

DIN L-ART HELWA

National Trust of Malta

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VIGILO



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Din l-Art Helwa is a non-governmental organisation whose objective is to safeguard the cultural heritage and natural environment of the nation.

Din l-Art Helwa functions as the National Trust of Malta, restoring cultural heritage sites on behalf of the State, the Church, and private owners and managing and maintaining those sites for the benefit of the general public.

Din l-Art Helwa strives to awaken awareness of cultural heritage and environmental matters by a policy of public education and by highlighting development issues to ensure that the highest possible standards are maintained and that local legislation is strictly enforced.



Din l-Art Helwa

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Francesco Zahra in his studio, from the Heritage Saved Watercolour Collection by Kenneth Zammit Tabona.



FRONT COVER

Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt and his first tower by
Kenneth Zammit Tabona



BACK COVER

The statue of St Roque during restoration
Photo: Stanley Farrugia Randon



45 Years at *Din l-Art Helwa*

Petra Bianchi
Executive President of *Din l-Art Helwa*

Organisations can only endure and continue to be successful over many years if they are able to adapt to the changing world around them. Nothing ever stays quite the same. Heritage is no exception and, as in all other fields, attitudes towards heritage have changed significantly over the years.

Traditional notions of heritage were mainly concerned with key buildings and sites of exceptional historic or aesthetic merit. However, over the years concepts of heritage have expanded enormously, and conservation practices have also evolved.

Today, we do not speak only of the value of specific buildings as symbols of national or artistic achievement, we also speak of contexts and 'streetscapes' and of urban regeneration. We look at rural, vernacular, industrial, modern and intangible heritage, as well as many other kinds of heritage. Threats to our natural heritage have also catapulted environmental issues to the top of the agenda.

The natural and built heritage is now valued not only for its intrinsic worth, but also as a factor influencing economic progress, education and well-being in the community, and as a major factor in the attempt to achieve sustainable development.

Heritage is no longer simply about conservation, but also about integrating heritage into public life and reassessing its value to the community.

The government and its agencies, non-governmental organisations, businesses, local councils and civil society are all partners in the challenge to understand, appreciate and conserve our heritage, and to identify best practice in ways of engaging our heritage for the benefit of the community.

Heritage has many dimensions and implications. We do not want to fossilise it on the one hand, nor over-commercialise it on the other, but instead we wish to integrate heritage into the community in a meaningful way that improves our quality of life and sense of belonging, and also adds value to the economy.

One of *Din l-Art Helwa's* main activities is the restoration and management of historic properties. Over the years, we have completed many projects, and the list is always growing. Our experience in the field makes us feel confident that we are capable of taking on ever more ambitious new ventures. This year we look forward to commencing work at Our Lady of Victory





left & opposite:
Details for the vault frescos,
Our Lady of Victory Church

church in Valletta. The deed of guardianship for this property has been approved and we are only waiting for the green light to get started, continuing the work initiated by the Valletta Rehabilitation Project.

Apart from new projects, we are also discussing ways in which to improve the management of the properties we have already restored. We would like to enhance the visitor experience at a number of our key properties in Malta and Gozo.

Finding appropriate ways of keeping buildings 'alive' is one of the great challenges faced by the heritage sector. As concepts of heritage are always widening, so are the number of buildings and sites that require attention. If heritage sites are not visited or put to some use, they quickly begin to crumble again and are a constant drain on resources.

Heritage management is not about resisting all change and keeping everything

exactly as it is. That is impossible. Change is inevitable, so in practice heritage management must be about managing change, by identifying and exploring the most appropriate ways of adapting our heritage to the contemporary world in a sensitive and meaningful way.

2010 is the 45th anniversary of our organisation, which was founded in 1965. All four former presidents of *Din l-Art Helwa* attended the Annual General Meeting in February, and are all still Council members and regularly participate in *Din l-Art Helwa* activities and initiatives. To me, this is a potent and convincing sign of the strength of continuity and success of the organisation. Under their stewardship, *Din l-Art Helwa* has endured, changed and grown over a period of almost half a century – and long may the organisation continue to act as a strong and trustworthy champion of Malta's beloved and rich heritage.

"Finding appropriate ways of keeping buildings 'alive' is one of the great challenges faced by the heritage sector."

below:
Industrial heritage buildings, dock No 1, Bormla



bottom:
Pristine Dahlet Qorrot, Gozo



The Environmental and Development Planning Act

Martin Scicluna

Vice-President of Din l-Art Helwa

We have been here before. Soon after the cataclysmic act of vandalism at the Mnajdra Temples in April 2001, the government was galvanised into action to bring forward a long-awaited Bill to reorganise Malta's cultural heritage. Although *Din l-Art Helwa* had a number of reservations about the final Bill that was enacted by Parliament, principally to do with the top-heavy structure envisaged (which was later amended) and the paucity of resources for the Superintendent of Cultural Heritage – still prevalent eight years later – it backed the laws that were finally passed by Parliament.

The Cultural Heritage Act has been bedevilled by the gap between the law and the application of the legislation enacted. A good piece of legislation has not been whole-heartedly supported either by the requisite resources (for both Heritage Malta and the Superintendent) or the political will to ensure that cultural heritage is protected in the face of relentless construction development.

The Bill to reform Mepa – the Environmental and Development Planning Act – is following a similar pattern. After a 10-year period when responsibility for Mepa fell directly under arguably the weakest Minister for the Environment in Malta's history (now, ironically, still the Minister responsible for several environmental issues, such as water resources and climate change), the Prime Minister, fighting for his political life at the last general election, promised to take the reform of Mepa directly under his wing.

After a gestation period of two years he – or rather his enterprising Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and, latterly, the Environment – has come up with a Bill which, subject to one or two omissions which are discussed below, is a good and workable piece of



ODZ should remain un-developed. Not so in Nadur, Gozo

Urban sprawl needs to be kept in check.

Photo: Ryan Shane Barbara

legislation. It should be a considerable improvement on the current Development Planning Act which it replaces.

The issue, as in the case of the Cultural Heritage Act and so much other legislation in Malta, is whether it will be properly and effectively implemented. The Bill opens with a declaration that “it is the duty of government to protect the environment” and then sets out clearly the admirable objects and reasons for the Bill. But the crux of its success will not be these fine intentions, but whether government is prepared to devote adequate resources to Mepa and exercise the political will not to undermine its work by its actions.



The reduction of Mepa's subvention by several million euros does not augur well. If Mepa is not provided with adequate resources, and fails to attract high calibre staff to its ranks, it simply cannot do its job adequately. If this proves to be the case in practice, no amount of legislative changes or political rhetoric about “reducing the environmental deficit” will change the current abysmal state of the environment.

As said, the Mepa Reform Bill is generally a good piece of legislation. It has incorporated the former Environmental Protection Act and the Development Planning Act into one Act quite effectively.

It sensibly leaves both environmental protection and development planning within the one authority. While there is inevitably a creative tension between planning and environmental protection, to separate the two functions into two free-standing entities, as some have proposed, would undermine the close communication and coordination between the two halves of the same problem on matters of common concern. This would be a retrograde step.

Areas of disagreement will always exist, but it is far better that such disagreements should be resolved in one place under the aegis of one leadership structure, rather than with two entities working towards different targets or agendas, as might occur if they were formally established as two separate bodies.

The essential challenge now is in making the integrated organisation work better, not in its de-merger. This means ensuring that the environmental directorate is given the human and financial resources to do its job properly.

The current Bill, however, contains one serious omission. This concerns the position of the National Commission for Sustainable Development and the need for a legally binding National Sustainability Plan, which has been omitted from this legislation. We have been assured that a separate Bill on sustainability is in the process of being drafted. This is crucial. The principles of sustainable development need to be placed at the centre of government, into all decisions and policies and the way government operates. A workable National Sustainability Plan – affecting, as it will, every aspect of Malta's social, economic and environmental development – will be vital. It is hoped that the new Bill will be enacted with urgency.

There is also a section of the Mepa reform Bill that needs strengthening. This concerns the reference to the new authority being kept “fully informed of government policies relevant to development”. While this is fine so far as it goes, the Bill makes no mention of how this is to be done. It would seem sensible to place a formal obligation on government to produce a binding annual development plan (perhaps as part of the Sustainability Plan) which would oblige Mepa to adhere to specific actions. There is otherwise the danger of policy being made on a political whim, as has happened in the past, most notoriously with the extension to the construction development zone.

In the final analysis, there are probably five tests that will determine the success or failure of this new legislation, and hence the success or failure of the promised reform of Mepa.

First - will the monstrous abuse of outside development zone (ODZ) be curbed? This is the litmus test. If Mepa does not get this right, the Bill will be deemed to have failed.

Second - if enforcement – which has ostensibly been beefed up in the Bill – is not effective, the Bill will have failed. This will require resources and greater will-power and political courage.

Third - if the environmental directorate is not given more weight – and more resources – this Bill will have failed.

Fourth - parliamentary scrutiny by the Standing Committee on Environmental and Development Planning must use the teeth it has been given by the Bill.

Fifth - last, but not least, the calibre of the members of the Mepa Boards is paramount. Passing a good Bill is all very well, but if the decisions taken by those entrusted with the task are flawed, the reform of Mepa will have been to no avail.

Din l-Art Helwa wants Mepa to succeed. By virtue of its wide responsibilities, Mepa probably exercises the greatest influence on the quality of the environment in Malta. We sincerely hope that this Bill will give it the tools to do its job effectively.

" ... the crux of its success will not be fine intentions, but whether government is prepared to devote adequate resources to Mepa and exercise the political will not to undermine its work by its actions."

below:
Vanishing heritage in Kalkara



Din l-Art Helwa Restorations

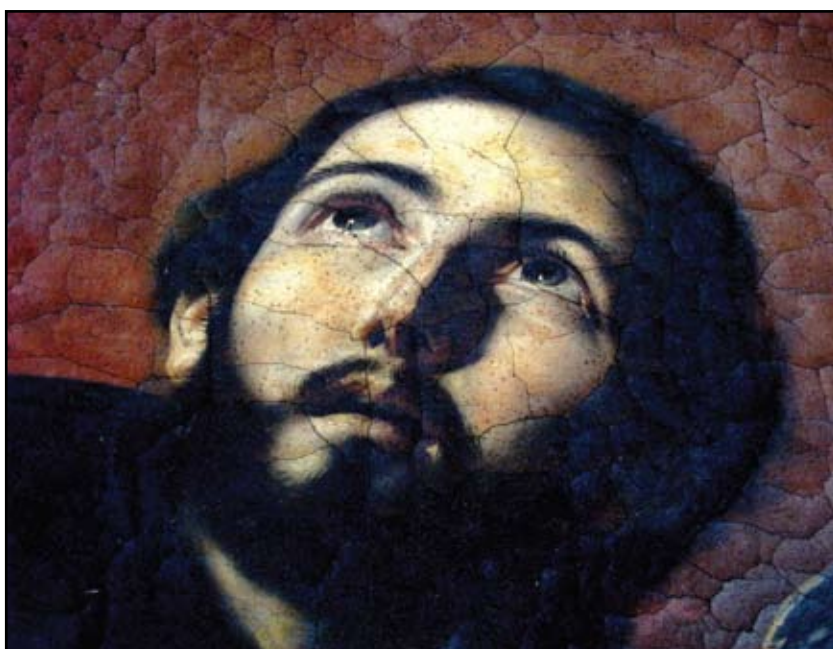
The St Francis Xavier Painting by Mattia Preti

Maria Grazia Cassar



The painting in the restoration workshop at St John's Co-cathedral

Detail of St Francis Xavier



Din l-Art Helwa has sponsored the restoration of an important painting by Mattia Preti, the St Francis Xavier, in the Chapel of Aragon at St John's Co-Cathedral. The restoration work is well underway, and the following is an interview with Giuseppe Mantella who, with his team of collaborators, has been entrusted with this work.

Please tell us what is so special about this painting?

It is, quite certainly, the first painting by Mattia Preti to have reached Malta, from Naples, when, in 1658, Grand Master Martin De Redin commissioned it as part of the embellishment programme for the chapel of his Langue. The choice of subject was, apart from the obvious devotion of the Grand Master to this saint, an allusion to the then recent institution of St Francis Xavier and St Firmin as co-patrons of Navarre, the birth-place of De Redin. The Grand Master was keen to promote the cult of St Francis Xavier in Malta, and insisted that the painting follow the same iconography as that which the Jesuit Father *Marcello Mastrilli*, to whom the saint had appeared and miraculously healed, took with him to battle, at the head of the Spanish Troops in Japan. The saint is depicted wearing the Jesuit habit, and clutches his pilgrim's staff while looking up at the monogram *IHS* which appears in the sky. There is a very subtle underlying connotation in all this: Grand Master De Redin wanted to identify himself with the heroic battle against the infidel and, most importantly, with the saint himself, in view of the fact that he was also related to him!

Did you find it in a very bad condition?

Well, yes. As you can see the surface of the painting is cracked all over as a result of the absorption of humidity and shrinkage of the canvas support. In the relining process, we will stretch it back to smooth out the cracks in the paint layers, making them nearly invisible. Otherwise, we can say that it is in a good state, 'intact', with very little re-touching done to it over the years and practically no loss of the painted surface. This is important from a conservation point of view, as minimal intervention is necessary. Also, we can appreciate Mattia Preti's painting technique and the colours he uses – that is his 'palette' – knowing with certainty that they are original. In fact, we are studying the composition of the pigments used in this painting, through a state-of-the-art, non-invasive technique. This documentation is very important and will help us understand the painting better, as well as allowing us to make comparisons with his other works.

Can you give us an example?

One thing that immediately strikes us is the vivaciousness of the colours in this 'Neapolitan' painting, which gradually darken and become more 'Mediterranean' during the course of his long career in Malta. The scientific analysis of the pigments will produce conclusive deductions.



Detail of Angel's face

All photos are by the author with the kind permission of St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation

below left:
Serena Sechi pointing out the "pentimento"

below right:
Anna Borzomati working of the painting

bottom:
Giuseppe Mantella, Prof. Maurizio Diana, Prof. Stefano Ridolfi and Serena Sechi during the insitu non-destructive diagnostic tests on the pigments



What other investigative tests have you done on this painting?

We have taken x-ray images of the painting which show us some changes that Preti made during the realisation of the work. Apart from the 'pentimento' which is the angel's hand pointing to the monogram, there are other adjustments to various parts of the painting. Knowing about them gives us a further insight into how he worked.

What other observations have you made so far?

Something that was noticed when the painting was removed from its frame, was that it had been reduced in size by about 15cm all around. This was probably done immediately, during its framing, as the frame itself covers some important parts of the painting, including the edges of the Angel's wing and the monogram IHS. It is evident that the painting was intended to appear larger, since the painted areas literally wrap around the stretcher.

Thank you, Giuseppe. We look forward to seeing the end result soon. This is the first time that Din I-Art Helwa has sponsored the restoration of a painting at St John's, and we hope that it will pave the way for future restoration work and collaboration with the St John's Co-Cathedral Foundation.

Din l-Art Helwa AGM

The Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* was held on 27th February 2010.

During the meeting, Dr Petra Bianchi was appointed Executive President, taking over from Martin Galea who relinquished the role at the end of his term in office. Ian Camilleri has taken over from Edward Xuereb as Secretary-General.

All members will doubtless join the Council in thanking both Martin and Edward for the splendid work they have done for DLH over the last few years, during which they have taken the organisation forward through difficult times in the world of conservation, and will also wish Dr Bianchi every success in her new role.

In her address, Petra Bianchi focused on two main issues that are dear to all DLH's members: the state of the environment and the organisation's position on the plan for the entrance to Valletta (see pg. 12 & pgs 27/28).

The AGM also gave DLH the opportunity to take 45th Anniversary commemorative photographs of all the Executive Presidents and Vice Presidents present. It was inspiring to see four former Executive Presidents – Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, Prof. Anthony Bonanno, Martin Scicluna and Martin Galea, who have spanned 45 years at the helm of the organisation – together. This underlined the tremendous commitment and continuity *Din l-Art Helwa* has shown in nearly half a century of work for the preservation of Malta's heritage.

The Vice Presidents present were Paul Ascjak, Eric Parnis, Cettina Caruana Curran and, again Martin Scicluna and Petra Bianchi – together with newly-elected Simone Mizzi – and Dame Blanche Martin, who was also presented with a token in recognition of a life-time's service to *Din l-Art Helwa*.

The four resolutions that were approved during the meeting highlight the need for the relevant authorities to make serious plans to secure our natural resources.



