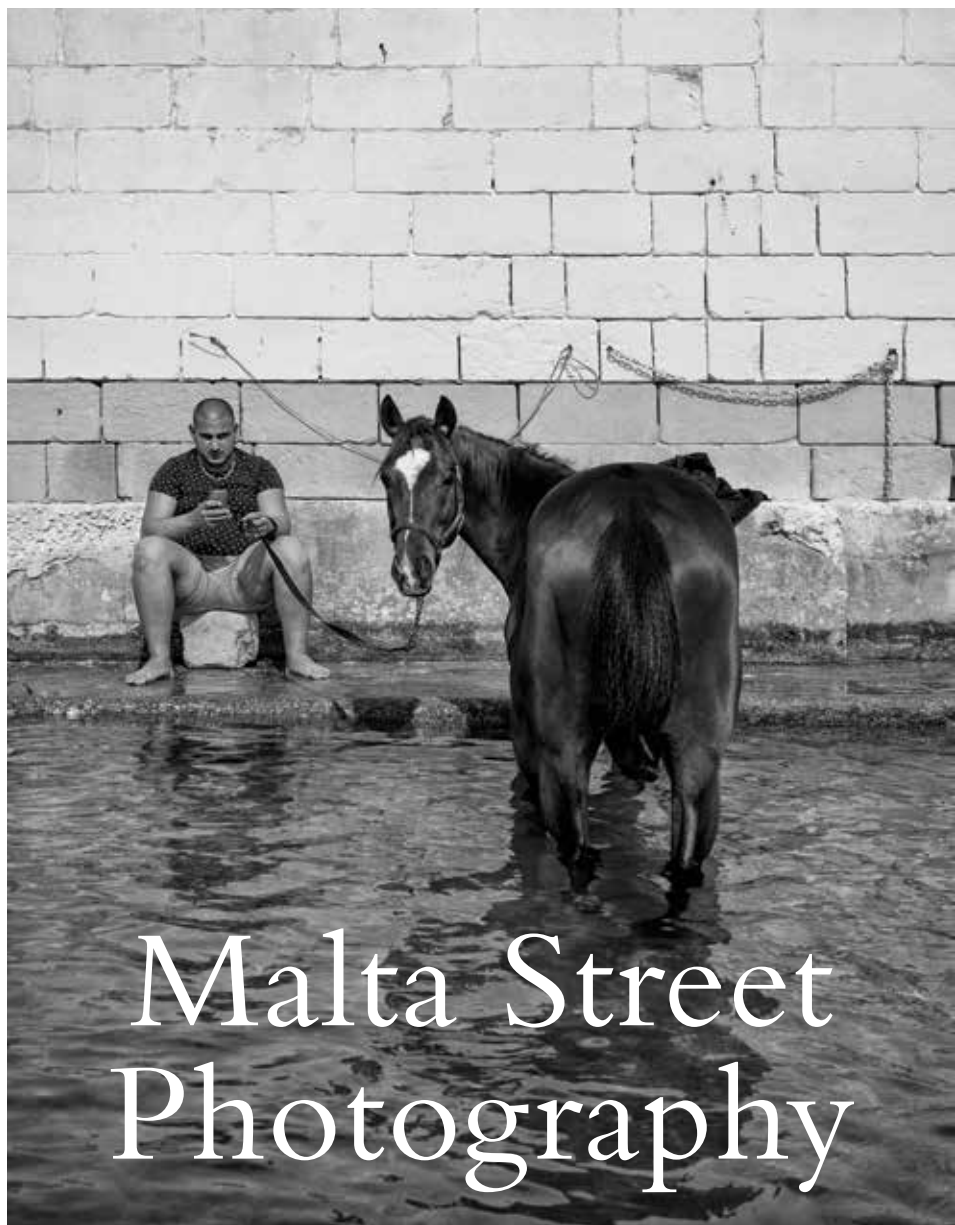


All interested applicants wishing to showcase their projects or exhibitions, or who wish to apply for a residency between September 2021 and January 2023, should familiarise themselves with the guidelines and apply through the online call for proposals. Applications are being accepted until March 2021.

For more information, or to apply to form part of the creative programme, visit. heritagemalta.org/projects/public-calls/



MALTA



Malta Street Photography

Portrait and documentary photographer Daria Troitskaia has captured the essence of Malta's streets in her new book, titled *Maltese Exposures*

> Malta-based photographer Daria Troitskaia, who specialises in documentary, portrait, and street photography, has carefully selected around 160 of her own photographs of Malta's unique streetscapes for publication in *Maltese Exposures* – a hardcover book designed by BDL.

Drawing upon her extensive arts education, the award-winning photographer creates breath-taking images for a variety of mediums including commercial, domestic, creative, fashion and documentary, while her work has been regularly exhibited in Italy, Russia, Spain and Malta.

"The book publication is the latest milestone in my photography career. It represents the closing chapter in my Malta street photography project, while it also documents some of the historical events of 2020, ranging from every-

day life into the first quarantine of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malta," Troitskaia says. "It also symbolises my love for this wonderful country, with its rich history, strong identity and wonderful people, without whom the book would not have been possible. In Malta I have found unlimited support from all my new friends and acquaintances, which, combined with the encouragement of my family, has helped me to reach my potential as an artist. I am hugely grateful to them all for believing in me!"

Maltese Exposures, with photography by Daria Troitskaia, foreword by Giovanni Bonello and introduction by Anastasia Glawion, is designed by BDL and available from their online shop at www.bdlbooks.com. More information about Daria Troitskaia can be found at www.dariatroitskaia.com, via Facebook at www.facebook.com/dtroitskaia/ and Instagram at www.instagram.com/dariatroitskaia/.

Te fit-Tazza & Richard England

The Maltese art studio Te fit-Tazza has collaborated with award winning architect Richard England to create 16 prints that celebrate England's work and his regional philosophy.

Richard England has always firmly believed that architecture must not only accommodate its functional aspects but, more so, it must enhance the spirit and elevate the soul of its users. He has often quoted Tennessee William's words "I don't want reality, I want magic", stating that his philosophy is that the job of the architect is to make the ordinary extraordinary. Embracing a regional approach with specific reference to place, memory and the zeitgeist of the age, England's inspiration stems from the rich millennial mnemonic layering of his native land; from the Neolithic, through the resplendent architecture of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries together with that of the ethnic vernacular typology.

The collection highlights distinct elements drawn from England's vast body of works, all of which combine a local expression with a contemporary aesthetic; a fusion that has become the hallmark of England's unique architectural vision.

Available from *Souvenirs That Don't Suck*, 108, Triq Manwel Dimech, Sliema and online: <http://www.tefittazza.com/richard-england-exhibition/>



MALTA



NICO VASCELLARI'S FLAG IN DARK TIMES WE MUST DREAM WITH OPEN EYES

AT ALBERT THE GREAT COLLEGE

Curated by Sara Dolfi Agostini

St. Albert the Great College flies Nico Vascellari's flag *In Dark Times We Must Dream with Open Eyes* during first months of schools' reopening their doors. In Malta, where a flag is a traditional yet still very common tool to convey political ideologies as a divisive rather than unifying medium, Vascellari's flag acts instead as a reminder of what really defines us as human beings, beyond economic interests and transnational borders. This message stands out during the Covid-19 pandemic, as the call for normality leaves behind areas of society whose immaterial value is not negotiable, such as culture, education, and human rights – all of which have not proven to be a priority of politics here and elsewhere. Challenging these principles of realpolitik, Vascellari's flag turns to the power of language to communicate hope and vision.

For the duration of the project, the general public and any interested groups are invited to purchase a flag from the artist's website – and the profits of the flags bought in Malta will be distributed to the associations of Old Bakery Street 212, namely African Media Association Malta, Malta Microfinance Ltd, Foodbank Life-line Foundation and Blue Door English. Their commitment to migrants, refugees, families with low income, and the homeless, has become more critical during Covid-19 – with the closure of harbours and the laying off of workers in every sector – and yet their voice and efforts have mostly gone unnoticed. Let's not forget them as we approach the Christmas season; a purchase of €25 can make a difference. In addition, to embrace the collective nature of this project, participants are encouraged to hang the flag outside their building and send a photograph with the street name to be included in a map that will be published on Blitz Valletta's website. We also urge the general public to reach out directly and support these associations with donations and voluntary contributions.

Log on to www.codalunga.org/codalunga/manifesto-flag to buy a flag and make a difference.

ONLINE

New Online Gallery Allura Art

Allura Art is a new online gallery, featuring original works of art from both emerging and established fine artists.

Allura, an award-winning organisation created by Laura Swale, is aware that those who appreciate art are not only interested in the final product but are also curious about artists themselves and how their work is created. All its activities involve inviting the public into the artist's workplace, either in person or virtually, to share in the creative process. It supports artists with some of the issues they face when selling art, while making finding quality art easier for buyers.

To ensure its artists reach an international audience, Allura has partnered with Artsy – Google's most visited art marketplace – launching nine Malta-based artists, both Maltese and international: Andrew Borg, Fabio Borg, Rosette Bonello, Debbie Bonello, Bogdan Dyulgerov, Christine Porter Lofaro, Christopher Saliba, Andrew Smith and Dagmara Zaczeniuk. www.allura-art.com



Strawberry Festival by Christine Porter Lofaro, Oil on board, 28 x 36cm, 2018.

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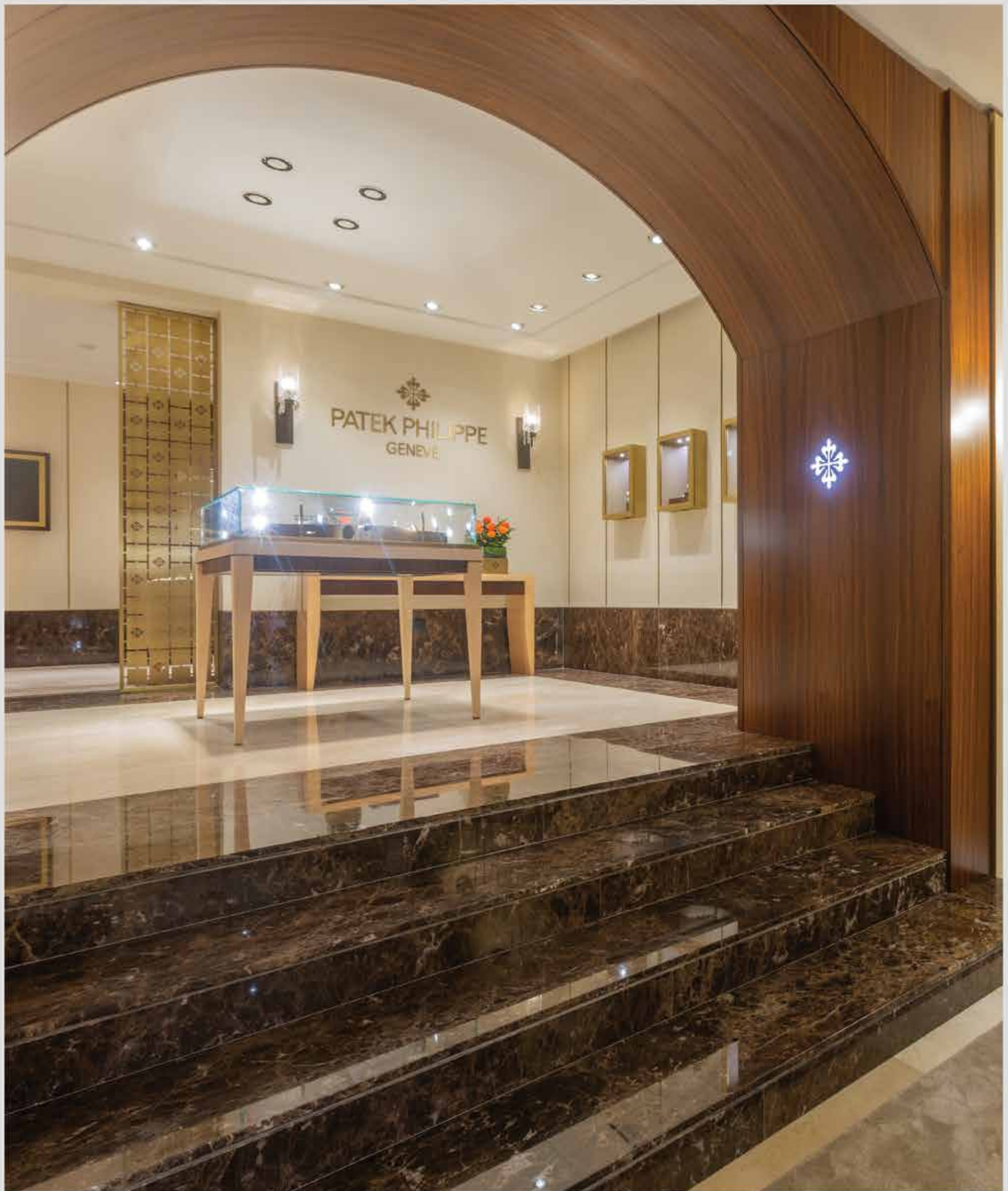
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KURT ARRIGO

A Superhuman Mindset

Neil Agius' epic feat saw him swim just over 100 kilometres in 28 hours from Sicily to Malta. Kurt Arrigo had the privilege of documenting his journey.

This was an important assignment to me both from a personal and documentary point of view. As an open water swimmer, I have a huge connection and respect for the sea. Neil is a friend of mine and invited me to be part of the challenge and support his movement Wave of Change, Neil's brainchild to empower people to keep our seas clean.

It's not every day that you get to witness a world class athlete take on such an incredible feat to convey such a simple message; to reduce plastic waste that ends up in the sea. I felt a huge responsibility to really showcase the enormity of Neil's challenge.

This adventure required me to be present throughout the whole journey and capture it from every possible angle. All my tools came into play, flying my drone to convey the expanse of the sea and



my Aquatech underwater housing below the surface portraying Neil's meditative state and steady, repetitive stroke. I photographed from sunrise to sunset and let the varying shades of light and sea conditions tell the story.

Throughout the challenges Neil was unwavering in his focus. It is hard to fathom that 90,000 strokes later Neil was as optimistic and positive as the moment he started, conveying his superhuman mindset.

I teamed up with Ian Adams, a talented creative director and friend, who devised a script for the short film *A Superhuman Mindset*. The film is narrated by Neil Agius himself.