Founder President Judge Maurice Caruana Curran (seated left), Professor Anthony Bonanno (standing right), Martin Scicluna (standing centre), Martin Galea (standing left) and incoming president Dr Petra Bianchi (seated right).

Photo - Joe Chetcuti



Edward Xuereb outgoing Secretary General, was presented with a commemorative plate thanking him for his many years of service.



Among others the AGM resolved that the restoration, rehabilitation and re-use of existing buildings rather than their demolition and replacement should be promoted.

Annual General Meeting 2010 Resolutions

Sustainable Fishing

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held in Valletta on Saturday 27th February 2010 that, in view of the fact that unsustainable fishing practices are decimating Malta's fisheries, destroying marine habitats and killing large quantities of unwanted fish and other marine animals each year, the government is hereby urged to ensure that all fishing operations are run at a sustainable level so that fishing can continue indefinitely, and to manage the structure, productivity, function and diversity of the ecosystem on which fishery depends, and to maintain and enforce a management system that meets all local, national and international laws.

Sajd Sostenibbli

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' *Din l-Art Helwa*, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fis-27 ta' Frar 2010, *Din l-Art Helwa* ssostni li xi prattiċi ta'sajd qegħdin jeqirdu din l-industrija għaliex joqtlu ammonti kbar ta' ħut u kreaturi oħra tal-baħar. Għalhekk il-gvern għandu jara li s-sajd għandu jkun sostenibbli biex il-ħut jibqa' jirriproduċi u għandu jara li l-produttività u d-diversità ta' l-ekosistemi li fuqhom jiddependi s-sajd għandhom jissafħu u jara li l-ligijiet nazzjonali u internazzjonali għandhom jitharsu.

The Re-Use of Limestone

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held in Valletta on Saturday 27th February 2010 that, in view of the fact that globigerina limestone which is an integral part of Malta's unique architectural landscape is a limited resource yet still the cheapest building material available in spite of dwindling supply, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority is hereby urged to ensure that policies to protect this valuable resource are put in place to encourage the re-use of excavated stone on building sites as well as the recycling of other material resulting from demolition, and to promote the restoration, rehabilitation and re-use of existing buildings rather than their demolition and replacement as a means of safeguarding the fast dwindling and already depleted resource of natural limestone.

Ir-Riċiklaġġ tal-Ġebbla tal-Franka

B'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' *Din l-Art Helwa*, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fis-27 ta' Frar 2010, *Din l-Art Helwa* thegħegħ lill-Awtorità tal-Ambjent u l-Ippjanar biex theggi politika li tiprotegi l-ġebbla tal-franka li tiffirma parti integrali mill-ambjent arkitettoniku ta' pajjiżna, u tinkoraġġixxi r-riċiklaġġ ta' din il-ġebbla kif ukoll ta' materjal ieħor li jinqala' minn postijiet li jitwaqqgħu. Għandha wkoll tippromwovi r-restawr, riabilitazzjoni u l-użu mill-ġdid ta' postijiet eżistenti minflok jitwaqqgħu l-postijiet u għalhekk jinħela dan ir-rizors naturali f'pajjiżna.

Pollution and Health

It is hereby resolved by the Annual General Meeting of *Din l-Art Helwa* held in Valletta on Saturday 27th February 2010 that, in view of the fact that the links between environmental pollution and health problems, including allergies such as asthma, infections, chronic disease of the lungs, foetal abnormalities and cancer, are increasingly obvious, the government is hereby urged to ensure that there is stricter control and enforcement of existing regulations in order to reduce dust emissions from quarries and building sites and to abolish from the roads the multitude of vehicles which are emitting toxic fumes, as well as initiatives to implement the long-awaited public transport reforms and to encourage the use of alternative energy with particular regard to energy efficient building practices.

It-Tniġġis u s-Saħħa

Minhabba li hemm relazzjoni qawwija dejjem tikber bejn it-tniġġis u l-effetti fuq is-saħħa bhall-ażżma, infezzjonijiet, mard kroniku tal-pulmun, mard fil-fetu u l-kanċer, b'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' *Din l-Art Helwa*, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fis-27 ta' Frar 2010, *Din l-Art Helwa* thegħegħ lill-gvern biex tinforza regolamenti eżistenti fuq trabijiet li jtiru minn barrieri u postijiet taħt kostruzzjoni u jitneħħew mit-toroq il-karozzi li għadhom inigġsu. Għandu jwettaq mill-aktar fis ir-riformi tat-trasport pubbliku u jinkoraġġixxi l-użu ta' enerġija alternattiva kif ukoll prattiċi tajba fil-bini tad-djar biex jonqos l-użu tal-enerġija artifiċjali.

Water Resources

It was hereby resolved at *Din l-Art Helwa's* Annual General Meeting in Valletta on 27th February 2010, in view of the fact that the dire state of our water resources and specifically the depletion of our resources in a very short time span (estimated at between five to 15 years time) is considered to be the biggest environmental threat that Malta faces if the current extraction rate is maintained, the government should finalise the National Water Policy and in line with the EU Water Directive implement all measures necessary to reverse the current trend and to preserve this precious resource.

Rizorsi tal-Ilma f'Pajjiżna

Minhabba li r-rizorsi naturali tal-ilma qegħdin dejjem jonqsu u huwa smat li fi żmien bejn 5 u 15-il sena dawn ir-rizorsi jispiċċaw, b'rizoluzzjoni waqt il-Laqqha Ġenerali Annwali ta' *Din l-Art Helwa*, f'133 Triq Melita Valletta fis-27 ta' Frar 2010, *Din l-Art Helwa* thegħegħ il-gvern biex thabbar il-Politika Nazzjonali dwar l-Ilma kif hija miktuba fid-Direttiva dwar l-Ilma tal-Unjoni Ewropea biex jiġu mħarsa dawn ir-rizorsi naturali. *Din l-Art Helwa* taħseb li din hija l-akbar theddida ambjentali li qieghed jiffaċċja pajjiżna.

Din l-Art Helwa News

Celebrating Malta's oldest watch tower

by Stanley Farrugia Randon

Photos: Martin Micallef



Special commemorative mass held on 10 February

Din l-Art Helwa, in collaboration with St Paul's Bay Local Council, the Malta Tourism Authority, St Paul's Bay Parish Priest and the Festa Committee, organised a programme of activities to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Wignacourt Tower in St Paul's Bay.

The tower was built by Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt, and its foundation stone was laid on 10 February 1610 – the feast day of the apostle Paul, for whom the Grand Master had much devotion.

This oldest of Malta's coastal watch towers is held in guardianship by *Din l-Art Helwa*, which was responsible for saving it from an extreme state of disrepair through restoration in 1975. The tower contains an exhibition of Malta's fortifications and a display of a typical guards' room and armaments of the time of the Knights.

From 10.30am to 4pm on 7 February there were displays of pageantry and re-enactments of a typical Maltese wedding and a parade by *In Guardia* in the area surrounding the tower. There was also folk-dancing by the Ta' Cangura Folk Group from San Lawrenz, and Ghana (the traditional Maltese music), activities for children and several exhibition stalls displaying fishing tools, filigree work and traditional lace-making. A good number of people visited the tower during the day.

On 8 February, DLH council member John Sare organised a guided tour of the coastal defence towers in the North of Malta. This was also a success and was well-attended.

In the evening of 9 February, the writer, who is warden of the Tower, gave a talk entitled *Wignacourt Tower and Modern St Paul's Bay* which was held in the tower.



Re-enactment within the tower



The *grabja* used to lower a replica of the foundation stone

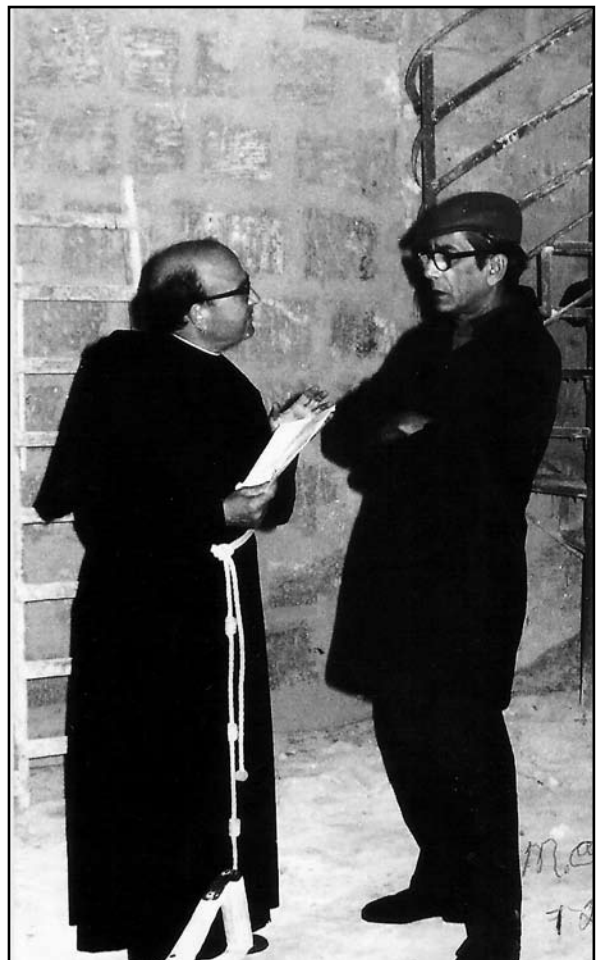


On 10 February, the actual 400th anniversary, the tower was open free of charge from 10am. The Malta Tourism Authority kindly sent a number of re-enactors to create the atmosphere of 400 years ago and Mr Emanwel Borg prepared the *grabja*, which was used to lower a replica of the foundation stone. A special mass was held at 12 noon, thanks to the collaboration of Parish Priest Fr Joe Cilia OFM, in the nearby chapel of St Paul, as the tower was erected on the original site of this chapel. A number of members of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta participated in the celebration of mass in full robes. Following the mass, there was a reception in the tower, during which Founding President Judge Maurice Caruana Curran unveiled a commemorative plaque. The writer also presented a booklet on the history of the tower to St Paul's Bay mayor Graziella Galea and Judge Caruana Curran presented the tower's volunteers with a photograph taken in the early 1970s of him with the first volunteer at the tower, Fr Felic Sammut OFM.

top right:
Celebrating the 400th anniversary of Wignacourt Tower



Presentation of the booklet



Early 1970s photograph

Heritage Saved Pen and Ink Watercolour Collection Sponsored by Banif Bank Malta plc

In November, *Din l-Art Helwa*, with the support of Banif Bank (Malta) plc, launched the *Heritage Saved* Pen and Ink Watercolour Collection and limited edition prints by Kenneth Zammit Tabona at the Auberge de Castille. The Heritage Saved collection is a major fund-raising initiative by *Din l-Art Helwa* as it prepares to celebrate the 45th anniversary of its foundation in 1965.

All the money raised through the sale of the limited edition prints will go towards the restoration of the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Valletta.

The *Heritage Saved* Collection includes 12 paintings executed in the artist's unique genre that blends historic memory and social reflection in detailed and colourful allegorical scenes. Each painting features a heritage site saved through restoration by *Din l-Art Helwa*, together with a colourful character portrait of the historic personality connected with each. A narrative written by Simone Mizzi accompanies each print for use after framing and a 'Crack the Codes' document guides the viewer through the stories that inspired each painting. The 12 limited edition prints come in two sets of six in a presentation gift folder, together with their narratives. The gift folder features the 18th-century artist from Senglea, Francesco Zahra, in his studio, the artist in honour of whom Kenneth Zammit Tabona painted this collection.

The sets cost €120, with a special price of €100 for members of *Din l-Art Helwa*. They can be ordered directly from *Din l-Art Helwa*

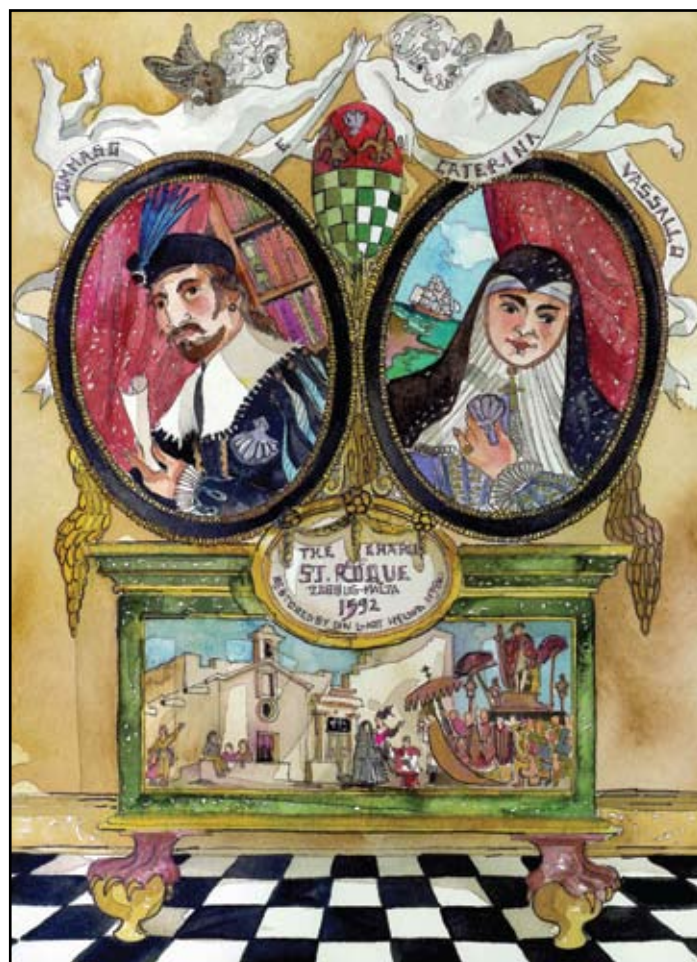


The power of believing

at info@dinlarthelwa.org, or by telephoning 2122 5952. *Din l-Art Helwa* is grateful to Banif Bank Malta for having made this fund raising initiative possible.



Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette and his Church of Our Lady of Victory



St Roque Chapel and Tommaso and Caterina Vassallo



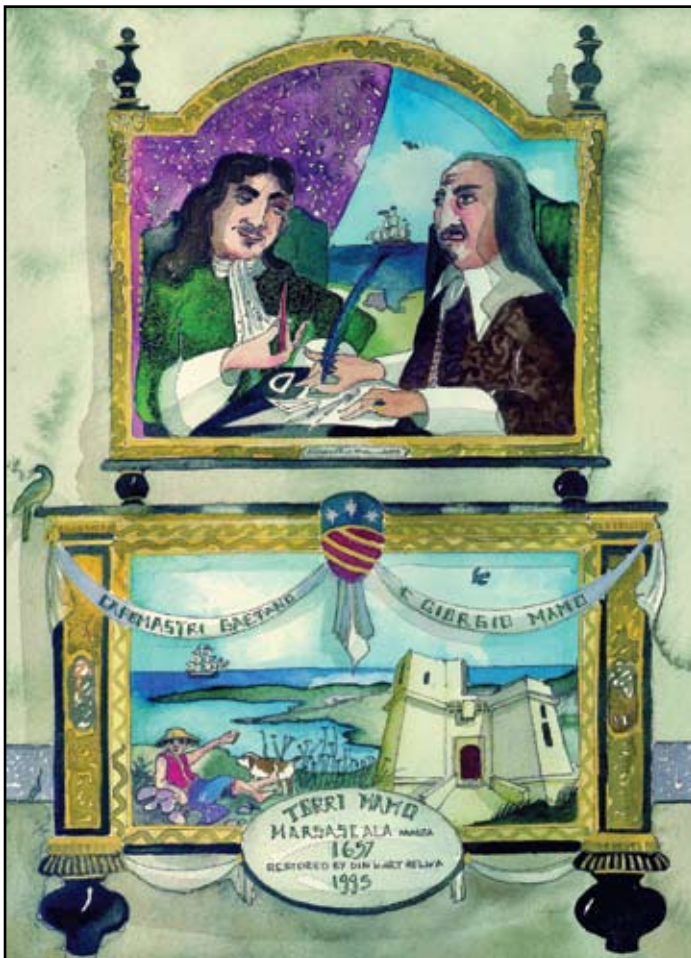
Monsignor Pietro Dusina, Grand Inquisitor, visits The Chapel of the Annunciation at Hal Millieri