View the short film with this link: <https://youtu.be/wHQhgAkRVPs>

MALTA

QUALITY ART SUPPLIES AND FRAMING

Sistina Art shop has been established in Malta since 1985. Its first shop was opened in Gzira, when art supplies were very scarce on the islands. Run by Louise Camilleri, and greatly encouraged by her father, Joe Pace Ross, a well-known watercolour artist, Sistina art shop steadily grew to be the most sought-after art shop on the island.

Today situated in Amery Street, Sliema, Sistina art shop is proud to sell the finest and world-renowned artists materials such as Schmincke from Germany, the Italian brand Maimeri mainly for artists paints. Da Vinci, German manufacturers for finest artists brushes, Hahnemuehle, German top quality artists' papers, Fabriano, Arches, Mabef for Easels and an endless list of accessories including stretched canvas and in rolls, mediums and framing services. Sistina has everything for the professional as well as hobby artists.

Sistina Art shop is open from 10 to 5pm Monday to Friday and 9.30 – 1.30 on Saturdays and offers a delivery service and 2 car spaces for parking. Call 21314453 for more information.



COMIC

Artoon by Bruce Micallef Eynaoud





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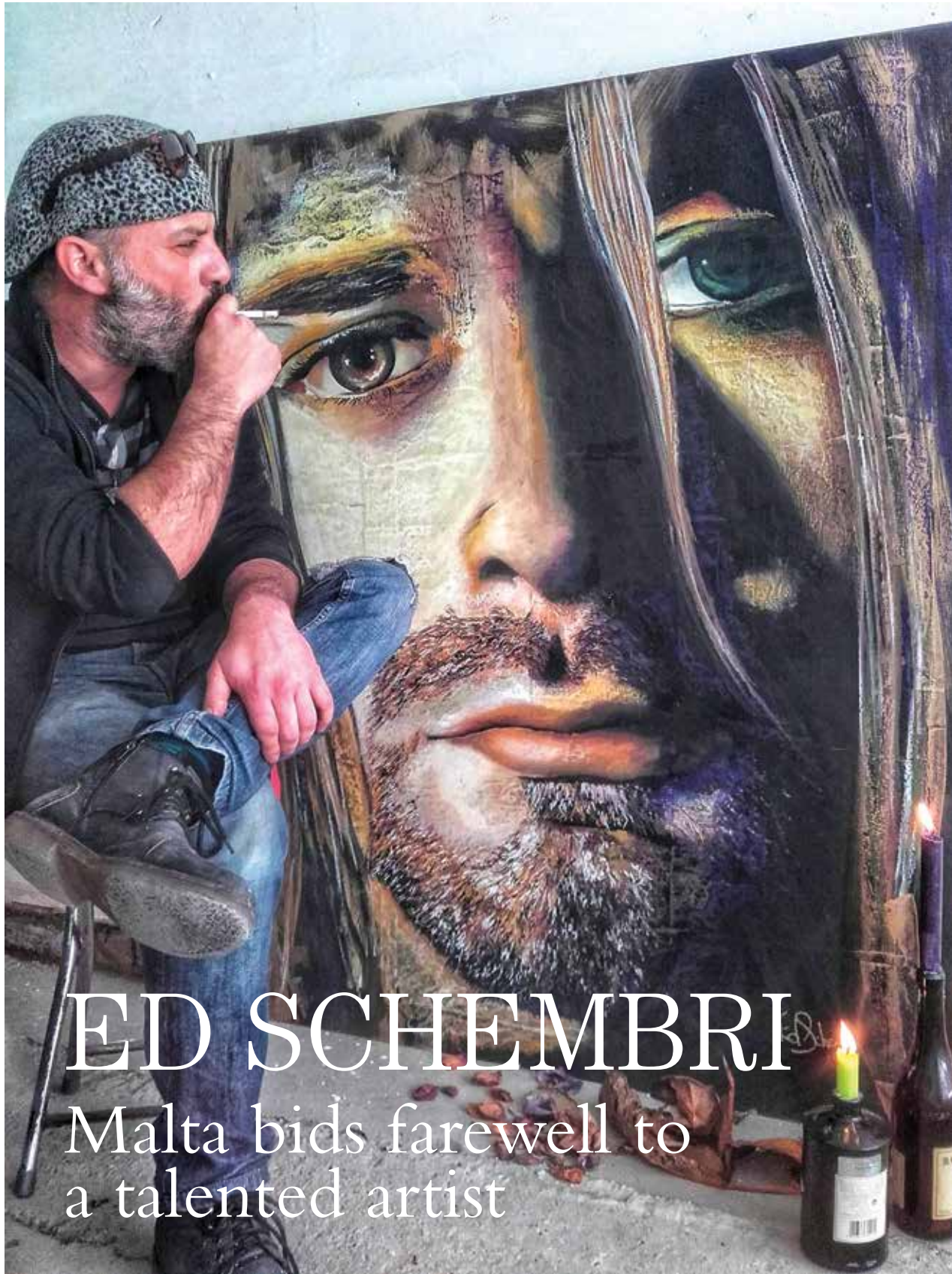
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+ Art News / Obituary / Ed Schembri
December 2020 - March 2021



Photo by Peter Mercieca



ED SCHEMBRI

Malta bids farewell to a talented artist



The sudden news of Ed Schembri's death last month brought deep sadness to the art community and all those who knew or met him. Described on social media by friends and family as a man "full of soul" with "a beautiful heart" and "a magnificent artist", loved ones struggle to come to terms with his passing at the young age of 45. Schembri was a prolific painter with great talent, as well as a wife and three children.

Schembri, known for his vibrant and unique painting style, encouraged and supported artists he knew and donated many paintings to charity, including spearheading an auction in aid of Ethiopian children and the ALS Foundation. The ALS Malta website describes Schembri as "a lively character who is both interesting and passionate about his work; he has been painting for most of his life having studied in his earlier years at the Malta School of Art and Design. His formal training gave him experience with different mediums which were all part of the journey of developing his own style of which Ed found Expressionism to be what enticed and inspired him the most, alongside portraiture."

If nothing else can bring solace for this untimely departure by such a young man, we have included here a selection of Schembri's paintings from his Facebook page – each conveying his eternal energy and talent. As said by fellow artist James Vella Clark – "Heaven is [now] more colourful." 🎨



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ONLINE

Arts Funders Forum (AFF) was launched in 2018 to develop new models of cultural philanthropy that will appeal to the values and priorities of new generations.

Designed to increase private funding for arts and culture in the United States and around the world, AFF is an advocacy, media, convening, and research platform for engaged philanthropists and funders, artists, experts, and influencers who come together to develop new models of impact-driven financial support for the cultural sector.

On December 8, Arts Funders Forum's director and founder of consulting firm MCW Projects LLC Melissa Cowley Wolf, and M+D and AFF co-founder Sean McManus hosted over 500 people from 15 countries for its second Annual (virtual) Summit at an unprecedented time for arts funding. The twin crises of a pandemic and global recession, combined with large-scale action towards equality and social justice, have accelerated new philanthropic models — ones that are more diverse, equitable, sustainable, and democratic. How can funders rise to champion the arts, and artists, as essential for rebuilding communities, strengthening democracy, and



inspiring creative solutions to global challenges?

Building on the work of the Remake the Model conversation series, AFF's Annual Summit brought together cultural innovators and entrepreneurs, pathbreaking artists, leaders of visionary cultural institutions, and next-generation philanthropists, to explore the challenges and opportunities for the arts in 2021 and beyond. The program presented tactical recommendations for how cultural communities can invest in new models of philanthropy, inspire more active engagement and financial support for the arts, and leverage our current moment to reimagine the

arts sector in ways that reflect the values of a new generation.

View the program and Watch the Summit here: www.artsfundersforum.com/events. For more information, contact Melissa Cowley Wolf: melissa@mcw-projects.com

MALTA

COLIN FITZ

It was **part of the play!**

I cannot remain quiet and not comment about the court judgement dismissing Pia Zammit's libel case against a Sunday newspaper. Like many actors – including those who are happy to endorse the left wing and proudly vote red - I have also worn Nazi or Fascist uniform on stage in plays, including that same production of 'Allo 'Allo, where I played the bumbling WW2 Italian *colonello* of the Fascist army.



Alongside me were indeed some actors known to often appear in left wing festivals and events such as Iljeli Mediterranji. But 'Allo 'Allo was just one big, happy comedy show, without any manufactured tribal political undertones.

Pia played the French Resistance Lady – but we were all exchanging costumes and wearing various disguises, including Nazi uniform and insigna – it was part of the play!

'Allo 'Allo is one of many plays, TV shows and films that ridicules the Nazis and other dogma and extreme ideologies, as well as illustrating the futility of war. To it you can add *The Great Dictator*, *La Vita e Bella*, *Dad's Army* and a million other sketches from Malta, the USA, the UK, Europe and other countries.

'Allo 'Allo was first broadcast in Malta on Xandir Malta when it was run by a socialist government. There was no problem with swastikas then.

It's sad that this socialist newspaper, which has a history of good writing and good journalism, and campaigns for the rights of workers and the weak, decided to misinterpret the use of Nazi insigna in this way, and that the courts decided to judge this as being okay.

#istandwithpia

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* Spotlight / Exhibition / Photography
December 2020 - March 2021

MALTA



Elliot Erwitt publishes *Son of a bitch*
Jilly Cooper writes *Women & Super Women*
Grayson Perry invents the mountain bike.
My parents got married.
The lost honour of Kathleen Blum written
Labour wins the election in the UK.
The year after, the UK joins the European Union
Nixon resigns
Pawl Carbonaro paints his flowers in a vase painting
William Eggleston takes a portrait of two girls on a sofa.
Cathy Newman was born.
Year of the tiger in the Chinese Calendar
A wooden cottage in Woodstock NY was built that we'd like to live in.
Jo Cox was born.
Victoria Beckham was born
Maxine Peake was born.
A woman under the influence was released, written by John Cassavetes.
Kate Moss was born.
Rachel Cusk writer moves to the UK.
Brian Eno writes *Taking Tiger Mountain*.
A Japanese soldier came out of the forest in Malaysia to find out world war 2
had ended 29 years ago.
I was born.

I like to make lists. It helps me to get on with the things I need to do in my day. It adds to my sense of purpose. It's maybe a reminder that today I am alive.

I started to make another list, not a to-do list this time, but instead, about the year I was born. I would wait for these things on the list to come to me in random moments. I did not go out and find them. I had little control over this list. Just as we have little control over so much of our lives.

It is by going back one finds ways of going forward. I was born in 1974. This year has kept coming up for me in random ways in the past few years. A reminder of my identity and who I am. For me, the list reminds me to be fearless with myself in all my affairs. As a woman at work, spiritually, and as a mother.

Malta provided the freedom when I was young to indulge the essence of freedom and turn it into creativity.

Such actions were deemed as rebellion at the time. However, we must challenge to evolve in life. I think my message has been clear and simple in my work. A curiosity & celebration of all humanity. I see the land and the sea that keeps us all alive, that is all powerful.

I was in Gozo at dawn one morning when I had the idea that I should become a photographer. I published my second book on Malta in 2006 in Great Britain.

For me, this was a process of looking inwards. Who am I? Half English, half Maltese. My tribe, family, rituals and stories passed down from generation to generation.

My parents met and fell in love in Malta. I know this island, for me, is about love. My father instilled that love in me as a child.

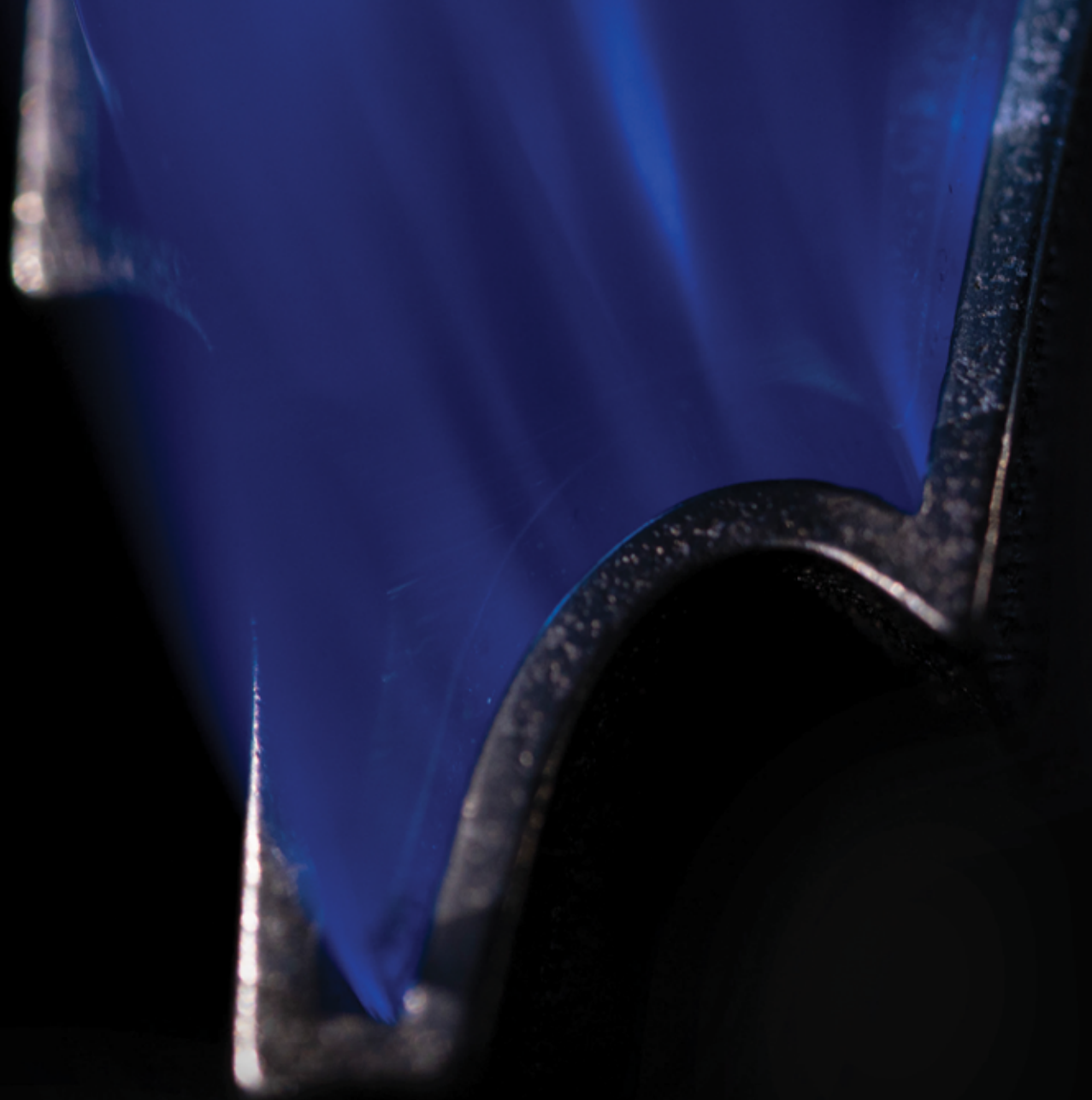
With so much change occurring in the world in the past 20 years, I find myself needing the very simple things of life as a means to ground me. I return to these things when I return to the islands.



The 1974 list comprises writers, photographers, and artists whose work I appreciate. It also comprises women I've met in my work. I'm fascinated by when people are born. What wider experiences in the world they have been raised with. I feel appreciation that I live in a time where I can hear the voices of so many women in our society. 🇲🇹

Amelia Troubridge presents Faith - an exhibition comprised of a unique photographic archive taken over the past 27 years. Shot through analogue photography and combining reportage with portraiture, the work represents a timeline of significant socio-political moments in the history of the Maltese Islands from 1993 to the present. Faith runs until 31 January 2021 at Spazju Kreattiv, St James Cavalier, Castille Place, Valletta.





Premju għall-Arti 2021 is recognising the extraordinary accomplishments achieved by the sector in overcoming obstacles and adapting to the new unfolding circumstances.

Nominations for the special edition, Premju għall-Arti 2021 are being received for two special awards and four non-competitive honours

Nominations for the 2021 edition are open until the 11th of January 2021 (noon)



premju.mt

Q Interview / Exhibition / Performance

December 2020 - March 2021

CHARLENE GALEA

This experimental artist employs the body as both instrument and subject, and through her work, navigates between online identity and physical experience.



MALTA

Q&A: Clubbing Report

Charlene Galea has been clubbing since 2000, and has travelled over a decade with her camera to document a globalised clubbing culture. We caught up with her to find out more about the pop-up show, *Us*, taking place just after Christmas.

**Artpaper: Why clubbing? What is so important about it?**

Charlene Galea: The clubbing experience is not just about going out at the weekend, but is a complex web of connections between people who will join together to share a journey that is both physical and emotional. Clubbers get ready, then meet with a group of friends at home or else in a bar. Once inside, individuals experience the clubbing scene on different levels: some to escape their everyday life, others to socialise, whilst others to dance in their own bubble just for the music. Then there's the after-party where the crowd get smaller and more intimate. Afterwards, the clubbing experience continues with memories, shared photos and conversations with new friends.

In London, I was exposed to an endless, intense club scene. A lot of my friendships and relationships from this time were formed while clubbing. Until I began my studies at the London College of Fashion, I would club simply as a clubber, but then I started to reflect on the club experience and to carry a small analogue camera to events. I documented friends and strangers – I'll never forget the excitement of seeing the photos a month later. There was disappointment too, when the images came out as a blur, or badly composed – perhaps someone would have just moved in front of the camera at the last second! I mostly looked out for the emotional expressions

of the clubbers – and for quirky outfits, since most my London College of Fashion projects were about identity and unusual happenings. I continued shooting and when I started to travel years later, I always looked out for a clubbing event to document – a bit like the Situationalists and their Happenings.

I ended up focusing on clubbing and fashion in my studies, both from a cultural and anthropological point of view. Communities within themselves are safe spaces of sharing and caring, however we are indeed living in modern times where individualism and capitalism runs the sense of connection and communication between each other. So, the clubbing adventure is much richer than just 'getting wasted' for sure!

Artpaper: Why now?

CG: The clubbing ritual can be compared to a modern healing ceremony. The sense of unity and sharing between clubbers brings back nostalgia of the sense of communities that have been lost over the years. But closed clubs have left many with no sense of belonging. We live on an island where space has been privatized, leaving many waiting for summer to go to the beach and for the weekend to go to the clubs, as this is all left for the body to experience.

But now the clubbing event has been cancelled for everyone. I was interested in the fact that people were posting on social media about how much they are missing the weekend and sharing memories from the year before. Ask anyone

who loves clubbing how they feel since Covid started and you will get similar answers from most of them.

Through this whole exhibition I would like each person attending to take something back in memory – to keep the clubbing experience as a ritual, not a routine. This time will not last forever, so imagine how it will feel when clubs open again. Do not rush time, let this time arrive by itself, and let the right moment take you back into the experience.

Artpaper: What's Next?

CG: My next opportunity will be a work as part of Art + Feminism at Spazju Kreattiv, where I will be performing live a story about female orgasms – this is a short story written by myself, combining some drama, dance and humour around the complex topic. After that I will be presenting a longer project called Backlog: How Long is Now – a combination of long walks and reflective journeys during Covid, most of which have been turned into a performance photography series called Locked In and Locked Out sessions. 📍

Us – an exhibition of clubbing photographs by Charlene Galea, curated by Margerita Pulè, will take place from 26 & 27 December 2020 in Cameron St, Gzira. More information on www.unfinishedartspace.org.



MALTA

JOANNA DELIA



Private: natural body as a fiction, Charlene Galea in collaboration with Jana Frost

"The revolution introduced me to art, and in turn art introduced me to the revolution"
Albert Einstein

ART TOO!

Does the Maltese artist stand up to be counted?

Art has always played a fundamental role in revolutions, and artists have always been on the forefront of every major philosophical and sociological upheaval. Interestingly, when it comes to the plight for gender equality especially, but certainly not only on the local scene, artistic community and the art market have often been perpetrators rather than vehicles for change. Renaissance female painters had to pose as men, muses were treated like prostitutes, sketched, painted and sculpted by men for men to buy and enjoy and even today more than 80 per cent of work in commercial galleries are by male artists.

One could expect to forgive artists for having delusions of male superiority or plain old chauvinism. But contemporary society is even prepared to condone behaviour that is far worse than that.

Julian Andeweg, a 34-year-old Dutch artist graduated in 2012 at the Royal Academy of Art (KABK) in The Hague. In 2018, he was nominated for the Royal Prize for Painting and at the prize giving ceremony at the Royal Palace, he is introduced to the king of The Netherlands.

The art groupies like him for being a typical bad boy artist, but big reputable wealthy commercial institutions like De Nederlandsche Bank, ABN Amro, the Leiden University Medical Center and the Bonnefantenmuseum own works by him. Not too bad for a dude in his early thirties.

Recently, the art world almost enjoyed hearing how four women had reported that they had been victims of Andeweg, accusing him of stalking, sexual assault, domestic violence, and rape to the police. And yet, the art magazines report, his career was hardly scathed.

We won't even go into the world of theatre and film. Even on this little island, scandals abound. And the victims are expected to get on with it.

The art world, in forgiving, is complicit.

It is also complicit when it revels at works that attempt to highlight the abuse and shies away from those that portray the abused. Presumably because the first is deemed thrilling and intriguing, while the second sad and dark and the buyers desensitized and bored by the subject matter.

It is complicit when it chooses which plights to support, while ignoring those which it somehow collectively chooses not to.

It is complicit when it chooses to drop activists and keep rapists and misogynists on board. Because they are interesting, or cool, or have a story to tell that is more sensational than the story of those permanently scarred by them.

Seldom have I entered a classically decorated home in Malta that didn't have a depiction of Suzanna and the elders. I always wonder whether the Maltese fascination with this painting is due to its almost pornographic nature, or else perhaps because it is some sort of badge – a symbol of their female ancestors' allegiance to the modesty club. A sort of 'behave and beware' tactic, passed down from mother to daughter.

Is it possible that the visual rhetoric of Suzanna's wannabe rapists, permanently hanging above the formal dining table, help to justify to persons who fantasize exercising sexual power over frail lasses that their behaviour is 'normal'? Or to tell granddaughters that being ogled and undressed by men is just, you know, how things have always been!

It is almost as tough we are still in 1906, when Greta Weneger scandalised the Danes with her painting of a gender-neutral figure sometimes.

Museums too?

What should the museums do? Should they promote harbingers of suffering in the name of freedom of expression and leave it at that? Do they disclose the artist's criminal record in the fancy bio at the start of the show and perhaps even base PR for the show around it? Do they disassociate themselves from the artist's habit of sending his lovers to the ER? Do they hide their shameful collections in their basements, or sell it back to the artist or heirs? Or do they just pretend they don't know anything about this little detail?

Where are the memorials? The permanent sculptures? We build a \$700 million dollar memorial for 9/11, but have never seen a memorial for the 50,000 women a year killed by their husbands or intimate partners – 2,000 of which happen in the United States alone. Locally, public opinion, as witnessed by comments on social media, repeatedly exonerates the rapist or murderer and blames the victim. The fact that a person owns that sort of body is enough to make her guilty of seduction and entrapment. One reaps what nature sows, I suppose.

We need installations such as the one by Turkish artist Vahit Tuna, with 440 pairs of high heels, the number of women murdered by men in Turkey in 2018, symbolising the victims of domestic violence, in Istanbul. But mostly we need to acknowledge the artists who have been creating powerful and remarkable works that empower as much as they divulge and expose.

It starts with artists taking control of their own bodies. With stating, singing and depicting exactly what they think or want their body to do or be. They need to talk about whichever parts of their body they want. They need to tell the world that hiding it or refusing to talk about it does not mean that anyone who messes with it need not feel shame.

In Malta, social media platforms such as Instagram have given artists like Charlene Galea the ease of visibility without the red tape. At the same time, she wonders if the online world is making women 'more seen and less heard'.

JOANNA DELIA is a medical doctor who specialises in cosmetic medicine. She is also a cultural consumer and art collector who tirelessly supports local contemporary art and culture.



“I actually have a lot to say... because when my last work in the mill was about being a woman and the online female identity... where I have used my body openly even though I know how society can judge me as my work has mostly been photography. But basically, since I came to Malta after living away for so long... I knew that no one can stop me using my body freely after my freedom of my body has been taken away as a child.”

In the 1960s, performance art became a potent new medium for discussing powerful traumatic experiences such as rape. Yoko Ono, for instance, in her work *Cut Piece* (1964), sat on a stage and invited the audience to cut away her clothes.

London-based Maltese artist, Roxman Gatt, often explores sexuality and unashamedly portrays very honest aspects around the subject. She recently worked on a project that reclaims derogatory words used to supposedly insult women. Roxman is careful with her words. She called the work *My Womxn is a God My God is a Womxn*, fully aware that ‘Womxn’ has become a problematic term – especially if used by

cis women [and transphobic people] or out of a specific context as it is hurtful to some trans people.

“However, I, someone who is non-binary, was using it in a completely other way; a way to be more inclusive of non-binary and trans people.”

The work comprises six tunes and visuals to go alongside them, as well as a choreography performed with five other people, and of a set of three large canvas paintings a sculpture and wearable sculpture plus a couple of other props.

The broomstick sculpture, for instance, was inspired by the iconic witches’ broom, which is connected to a fear of female sexuality – the idea that women were perverting domestic tools of womanhood for their own pleasure. The performance and tune *Slut*, is inspired by the words of Samirah Raheen’s response to a right-wing pastor calling her a slut and slamming her choice of clothes.

I loved the honest self-portraits by Martina Mifsud, in her recent show *Point of You*, curated by Andrew Borg Wirth.

In her contemporary selfies, painted in oils in large format, Martina becomes both muse and artist. Breaking right through that stereotype on canvases that are unashamedly powerful.

Malta-based artist, Charlie Cauchi, researched the borderline fantastical Maltese run brothels in soho – with her research being immortalised in her exhibition, *Sheherazade*, held at Valletta Contemporary at the end of 2019. “Wash your hands before you dirty your fingers”, said one of the teeth grinding inducing slogans on a light box piece.

Throughout the installation, she reminded us that women, their bodies, were expendable commodities – used, sold, resold and ultimately discarded at the whims of men who cashed in on their creative ideas for their possessions’ many uses.

Kevin Attard, a filigree artist, launched a set of pendants depicting a few of the infinite variations the vagina can have, in a bid to use this rather traditional jewellery genre in a contemporary setting. The images are set to become symbols of the very belated attempts at breaking taboos surrounding female sexuality and sexual reproductive health. In fact, proceeds from the sale of the ‘pussy pendants’ are in aid of the women’s rights foundation, and the Women4Women foundation.

I feel art drives and in return is driven by shifts and radical changes in society, yet I just don’t see it doing anything for emancipation. It’s too little, too slow, and way too late. Especially locally. Art sales are stacked towards the male artist. The narrative is still that of the powerful artist helping his muse open up and explore her sexuality. The



Be my Woman, by Roxman Gatt

owner of the body of the figure lives in the shadows. No one knows her name. Even though her intimate body parts are painted in detail while the male model reserves the right of appearing more subtle, less vulnerable. Or at least those are the images that are deemed sellable.