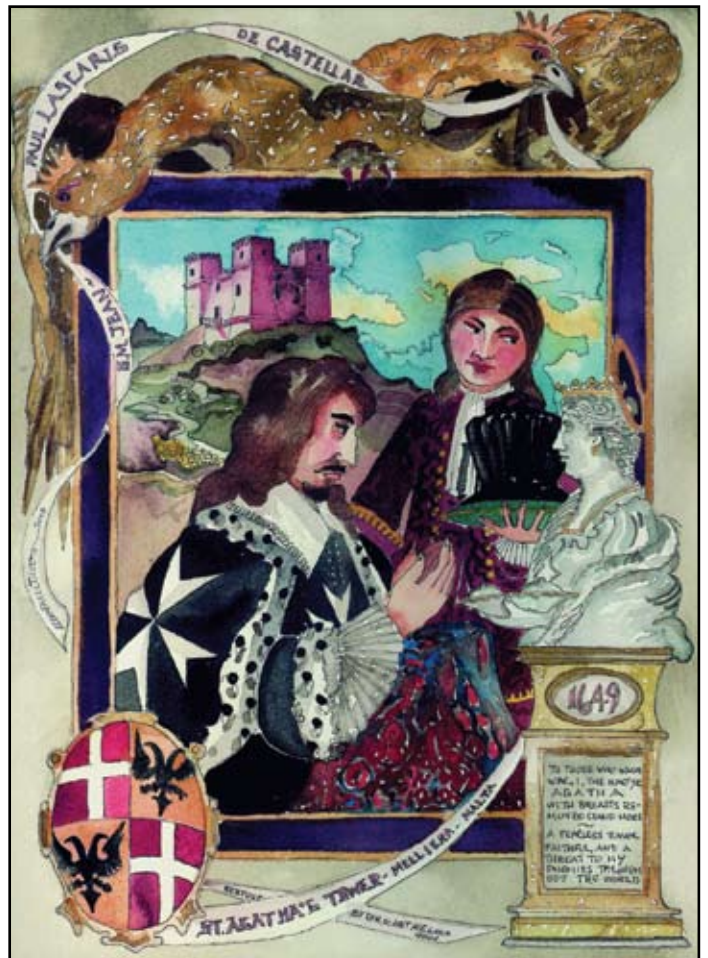
Church of Santa Marija ta' Bir Miftuh and an aristocratic benefactress



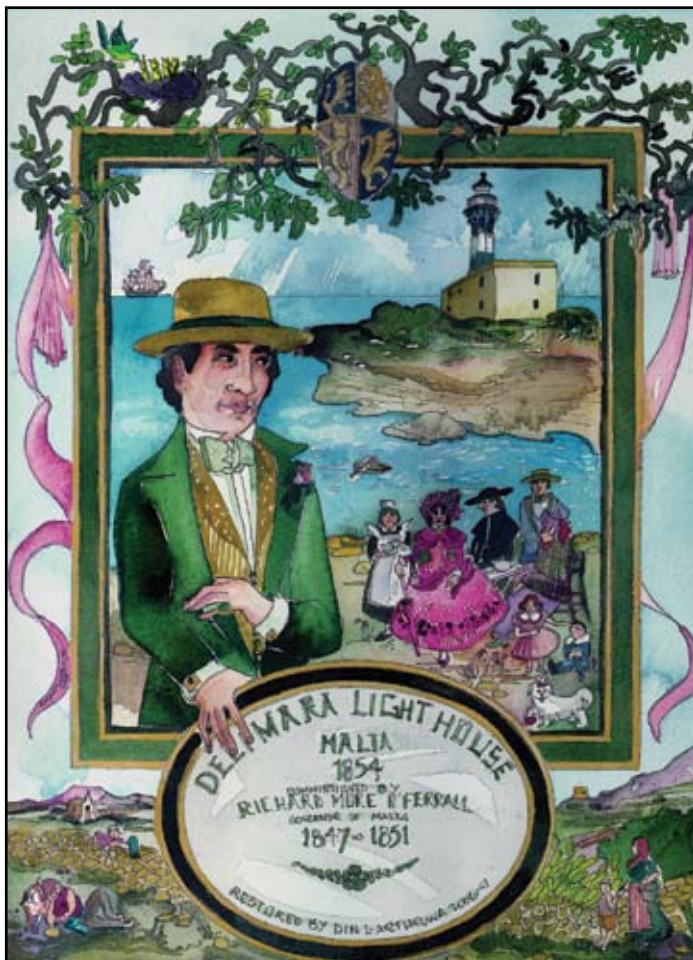
Grand Master de Vilhena and the Lion Statue



Torri Mamo, a fortified country home with 16 façades, and its two master builders



St Agatha's Tower and Grand Master Jean Paul Lascaris de Castellar



The Lighthouse at Delimara and a popular British governor



Lunzjata Fountain, Gozo, and the Most Noble Hercules Martin Testaferrata, Baron of Gomerino



St Paul's Island and a galley captain of the Order



Grand Master Emanuel Pinto de Fonseca and Mistra Gate



St Roque reveals his true colours

The 19th century statue of St Roque, on the eastern side of the chapel dedicated to this saint in Birkirkara, has almost literally sprung to life after four months of delicate and laborious restoration organised by *Din l-Art Helwa* together with the chapel's administrator, Mr John Tonna and Birkirkara Local Council.

Painstaking work by stone conservators Ingrid Ross and James Licari, which began last August, involved the removal of layer upon layer of paint to reveal the beautiful polychromatic features of the statue, which is attributed to Vincenzo Dimech, a leading Maltese sculptor of the early 19th century. St Roque was born in the 13th century to a well-to-do family and gave up his inheritance to tend the sick in France and Italy. Tradition has it that he cured infectious diseases and that he himself survived the plague. Chapels such as this one in Birkirkara and another one in Zebbug were dedicated to St Roque in the hope that the communities would be spared from the plague. St Roque is often depicted holding the pilgrim's begging shell, showing his wounds and accompanied by a dog who fed him bread while he was ill.

The restoration project was coordinated by Stanley Farrugia Randon and financed by Birkirkara Local Council and the local community that organises services in the chapel. Information about this statue remains scant, and it would be much appreciated if anybody who has any historic data about it would contact Dr Farrugia Randon at sfarran@maltanet.net

Comino Tower Speaks

I stand still sentinel on sun drenched Isle
Proud of my past defending Maltese shores
Now lovingly restored in splendid style
I raise the flag and open wide my doors

Loyal volunteers assist me in this task
I mark their journeys 'cross the shimm'ring sea
Their devotion answering all I ask
I honour friends who care so much for me

And those I would in bygone days repel
I welcome to my parapets with pride
Entranced they quickly fall beneath my spell
As in my strength and solitude they bide

My presence telling tales of yesteryear
Is now a beacon bold to humankind
To put aside its enmity and fear
For peace and love is there for all to find.

Kate Nelson

dedicated to all the Comino Tower volunteers



Appeal

Volunteers for DLH bookshop

We are looking for volunteers to man our new bookshop on the corner of Bakery Street and Melita Street in the mornings only. It would be appreciated if anybody who is interested in helping could please email info@dinlarthelwa.org or telephone the office on 2122 0358 or 2122 5952.

Spring Fete at the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest

The Spring Fete at the Msida Bastion Garden of Rest was held on Sunday, 25 April. Mary Aldred and her hard-working team organised a very successful event with the participation of volunteer historians who gave guided tours of the garden and many local artists who set up their easels for an outdoor painting session during the event. Many donated plants, books and food items which were sold during the event and the income from which will go towards the ongoing maintenance of the garden.



Din l-Art Helwa Heritage Journalism Award 2009

Din l-Art Helwa has presented the 2009 Built and Natural Heritage Journalism Awards to those journalists whose publications most raised awareness about Malta's built and natural heritage during the year. There were 15 entries – 11 in English and four in Maltese – coming from *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *It-Torċa* and *Il-Ġens Illum*, and also one from the Malta Environment & Planning Authority, who submitted its comprehensive *One World* series for consideration. The awards were presented by President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, together with DLH Vice President Martin Scicluna.

The winner of the award for Natural Heritage Journalism was Alan Deidun for his article *The Forgotten Islets of Filfla, Comino, Fungus Rock and St Paul's Islands*, which vividly described the islets' wealth of flora and fauna, as well as their unique history.

The winner of the award for Built Heritage Journalism went to Fiona Vella for her article in *It-Torċa*, *Iċ-Ċimiterju b'għajnejn Ohra*, which re-told the story of the building of Addolorata Cemetery, the Maltese fascination over the centuries with the sanctity of Malta's burial places and the story of some of its most striking monuments. The article ended with a plea – which appears to have been heeded – for the relevant authorities to take action about the poor state of some parts of the cemetery which require urgent conservation.

Diplomas were also awarded to Lino Bugeja, for his articles *The Impending Rape of Our Arcadian Beauty*, a *cri de coeur* for the looming destruction of the valley of Ramla il-Hamra and, more widely, the massive loss over several years of so much of our natural landscape, and his article in *The Sunday Times* on *The Grand Harbour's Role in History*, which told the story of the built heritage around Grand Harbour, highlighting the need for urgent restoration to many of the fortifications and palaces.

After presenting the awards, President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici made an appeal for the media to take on a wider role in furthering awareness of built and natural heritage and stressed the responsibility that remained with everyone involved in mass communication in the education of the public.

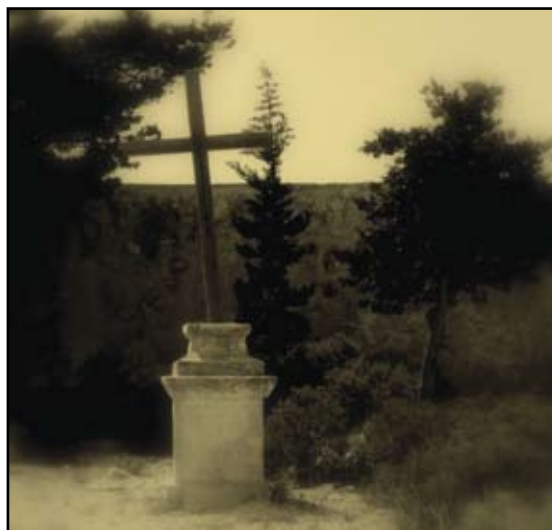
Martin Scicluna thanked the judges, Mario Schiavone, Simone Mizzi and Malcolm Naudi, and paid tribute to Philip Zammit Briffa, whose recent death has been felt by all in *Din l-Art Helwa* where, as former Secretary-General, he was Chairman of the Awards Jury Panel and the organisation of the awards schemes.

In his concluding remarks, Mr Scicluna said that the aims of the awards are clear. *Din l-Art Helwa* wants to encourage the press to focus on articles or writing campaigns to underscore the vital contribution made by Malta's rich heritage – both its built heritage and its landscape heritage – to our history and culture, as well as the over-riding need to protect it. He also thanked newspaper owners and editors for the high profile and coverage they are giving to the great problems brought about by climate change, air pollution, the search for alternative energy, over-development and the depletion of our natural resources, thus ensuring that these are kept high on the agendas of both the government and the public.



above:
Journalism Awards winners: Alan Deidun, Fiona Vella and Lino Bugeja
with DLH Vice President Martin Scicluna and
President Emeritus Dr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici

top:
The Old Hospital, Comino



Abandoned cemetery, Comino

Din l-Art Helwa Architectural Heritage Award 2009



The *Din l-Art Helwa* Architectural Heritage Award Scheme was set up primarily to encourage better architecture and reward any building project that made an outstanding contribution to architectural excellence in a Maltese context. The criteria used in judging the awards have been based on the quality of work carried out, its historical, cultural and social relevance, the research conducted and the aesthetic and visual merit of the project. The over-riding consideration was the significance of the project in the Maltese context and its contribution to Maltese cultural heritage. The scheme was set up with the support and advice of the *Kamrat-Periti*.

While there were no applicants for the first category in the 2009 Award Scheme, that of the major regeneration of a complex on a grand scale, DLH Vice President Martin Scicluna said it was most encouraging to see the exceptional restoration now coming to fruition at Fort Manoel and the plans finally to transform “the disgraceful eyesore that is Freedom Square, the Opera House site and the appalling City Gate”, adding that “the country surely cannot go on arguing self-indulgently for another 70 years” about this project.

The *Din l-Art Helwa* Prix d’Honneur, as well as the overall Silver Medal for 2009 in the category for conservation and restoration, was awarded to the restoration of the Carmelite Priory of Mdina as being an outstanding example of a 17th Century baroque building that has been restored to the highest standard and is now open to the public, offering a fascinating insight into the way of life of the cloistered friars as well as access to an impressive selection of paintings, silver, sculptures, and other *objets d’art*. Given the richness of Malta’s ecclesiastical heritage, the judges of the Award hoped that the pioneering initiative taken by the Carmelite Priory would encourage other monastic orders to follow its example. The restoration was carried out by the Restoration and Conservation Co-op Ltd led by Paul Muscat (more information is available on theoldpriory@gmail.com).

Architectural Heritage Awards winners with DLH Vice President Martin Scicluna and President Emeritus Professor Guido de Marco

opposite:
Apotheosis of the Madonna of Mount Carmel, Carmelite Priory Church, Mdina

The Refectory, Carmelite Priory, Mdina

Architect Martin Farrugia of MF Architecture was awarded a Diploma for a most important contribution to architectural heritage for his rehabilitation and re-use of 254 St Paul’s Street, Valletta, now Dar-Ewropa. The restoration of this 16th century Valletta townhouse combines daring modern interventions with the aesthetic and architectural integrity of the building, including comprehensive access facilities for the disabled. This excellent rehabilitation has successfully converted this 400 year old classic example of a Valletta townhouse into modern offices by the European Parliament and now houses both the offices of the European Parliament Representation Office and the European Commission Office in Malta.

The restoration of Villa Francia was a successful example in the third category of the Award Scheme, that of the restoration and conservation of a period building. Architect Claude Borg was awarded a Diploma for his sensitive restoration of the elegant 18th century Villa in Lija, which was carried out with great attention to detail. The villa, its intricately painted interior and its extensive grounds, gardens and statuary, have been beautifully restored and returned to their former glory after several years of abandonment and neglect.

Din l-Art Helwa continues to believe that, while there is much work being done on the restoration of monuments and heritage sites, poorly conceived urbanisation continues to proliferate in a most unbridled fashion and is resulting in an explosion of ugliness and in the tragic loss of the indigenous Maltese architecture that was unique to our island.

The 2009 Architectural Heritage Awards were presented by President Emeritus Professor Guido de Marco. In presenting the Awards, President Emeritus de Marco praised *Din l-Art Helwa’s* initiative in establishing this scheme five years ago. “It is vital”, he said, “that Malta’s centuries-old architectural traditions are properly safeguarded. *Din l-Art Helwa* continues to play an essential national role in doing so.”



Medserv Supports the Restoration of Xlendi Tower

Medserv is to support *Din l-Art Helwa* in one of our forthcoming projects. "This has been on our agenda for a while now. We want to be able to give something back to the community and build on our social responsibility activities. We wanted to be associated with an independent organisation that is working across the country in the field of heritage protection. *Din l-Art Helwa* was an obvious choice," said Medserv chairman Anthony Diacono.

Medserv's sponsorship will go towards supporting the restoration of Xlendi Tower, which was built in 1650 during the reign of Grand Master Lascaris. The restoration will be a joint venture between *Din l-Art Helwa* and Munxar Local Council and the cost will be shared on a 50/50 basis. Work is due to start in a few months' time and is expected to take about three years.

Din l-Art Helwa depends on donations and sponsors in order to carry out restoration projects, and corporate sponsorships account for a large percentage of our income. Medserv is currently the only sponsor contributing to the Xlendi Tower project.

Founded in 1974, with its head office in Malta, Medserv has provided logistics services and support to some of the world's leading oil and gas exploration companies, such as Hess Corporation, Saipem, Petrobras, Gazprom and Exxon.

The company's management team and in-house technical teams have decades of industry experience. Their support bases located in the Mediterranean combine speed, efficiency and in-depth local knowledge to ensure they meet and exceed the needs of their clients. The company's safety culture and practices are a key component of daily operations.

Medserv Operations Ltd owns and operates a dedicated logistical support base from Malta, while Medserv Misurata Freezone Company operates another such base from Misurata, Libya. Both bases are situated in freeports. Medserv plc is a member of the International Association of Drilling Contractors as well as a member of the Association of Ship Agents.

The company has gone from success to success in a relatively short period of time, since first being listed on the Malta Stock Exchange in 2006. Over the years it has contributed to various charities and initiatives but has now taken the decision to focus its CSR initiatives on an organisation that gives back to the Maltese community as a whole.