Violence is still venerated in the arts, and while we build memorials for every political martyr, 50,000 women a year are killed by husbands and intimate partners and zilch. Some people tell me that I manage to find a bitter gender angle to everything. Well, that’s because there is one. Always. And perhaps supporting artists who shine light on it might one day blur that angle into obtuse oblivion. And if buying a silver pussy pendant and wearing it around your neck helps spread the word, then why not! 🍆

View more artworks by the artists mentioned in this article via the website www.artpaper.press/opinion



Vaginal Filigrees, by Kevin Attard

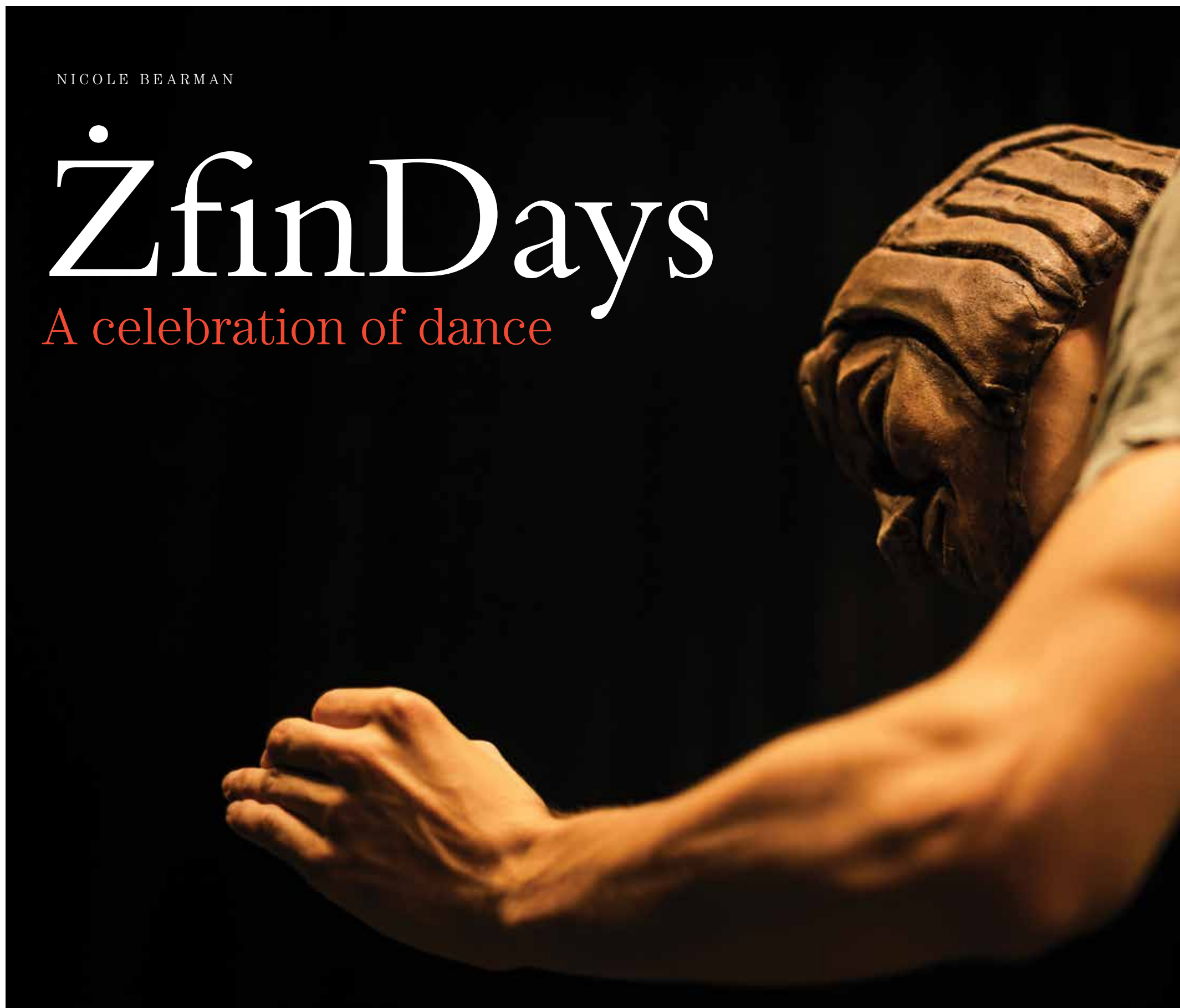
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NICOLE BEARMAN

ZfinDays

A celebration of dance



Photos by Neil Grech

Ultimately, Kalypso is a performance about human shame and how its associated guilt drives people to act out in unimaginable ways

NICOLE BEARMAN
Nicole is a cultural
producer and editor,
and is currently
Producer for ŻfinMalta.



ŻfinMalta's 2020/21 season programme opens the new year with a double bill introducing two very distinctive choreographers – Maltese born Jacob Piccinino and Núria Guiu, from Spain. This unique evening of dance, titled ŻfinDays, shines a spotlight on ŻfinMalta's versatility and raw talent. Now in its second year, and created under the artistic direction of Paolo Mangiola, ŻfinDays is one of the company's annual, signature programmes, aimed at fostering creative relationships within the region, and giving audiences an opportunity to see the company's repertoire expand.

ŻfinDays engages ground-breaking choreographers, inviting them to create or re-stage a work with ŻfinMalta's company dancers. This season presents two works that are stark in contrast, one drawing on mythology and ancient forms of theatre and costume making, and the other firmly rooted in the present and our coexistence with digital technologies.

In Jacob Piccinino's *Kalypso*, the protagonist seeks refuge after being exiled by her own people. Lost at the sea, the waves bring her adrift to an uncharted peninsula inhabited by mythical dwellers. Her presence becomes a colonising force on the islet and its inhabitants. She promises fertility in return for their servitude and devotion. Tampering with the harmony of this clan, *Kalypso* triggers a string of accidents that imperil the fate of this land. Ultimately, *Kalypso* is a performance about human shame

and how its associated guilt drives people to act out in unimaginable ways. It is also about compassion (or the lack thereof) between men and women, and the power struggles that can lead to brutal tension within societies.

Piccinino has collaborated with French costume designer and mask maker Lucien Cassou, whose background includes studies in Sacred Theatre in Asia, with a particular focus on 'Kathakali', an ancient form of theatre. The original score is a collaboration between Piccinino and Alex Vella Gregory, with sound design by Kristopher Chahda.

For *Superlikes*, Barcelona-based artist Núria Guiu has created an adaptation of her solo work *Likes*, exclusively for the ŻfinMalta company dancers. Upgraded to *Superlikes*, this work similarly bases itself on the analysis of two popular YouTube phenomena – cover-dance tutorials, and videos on the different techniques of yoga which have spread through social networks in recent years. Guiu approaches her audience from a socio-anthropological perspective and reflects on the social value of a 'like' in our digital culture and society. The work takes a fresh look at the presence of the body in the digital age, through choreography.

Nuria Guiu's education in contemporary dance and anthropology and human evolution coalesce in her choreographic work. As a dancer Núria has worked with some of Europe's most progressive com-

panies including Cullberg Ballet, Gisele Vienne, Carte Blanche Dance Company, and Batsheva Dance Company.

When asked how 2020 defined, or re-defined, her observation of the body in this digital age and subsequently shaped the choreography of *Superlikes*, Guiu says, "As we have all experienced during this period of COVID, the presence of the body from the other side of the screen takes another dimension. The communication and the symbolisms that we use through the internet in order to express ourselves (such as 'likes') have taken on different values. With my work I don't pretend to create a hierarchy between the digital and the live and physical experience, on the contrary, I try to play, have fun and reflect on the fluidity between the two mediums; from our physical and live experience to the virtual one and vice versa. I am excited to be working on *Superlikes*, hoping for a face-to-face creation process, while also aware that this period is teaching us to adapt, change and most importantly to be more creative than ever in order to keep going and to reflect through body, dance and choreography, on the things that affect us." 📍

Dates & time: 12/13 February 2021, 20:00 / 14 February 2021, 14:00 & 20:00

Venue: Valletta Campus Theatre

Bookings: kultura.mt

Total duration: 70 mins with interval

Age: 5+



SUPERLIKES
Choreography: Núria Guiu
Set design: Tom Van Malderen
Music: Pablo Esbert Lilienfeld
Light design: Moritz Zavan Stoeckle
Costumes: Holly Knowles
Duration: 40 minutes
Supported by the Embassy of Spain in Malta.

KALYPSO
Choreography: Jacob Piccinino
Original score: Alex Vella Gregory
Sound design: Kristopher Chahda
Light design: Moritz Zavan Stoeckle
Costumes & mask maker: Lucien Cassou
Duration: 30 minutes
Supported by the Embassy of France in Malta.



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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

In Search of Lost Beauty

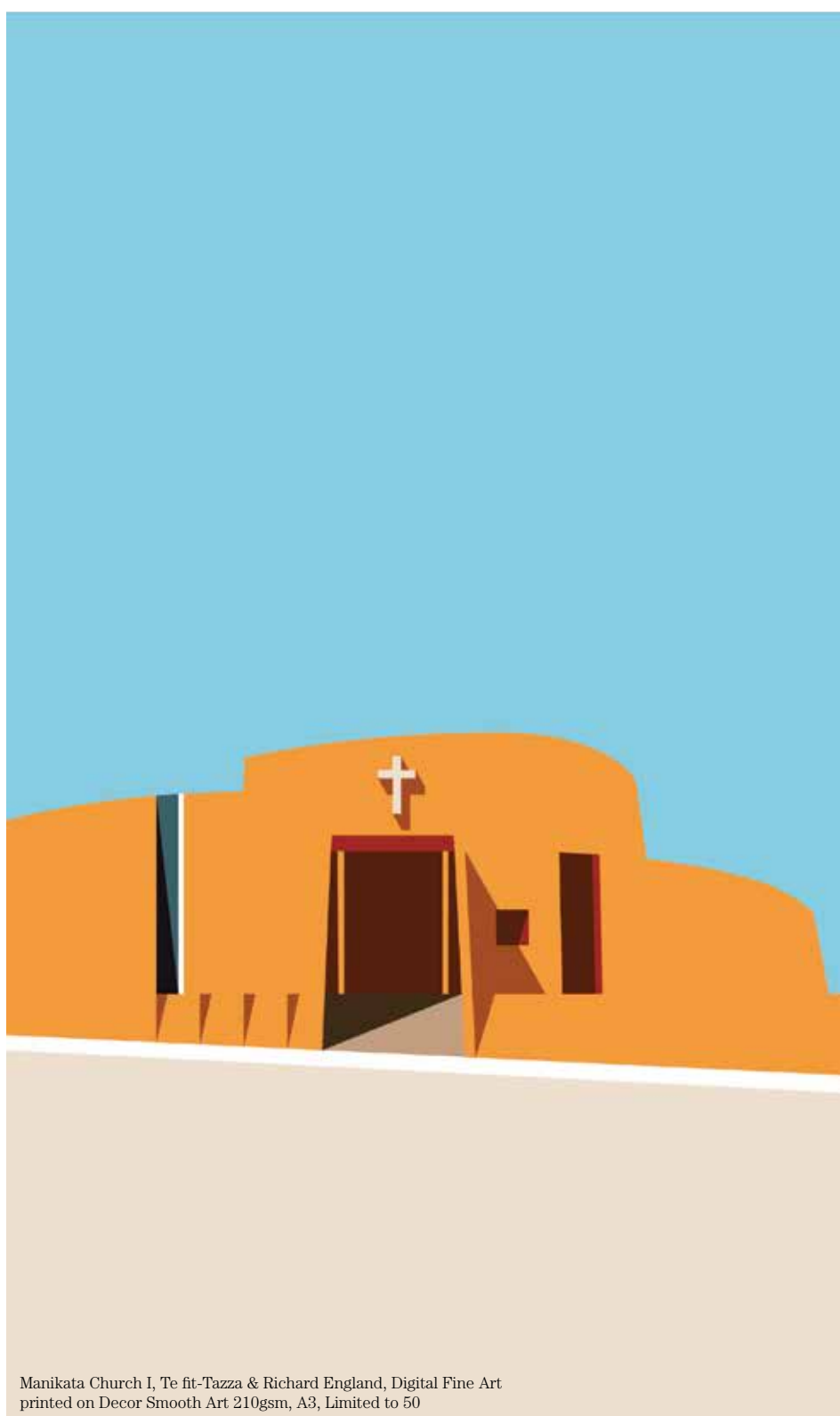
In this utilitarian age we live in, beauty – I find – becomes more and more elusive, and I personally become increasingly a living anachronism. A dinosaur, ageing ungracefully and wondering what happened to those balmy days when the world was my oyster. With Covid, this sense of being on a fast train that one can't get off save to die has become far more acute.

I watch politicians the world over making hashes of their governments, acting like cornered rats and throwing the artist to the wolves. The British actually asked artists to retrain, and I suddenly got visions of Russian princes and grand dukes driving taxis in Paris after the revolution they had fled from in the clothes they stood up in. Gone were the Faberge Easter Eggs and the malachite walls... is this what Covid has done to us? Is this the end of civilization?

In Malta, over the last half-century, we have made a total Horlicks of our environment. The baroque and Semitic vernacular has given way to masses of chicken coops and highways crisscross where once there were quiet country roads lined with rubble walls and Aleppo pines, as one sees in the work of the vedutisti under a sky of Posillipo blue inherited from Naples. Graciousness and elegance seem to have been forgotten or eschewed and there is no Marchese Scicluna to 'develop' into something as iconic as Balluta Buildings... if only.

Our plutocrats are definitely not patrons of the arts, and our planners are devoid of any aesthetic sense. While I have to still come across an architect who is an artist first and a draftsman afterwards, except for Richard England who's Manikata Church shines like a beacon in this dark and ugly age.

We live amidst a forest of cranes with the noise of jiggers forever in the background driving us mad as they delve like malicious orcs deeper and deeper into the earth. One cannot escape.



Manikata Church I, Te fit-Tazza & Richard England, Digital Fine Art printed on Decor Smooth Art 210gsm, A3, Limited to 50

Our plutocrats are definitely not patrons of the arts, and our planners are devoid of any aesthetic sense.

With Covid, the possibility of escaping to a concert, a play, an opera, an exhibition has become like playing snakes and ladders while people think it's safer to restrict artistic activity to online performances, which lack the frisson of a live performance, not to mention its intrinsic beauty.

Where has beauty gone? We are surrounded by ugliness and squalor made all the more poignant when confronted with a black and white photo of old Sliema that old codgers like me post on Facebook or Instagram. I remember the lovely villas, Bonici, Trigona, Torreggiani, Formosa, Hunters, with lovely 18th and 19th century houses clustered around Stella Maris Church. Now nothing is left. Yet I remember them all. I used to play with my contemporaries at Villino Bonici and I used to walk Mary Trigona's black poodles around the block for half a crown, which was a vast fortune in those days. I used to play social tennis every Saturday at Villa Formosa – it's all gone!

The Prince of Lampedusa wrote that things must change in order for them to stay the same, but it's simply not true. Our world has been transmogrified by greed and insensitivity and we have destroyed our once beautiful island all in the name of progress 99 times more than the Aeronautica and Luftwaffe did in three years on incessant bombardment.

Maybe it's Covid, or maybe it's that age is catching up with me, but I think that the post-war generation has made a complete mess of things. Most of us agree that this is true and yet we persist in our error. On and on we go, splitting masonry designed to withstand the erosion of centuries and replacing it with cement and aluminium.

Yes, this is a jeremiad of leviathan proportions that is going to fall on deaf ears, but at least now that I've managed to write it the pent up frustration, I feel is slightly better. ☹



Call for Artists in Residence and Exhibition Proposals

All interested applicants wishing to form part of the creative programme between September 2021 and January 2023 are to apply by the 26th March 2021. Interested applicants must submit a proposal through the online application form here - heritagemalta.org/projects/public-calls/

For more information on the call, contact us on info@muza.org.mt or by calling on +356 2122 0006.