Xlendi Tower



Restoration of the oldest pharmacy in Malta

Michael Bonnici

Thursday, 4 February was a memorable day in the medical history of Malta, with the opening of the country's first Medical History Museum in the old pharmacy of Santo Spirito Hospital in Rabat – now the home of the National Archives – by the Dean of Medicine and Surgery at the University of Malta, Prof. Godfrey LaFerla.

The old pharmacy has been restored to its original glory on the initiative of pharmacy technician Michael Bonnici, who also furnished it with his own personal stock of a number of chemicals and a unique set of the dispensing equipment used over the last 90 years for the dispensing of prescriptions. Mr Bonnici has also provided a unique set of the dispensing equipment used over the last 90 years for the dispensing of prescriptions, in order that the 'art of dispensing' will not be forgotten.

Main entrance,
Santo Spirito Hospital



The advent of patented drugs greatly diminished the old dispensing techniques of self-prepared preparations, meticulously dispensed by pharmacists from various natural products. Unfortunately, most of these natural items have been destroyed but, luckily enough, some had been saved as dormant stock, or considered leftovers, by conscientious owners who recognised them as being of historical interest.

In the absence of patented drugs, doctors prescribed numerous prescriptions from their comprehensive knowledge of the availability of chemicals produced in those days and imported by local agents or by pharmacists themselves. These prescriptions were supported by the early British Pharmacopoeias, as well as the British Pharmaceutical Codex.

In the process, the names of various medical practitioners of the 20th century have come to light.

Malta can now claim to have a well-preserved old pharmacy, situated in the most appropriate place – the National Archives – wherein its mission statement clearly states "...to preserve the collective memory of the Maltese nation through the protection and accessibility of all".

The history of Santo Spirito Hospital

The former Santo Spirito Hospital in Rabat ceased to function in the early 1960s and after a long period of neglect, the government decided to use the building to house the National Archives. Act of Parliament No. V of 2005 established the regulation of the National Archives and made provisions for the appointment of the National Archivist and for other dispositions ancillary thereto.

Incidentally, the original pharmacy of Santo Spirito Hospital had remained intact, although deprived of the jars and silver cutlery with which it was equipped, and action has been taken to preserve and rehabilitate its original furniture.

In the mid-14th century, the place where Santo Spirito Hospital now stands was an annex to a priory, with a chapel for the benefit of the surrounding residents.

It was subsequently used as a small hospital, with the name St Francis Hospital, which catered for the people of Malta – in 1347 numbering around 10,000 – financed by income from urban and rural rents. By 1433 it was being administered by the University



Courtyard of the
Santo Spirito Hospital

and in addition to the admittance of the sick, it also housed orphaned or unwanted children.

With the arrival of the Knights of St John, the hospital was re-named Santo Spirito and brought into line with other hospitals around Europe run by the religious order established by Guy de Montpelier.

In 1574, Apostolic Nunzio Pietro Duzina gave strict orders for the better administration of the hospital, especially with regard to hygiene, and in 1624, French Grand Master Antoine de Paule (1623-1636) issued a decree in which he specified regulations similar to those found in other hospitals run by the Order. The hospital remained in use until 1963, when it was closed and left unused until it became the home of the National Archives in 1989.

The origins of Santo Spirito Pharmacy

By 1580, or possibly earlier, Santo Spirito Hospital had its own resident apothecary (“*speziale*” or “*aromatorio*”) (1&2) who had his own pharmacy at the hospital. The Maltese *aromatorio mastru* Geronimo Callus, the father of Dr Joseph *alias* Matthew, appears to have been employed at Santo Spirito between 1518 and 1520.

Antoni Zammit was another pharmacist employed at the hospital. The first known resident hospital pharmacist was Antoni Bisci, who held his appointment until his death in 1580.

In 1624, the Grand Master Antoine de Paule (1623-1636) issued a decree (*bando*) (3) in which he specified the various functions of those who were trained in the administration of aromatic herbs and other medicinal (poisonous) items.

The Grand Master officially nominated *Protomedico* il Magnifico Nicolo Cilia, according to the Ordinance of the Chancellery of the Sacred Order for the islands of Malta and Gozo.

In addition, he ordered that nobody could mix medicines without the permission of the *Prothomedico* or his substitute and that they had to be in accordance with the prescribed doses. Mixtures were to include the day and the year of dispensing.(4)

The restoration of the Pharmacy

There have been repeated calls, in both the media and during medical and pharmaceutical conferences, for Malta to have a comprehensive medical history museum equipped with all the instruments used by medical practitioners and in medical laboratories, as well as those used by pharmacists in their dispensing profession. The restoration of the Santo Spirito Pharmacy is precisely to satisfy, in part, these calls.

The museum will serve as a source of knowledge and research into this aspect of Maltese medical history, and to ensure that the chemicals and equipment used in the early days of pharmaceutical practice will not be forgotten.

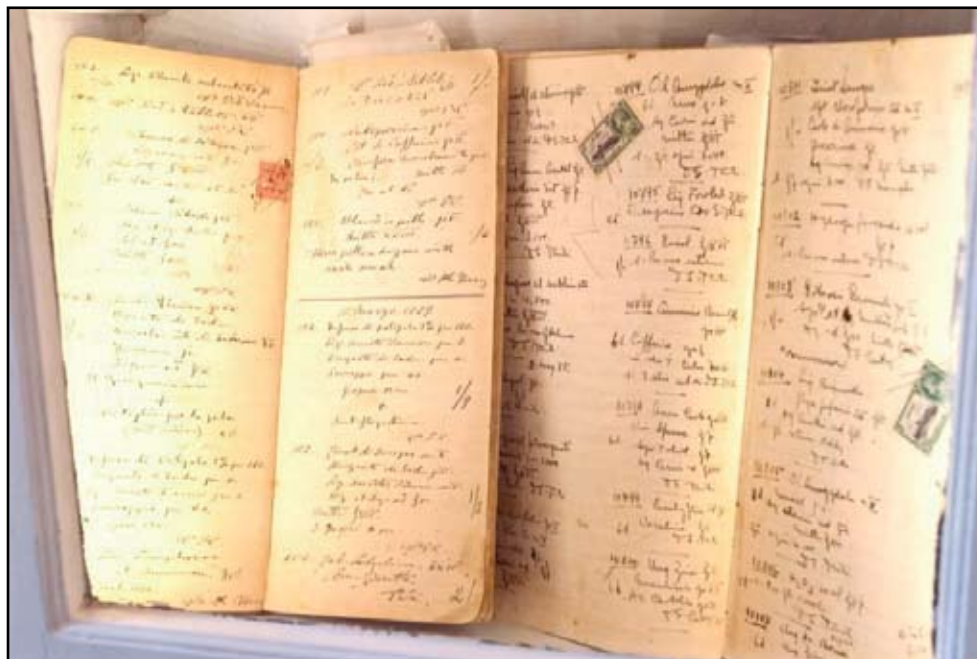
This permanent exhibition has been established as a national memorial to the pharmacists and pharmacy technicians (formerly known as assistant apothecaries or compounders) who contributed sterling service to the well-being of the people of Malta.

Exhibits of pharmacy practice

The pharmacy has been re-equipped with various chemicals in both powder and liquid form. Some of these chemicals are still in their original containers bearing the name of the manufacturer and country of origin. Others have been transferred from original

Restored
Santo Spirito Pharmacy





Prescription registers

below:

left – The author at work in the pharmacy
right – The pharmacy during the restoration

stock to specific containers, perhaps through sharing, for better conservation, or for a better adaptation to storage space.

The use of most of these chemicals is supported by prescriptions as detailed in the collection of prescription registers which date from 1929 to the present day. These prescriptions refer to various types of medicines prescribed and eventually dispensed, mainly in six different forms: mixtures, cachets, wrapped in individual doses, eye and skin ointments, liniments, and eye and ear drops. The manual dispensing of these preparations was the responsibility of the managing pharmacist and they were normally dispensed to patients in suitable containers purposely imported for each type of item.

Exhibits of pharmacy equipment

This pharmacy houses the pharmaceutical equipment used for the preparation of different types of medicine necessary for dispensing purposes, together with other sundry equipment for specific use by patients.

Of particular interest are the sets of weights in the avoirdupois, imperial, and metric systems. This unique collection of weights begins with the decigrams (dcg) and the centigrams (ctg) which, in those days, were used on specialised pharmacy scales enclosed in a compartment.

The different forms of containers for both liquids and solid compounds are made of different coloured glass to distinguish between poisons and non-poisonous, material that requires dark storage, corrosive and non corrosive items, etc. Other equipment includes ceramic or terracotta jars, a pill machine, a cachet machine, suppository moulds, small metal pans, spirit lamps, and other items that were part and parcel of the preparation of medicines.

Other equipment sold from pharmacies includes glass baby-feeding bottles, vaginal douches, urinary bottles and enamelled patellas for bed-ridden patients, enema douches, dilators, bronchitis kettles, ring pessaries, and glass syringes.



Michael Bonnici would like to acknowledge the encouragement, advice and direction of Charles Farrugia, Archivist of the National Archives.

He would also like to record his debt to his father, Dante Bonnici, Ph.C (1906-2006), from whom he learned the art of dispensing and who, in 1980, after owning and practiced his profession in this pharmacy from 1933 to 1980 sold him most of the items now on display. He, in turn, has now deposited and exhibited them in the museum as a symbol of pride in the pharmaceutical profession.

The author also expresses his gratitude to his wife, Beatrice, and their children Elaine, Bertrand and Raphael, who wholeheartedly supported his decision to bequeath part of their inheritance to the nation.

References

- (1) "aromatico" (Italian) pharmacist
- (2) "speziale" (Italian) pharmacist. This word has been corrupted in the Maltese language as 'spizjar'
- (3) Cfr. BNM Libr.2 Stromatum Melitensium Liber XIV, 1759, f.601-06: Bando e Comandamento da parte del Gran Maestro Antonio di Paula.
- (4) See also J. Amodio, corpus Inscriptorum Latinarum nell'ospedale medievale di Santo Spirito, Rabat in Tony Cortis et al. (ed) Melitensium amor, 2002:172)

Heritage & Europe

Denis de Kergorlay

It was a tremendous joy having the opportunity to be back to Malta, four years after the memorable EN Congress which was held in Valletta in May 2006. This was one of the best organised Congresses ever, thanks to the leadership and tireless efforts of Martin Scicluna in his capacity as the Vice-President of *Din l-Art Helwa*, the National Trust for Malta and representative of this organisation in the main governing bodies of Europa Nostra.

As I said at the time: “*Nous sommes comme les chevaliers de Malta: nous sommes les chevaliers guerriers quand nous menons les batailles pour sauver un élément du patrimoine culturel de l’Europe qui est en danger; et nous sommes les chevaliers hospitaliers quand nous cherchons à trouver des remèdes ou des potions magiques pour remettre ou maintenir le patrimoine en bonne santé.*”

(“We are like the Knights of Malta: we are the fighting Knights when we give battle to save an element forming part of the European cultural patrimony which is in danger; and we are the hospitalier knights when we look for remedies or magic potions that will return or maintain the patrimony in good health.”)

Today, I have the pleasure to be back to Malta thanks to two persons to whom I wish to pay tribute, Mr Martin Scicluna, but this time in a different capacity, as Director General of The Today Public Policy Institute, an influential think-tank, and the French Ambassador in Malta, Daniel Rondeau, a person whom I have known for many years and with whom I share a passion for European values and culture.

Generally, I am invited to speak about ‘Heritage and Europe’ and about Europa Nostra by organisations active in the field of heritage. Less often, I have the pleasure to be invited by a think-tank concerned with topical issues of society, environment and economy. Hence, heritage is at the heart of our society, environment and economy and I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to demonstrate to you that talking about heritage does not mean talking about matters of the past which are not relevant for the everyday life of our citizens. Heritage is indeed an essential element of our present-day life and our present-day living environment – a living environment which is not only marked by modern constructions and by nature; a living environment which has a history; a living environment which must have a future.

When one speaks about heritage, one usually thinks of heritage as being part of national treasures and national identity. My task here is to write about the importance of our heritage in relation to Europe – to its past, to its present



EUROPA NOSTRA International Secretariat

Lecture delivered on 18 February by Denis de Kergorlay, Executive President of Europa Nostra at the invitation of The Today Public Policy Institute and H.E. Daniel Rondeau, Ambassador of France in Malta.



Denis de Kergorlay
delivering his lecture

but also and above all to the process of building a Europe of the future. And I am pleased to do this in my capacity as the new Executive President of Europa Nostra, the federation of heritage NGOs whose core *raison d'être* is to be the voice of cultural heritage in Europe.

Heritage and Europe – many of you will ask me “which Europe”? Where are the limits of “Our Europe”, the Europe of the European Union? My answer to this is that we at Europa Nostra are convinced that the ‘*European cultural space*’ cannot be confined to the present day frontiers of the European Union. We cover the entire area of the Council of Europe, *La Grande Europe*, which includes Russia and Turkey. We are therefore very proud that Europa Nostra’s annual Congress 2010 will take place in Istanbul, the capital of three great empires which have marked the history of the Europeans, and which has been selected by the EU member states to be the European Capital of Culture 2010.

When we speak about heritage and identity we keep in mind that our own identity is never monolithic. Each and every citizen of Europe and of the entire Globe has multiple identities which are not competing with each other but complimenting each other. We have therefore decided to dedicate the public forum which will be held in Istanbul to the theme ‘Multiple Identities, a Common Heritage’.

Many of you might ask the question: does the European Union have the competence to deal with culture and cultural heritage? The member states will say that cultural heritage is and must remain the sole competence of the member states. But we, the representatives of Europe’s civil society dealing with cultural heritage, have a slightly different answer to this question. Since our cultural heritage is the visible and tangible testimony of our shared history and shared culture, the European Union must also play an important role in ensuring that this shared history and this shared culture is preserved for the sake of present and future generations.

The Treaty of Lisbon has recently come into force. Much attention has been given to the various changes made by this Treaty. However, I am almost certain that many of you have not noticed one – at first sight minor – modification in one of the first articles (article 3) of the Treaty which defines the main aims of the EU, where it is stated that the Union: “*shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.*”

If this specific mention of cultural heritage figures among the main aims of the Lisbon Treaty, this is due to the fact that Europa Nostra’s ‘Voice of Cultural Heritage’ has been heard by those who drafted this Treaty. This is the product of the relentless lobbying efforts of my predecessor as Executive President of Europa Nostra, Ambassador Otto von der Gablentz, and our International Secretariat based in The Hague.

Reference to Europe’s heritage is also made at the very beginning of the Preamble of this Treaty: “Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.”

However, Europa Nostra wishes to go further: we are determined to come up with convincing arguments to the European decision-makers that the EU should develop a comprehensive European Agenda for Heritage. Such an agenda should seek to develop a true vision of the importance of our cultural heritage for Europe’s society, environment and economy and for Europe’s sustainable development, and should therefore ensure the so called ‘mainstreaming’ of cultural heritage considerations in various policies developed and implemented by the Union.

Our culture, and our cultural heritage, have an undeniable European dimension. This dimension is not an artificial invention by an omnipotent Brussels bureaucracy, but is quite the opposite – a reality which is the product of many centuries of common history and of the movement of people, merchandise and ideas which have characterised our continent throughout history. This European dimension, which is the complement of, and not a substitute for, the national, regional or local dimensions of our heritage, should nevertheless be highlighted even more, and we should all, each one of us – institutions and networks, professionals and benefactors, the public sector and the private – contribute to this objective.



Enlèvement d'Europe
(The Abduction of Europa)
by Noël-Nicolas Coypel, c. 1726



It is actually an anomaly that over this last half-century the EU member states have constructed Europe while jealously keeping culture outside the competencies of the Union, and then only letting it in through a wicket gate, following the introduction of an article (151) on culture in the Maastricht Treaty. We can no longer tolerate this anomaly. This slightly open wicket gate should thus become a fully open main gate for European action, indeed for a European strategy and policy in support of the cultural heritage.

Member states should admit that such an evolution is not prejudicial to national interests and so cannot be considered as a watering down of national sovereignty. They should, in effect, stop hiding behind respect for the principle of subsidiarity in order to justify their reticence in respect of future broadening and deepening of community action in the field of culture and cultural heritage. For it is the principle of subsidiarity itself which demands community action in the field of culture, since culture and, above all, the cultural heritage, assumes a historic dimension, wide geographic spread and a significant meaning in respect of identity and politics which are undeniably European.

Moreover, the challenges of the heritage in today's European society and economy are common to all our countries. The responses to these challenges can thus only be communal or concerted, and demand a close co-operation between actions undertaken at national, regional and local levels and those at the European level.

We do not, however, envisage any Community action which would lead to a harmonisation of our heritage. Such action should rather celebrate the diversity of this heritage, while at the same time highlighting its fundamental characteristic, which is 'unity in diversity'.

We also envisage a need for the Union's institutions to take account of the considerations of culture and the heritage in the definition and implementation of all its policies.

What is the role played by European networks and European civil society for safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage?

In essence the networks are among the principal players of this *Communauté Européenne du patrimoine en gestation*" (European community for administration of patrimony). Let us make it clear once and for all that for civil society, this community is a vibrant reality.

The setting up of networks of professionals, as with volunteers, is a practice which had already begun in the



opposite:
The Roman Baths at Allianoi, Turkey

Cutting through the landscape at the Greece heritage site of Segesta, Sicily



1960s. Europa Nostra and ICOMOS were pioneers in this area: ICOMOS with its world-wide approach and its network based exclusively on heritage professionals, and Europa Nostra, with its pan-European reach and its network open to all non-governmental players, whether professionals or volunteers, owners of historic monuments or associations defending heritage. Thus, the principal mission of Europa Nostra is to re-group civil society under various forms of its organisation, and to cover the totality of the heritage sector, whether fixed or movable, built or landscape-based.

During the 1980s and 1990s we saw a proliferation of European networks. Some covered particular elements of the heritage (for example DOCOMOMO, with whom we have co-operated by organising a forum on modernist heritage as an integral part of Europe's cultural heritage). Others bring together particular categories of heritage players (eg UEHHA or ECCO). So one could today talk of the existence of a true European

movement in support of the heritage. Europa Nostra has a justifiable objective to be the spokesman, even the promoter, of this vast movement involving public institutions, European but also national.

What is therefore our added value? In general, the networks represent the expression of a serious need, and of a common desire for sharing, for exchanges, for better knowledge and mutual understanding which the citizens of Europe feel they need, and which manifests itself by autonomous action – more or less informal – to set up a network. In this sense, European networks represent the expression of the desire of citizens to practice inter-cultural dialogue at the heart of Europe.

The networks, often directed and managed by highly motivated individuals who are really passionate about their cause, have the power of persuasion so necessary to advance our arguments for the better and against the worse in the safeguarding of Europe's cultural heritage. More particularly, the actions and debates taking place at the heart of Europa Nostra contribute to a '*décloisonnement*', one could say even a 'denationalisation' of the debate on the meaning and role of culture and of the cultural heritage in Europe.

We have available the freedom of words and action which allows us to play a useful and constructive role in the questioning of institutions and political decision-makers.

As we do not have to suffer the weight of bureaucracy, we can be sufficiently flexible in our actions, and can react rapidly in the face of new challenges and threats – global or urgent – which have a bearing on the heritage. We can mention as an example the growth of wind turbines and their effect on the landscapes of Europe; here is a challenge which clearly affects all of Europe and which calls for pan-European debates and solutions which conform to the principles of sustainable development of our countryside and landscapes.

Our action is also the very expression of the principle of European solidarity which is one of the fundamental principles of the overall construction of Europe. This is why we willingly offer our support to national campaigns supporting the safeguarding of heritage at risk. As examples let us cite our campaign in support of the safeguarding of Rosia Montana and against the location of Draculand near the mediæval city of Sighisoara in Romania; or the current campaign in support of the safeguarding of the Roman baths of Allianoi in Turkey, or that against the construction of the Gazprom Tower, more than 400m high, right next to the historic centre of St Petersburg.

In countries or situations of 'high political tension' (such as the Balkans), Europa Nostra can still express a view on a heritage subject without our being classified as belonging to that or the other political camp. In such cases, we act as an advocate representing an aspect of heritage which has become a victim or hostage of political confrontations or ethnic conflicts. And we seek to steer the debate to where it ought to be: the cultural sphere in its European context.

Finally, let us mention also the strong humanitarian nature of some of our initiatives. This was particularly visible in November 2006, when we succeeded in bringing together some Serb and Albanian Kosovars involved with the protection



of the heritage, in a welcoming and inspiring heritage meeting at the Château de Canisy in Normandy, for an exemplary exercise in 'parallel cultural diplomacy'. At the end of a full weekend of discussions – which were frank, sometimes sad, but more often convivial and even friendly – the various protagonists at this meeting had succeeded in emerging from confrontation, in overcoming prejudices, in opening their hearts and spirits towards the other, in recognising the existence of a shared responsibility for the safeguarding of the multi-cultural and multi-faith heritage of Kosovo, and in bearing witness to a willingness to talk and co-operate. This positive spirit was fully confirmed during the public forum which took place afterwards.

Encouraged by these opportunities, but at the same time conscious of our weaknesses, we should now demonstrate our ambitions so far and, with a major effort of communication, approach new partners:

- a) in the world of politics and its many powers – legislative, executive and even judiciary – by building real alliances in support of the heritage; and this at all decision levels – local, regional, national and European;
- b) in the world of the media;
- c) and finally, in the world of business and private foundations, including even specific benefactors.



The Old Bridge in Mostar rebuilt after the war in the Balkans

The entrance to Valletta is unworthy of a World Heritage city. The debate about plans for this site has raged for over 60 years, and it is highly unlikely that consensus will ever be reached. Any government taking decisions on this special project must therefore expect to finally go ahead without consensus. There is no other way.

Din l-Art Helwa's concern is that any decisions taken should follow good heritage conservation principles. Unity of style is not the overriding aim of restoration. Sensitively blending the new with the old has long been followed as a guiding principle, and was confirmed in the Venice Charter in the 1960s. Different layers of history lie visibly over one another. *Din l-Art Helwa* believes that a contemporary design of a high standard is the most desirable solution for this site.

Din l-Art Helwa recognises the high quality of architect Renzo Piano's buildings all over the world, and considers that Valletta is fortunate to be able to incorporate the designs of this great Italian architect in the 21st century. Opinions on aesthetics are inevitably subjective; however, the proposal is imaginative, skilled and sensitive to its context.

The designs engage with the shapes and masses of the adjacent bastion walls and the cavalier, and respect the traditional stone out of which Valletta was built. The entrance will feature massive blocks of limestone, Malta's most beautiful natural resource and the building material of our island's historic and colossal defensive walls.

The government intends to erect a new parliament building in Freedom Square. This area was built up in the past and only evolved into an open space after the Second World War. Constructing a building, including a parliament, in this square is therefore perfectly acceptable on heritage conservation grounds.

Valletta also stands to gain enormously from the plan to turn the Palace in St George's Square into a national museum when parliament moves out of that building.

It is not part of *Din l-Art Helwa's* mission to comment on where the government's financial priorities should lie: there will always be competing priorities. However, we would insist that when the entrance to Valletta is tackled, a budget proportionate to the importance of this site must be allocated. It is absolutely unacceptable to imagine that anything on this site should be done on the cheap.

The Entrance
Petra E
Executive Presiden



The arcades of Freedom Square

right:
The proposed chamber of Parliament

The project site before initiation of the project - Photo: David Cassar



e to Valletta

Bianchi

nt of Din l-Art Helwa

Valletta is a World Heritage site and we owe it not only to ourselves but to the whole world to ensure that the new entrance to the city follows today's standards of great world architecture – to which Renzo Piano is no stranger. The decision to assign a budget to this site will always be a difficult one for any government. *Din l-Art Helwa* therefore welcomes the fact that a commitment has finally been made to invest substantially in our much-loved city.

The opera house ruins are recognised as having a heritage value, and have been scheduled by Mepa. Any new designs for this site should therefore incorporate them. Renzo Piano has transformed the ruins into an unusual outdoor performance and meeting space, with backstage facilities beneath the adjacent area near the church of St Catherine of Italy.

The post-war building which currently houses the police station next to the church will be demolished for the site to be turned into an open square and reveal the auberge behind it. The idea of an open and functional space within the ruins is intriguing and *Din l-Art Helwa* has no objection to this on heritage or aesthetic grounds.

Many designs have been put forward in the past for an 'indoor' theatre on the ruined site, including the results of various competitions. None of these designs were ever agreed to and at times they engendered as much controversy as we are witnessing today about the outdoor space. Questions about a roof and the required backstage area are under discussion, and the idea of building a large theatre on a different site has also been put forward. We await the outcome of these questions with interest. However, *Din l-Art Helwa* favours one holistic vision for the entrance to the city.

When the government came forward with the idea for this project in 2008, *Din l-Art Helwa* and other stakeholders were consulted. We were consulted again in 2009, when the plans were drawn up. A large model of the proposal was exhibited last year at the Museum of Archaeology in Valletta for the general public to view.

In the meantime, hundreds, if not thousands, of different comments and divergent views have been put forward through Mepa and the newspapers, and in discussions, blogs and articles. *Din l-Art Helwa* is pleased to note that some of its suggestions have been taken on board, such as extending the designs to include the bus terminus and the residential block opposite the parliament building.

Consultation and debate are healthy. However, there comes a point when debate must end and a decision has to be taken. Valletta must be allowed to move on. *Din l-Art Helwa* backs the implementation of these imaginative and contemporary designs, which we regard as a major step forward in the ongoing rehabilitation of Valletta.

Din l-Art Helwa believes that this is a project of an exceptionally high standard, and that the time has come for Valletta to receive the attention and the expenditure that it deserves. It is a fitting prelude to the designation of the city as European Capital of Culture in 2018.



Subterranean Valletta

Edward Said

The subject of underground Valletta is a favourite with many people who have been in some way associated with the city or just simply gripped by its delectable appeal. I for one have always found the colourful stories that one encounters about the “*belt ohra taht il-Belt*” particularly intriguing. Like anything that is hidden away and difficult to access, it is inevitable that such a subject be heavily shrouded in legend.

As attractive as the mythology connected with this underworld may be, I was sure that it seriously obscured the reality of the situation. So what really lies beneath the palaces and churches, streets and squares of Valletta? My thesis approached the matter historically, attempting to describe what is really there in the form of a chronological account that spans the history of the city.

What makes Valletta quite exceptional is that it was conceived as an entire project on a virgin site: started and, to a certain extent finished, in accordance with a set of plans and regulations. In building the new fortifications, engineer Francesco Laparelli had the advantage of the rocky heights of Mount Sceberras out which he formed the land-front bulwarks of the city. He exploited the living rock and, wherever possible, when gouging out the Great Ditch he excavated the fortifications rather than built them. The spoil material was put to good use, being carefully cut and used to build the battlements. Laparelli further used the robustness of solid rock fortifications by introducing a system of subterranean passages to link the ditch with the city, as well as other spaces such as the casemated platforms protecting the curtain walls. These underground systems were later extended when the outer works reaching into Floriana were created.

Grand Master de Valette also briefed Laparelli regarding the street network which, after a number of modifications, was set out and laid as we know it today. It was then up to the Order’s Commission for Housing, the *Officio delle Case*, to ensure that within the *quartieri*, or blocks, all edifices, particularly domestic buildings, were built in accordance with a set of specific standards that strictly ensured military conformation, maximisation of the site, suitably designed urban qualities and acceptable aesthetic considerations, as well as an efficient water supply and sanitation system.

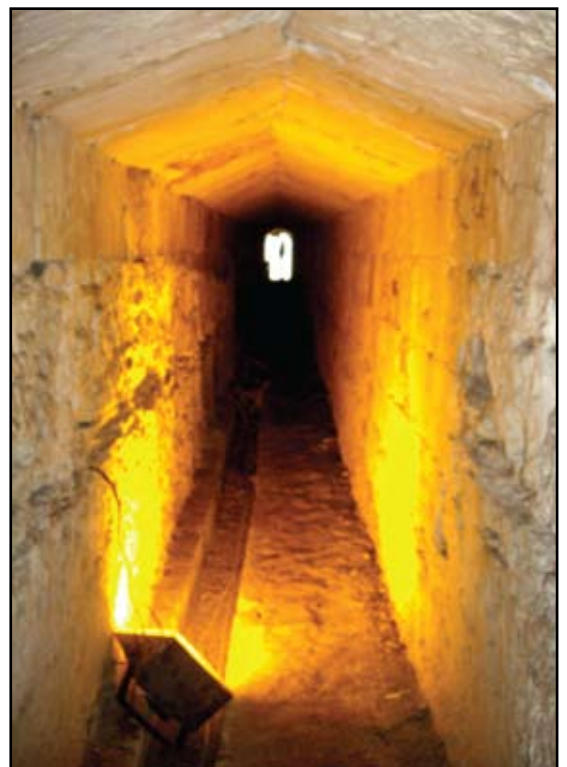
With these regulations in force, the laborious task of excavating basements, crypts and cellars began, wherever possible using the excavated rock to construct the building above. This ensured a minimal wastage of material and facilitated the logistics of material transportation. Should the stone on site not suffice, the builders were instructed to obtain it from the Great Ditch or the *Mandracchio* – the dock that the Knights were creating on the Marsamxett side of Sceberras – which was eventually abandoned.

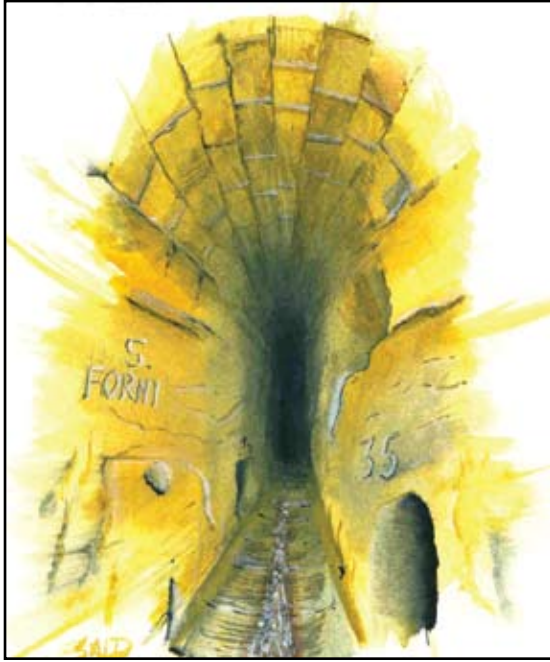
The emphasis on an adequate provision of water necessitated the hollowing out of cisterns and channels, which also provided more building material. The *Officio*’s regulations required the provision of a specially designed place in each building for waste disposal. It appears that these took the form of large shaft-like pits, which were connected to the main public sewers that stretched into an intricate network below the city’s undulating streets. Refusal to comply with these stringent rules was met with hefty fines. Faced with very restricted site limitations, the Hospitallers made sure that the water supply and sewage systems were completely isolated from one another to avoid outbreaks of plague and disease. For the general use of both the military establishment and the general public, the Knights, on direct instruction by Laparelli, provided giant reservoirs in strategic locations around the new city, beneath streets and squares with maximum water-catchment potential.

Over the years, these systems were upgraded and extended. The introduction of running water by means of Grand Master Wignacourt’s aqueduct resulted in the excavation of more reservoirs and channels. In 1645, a serious threat of siege led Grand Master Lascaris to revamp the water supply by ordering more cisterns to be hewn out around Valletta. Further threats of attack in the early 18th century led the Order to engage a leading Italian hydraulic engineer and talented architect, Romano Carapecchia, to carry out an inspection of Valletta’s water supply system. This he did with considerable dexterity, compiling his observations and

This article is taken from a lecture delivered by the writer at the invitation of *Din l-Art Helwa* on three separate occasions in the past year. *Subterranean Valletta – An Historical and Descriptive Analysis* was the title of his undergraduate thesis, after reading architecture at the University of Malta, in June 2005. He is a conservation architect and currently sits on the Board of Trustees of *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna* (Malta Heritage Trust).

Tunnels underneath St George’s Square





Bunk beds in the old train tunnel converted to WWII air raid shelter



Valletta sewers
Artwork by the author

recommendations to the Grand Master in a beautifully illustrated report that can still be seen in the National Library. In the course of his work, Carapecchia counted over 1,600 cisterns in the city.

The early years of the British period saw an influx of people taking up residence in Valletta. Sub-standard living brought about by poverty (and vice-versa) resulted in entire families making homes in dark, dank basements and cellars. Slums flourished, particularly the festering *Manderaggio*, which became known as Valletta's underground city. This desperate situation eventually led to the drawing up of the Code of Police Laws in 1854. The Victorian era saw a number of large projects that concerned underground Valletta, some of which were completed, while others never left the drawing board. The New Market in *Strada Mercanti* (1859) and the Royal Malta Opera House (1861) were both supplied with cavernous underlying cisterns. Governor William Reid proposed the excavation of a tunnel that would link Marsamxetto with Grand Harbour, but this was something else that never happened.