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.



MALTA

KONRAD BUHAGIAR

Caravaggio and the Charisma Machine

Of late I have been thinking a lot about Caravaggio. I'm not sure exactly why. Although the link is extremely tenuous, I think that it has something to do with the U.S. elections and with Donald Trump in particular.

Truth be told, Caravaggio pops up a lot in my personal and professional life. He makes an appearance in various forms, surfacing in exhibitions, lectures and in projects I'm involved in that relate to his Maltese legacy. Clearly, he likes to be noticed and to be talked about. He is as controversial, and with an equal talent for showmanship, as Donald Trump, who, as we all have understood over the last few decades, loves attention too. As for Trump, one of the many ways in which this compulsion manifests itself is his insistence on making cameo appearances in movies and TV shows, where he always plays himself in his own properties. Caravaggio too, motivated perhaps by the same narcissistic intention, played himself when he painted his likeness over and over again. At times he's the protagonist, Goliath or the sick Bacchus, at others, he's just a weary witness, lurking in the shadows, as in the *Martyrdom of St. Ursula*.

Unfortunately, unlike little Kevin in *Home Alone 2*, who gets lost in New York, finds himself in the glitzy Plaza Hotel and asks the future President – who just happens to be hanging around – the way to the lobby, I never had the good fortune of bumping into Caravaggio and asking him directions. In spite of this, I often think of him walking the streets of Valletta – a rough but beautiful and charismatic man who loves the pleasures of life, wine and food and sex, and has the power to take what and who he likes. I imagine him pointing at the people he fancies, whatever their social class, people he wants to immortalise in his paintings and who could serve as models or become his lovers. He points, like his own Christ in the *Calling of St. Matthew*. I want YOU. And you and you. All these people will get into trouble, just like Christ's disciples did before, not as a consequence of their own choices, but, rather, of his. I am sure that were I to come across Caravaggio one day in Republic Street, he would set his charisma machine in motion and I would, without any hesitation, become a follower. Donald Trump must be the same. I guess he, too, is used to getting whatever he wants.



Antoine- Jean Gros - Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa. Image from wikipedia.org

As the reader can deduce, although my hopes are rather dim that our paths will one day cross, the baroque enfant terrible and I, I speak about him a lot. Sometimes, as we emerge from a particularly poignant meeting and walk down the streets of Valletta, feeling tired and a bit forlorn, I console my colleagues by describing Caravaggio's *Incredulity of St Thomas*, which, I explain, is a lesson on how to transform pain into the pleasure of feeling alive. Besides, to me, it is the best example I know of charisma at work.

The classic explanation of the painting is that it depicts the story of doubting Thomas who needs proof that Jesus has risen from the dead. My theory, instead, is that Caravaggio had no patience for Thomas, his hesitations and the weakness of his character. He was interested only in what Christ was feeling. What he is depicting here, I sense, was what he imagined was the incredulous pleasure that Christ must have experienced on feeling alive again after three dull days confined to the still and musty darkness of a rock-hewn tomb. In the painting, Jesus clearly wants contact, physical even, with the living. Still uncertain of the role he's been given, he desperately needs evidence that this is for real. Thomas, flushed and foolish looking, places his finger in his wound. The pain Jesus feels, as he guides his disciple's hand towards the sensitive spot, a dull

pain as of an old scar, is a pleasurable one. It gives him a sense again of the life that's running through his veins, as Robbie Williams describes the sensation two millennia later. And as his disciples gather around him and press closer, four furrowed heads crowding together in a vortex of wonder and amazement at this symbolic wound, a new life for the world is born and the sins and suffering of the mankind are redeemed.

In Catholic doctrine, the word 'charisma' was used to define the 'gift of grace' that a priest received to transcend his own human frailty and to allow the rituals he performs to acquire superior and spiritual meaning. In a secular society, it is applied to a forceful leader whose powers are a function of his feelings, his ability to express them and to attract the feelings of others. His actions are secondary to this. The charismatic leader has his finger on the pulse of his people. He has the gift of empathy and understands their suffering, exploiting their wounds and their weaknesses to give them hope in a superior existence.

One famous case of staged compassion by a charismatic leader springs to mind. In March 1799, during his Egyptian campaign, General Bonaparte paid a spectacular visit to his soldiers who were struck by the bubonic plague following the violent sack and capture of Jaffa. The plague had all but decimat-

ed the army and the survivors and the stricken took refuge in the Armenian Monastery of Saint Nicholas. It was said that Bonaparte touched and consoled the soldiers – a daring act of mercy considered to be both magniloquent and suicidal, although the means by which the plague spread were still unknown at the beginning of the 19th century. The scene was immortalised in a painting by Antoine-Jean Gros, commissioned in an attempt to embellish Bonaparte's mythology, that was exhibited at the Salon de Paris between Napoleon's proclamation as Emperor and his coronation at Notre-Dame de Paris, clearly a full turn of the wheel of the Charisma Machine. In the painting, Napoleon poses as a saviour of his people while an officer standing behind tries to stop him from touching the sores of an afflicted soldier. An oversized French flag flies above the walls of Jaffa that serve all around as a distant backdrop, while in the foreground the picture plane is crammed with prostrate and reclining bodies, a metaphor of the suffering of the French people.

The staged spectacle continues to this day. In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi hugs and consoles a desperate elderly lady who could be anyone's grandmother. Her home has collapsed in the earthquake and all her belongings are dispersed together with, most bizarrely, her denture, over whose loss she moans and cries. Silvio soothes her and promises to buy her a new set of false teeth. She stops sobbing and is silent, comforted by his words. In Turkey, Erdogan instructs his chauffeur to stop his car as news reaches him that a young man is about to commit suicide by jumping off the bridge. He speaks to the wretched youth to understand his motives and promises to help him out of his dire predicament. In the States, Trump appears in TV shows and Hollywood movies and the problems of his people immediately pale in the distance and lose their serious cast.

Richard Sennett, in his marvellous book, *The Fall of Public Man* writes extensively about charisma. The charismatic leader will "bind and blind people as surely as a demonic figure if he can focus them upon his tastes, what

Continued to Page 29 >>



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ANN DINGLI is an art and design writer with an MA in Design Criticism from the University of the Arts, London. She has worked as a freelance writer and content consultant for four years, writing remotely from London, New York and Malta since 2016. (anndingli.com)



LONDON

ANN DINGLI

Consented Subversion: *Graeme Mortimer Evelyn and the conversational power of art*

Ann Dingli interviews artist Graeme Mortimer Evelyn, discussing his methodology of subversion, as well as a recent visit to Malta that crystallised his views on the role of contemporary art in historic contexts.

Graeme Mortimer Evelyn is a hybrid artist – musician by default, visual artist by vocation, researcher by instinct. Based primarily in London, his experience and portfolio are vast, his work having been patronised by institutions of both secular and holy grandeur. Commissioners have included the Gloucester Cathedral, the Royal Commonwealth Society, The Royal Collection Trust and Kensington Palace, amongst several others.

The path to Evelyn's currently practice has been circuitous. He is most known for his sculptural work, but his practice is encased by divergent tangents. Growing up, his business-owning parents encouraged him to study marketing, which he did. He later gave in to a nagging artistic call, following a Graphic Fine Arts course at Anglia Ruskin Art School in Cambridge with a focus on printmaking. After that, without adequate etching presses or equipment to hand, Evelyn turned to drawing and sculpture. Performance art, poetry reading and performing as an international circus clown ensued – all against the constant backdrop of music-making.

In the art world, he is now mostly linked with his multi-media interventions inside municipal buildings, often large-scale and permanent, which he describes as statements of subversion within deeply entrenched narratives, rituals and histories. "I go into institutions and I subvert them, with their consent," he explains, describing his overriding process, but speaking mainly in reference to his sculptural work for religious institutions. "They know upfront that I'm going to take the most



Portrait of Artist Graeme Mortimer Evelyn. Photo: @tatianagorilovsky

important tenet of their institution and subvert the message in order, not to undermine, but to bring in and excite a new audience."

This approach of provocation is bolstered by research. Evelyn describes immersing himself into given contexts and communities in order to fully grasp the lineage of their rituals and messages. "I like to get embedded into the fabric of the institution – you know, you make friendships, you see their battles, you understand where they are coming from and then it enriches and informs the research even more". His position is particular, belonging to the Buddhist

faith yet working for patrons including the Church of England. As an outsider, objectivity is more achievable.

"When I did the *Stations of the Cross* for Gloucester Cathedral, my pitch to the Dean was that I'm a practising Buddhist, but I would like to make the Stations accessible to atheists, by subverting the Christian message," he explains, describing his work around the stalwart art historical and biblical subject, exhibited at Gloucester Cathedral Cloisters during the period of Lent 2006 in 2007. "I wanted to stretch it apart and make it a human journey of the cross by adding another station

of my own – a secular audience would then be interested in that, whilst at the same time recognising the subversion".

"It's about making the artist become the bridge builder, rather than an instigator," he continues, the conversation stretching to his work on *Reconciliation Reredos*, which is on permanent display at St Stephen's Church in Bristol, one of the city's oldest churches, located in its Medieval centre. Established in the 13th century and historically significant as the city harbor church that blessed every Bristol merchant slave ship from the 17th to 19th century, before setting sail on >>

Q Interview / Art & Culture
December 2020 - March 2021

L O N D O N

>> Continued



Reconciliation Reredos. Graeme Mortimer Evelyn

their voyage to the West African coasts. The *Reconciliation Reredos* was designed to be a contemporary artwork of universal reconciliation, responding to the church's past, reflecting the voices of Bristol today, whilst representing the potential of the future. It remains the only permanent public artwork within the UK created to address the tragedy and legacy of the British Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Evelyn's recently completed public artwork entitled *The Eternal Engine*, was commissioned by a Diocese of London and unveiled in November 2017 for the only church built in the capital in over 50 years – St Francis Church in Hale Village, Tottenham. The artwork is currently the largest permanent, hand carved and painted contemporary altarpiece in Europe (5m x 3.5m, weighing over half a tonne). The site of the new church is situated adjacent to where Mark Duggan, a young black man, was fatally shot by armed police in 2011, triggering city-wide riots. The Diocese of London chose that site to establish a missionary as part of London's healing process. Evelyn's brief was "to create a new image of God without representation, that reveals the individual and the community's relationship to the Creator".

For Evelyn, it was important that the function of the work engaged and involved the diverse community from the area, transferring ownership over the artwork to the people as a permanent reflection of their unique history and creative legacy. When first unveiled, the reredos was the largest contemporary altarpiece in the UK, inviting contem-

plation from new audiences not just by virtue of its subject and execution, but also through its sheer physical scope.

"The bridge building role is not only a way to introduce new audiences to something they might have previously disliked, but it also demonstrates the power of art". This classification of art

as a potent mode of communication coloured Evelyn's last holiday before lockdown, which happened to be to Malta.

"I got a lot from my visit to Malta – I was so inspired by what I saw there. I went out of my way to find contemporary spaces. Because there's great



Stations of the Cross. Graeme Mortimer Evelyn

MALTA

>> Continued from Page 25

architecture, so I thought: there's got to be some contemporary art here. But what I did notice was a separation. I saw some incredible stuff in Malta's churches, and I wondered whether there was an opportunity for contemporary artists to use this to their advantage, to bring in new audiences".

"When I visited St John's Co-Cathedral, for example, which is super Baroque bling, the ideas that came to mind... all the tiles on the floor, the creatures drawn in a very contemporary way, the patterns that are used – there are so many ways contemporary artists could reinterpret that history. Even if you are a rabid secularist, you can still use that".

For Evelyn, the trip was a catalysing experience, fueling ideas for his next research and interpretive experiments. "I intensely documented [what I could] about Maltese visual culture – built environment, fauna, and the islands' religious and historical sites have given me

wealth of visual content to work with. So with that, I am currently focusing on creating a new body of work which will include drawings, mixed media works on paper and relief sculpture based on my response to Malta's unique cultural landscape".

Evelyn's objective as he moves into a post-Covid world of art practice, is to channel his unique experience as an artist into the discussion around democratisation of public space and cultural cohesion. "I'm presently working in consultation with Office for the Mayor of Bristol in the UK, helping to inform future visual responses to public monuments in Bristol following the removal of the statue of Edward Colston, which was brought down by protestors in summer 2020". As ever, Evelyn is still making music in and around his visual art practice, and along with his work tied to Bristol and Malta, he is also currently collaborating with dub-step artist MALA to create immersive sound and visual sanctuaries. 🎧



Caravaggio - The Incredulity of Saint Thomas 1601-1602. Image from en.wikipedia

his wife is wearing in public, his love of dogs. He will dine with an ordinary family, and arouse enormous interest among the public, the day after he enacts a law that devastates the workers of his country-and this action will pass unnoticed in the excitement about his dinner... What has grown out of the politics of personality is charisma as a force for stabilising ordinary political life. The charismatic leader is the agent through whom politics can enter on a smooth course, avoiding troublesome issues or divisive questions of ideology". Charisma, in the hands of the wrong politician, can be a very dangerous machine.

Which brings me back to the U.S. elections. If Biden won, he did so on the strength of the votes of the Democrats, of the conservatives and the moderates, the admirers of Kamala Harris, of the black community, of those emotionally attached to former President Barak Obama, of the renegade Republicans, the floaters, the late deciders, the disillusioned former followers of Trump. Trump's seventy-three million or so votes, on the other hand, were all earned by him and him alone, and were exclusively for him, thanks to the efficiency of his own personal charisma. He may have lost the elections, but the elections were exclusively about him.

Trouble is, self-marketing magicians are forever tempting fate and falling victim to self-fulfilling prophecies. Although there has been a plethora of theories about how Caravaggio died, from sunstroke or syphilis to assassination by the Knights of Malta, recent studies of a skeleton buried in the cemetery of Porto Ercole, and believed to be Caravaggio's, reveal that he probably died from sepsis caused by a badly infected wound. Knowing Caravaggio's tumultuous lifestyle, this is not unlikely. Nor is it surprising, therefore, that his last painting *The Martyrdom of St Ursula*, in which he portrays himself with upturned face amongst the onlookers, depicts the saint looking down in quiet shock at seeing the arrow's shaft suddenly lodged inside her breast.

As for a Trump, if you were to apply the 'contrapasso' principle from Dante's *Inferno*, I guess he will now be relegated to the lobby, not the lobby of the glamorous Plaza Hotel which is no longer his, but a virtual lobby, muted, video turned off by default and desperately waiting, desolate and defeated, for someone to let him in. 🚪



The *Eternal Engine* and *Stations of the Cross* @StFEngineRoom. Copyright © 2017 Graeme Mortimer Evelyn LGE.