Some of these projects were seen as extravagant by the populace, as the rapidly growing problem of sanitation in the city was not being properly addressed. Eventually, after decades of political disagreement, the sewers left by the Knights were radically overhauled, the work being completed by 1878. A new railway line, opened in 1880, saw the excavation of the Valletta station and ancillary tunnels below Porta Reale. At one stage, Sir Gerald Strickland planned to extend the line down to St Elmo, but this proved unfeasible. By 1930, the service was terminated and the line closed. Within a decade, subterranean Valletta would assume an altogether very different role.

By the end of the 1930s, with the prospect of a pan-European conflict looming, Malta braced itself for war. Attacks from the air were anticipated, and in Valletta the authorities began identifying and cleaning out existing underground spaces. These mainly included the Knights' military tunnels and passages, as well as the defunct railway station. When the bombing

began, it was soon realised that not only were these insufficient, but they were located on Valletta's land-front, dangerously far from the densely populated areas of the city. By the end of 1941, several hundreds of metres of passages had been cut out, incorporating existing spaces such as cisterns, public reservoirs, crypts and basements. As a result, the city's bowels became a veritable rabbit warren that provided refuge to thousands during the height of hostilities in the first half of 1942. So effective was taking cover underground that the British military establishment decided to house the command of its armed forces in one complex below the Castille area. This resulted in the creation of one of the city's largest subterranean spaces, the Lascaris War Rooms, which remained in use well into the 1970s.

After the war, much of Valletta's undercroft was sealed up and forgotten. It was only in recent years, particularly with the establishment of the Valletta Rehabilitation Project, that glimpses of the remarkable scale and character of the underground dimension of the city came to light. With numerous restoration projects taking place within the city, many basements, cellars and a couple of air-raid shelters have now been restored. The Lascaris War Rooms are being restored by *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna* and will be re-opened shortly. Much of the city's underworld, however, remains dark and damp, used only by vermin and loaded with much of Valletta's infrastructure. Occasionally, brave maintenance teams carry out repair work or inspections inside the passages. The sewers, an ingenious feat of Renaissance civil engineering only rivalled in age by their ancient Roman counterparts, are in urgent need of repair, whilst many of the public wells and cisterns are disused or damaged.

The aim of my study was to make an attempt at interpreting all the historical material available by way of documentation such as texts, drawings and images, as well as analysing in-situ evidence (where accessible). Hopefully, it will provide a background for any future continuation on the subject, something which I hope to achieve in the coming months.

Tunnels beneath the city with fold-down bunk beds used by the population for air raids shelter during WWII

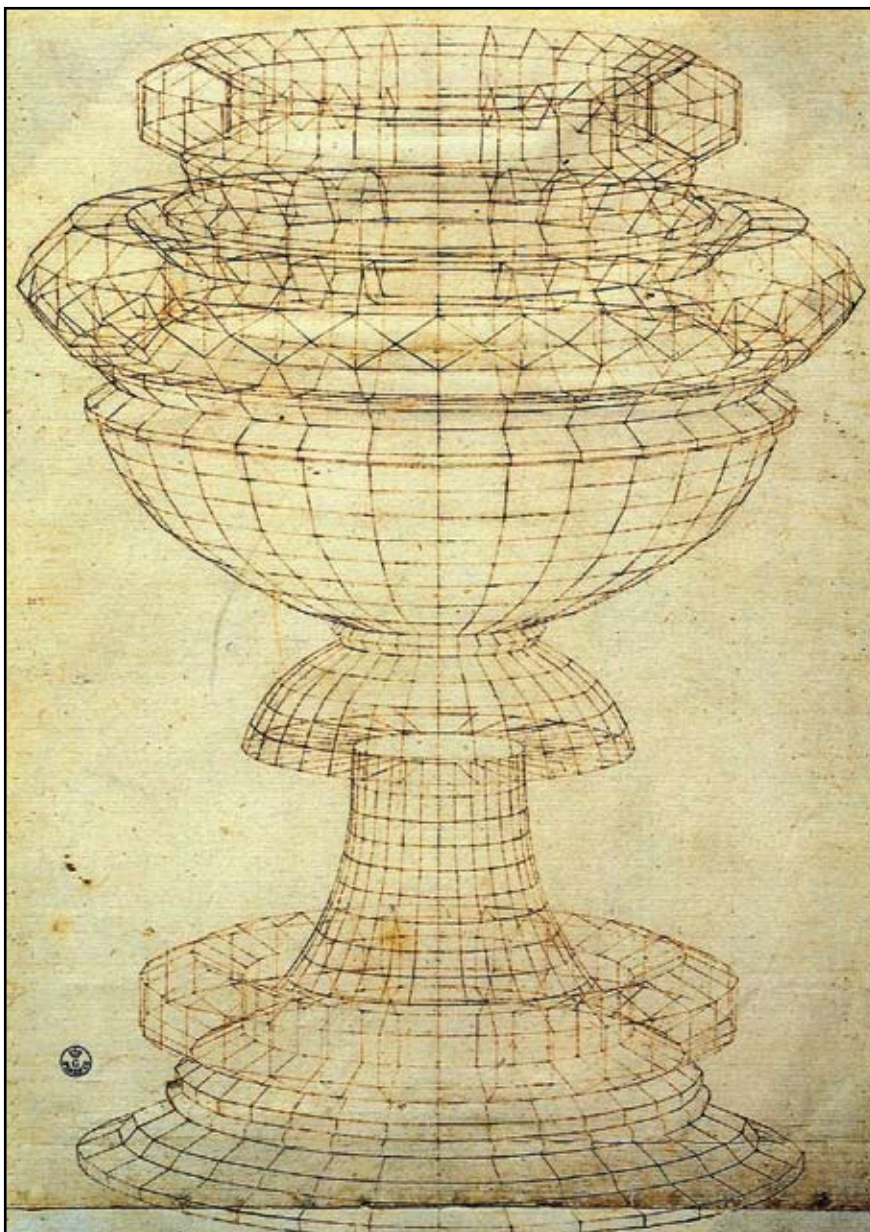


Photogrammetry Applied to Documentation

Peter-Paul Bugeja

This article is an abstract of a long essay submitted in partial fulfilment of the Diploma in Baroque Architecture. The course is organised by the International Institute for Baroque Studies, University of Malta, and funded by the Works Division of the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

Paulo Uccello,
Perspective Drawing of a Chalice (c.1450)
Uffizi, Florence



Baroque architecture is rich in its forms, projections and decorations, with palaces and churches of this era constructed to elaborate designs, making them difficult to measure for documentation purposes.

Measurements can be obtained in a number of ways, among which is photogrammetry – a technique that has been found to be particularly suitable in many cases. Photogrammetry is the transformation of photographs into orthophotos, which are elaborated to a scale that can be measured.

The word “photography” means “drawing with light”. It is the action of light being reflected back off an object and then processed by our eyes and brain, which provides us with our sense of sight.¹ Every point on an object reflects light and this bundle of light needs to be controlled to form an image.

Photogrammetry covers all the systems used for measuring objects in two or three dimensions from photographic records. It is a technique that uses the metric properties of a photograph to determine the form, dimensions and relative and absolute position of any object placed in a determined distance of observation.

It is the art, science, and technology of obtaining reliable information about physical objects and the environment through the processes of recording, measuring, and interpreting photographic images.² The term “art” here is intended as “skill”, which

is obtained through experience. Leonardo da Vinci explored the mathematical techniques of linear perspective, which painters use to create an illusion of depth in space and distance on flat surface.³

The simplest type of photogrammetry is the rectification of photographs taken on a single plane. To produce a rectified image of a single plane, one should measure the four sides of a perimeter of four known points and the diagonals. Digital software, such as Metric Single-image Rectification (MSR), transforms a normal photograph to a scaled photograph. When an object consisting of various planes is measured for rectification, target points must be added to each plane to eliminate projection distortion.

A building can be measured using different methods. The use of 2D or 3D systems depends upon the nature of the building and the final product to be achieved. When using a 2D system, only a two-dimensional measurement can be obtained. Rectifying photographs permits this process.

A 3D system is used for measuring a building with different planes. To obtain measurements from different projections, it is necessary to know the values of each point, which are the X, Y and Z coordinates. These measurements can only be obtained through surveying instruments and terrestrial photogrammetry.

A single photograph can do no more than provide a set of directions in three-dimensional space, without any indication of distances along the rays. The general problem lies in using a series of such sets of directions to reconstruct a model of the objects photographed. At least two rays from different points are required to fix the position along a ray.

In architecture, especially baroque architecture, photogrammetry is complicated. When it is applied for the production of survey sheets, normally one of the 3D coordinates remains constant and the common points are clearer. For example, when restoring the upper outline of houses from a stereo-pair of aerial photographs, normally the Z coordinate will retain the same value. In architectural mouldings, we often have a continuous change of coordinates, which makes it difficult to superimpose the stereo-pair for the restitution.

So-called classical photogrammetry was originally created to make it possible to measure a stereo-pair that contains an image of various planes. Classical photogrammetry – the transformation of a stereo-pair – is based on human eye vision.

Human vision registers depth, so the eyes look parallel to the object space. When viewing an object with both eyes, two slightly different impressions of the same object reach the brain. The brain interprets the messages and a single 3D image is produced. According to the degree of convergence, the brain can calculate the distance. Stereoscopic vision helps a lot in this, since judgement of distance is very difficult with only one eye. Human beings have stereoscopic vision and hence are capable of judging distances.

Photogrammetry can be divided into two categories: far range, which is normally aerial, and where the camera lens is set to infinite distance, and close range, which is normally terrestrial, with the camera lens set to definite distance values. Both types need a series of procedures, which include photographs, stereo-plotting, editing by Computer Aided Design (CAD) and printing – and both are expensive when it comes to plotting and editing. Aerial photogrammetry involves the expense of an air-flight, while terrestrial photogrammetry, which normally operates on digital workstations, includes the expense of scanning slide film to digital format.

A single bundle of rays from a single photograph cannot provide any numerical topographical information. Single images can only be used for plane objects, which can be rectified to give a scaled photograph. They can be assembled in mosaics to provide

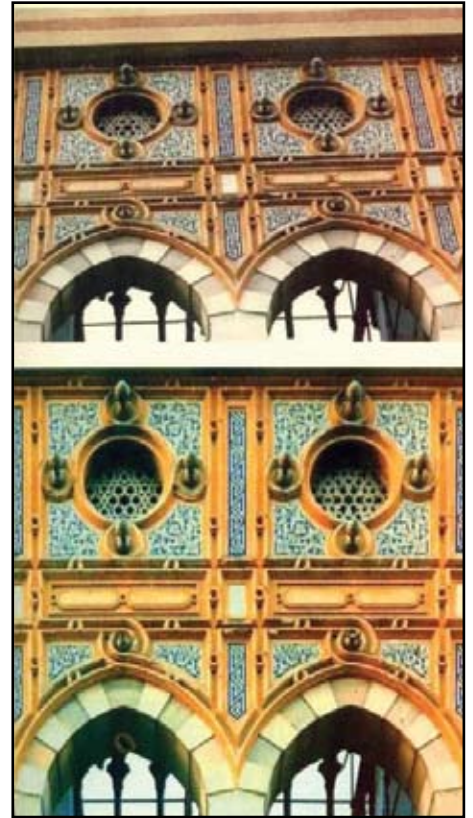
photomaps of reasonably sized areas but good mosaics require a knowledge of the principles of photogrammetry, and also a great deal of skill.⁴ Single photographs are of very limited use in surveying, which is mostly implied in a stereo-pair or stereogram.

A stereo-pair consists of two photographs of the same size, taken from different positions but with a certain amount of ground in common. They can be examined in a stereo-plotter to present an impression of the three-dimensional features. Since stereo-pairs are placed in their correct relative positions, this method provides a true three-dimensional model, known as a stereogram. The stereo-pair is the basic unit in photogrammetry. Stereo-pairs are usually the successive pairs in a strip of photographs. The stereo-pair must have the same characteristics, that is, the same exposure, distance, colour and light.

In archaeological, sculptural or relief surveys, measurements can only be determined using a photogrammetric system. It is, however, very difficult to measure round objects through photogrammetry. Statues are best surveyed by a laser scanner, which produces a wire-frame of the object, which can be draped by an orthophoto-image as a digital terrain model.

A major drawback of photogrammetry is the documentation of façades of high buildings situated in narrow streets. Here, the exposure distance for photographs is too short, and the view too acute. A photograph contains a limited extent of useful area. To map an extensive area by photography, a systematic coverage is required and since every point must appear in two photographs, the unit of cover is the photographic overlap and not a single photograph.⁵ Photographs are normally taken with an overlap of 60 per cent.

Plate 1 shows a photographic projection with O as the perspective centre and every point P on the object has a corresponding point P on the image. The negative N is a section cutting through the bundle of perspective rays in the image space. A developed photographic print is a positive section of the same bundle of perspective rays in the object space.



Rectified photograph

Photographs assembled in mosaic.
Mnajdra Temples
Photo: Alex Torpiano



When comparing a perspective photographic image to a survey drawing of the same features, the scale changes are due to the inclined axis of the image, which leads to converging parallel lines and to the projections of the object itself⁶ (Plate 2).

Plate 3 shows the surveying of a building using stereo-pairs for stereo-photogrammetry. The photographs must be taken from two viewpoints along approximately parallel axes. Each point on the object is linked by two perspective rays, which pass through the two camera lenses or perspective centres to produce two matching image points on the plane of the negative.

Photographs must be converted to digital format by scanners that retain the geometric and radiometric fidelity of the original photographs.⁷ Digital images can also be used, if digital cameras are equipped with a calibration system. After the film is scanned and converted to a digital image, no further distortion occurs.

Improvement in image digitisation technology has reduced the expense related to the scanning of images at high spatial resolution for specific photogrammetric projects. Photographs should be scanned to a minimum resolution of 300dpi (dot per inch), to provide adequate clarity of detail and sufficient measurement accuracy, while avoiding excessive data volume.

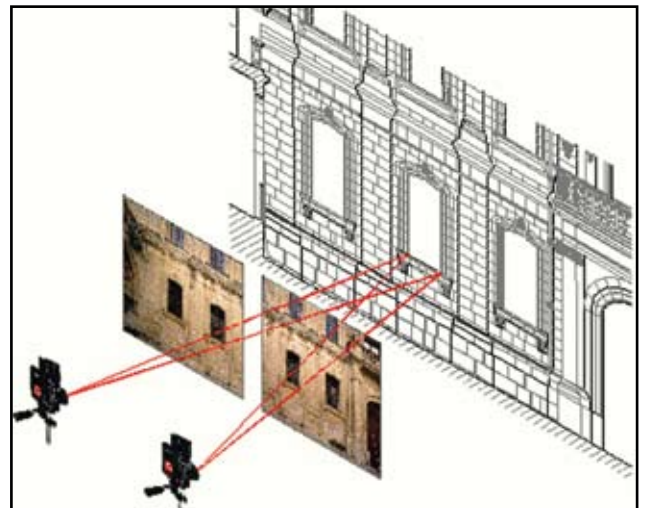
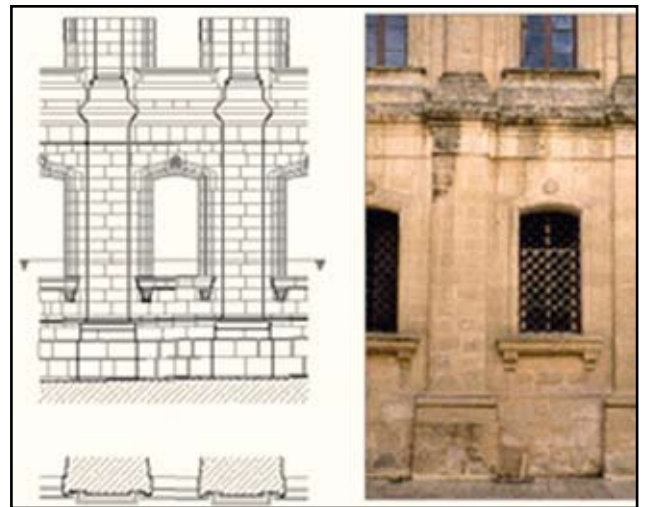
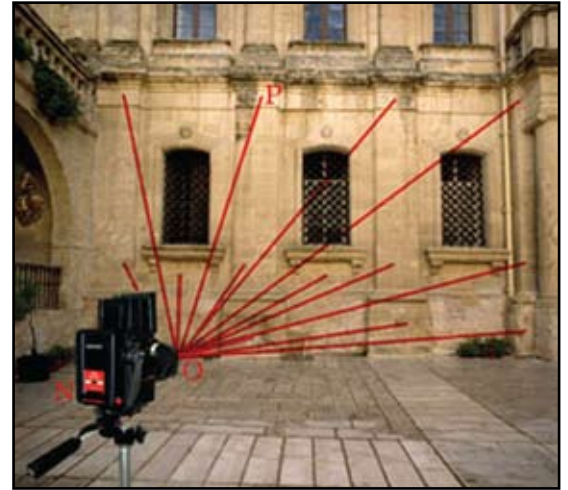
The market for stereo-view software is the survey sheet, which gives the highest cost-efficiency for the time taken. Comparatively, one can imagine how long it would take, and how many difficulties would be encountered, in obtaining such a survey manually. Survey sheets cannot be reproduced without the aid of such hardware and software. With these facilities it is possible to produce a measurable and accurate model as a final product. Close-range photogrammetry is economically used for elevations.

Stereo-viewing requires the separation of the two images of a stereo-pair that allow the left eye to see the left image and the right eye to see the right image. This is achieved using binocular optics, which provides perfect separation, and polarising systems.⁸ Most analytical plotters use binocular optics, which provide perfect stereo separation, while most digital systems result in some degree of ghosting.

Many of these techniques result in a poor result when building structures are composed of complex shapes. Oblique images will cause assumptions on the image geometry and for a good result a building extraction system must make use of all available scene and image geometric information.

As already pointed out, it is not possible to measure mouldings from rectified photos and it is easier to take direct measurements by hand than to use photogrammetric techniques. Only planes can be measured by using rectification of photographs. The available stereo-view software does not easily measure objects with no well-defined planes unless it is equipped with the appropriate stereo-view correlation.

The advantage of this restitution stereo-view plotter is that the user is drafting a 3D model. The greatest difficulty that the user encounters is the ghosting of images and the better the photographs, the fewer limitations for restitution will be encountered.

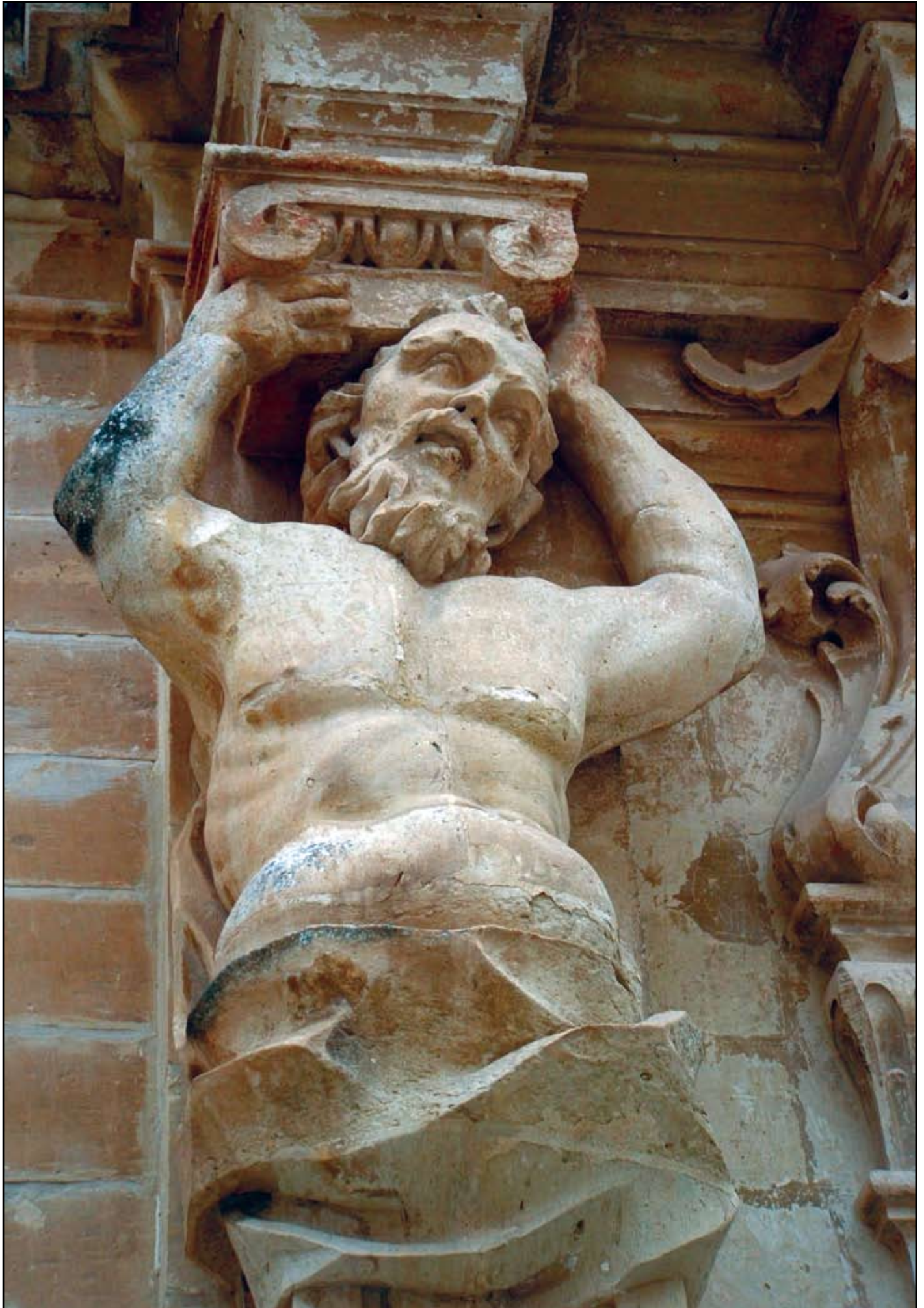


Plates 1,2&3

All plates provided by the author

- 1) www.ted.photographer.org.uk/photoscience
- 2) www.univie.ac.at, 'What is photogrammetry'
- 3) A. Scott Fetzer. *The World Book Encyclopaedia* 12 (London: 1996), p. 180
- 4) D.R. Crone. *Elementary Photogrammetry* (London: 1963), pp. 33-34
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 5
- 6) L. Baratin. *Photogrammetric system and cost analysis for architectural and archaeological surveys* (Zurich: 1990), passim 53, 58.
- 7) R. Welch & M. Remillard. *GPS, photogrammetry and GIS for resource mapping applications*, ed. C. Greve (USA: 1996), pp. 184, 186, 190.
- 8) D. Kaiser. *Comparison of Softcopy vs. Hardcopy*, ed. C. Greve (USA: 1996), p.143.

opposite:
Baroque telamon supporting
the central balcony of the
Mdina Cahedral Museum



Challenges to Biodiversity Conservation in the Maltese Islands

Dr Alan Deidun

It can be argued that biodiversity has, at least temporarily, replaced climate change as the most frequently discussed topic in media circles. This can be attributed to the fact that the United Nations has designated 2010 as the International Year for Biodiversity. The actual meaning of the word “biodiversity” is still a bit of a mystery to many people. It assumes three dimensions: the variety of habitats and ecosystems, the variety of species (the definition with which most would identify themselves) and the variety of genes within a species (which, for plant species, is being winnowed down by the abandonment of traditional farming techniques and the adoption of industrial monoculture practices, for example). The global biodiversity is sustained in a wafer-thin layer known as ‘the biosphere’ to scientists (and as ‘creation’ to theologians), which, though seemingly vast, extending from the deepest part of the ocean – the 11-km-deep Mariana’s Trench in the Pacific Ocean) – to a few kilometres up in the atmosphere, cannot be viewed edgewise from space. Despite this, the layer is so intricately complex that many of the species (the currency by which most biodiversity counts go) contained therein are still awaiting discovery. In fact, while around two million species have been discovered to date, estimates of the overall number of species out there range from between five million and 50 million. In 1972, the British inventor James Lovelock devised the Gaia parody, in which he compared the biosphere to a superorganism encompassing all the Earth – Gaia is derived from Gaea or Ge, a vague goddess of early Greece, most often seen as the personification of the Earth itself.

A landmark ad hoc convention – the Convention on Biological Diversity – was signed by more than 150 contracting parties (including Malta) on 5 June 1992 at the Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the “Earth Summit”). It defines biodiversity as “the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.” The European Commission had, way back in 2002, set itself the ambitious target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010, only to admit last year that it had abjectly failed. In March this year, European environment ministers met in Brussels to establish fresh objectives for the conservation of biodiversity on the continent, which can be distilled into a pledge to halt biodiversity and habitat loss by 2020, mirroring efforts by the European Commission to combat climate change.

Another landmark convention concerning biodiversity is CITES, which is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and which, as the name implies, seeks to stave off international trade in animal and plant species deemed in danger

of becoming extinct. This Convention ranks as one of the oldest international conventions (coming in force in 1975) and with one of the highest number of participants (with currently 175 parties). The latter statistic is especially significant when one considers that adherence by States to CITES is voluntary. Currently, CITES affords varying degrees of protection to around 5,000 animal and around 28,000 plant species. Since the ratification of CITES, just one species (Spix’s Macaw) has become extinct as a result of international trade, thus underscoring the convention’s efficiency in reaching its goals.

Protection under CITES is three-tiered: Appendix I gathers around 800 species that are in imminent danger of extinction (eg all the large cats, the red panda, gorillas and chimpanzees and most rhinoceros populations; Appendix II bundles around 32,000 species that are not necessarily threatened with extinction, but may become so unless trade in specimens is subject to strict regulation in order to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival (eg the American black bear, the African grey parrot, the green iguana and the bigleaf mahogany); Appendix III lists around 170 species that are not necessarily threatened with extinction globally, and that were included after one member country asked other CITES parties for assistance in controlling trade in a species (eg the African civet and the alligator snapping turtle). Captive bred animals or cultivated plants of Appendix I species are considered Appendix II specimens, international trade in which is then permitted through the issue of a relevant export permit or re-export certification.

Species are proposed for inclusion in or deletion from the Appendices at meetings of the Conference of the Parties (CoP), which are normally

Ta’ Sarraflu freshwater pool,
Kerċem, Gozo



held every two or three years. The most recent meeting (CoP 15) took place in Qatar, and resulted in a lack of consensus over stricter protection measures for species such as red coral, blue fin tuna and many species of sharks, with rare silver linings such as the prohibition of a renewed trade in elephant ivory.

The world is currently experiencing a biodiversity crisis of unprecedented proportions, the so-called Sixth Mass Extinction. A mass extinction is a period in which extinction (the irrevocable loss of species) rates are disproportionately higher than under normal circumstances, resulting in the loss of sizeable fractions of living species. It could be argued that extinction is a natural phenomenon (species tend to have an average lifespan of around two million years, with the exception of living fossils, of course, like many reptiles and sharks). This implies that there have been five previous mass extinctions which, however, took place over a much longer time span (thus giving ecosystems time to adapt to the gradual loss of species) and were never caused by a single species as is the case with the current mass extinction event. Researchers estimate that the current rate of extinction hovers between 1,000-10,000 times the rate that prevailed before humans began exerting significant pressure on the environment.

We happen to live in a region – the Mediterranean – which is regarded as a hotspot of biodiversity and of endemism (endemic species are restricted to one particular country) in view of the disproportionately high number of terrestrial (around 20,000 terrestrial plant species) and marine species (around 12,000) it harbours, of which 60 per cent and 25 per cent respectively are considered endemic. Stunningly enough, around 20 per cent of all Mediterranean species are considered as threatened. To further compound matters, we live on a small island, whereby islands are considered in their own right as biodiversity hot spots, due to long coastlines and isolation of island populations from those on the mainland. Concurrently, island biodiversity is most prone to the introduction of alien species, and tourism normally assumes an overt importance on islands, exacerbating the human impact.

The biodiversity numbers for our islands are indeed impressive: the Maltese Islands, in fact, harbour 23 endemic floral species and around 60 endemic faunal plant species (Schembri, 1994). The total number of non-marine species described to date from the Islands totals around 2,400, although the total number of such species is expected to be in the region of 5,000 species (Schembri, 2006; Schembri et al, 1999, 2002). The total number of floral species from the Islands hovers around 1,200 species (Schembri et al, 1999, 2002).

The current scourge being faced by biodiversity comes from the HIPPO set of human pressures – Habitat destruction and fragmentation, Introduction of invasive species, Pollution, Population (ie the ever-increasing human population) and Overexploitation of species. Locally, major threats to biodiversity stem from the removal of garrigue for agriculture, bird-trapping and road-opening purposes, the indiscriminate collection of specimens (eg the French daffodil, frogs and other charismatic species), unsustainable fishing practises such as those involving the landing of sexually immature fish or the illegal deployment of trammel nets within bays, and the wilful or accidental introduction of alien species (including the introduction of Bedriaga's frog at the Ta-Sarraflu freshwater pool in Kercem, Gozo, the cape sorrel, which carpets fields and rubble walls, and the Hottentot fig, planted for ornamental purposes at roundabouts). Activities that degrade biodiversity resources should be given the same degree of publicity as is given to illegal developments locally – the pillaging of garrigue should receive the same attention



Major threats to biodiversity stem from the removal of garrigue for agriculture and road-opening

"Activities that degrade biodiversity resources should be given the same degree of publicity as is given to illegal developments locally – the pillaging of garrigue should receive the same attention as ODZ developments."

Alien Frog - A large population of the alien Bedriaga's frog has established itself at Ta' Sarraflu freshwater pool in Kercem Gozo - MEPA is embarking on an eradication programme.





Hottentot fig - Despite its alluring flowers, the hottentog fig is native to South Africa and carpets whole swathes of disturbed ground, displacing local flora.

Male selmunett - The Maltese wall-lizard is endemic to the Maltese Islands and to Linosa and Lampione - seen here is the Selmunett race, which is extinct in the wild
(photo courtesy of Mr. Arnold Sciberras)



as ODZ developments. Education is obviously instrumental in this respect.

Island species are particularly prone to the introduction of alien species, since they have evolved largely in isolation and thus are bestowed with specialist and unique characteristics that are largely useless when it comes to counteracting competitors like alien species. In the Maltese Islands, 18 per cent of the plant species so far identified may be classified as alien. Of these, approximately three per cent are possibly native, one per cent was introduced more than 500 years ago, and approximately three per cent are known to be invasive (Mepa, 2006). Of these, a number of insidious alien floral species have colonised vast terrestrial swathes of the Maltese Islands, with some being introduced wilfully by man while others were introduced accidentally. These include the Cape Sorrel (*Oxalis pes-caprae*), introduced accidentally in the beginning of the 19th century from South Africa (Henslow, 1891), which carpets abandoned agricultural and rubble walls, having spread

to date along the entire Atlantic coastline of Europe as far as the UK; *Aster squamatus*, probably the most successful “weed” species in the Maltese Islands, introduced towards the 1930s (Schembri & Lanfranco, 1996) and preferring sheltered and humid soil such as that found along watercourses; the Castor Oil Plant (*Ricinus officinalis*), introduced wilfully for ornamental purposes and highly invasive within riparian (valley) ecosystems; the tobacco plant (*Nicotiana glauca*), also introduced for ornamental purposes and currently synonymous with disturbed habitats and mounds of rubble.

The Maltese Islands, and the Mediterranean region in general, have a long history of human-mediated biotic introductions. Archeophytes are defined as floral species introduced wilfully by man for agricultural or ornamental purposes in antiquity (ie predating 1492, the discovery of the Americas) and which have become naturalised, with examples including the prickly pear (*Opuntia ficus-carica* – native to Mexico), the carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua* – native to the Middle East) and the giant reed (*Arundo donax* – native to Turkey). Generally, undisturbed ecosystems are inherently resistant to invasion by exotics (Di Castri, 1990). However, this capacity is severely reduced in ecosystems that are disturbed, especially if the disturbance is rapid and frequent (Di Castri, 1990). The promulgation of non-indigenous species in the Maltese Islands can thus be considered as symptomatic of the high degree of human disturbance on the islands.