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AFRICA



Dramane Toloba, 'La Pose', 2020, 1m x 1m, Mixed Medium Canvas, Photo: Dramane Toloba

was in 1994, a time when photography in this part of the world began gaining recognition, that the government of Mali and the Institut Français started the very first biennial photography exhibition, Bamako Encounters, which was originally named Rencontres Africaines de la Photographie. This biennial has seen the works of powerful African photographers like Zanele Muholi, William Kentridge, Samuel Fosso and Pieter Hugo throughout the years, bringing much international attention to the show with them. Similarly, the Ségou Art festival (Festival sur le Niger Ségou) also continues to give Malian artists an opportunity for greater exposure within the country.

Mali's national museum – the Musée National du Mali, which has existed since 1953 – often hosts the Bamako Encounters, and although it is an archaeological and anthropological museum, artists in Mali have used the Centre Soleil d'Afrique as a space for cultural exchange and artistic encounters since its inception in 1999. Art galleries in Mali include Galerie Medina and Bamako Art Gallery, but a great number of art spaces continue to open for the numerous art collectives to show their work. It is evident that Malian artists are accustomed to working collectively, sharing techniques from each other as well as collaborating when it comes to

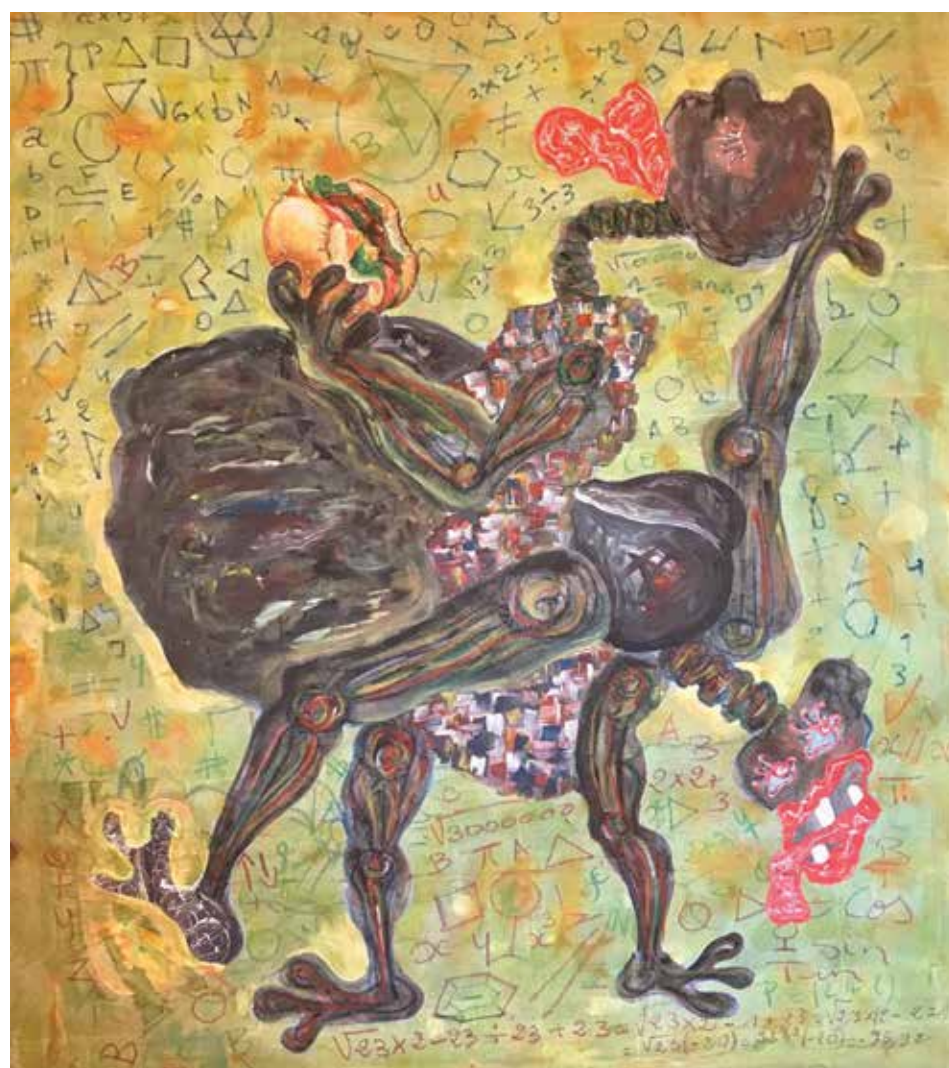
CHRISTINE XUEREB SEIDU

ARTISTS MAKING ART TOGETHER

Artist Collectives in Mali

After a long Western-centric focus in the history of art, a much awaited introduction to African art has taken place, thanks to artists like the now-deceased Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, who shed a new light on West Africa in the 1960s. It was one a portrayal that no longer associated the continent with colonialism, repression and brutality, working to change the existing global socio-political perception. Known as the 'Eye of Bamako', Malick Sidibé was the first African, as well as the first photographer to receive the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in 2007, thanks to Fondation Cartier and André Magnin, who discovered him back in 1994 when "there weren't any African art museums or galleries", except in South Africa.

When ContemporaryAnd spoke to the now-deceased artistic director of the Bamako Encounters in 2015, Bisi Silva mentioned the importance of Mali as a host country of this biennial "with its extremely rich material and visual culture as well as a fascinating history and legends – of Timbuktu, of the founder of the Malian Empire, Sundiata Keita (an African king who fought for the country), and of the Mansa Moussa and his trip to Mecca- going back thousands of years. Mali is famous for its griots, for its art of telling stories, of preserving the history of the country, of families, and of individuals through an oral tradition". It



Famakan Magassa, 'Sens Dessus-Dessous', 2019, Acrylics on Canvas, 170 x 170cm. Photo: Samba Guindo

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.



exhibitions. Working as collectives offers more opportunities, and in Bamako artist collectives include Tim 'Art, Sanou 'Art, Atelier M Collective, Badalian 1 and Anw-Ko Art.

The Institut National des Arts de Bamako (INA) was the home for national school for the arts from 1963. Since 2004, artists have been studying at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers Multimédia Balla Fesséké Kouyaté. Well known artists within the Malian art scene include Amadou Sanogo, Cheick Diallo and Abdoulaye Konaté, although many others have been enjoying recognition within the international African art scene. These include Daouda Traore, Dramane Diarra, Ibrahim Ballo, Harry Mensah, Dramane Toloba and Famakan Magassa; sculptors Amahiguere Dolo and Ibrahim Bemba Kebe; photographers Seydou Camara, John Kalapo and Marian Niare; Dramane Diarra, Habitatou Yaye Keita, Ange Dakouo, Toussaint Klémagha Dembéle and many more.

Whilst some Malian artists are represented by galleries in Europe, others are also represented by individuals known among many African artists who work with galleries in Europe – these include Rosa-

lie Van Deursen of Urban Africans who represents Dramane Diarra and Daouda Traore, or Floreal Duran who represents Famakan Magassa, Harry Mensah and Dramane Toloba.

Recently, I spoke with Floreal Duran, who aims to open 5 Mondes Gallery in Bamako in 2021. I asked Floreal: “why Malian art?” and he was quick to respond that the Malian way of working is an exception in West Africa. Artists based in Mali work in groups and are related through the materials they use, including textiles, yarn and recovery materials; or through the freedom in the composition they each create and the practise of self-depreciation, and escape of academicism.

Unless the Al Qaeda add to further unrest within the country, events of which have been affecting tourism in Mali, or the implications of Covid-19 continue to hinder of events from taking place, we continue to look forward to visiting the 13th Bamako Encounters as well as the Ségou Art festival, which is set to be held between the 4th and 7th February of 2021. We also look forward to what 5 Mondes Gallery and the various Bamako collectives have to offer in this year ahead. 📍



Harry Mensah, 'Le Désir' 2018, Acrylics on Canvas, 148cm x 127cm. Photo: Marian Niare

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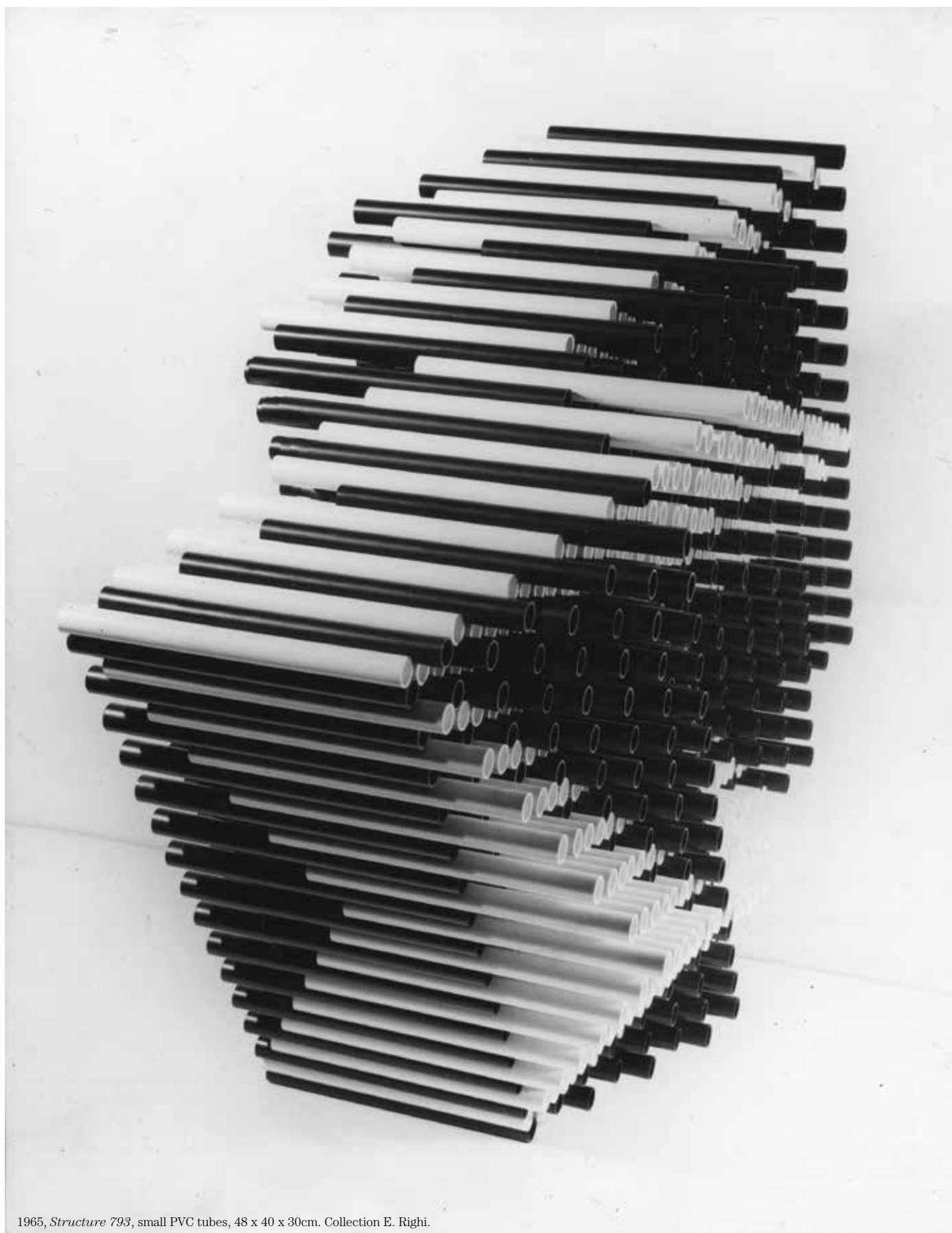
* Exhibition / Design / Milan
December 2020 - March 2021

ITALY

ERICA GIUSTA

Enzo Mari's timeless lessons

The opening of the retrospective at the Triennale (Milan) sadly coincided with the passing of the great Italian designer, Enzo Mari, whose work will always remind audiences of the importance of rigour and seriousness, as well as the infinite opportunities for beauty that accessible, modest and truly sustainable design offers.



1965, *Structure 793*, small PVC tubes, 48 x 40 x 30cm. Collection E. Righi.



1961, *The Nature Series No. 1: the apple with Elio Mari*, silk-screen print on texillina paper, 112 x 112 cm, Danese Milano. Photo: Danese Milano

As philosopher Hannah Arendt once wrote, spatial thinking is political thinking, and so was design thinking to Enzo Mari. Above anything else, to him design was a way to understand the world, to learn about environments and people, and to express a specific, democratic, almost utopian, vision of 'things'. The notoriously stern and short-tempered Italian designer influenced the industry at large with his uncompromising views on what design is – or should be – about.

Among Mari's vast production of design objects, or things, as was his preferred term, the publication *Autoprogettazione* is perhaps one that best illustrates his vision. It was first published in Italy in 1974, at the time of Enrico Berlinguer's most inspired speeches, and initially often underestimated as a dull DIY manual. On the contrary, the book is a guide to experiencing design processes, infused with art, politics and a great deal of empathy.

Autoprogettazione is hard to convey in English; as explained in the introduction to the most recent edition, "It literally means *auto* = self and *progettazione* = design. But the term 'self-design' is misleading since the word 'design' to the general public now signifies a series of superficially decorative objects. By the word 'Autoprogettazione', Mari means an exercise to be carried out individually to improve one's personal understanding of the sincerity behind the project. To make this possible you are guided through an archetypal and very simple technique. Therefore the end product, although usable, is only important because of its educational value."

In 2004, at the peak of the process that saw the design market giving in to formalism, with manufacturing companies becoming glamorous places 'filling up with yuppies, dangerously replacing

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.



genuine entrepreneurs', he dryly placed a paid advertisement in Domus magazine, turning the template of a standard job advert into what reads like a (still) very valid manifesto. "A good project requires a passionate alliance between two people," reads the first footnote to the main text, "a soldier of utopia (the designer), and a tiger of the real world (the entrepreneur). The tiger is always the one holding the power to realise at least a small fragment of utopia. Tigers seem to have gone extinct today". With this *'inserzione a pagamento'* – worthy of the most cunning Duchampian artist – Enzo Mari asserted the importance of the role of the designer as someone who gives form to a collective value, and the role of the entrepreneur as the crucial figure who makes that form, and therefore that value, accessible to all.

He also methodically investigated the relationship between art and design, which culminated in his exhibition, L'ar-

te del Design, at the Galleria di Arte Moderna in Turin, in 2008; in an interview about it (available on YouTube and highly recommended to Italian-speaking readers), he tells the journalist that the commercialisation of design is now similar to that of contemporary art: "limited edition or 'unique' design pieces are now being exhibited in galleries and sold at ridiculous prices, as if they were art pieces; but the designer who makes an 'artistic object' from time to time, for purely marketing and commercial reasons, shows that he or she knows nothing about art. Art is total desperation".

This kind of sweeping statement made Mari internationally famous, loved by some and hated by others, but respected by all. He rejected design as a discipline trying to superficially imitate art, or, even worse, aiming at creating beautiful objects for the sake of it – *l'art pour l'art*. He always remained faithful to his beliefs. For this reason, another

famous Italian designer, Alessandro Mendini, dubbed him "the conscience of design".

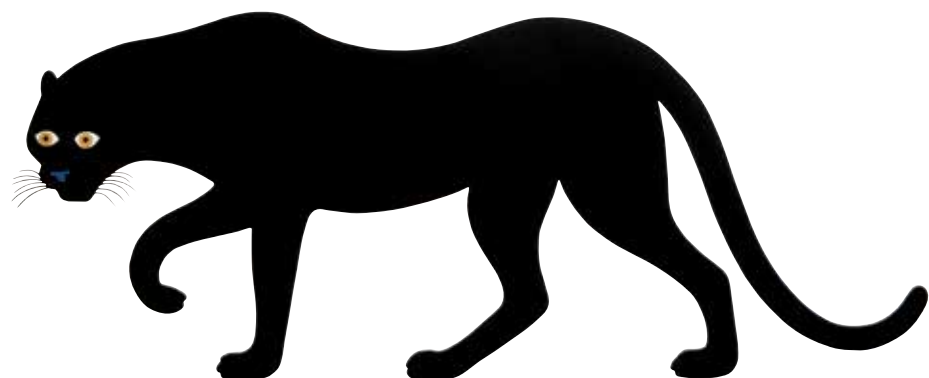
At times, Mari may have appeared too harsh or too angry, even intimidating, but that was because he cared. He genuinely cared about striving for equality through design and contributing to society in meaningful ways. He belonged to a generation of intellectuals who witnessed World War II, considered suffering a hallmark of seriousness, valued work as the most noble activity, and wouldn't think twice before rejecting a job for a matter of principles. These traits, along with a peculiar way of challenging contemporaneity and of resisting its steamrolling commodification-of-everything dynamics, are evident in all of Mari's projects.

His pioneering work (he was talking about sustainability and circularity long before the terms became buzzwords) inspired not only generations of architects and designers, but today's most successful artists and curators as well, including acclaimed Hans Ulrich Obrist, co-curator with Francesca Giacomelli of the current retrospective at the Triennale. The exhibition examines over 60 years of Mari's activity and includes a series of contributions from international artists and designers. Among others: Adelita Husni-Bey, Mimmo Jodice, Adrian Paci, Nanda Vigo, and Virgil Abloh for the merchandising project – which, I believe, Mari himself would have loathed. 🗨



1963, *Formosa*, perpetual wall calendar in plain anodized aluminium and lithographed PVC, 31.5 x 31.5 cm. Danese Milano

Unfortunately, at the time of writing the Triennale is closed due to a new COVID-19 outbreak in the north of Italy. Digital tours and online events have been organised, and more information and regular updates are available on the Triennale website.



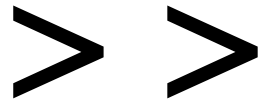
1964, The Nature Series No. 4: the panther with Elio Mari, silk-screen print on texilina paper, 56 x 112 cm, Danese Milano. Photo: Danese Milano



1969, *L'uovo e la gallina*, Emme Edizioni polychrome print on coated paper, 215 x 215 mm. Archivio: E. Mari, City of Milan, CASVA



1958/1969, *La mela e la farfalla*, printing draft, polychrome print on coated paper, 193 x 203 mm. Archivio: E. Mari, City of Milan, CASVA. Photo: Gianluca Di Iorio - © Triennale Milano



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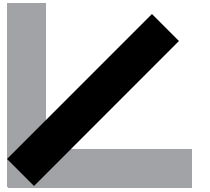
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MATT THOMPSON

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RON ARAD 69 – NEWLANDS HOUSE

The historic Newlands House in England is holding a major retrospective of artist, architect and industrial designer, Ron Arad. Ron Arad 69 will showcase significant works from across Arad's career, and will be curated by artistic director, Simon de Pury. The show will characterise the gallery's debut exhibition devoted to design, and will feature early works from the 1980s and 1990s alongside more recent work from the past two decades. The exhibition will also include unseen releases for 2020. The show coincides with Arad's 69th birthday this year and features approximately 69 studio pieces, several of which have been previously exhibited at the Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Museum of Modern Art (MoMa), New York; the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), London; and the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

*Newlands House, Pound Street, Petworth, England, GU28 0DX
www.newlandshouse.gallery*

Image: London Papardelle, Ron Arad, Image by Elizabeth Zecshin. Photo courtesy of Newlands House



21.11.20
Until 23 January 2021

GHADA AMER: THE WOMEN I KNOW – KEWENIG

Ghada Amer's work will be on show for the second time at the Kewenig gallery in Berlin. Titled, The women I know, the exhibition will feature a new body of work including four moving portraits of Amer's female friends in the artist's signature embroidered painting style, along with a self-portrait in black and white. The exhibition also showcases 'a constellation of ceramics' that surveys the artist's most recent sculptural works. The entire series characterises the latest development of Amer's superimposition of figures and text – a visual approach that she has been experimenting with since 2013. The portraits on show were all executed in Amer's New York studio throughout the Covid-19 lockdown. Ghada Amer (b. 1963 in Cairo, Egypt) lives and works in New York.

*Kewenig, Brüderstr. 10, Berlin, Berlin, 10178
www.kewenig.com*

Image: Self Portrait in Black and White, Ghada Amer, 2020, Acrylic, embroidery and gel medium on canvas 127 x 121.92 cm | 50 x 48 in. Photo courtesy of Kewenig



23.10.20
Until 31 December 2021

DESIGN: 1880 TO NOW – BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Design: 1880 to Now will showcase an exciting range of designers and manufacturers from the late nineteenth century to the present day at a new space within the Brooklyn Museum of Art. The exhibition will form a core area of the museum's design and decorative arts collection, which includes more than 30,000 objects. Design: 1880 to Now will expand upon the traditional Eurocentric narrative, taking a close look at issues of cultural appropriation across decorative arts mediums. The exhibition has been organised by Aric Chen, independent curator and curatorial director, Design Miami, and professor and director, Curatorial Lab, Tongji University, Shanghai; with Shea Spiller, curatorial assistant, Arts of the Americas and Europe, Brooklyn Museum. Additional curatorial contributions have been provided by Catherine Futter, Senior Curator, and Elizabeth St. George, assistant curator, Decorative Arts, Brooklyn Museum.

*200 Eastern Parkway, New York, NY 11238-6052, United States
www.brooklynmuseum.org*

Image: Tejo Remy, designer (Dutch, born 1960). Droog Design, Design Cooperative, manufacturer, Amsterdam, Netherlands (founded 1993). Chest of Drawers, You Can't Lay Down Your Memories, designed 1991, made 2005. Maple, other woods, painted and unpainted metals, plastic, paper, textile, 60 x 60 x 30 in. (152.4 x 152.4 x 76.2 cm). Gift of Joseph F. McCrindle in memory of J. Fuller Feder, 2005.36. © Droog Design. Photo: Brooklyn Museum



03.12.20
Until 06 January 2021

CARMIGNAC PHOTOJOURNALISM AWARD 10TH EDITION: 'AMAZÔNIA' BY TOMMASO PROTTI – SAATCHI GALLERY

The 10th edition of Carmignac Photojournalism Award is dedicated to the Amazon and the issues related to its deforestation. The award is being chaired by Yolanda Kakabadse, and the jury met in November 2019 and awarded Tommaso Protti. From January to July 2019, Protti – an Italian photojournalist – travelled thousands of miles across the Brazilian Amazon to create this reportage with British journalist Sam Cowie. From the eastern region of Maranhão to the western region of Rondônia, through the states of Pará and Amazonas, their images showed life in modern day Brazilian Amazon, where social and humanitarian crises mingle with the ongoing destruction of the rainforest. The photographs raise awareness of the Amazon's erosion due to climate change and human activity, while offering a glimpse into the modern everyday life of one of this vast region.

*Duke of York's HQ, King's Road, London, SW3 4SQ, United Kingdom
www.saatchigallery.com*

Image: Arariboia, Maranhao, 2019. A member of the Guajajara forest guard in a moment of sad silence at the sight of a toppled tree cut down by suspected illegal loggers on the Arariboia indigenous reserve in Maranhao State. With deep cuts to Brazil's environmental and indigenous protection bodies in recent years, tribespeople across the Amazon are increasingly forming vigilantes. © Tommaso Protti for Fondation Carmignac Image courtesy of Saatchi Gallery, London



12.11.20
Until 31 January 2021

STEVE MCQUEEN: YEAR 3 – TATE BRITAIN

Turner Prize-winning artist and Oscar-winning filmmaker Steve McQueen unveils his epic portrait of London's Year 3 pupils. Explored through the vehicle of the traditional school class photograph, this vast new art work is one of the most ambitious portraits of children ever undertaken in the UK. It offers us a glimpse of the capital's future, a hopeful portrait of a generation to come. Steve McQueen invited every Year 3 pupil in London to have their photograph taken by a team of specially trained Tate photographers. They included children from state primaries, independent schools, faith schools, special schools, pupil referral units and home-educated pupils. Year 3 at Tate Britain is curated by Clarrie Wallis, Senior Curator of Contemporary British Art and Nathan Ladd, Assistant Curator of Contemporary British Art; and is produced by Erin Barnes and Gemma Clarke. The outdoor exhibition is curated by James Lingwood, Co-Director, Artangel and Cressida Day, Managing Director, Artangel. Steve McQueen Year 3 is a partnership between Tate, Artangel and A New Direction with collaboration from media partner BBC London and film partner Into Film.

*Tate Britain, Millbank, London, SW1P 4RG, United Kingdom
www.tate.org.uk*

Image: Installation view, Steve McQueen Year 3 at Tate Britain © Tate



16.11.20
Until 11 January 2021

FORZARE IL PAESAGGIO – Z20 SARA ZANIN GALLERY

The illusory potential of photography marks the research of Silvia Camporesi (Forlì, 1973), and is developed through the suggestions of three Italian places which, due to their characteristics, respond to particular features of the uncommon. Each showcases a radical intervention that has changed the fate of the place in itself. The three environments are documented through photographs, videos and archive materials that highlight the ambiguity between reality and fiction, the need to search for fragments of memories, the consequences of a certain unbridled anthropization, and the curiosity that is hidden in contexts on the edges of normality. Utopian atmospheres are suspended and crystallized, where landscape is artificially conceived from scratch, unhinged to avoid abandonment, or submerged as the only way to avoid oblivion and its disappearance from geographical maps. This exhibition presents an alteration landscape that intersects with the possibilities of photographic manipulation, questioning the infallibility of this medium to faithfully reproduce reality.

*z2o Sara Zanin Gallery, Via della Vetrina, 21, Rome, Lazio 00186, Italy
www.z2ogalleria.it*

Image: Il paese che emerge #2, Silvia Camporesi, 2020, Inkjet print on fine art paper, on dibond, with Nielsen Natura/34 frame and glass, 40 x 65cm. Photo courtesy of z2o Sara Zanin Gallery

GABRIELE SPILLER is a journalist with an MA in Art Education. She lives in Berlin and Ghajnsielem. Her book *50 Reasons to Love Gozo* is an expression of her enthusiasm for Malta's culture.



GERMANY

GABRIELE SPILLER

Thinking about *his* Mortality

The creations of the German artist Philipp Fürhofer are causing an international sensation. Currently, his dystopian scenes are touring from Montréal via Munich to the Louvre in Paris in an exhibition about the fashion designer Thierry Mugler. Artpaper visited Philipp in his Berlin studio.

With Philipp Fürhofer, there is always something going on. Nevertheless, throughout the conversation in his tidy workshop behind Berlin's main railway station Hauptbahnhof, he is a calming influence. While one of his lightboxes is turning on, his alert mind formulates an artistic vision: "in drawings, I experiment a lot; I try to combine different techniques and media that don't really belong together – so it's always the dissolution of the static," he says quite appropriately. As if the pictorial design with oil paint, Plexiglas, mirrors and cables did not exhaust him, he also creates opulent stage sets for operas. Everything has several layers for Philipp Fürhofer.

He grew up in a family of teachers in Augsburg, Bavaria – he graduated from an artistic grammar school, learned piano and attended Wagner operas as a pupil. But the small town became too small for him, and he travelled to Berlin to study fine art. A story like many, if it weren't for the heart valve transplant, which helped him at the age of 24 to overcome a life-threatening congenital heart defect.

Death is negated in our society

This existential incision into his body made the budding artist think about his mortality. Thus, the life-threatening diagnosis is still present in the 38-year-old's works today: very strikingly as an X-ray, or as cyborgs, persons equipped with implants, that populate Fürhofer's

creations. "In art, the subject must never become private," he says. "But it is a reflection of our own mortality, just as religion used to take it over"

Fürhofer gets into philosophy: "there is a negation of death in our society. We can't rationalise it away, even if we digitally store ourselves to infinity." As an affected person, he asked himself what the insertion of artificial heart valves would make him. Transplants could lead to absurd moments, but on the other hand, they saved lives, as they did with him. So the fusion of organic and technical elements became the leitmotif of his work.

The woman as a fashion robot

A current example is the Thierry Mugler exhibition, *Couturissime*, in the Kunsthalle Munich (showing until 28 February 2021). Fürhofer has designed rooms for this internationally touring retrospective of the French fashion designer, director, photographer and perfumer. One enters a semi-dark, dystopian scene described as *Gynoid Couture & Futuriste*. The woman as a fashion robot is a characteristic of Mugler's creations. One thinks of his iconic music video for George Michael's *Too Funky* (1992), in which the most famous top models presented their luxury bodies in robot costumes. These strong, comic-like, overdrawn amazons walk the catwalk in bustiers seamlessly fitted to their bodies – the chrome parts shine like car bodies.

Mugler's perfect creations, in turn, appealed to Fürhofer to break the effect with his "simple, trashy means". For the exhibition staging, he installed neon tubes, painted mirrors and a weathered metal wall riddled with "bullet holes", through which light breaks from behind, "like stars, like the cosmos". The transformation of the scrap into something aesthetic is what interests him. "Junk has its own beauty," he says. "These are



Photo: Steven Kohlstock

romantic utopias in the best sense of the word: our surroundings are over-developed, but we still have a longing for the environment".

With his depictions, the artist challenges the viewer to perceive himself – in an artificially over-moulded environment or an artificially designed body: "That's not bad, you just have to know about it and know your limits," he says. People's "self-produced dung", the waste culture, also stimulates his creativity. Despite some gloomy images, Fürhofer is a positive-thinking person.

Reverse glass paintings for private collectors

Smaller works, for contemporary art lovers, will be shown again in 2021 at his Berlin gallery Judin in Potsdamer Straße. Prices start at around €2,500 for a smaller reverse glass painting on Plexiglas; for a wall-dominating lightbox they are €60,000 and more. This year, his multifaceted work was honoured in an illustrated book published by the

curator Thierry-Maxime Lorient. (*Dis Illusions* is its title and he was able to count on contributions from the art historian Sir Norman Rosenthal and even the singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright. This shows the breadth of the 'Fürhofer fans' who feel addressed by his art.

While his opera productions, like *Carmen*, are shifted into the future due to Corona, Fürhofer finds more time to work in his studio. He tries not to give his works a daily touch, but to continue to depict human sensitivities. "It would be too narrow for me to pin it on Covid-19," he says. "After all, we are not immortal, even if the pandemic is over, the finite nature of resources will always remain there – as danger and vulnerability." ●

Exhibition: Thierry Mugler; Couturissime, Kunsthalle Munich, until 28 February 2021. www.kunsthalle-muc.de. From June 2021 at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs/Palais du Louvre, Paris. www.philippfuerhofer.de



*** Spotlight / Events / Malta**
December 2020 - March 2021

**VISUAL ART
EXHIBITIONS**

A selection of curated events in Malta

12.20-03.21

Events until April 2021



03.12.20

Until 23 December 2020

**SERENITY &
UPHEAVAL**

An exhibition of 42 oil paintings by Catherine Cavallo representing the pockets of serenity that are to be found amidst all of life's upheavals. Spread across all four art galleries of Palazzo de La Salle, viewing allows for easy social distancing, on top of other safety precautions such as the use of masks, hand sanitisers, and the checking of temperatures.

Where: *The Malta Society of Arts, Palazzo De La Salle, Republic Street, Valletta. 9am – 7pm*

www.catherinecavallo.com/home

Image: *Pastizzi at Crystal Palace, oil on canvas by Catherine Cavallo*



07.01.21

Until 14 January 2021

TWILIGHT

The first exhibition at the MSA Galleries during 2021 Will be a solo show by artist Madeleine Gera, with a selection of 22 oils on canvas featuring interiors, landscapes and still life. The interiors paintings characterise a new departure for Gera, each inspired by pandemic lockdown months of seclusion and introspection, where she still worked productively albeit under very novel circumstances. www.madeleinegera.com

Where: *Malta Society of Arts, Palazzo de La Salle, 219 Republic Street, Valletta*
Monday to Friday: 9am - 7pm; Saturdays: 9am - 1.30pm

www.madeleinegera.com

Image: *Twilight, oil on canvas, Madeleine Gera*



05.02.21

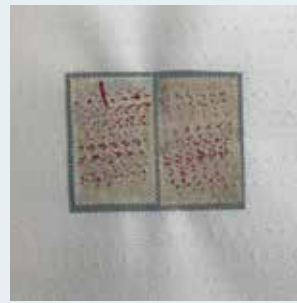
Until 21 March 2021

ART + FEMINISM

Gustav Courbet's *The Origin of the World*, is possibly the better known of historic paintings to audaciously depict and place female genitalia in the foreground of the work, thereby elevating it to subject matter. Whilst sexually charged, the anonymous woman's body and stance, do not attain erotic or pornographic status. The work is simply a crude and unequivocal portrayal of the sensuousity of a (female) body in space, powerfully modelled and accentuated through light and shade. This is precisely how and why {v} was conceived, as an overdue attempt to both celebrate and demystify the female form, by overtly choosing to portray the vagina in literal, or abstracted terms, or even by connotation. Forming part of Spazju Kreattiv's annual Art +Feminism programme, the collective multimedia visual exhibition will be accompanied by ancillary events, which will both foster and encourage debate and dialogue on, and surrounding the subject. Commissioned by Spazju Kreattiv, this exhibition is curated by Lisa Gwen Andrews in collaboration with Wiki Community Malta and Wiki Foundation.

Where: *Spazju Kreattiv (Space C), St James Cavalier, Valletta*
Tuesday to Friday 9am - 9pm; Saturday & Sunday 10am - 9pm

Image: *Ritty Tacsum, digital collage, 2017*



27.02.21

Until 30 April 2021

ISLACE

Lace has been used in the Maltese Islands since the time of the Knights, and today artists and designers continue to appreciate the timeless skill of lace-making by translating and transforming it in new ways. Art practitioners are using themes that incorporate ideas around gender, including domesticity, sexuality, and erotica, whilst designers are reinterpreting intricate structures of lace exploring and subverting tradition. The two artists featured in this exhibition, Dominique De Beir and Austin Camilleri, draw on history, traditions, behaviour, and human relationships of their own environment, giving a special depth to their work, according to a ritual where the corporeal, the gesture, the sacred and the beliefs are often exacerbated, as a reaction to certain events on which they question us.

Where: *Entrance hall of The Cugo Gran Macina, Senglea*

Image: *Dawra, cotton linen handmade lace and digital embroidery, 2014, 45cm. Photo: AUSTINCAMILLERISTUDIO*



04.03.21

until 25 March 2021

HOMEBOUND

Anna Calleja will be exhibiting a collection of paintings and prints in her first solo exhibition. Her current body of work explores the domestic space, using the process of painting and printmaking to create quiet moments of introspection. Calleja draws on childhood fairy tales, historic tropes in figurative painting and her sensitivity towards political and social issues. Distinctive qualities characterise her work, including muted earthy colours and her ability to convey textures of home, from the way a mirror fogs up to a soft woolly jumper.

Where: *Malta Society of Arts, Palazzo De La Salle, Republic Street, Valletta*
Monday to Saturday 9am-7pm and Saturdays 9am-1.30pm

www.annacalleja.co.uk

Image: *Alone in Quarantine, oil on canvas, by Anna Calleja*



05.03.21

Until 11 April 2021

**LIGHT IS TIME
THINKING ABOUT
ITSELF**

Light is Time Thinking About Itself examines landscapes without the presence of humankind. The artist, Antje Liemann, takes the recent lockdown – with home-isolation ad absurdum – as the starting point for imaging a differently calibrated world, and even looking forward to the end of humankind's domination over the earth. Through interactions with experts and artists, the project asks if there is still time left to rethink our relationship with the world, or if the belief in the sovereignty of humankind has brought us to the brink of collapse of our living conditions. Through two-dimensional work, installations and a film documentary, Antje Liemann imagines post-human scenarios – including a Malta colonised by bee-like hybrid beings, and once-extinct orchids. The artist attempts to bring us closer to the reality of the fragility of our existence. Curated by Margerita Pulè.

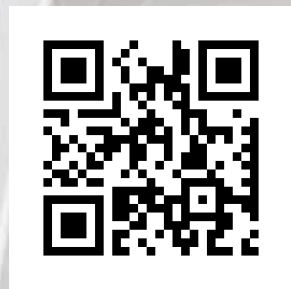
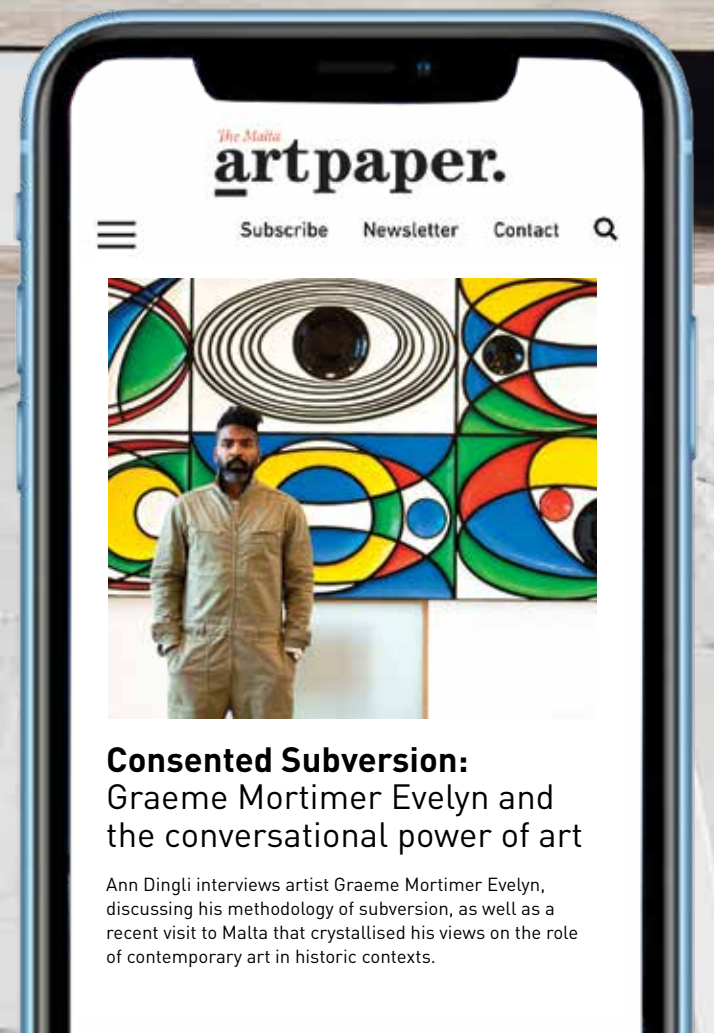
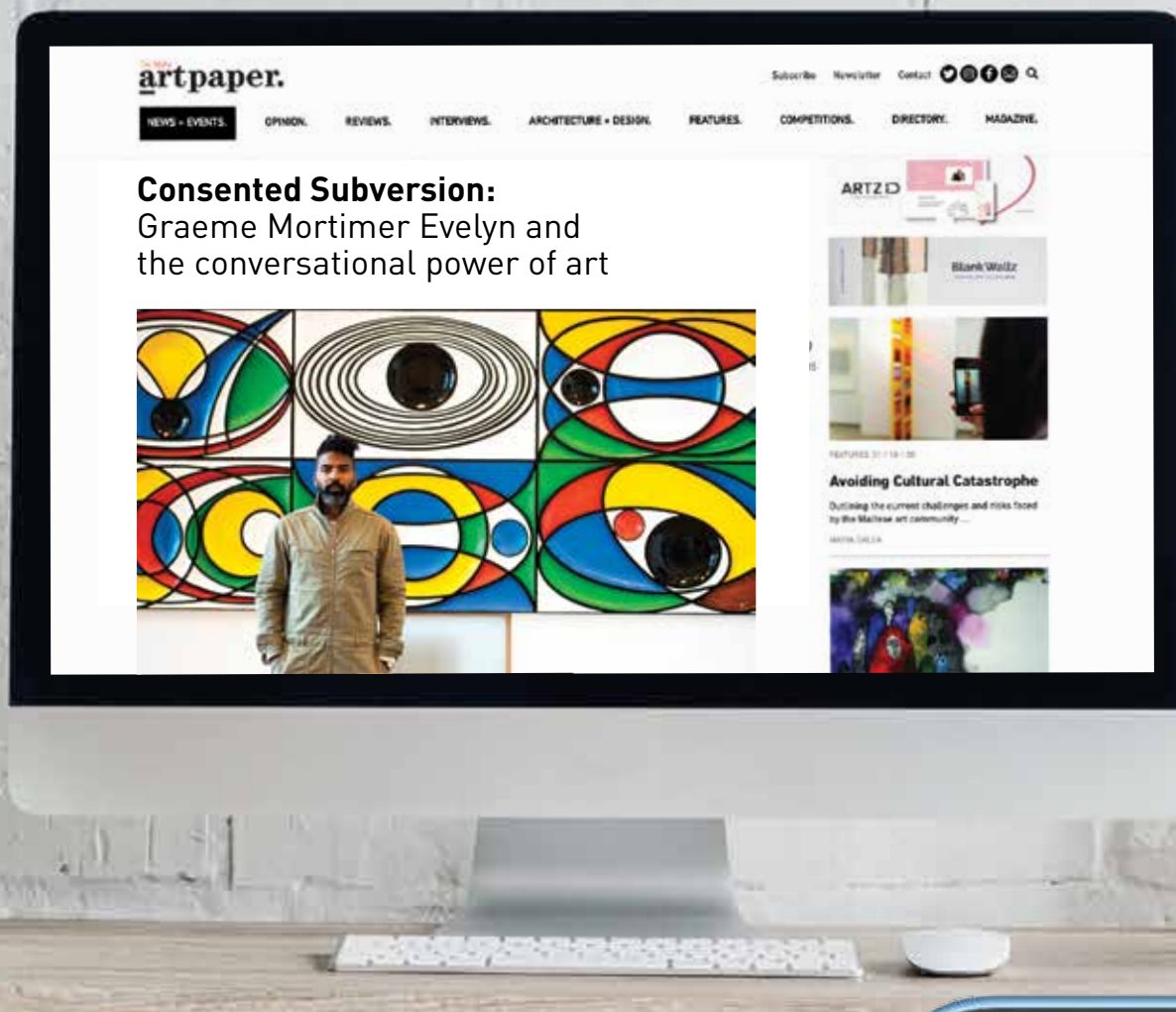
Where: *Community Space at MUŻA - The Malta National Community Art Museum, Valletta*

Image: *Antje Liemann, Fungus Rock with Bees, oil on canvas, 2020. Courtesy of the artist.*



The Malta

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Consented Subversion: Graeme Mortimer Evelyn and the conversational power of art

Ann Dingli interviews artist Graeme Mortimer Evelyn, discussing his methodology of subversion, as well as a recent visit to Malta that crystallised his views on the role of contemporary art in historic contexts.



HAPPY HEARTS COLLECTION

Chopard

THE ARTISAN OF EMOTIONS – SINCE 1860



EDWARDS LOWELL
SINCE 1925

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