Different islands adopt different strategies with respect to the introduction of non-indigenous species. Differences in assessing the ecological impact of *Carpobrotus edulis*, commonly known as the Hottentot fig or the iceplant, a native of South Africa and considered as an alien species in many parts of the world – including Australia and Europe – is a case in point. *C. edulis* forms impenetrable mats and competes aggressively with native species, threatening rare and endangered species. This prompted the European Commission in 2001 to approve the LIFE Nature proposal for the *Conservation of areas with threatened flora in the island of Minorca*, the main objective of which was the eradication of exotic plant

species from the island. Conversely, on the island of Malta, landscape consortia still strenuously defend the planting of the species along roadsides and in public gardens, which has resulted in the species establishing itself in the wild such as on rocky cliffs.

As Edward Wilson, author of the masterpiece *The Future of Life*, and revered by *The Times* of London as “the world’s greatest living writer on science”, concludes: “A civilisation able to envision God and to embark on the civilisation of space will surely find the way to save the integrity of this planet and the magnificent life it harbours.”

It is to be hoped that biodiversity and its conservation will occupy central stage at this year’s events concerned with World Environment Day and that the local authorities will wake up, as they have done with climate change, and take a proactive role here in this regard. Let us hope that biodiversity issues start grabbing the headlines: the onus is on politicians to ensure that this is the case.

A Study of The Portal of The Church of St John the Evangelist at Hal Millieri

Joe Azzopardi

The church of St John the Evangelist is one of the few architectural remains of the mediaeval hamlet of Hal Millieri, located on the outskirts of Żurriq and Mqabba, and is one of a complex of four churches that stood in two pairs on either side of the hamlet's main square.

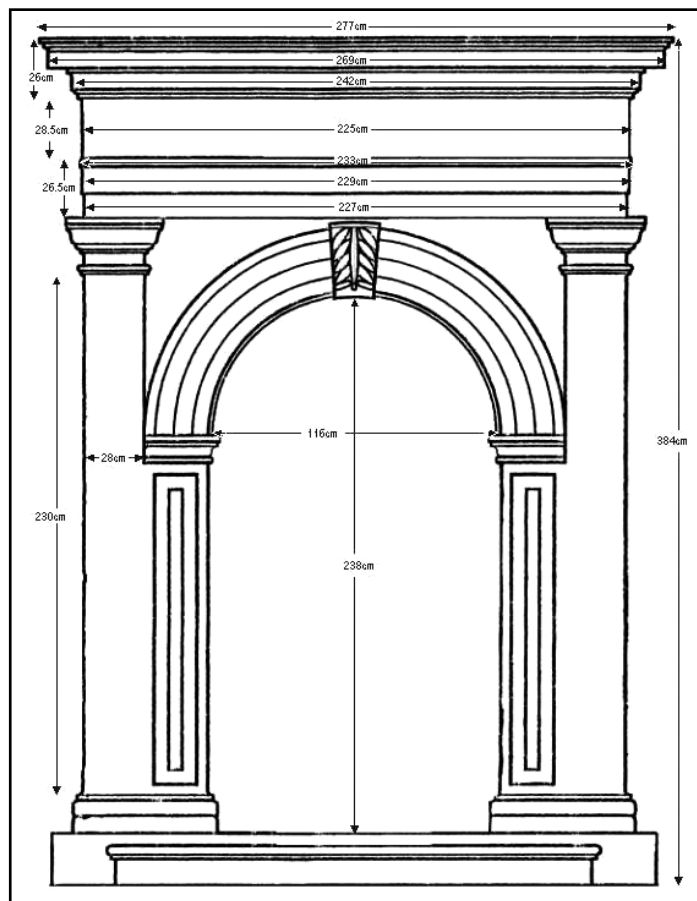
Although the building we see today dates back to the first half of the 17th century, the earliest records referring to the church date back to 1481. Both the church of St John the Evangelist and its twin, the church of the Archangel Michael, were recorded as being in poor condition during a pastoral visit in 1634 and it was suggested that they be deconsecrated. This provided the impetus for their reconstruction, and in 1646 Bishop Balaguer noted that they had been rebuilt. The identical churches were fairly plain, apart from their portals which, according to popular tradition, came from the old parish church of Żurriq that was also being rebuilt at the time.

The portal of the church of St John the Evangelist consists of a semicircular arch that springs from two panelled features flanking the entrance and culminates in a keystone decorated with a foliage motif, with the whole framed on both sides by pilasters with decorated capitals. These pilasters support a well-proportioned, if not particularly elaborate, entablature.

One peculiar aspect of the design of the portal is that the framing pilasters do not form two independent vertical elements. For over half of their length they are an integral part of the door jambs, within which the ornamental panelling is inscribed. This bonding element is further emphasised by the fact that they rest on a base that is twice as wide as their width and on which the panelling also rests. This base is composed of a narrow plinth, an *ovolo*, and a cincture. The panelling rises to the level where the arch springs. At this point the two elements, arch and pilaster, go their own logical direction, creating a non-indifferent tension that adds dynamism to the whole composition.

The church of St John the Evangelist





This fundamental part of the composition is intelligently articulated through the use of decorated elements that form the apex of the panelled sections, while providing bases from which the arch can spring. These decorated elements are composed of an *ovolo*, a *cyma recta*, a fascia and an abacus. The arch, which is composed of four receding fascias, culminates in the decorated keystone, while the flanking pilasters proceed vertically towards a pronounced element composed of a fascia and a cincture. This is surmounted by a section of plain masonry on which the capital rests. The capital is composed of a *fascia*, an *ovolo* and a *cyma recta* over which rests an abacus that marks the transition to the entablature.

top left and bottom:
Drawings with
measurements

top right:
The portal

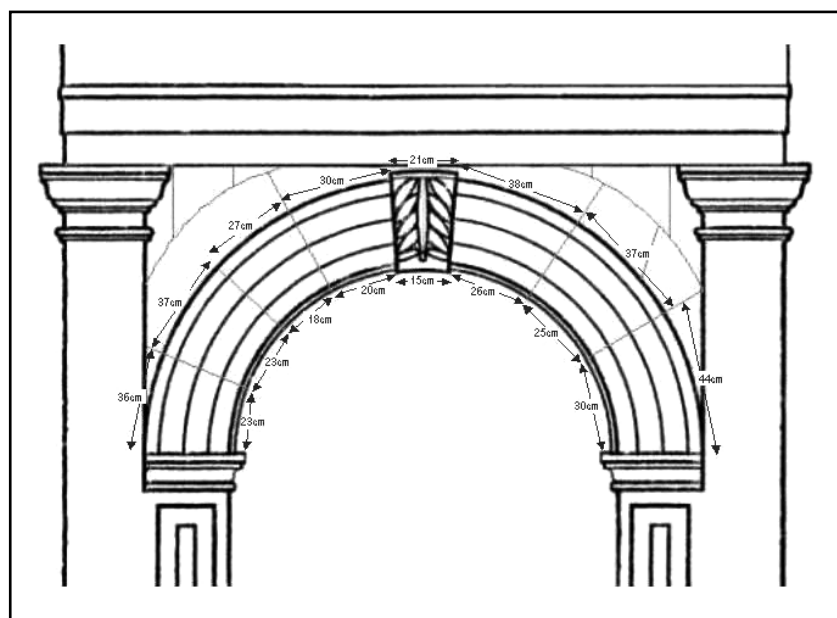
The entablature begins with a plain architrave that is, however, made more interesting by being divided into two parallel horizontal sections, the lower one of which is shallower than the higher one. This creates an edge that projects a sharp line of shadow. The same optical device is used to emphasise the transition between the architrave and the totally plain frieze section. This transition is marked by a tick fascia.

Certainly the most imposing element of this architectural design is the deep cornice which animates the whole façade by projecting a dark, deep shadow. The transition between the frieze section and the cornice is again marked by a fascia. Over this is an *ovolo* surmounted by an even larger *ovolo* and a *cavetto*. The *cavetto* penetrates into the *gocciolatoia* composed of a wide strip of masonry surmounted by a *cavetto* and a fascia. This represents the culmination of the whole composition.

Proportions

The whole design, both in its entirety and in its details, can be said to be quite simple. It is probably the product of an experienced stonemason rather than a trained architect. Despite this, and thanks to a sensible use of proportion, the result is interesting and harmonious.

The most evident proportion is manifest in the semi-circular arch of the doorway. The radius of the arch corresponds exactly to one fourth of the length of the opening, giving a ratio of 1:4. Another interesting element is the fact that the length of the shaft of the pilasters corresponds almost exactly to the width of the frieze. These are, in fact, 230cm and 225cm respectively.



It should also be noted that the difference between the length of the pilasters and that of the arched opening is 8cm, which correspond to the height of the first element of the base of the pilasters. If this element were to be removed, the opening would also be 230cm in height. Finally, there is another pleasing proportion in the massing of the entablature. It is noted that the three elements composing the entablature are of a similar height, with a maximum variation of 3.5cm. This means that the proportion of the entablature to each of its composing elements is of 1:3.



Shaping of the stones

The entablature

The fact that the portal is probably the work of a skilled stonemason rather than a trained architect can be deduced with greater certainty when the composition is studied stone by stone. In certain areas, particularly in the arch, a degree of on-the-spot, rather than mathematically calculated, manipulation is evident.

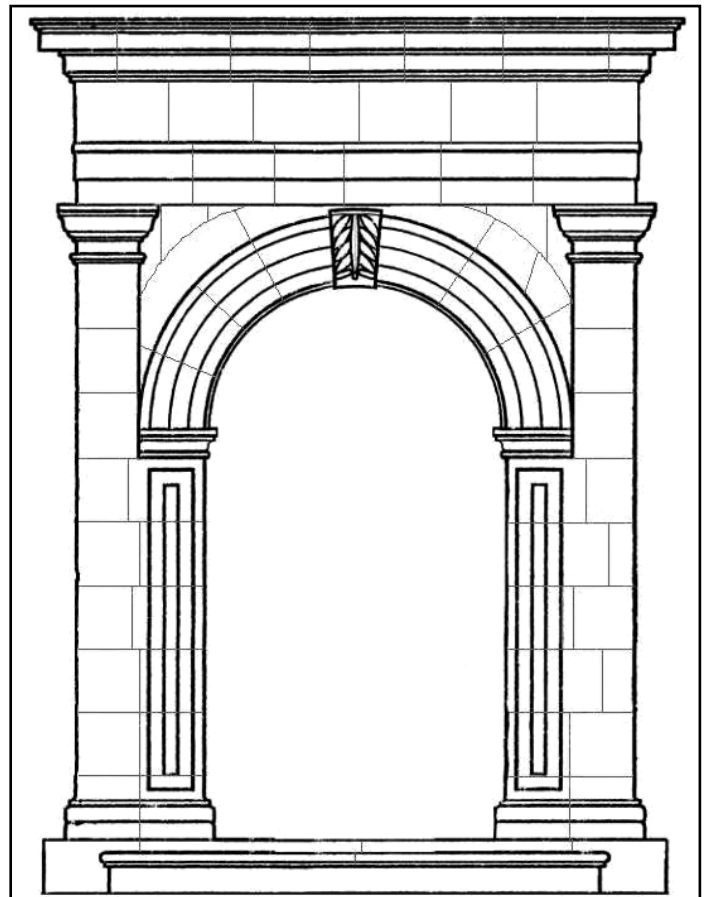
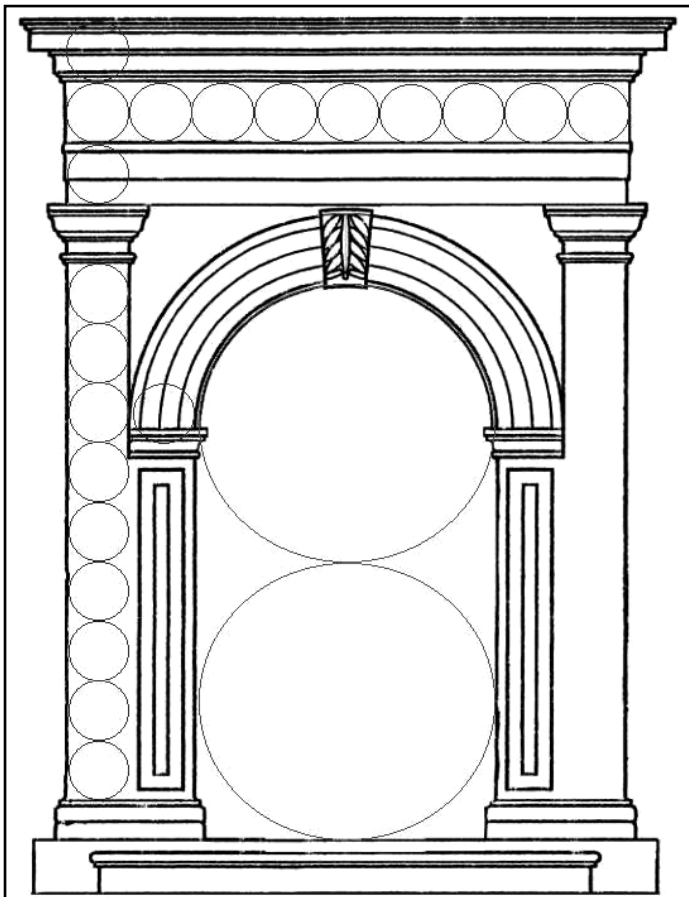
This transpires from the way in which each *vousoir* is cut and shaped. Had the arch and its composing elements been calculated mathematically, it would have resulted in a set of equally sized *vousoirs*. In reality, however, the dimension of each element varies both from the one next to it and from the one corresponding to it in the opposite segment of the arch.

This argument is reinforced by a study of the area of transition between the arch and the entablature, defined as spandrel. Here, the stones have not been cut as an extension of the arch but are a somewhat clumsy effort to fill the triangular space. The same applies to the entablature. Both the architrave and the frieze are made up of six stones, while the cornice is composed of seven. Each of the three sections, however, is made up of stones of different dimensions.

All these facts seem to indicate that the portal was executed by a craftsman using traditional building methods rather than an architectural drawing. Some of the incongruities mentioned above might also confirm that the portal originally formed part of another structure and was effectively reconstructed here to meet the requirements of its new location.

bottom left:
Proportions drawing

bottom right:
Stereotomy drawing



Residue of carelessness
at the Kalkara waterfront



Literally falling to pieces.
The unique skewed arch at
il-Ġnien tal-Milorda
(Sa Maison Garden).
Photo - Victor Rizzo



Ruining further the little that is left of the once beautiful area of Ta' Ghajn Barrani, Xaghra, Gozo



Extreme heritage protection in Marsa



Of the nine buildings that look over the Birgu Waterfront two are still waiting for restoration and the third is still an empty site

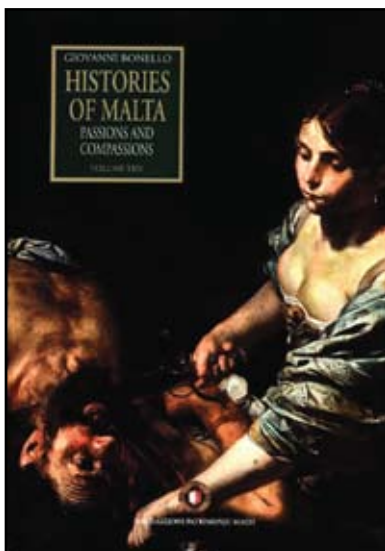
Heritage Publications Review

Publications for consideration
within this section
are to be forwarded to
the Editor :

Din l-Art Helwa
133 Melita Street
Valletta

Histories of Malta
Passions and Compassions
Volume X
Author - Giovanni Bonello
Published by - Fondazzjoni
Patrimonju Malti
ISBN – 978-99932-7-274-8
Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi

opposite:
Grand Master Claude de la Sengle with the
plan of Senglea and the flag of the order
in the background



The 10th volume of any series of publications is a considerable achievement. Such numbers speak of a lasting commitment towards one's subject and indicate a process of assimilation by which the work of an author starts to become an integral part of his existence. I am sure that Giovanni Bonello has learned as much *from* the innumerable characters he has brought to his pages, as he has *about* them. With this series, he has rightfully earned for himself the status of one of Malta's foremost historians. He can be numbered among the few who deserve to be curved as a telamon supporting the entablature of the temple of Maltese historical knowledge.

The most challenging chapter by far of this volume is the one relating to Dun Gaetano Mannarino and his antics, following the failure of the 1775 plot against the Order of St John. Until coming Bonello's way, Mannarino was considered a hero of patriotism – an image crafted around him in the 19th century. The author, however, exposes him as a “false and deceitful idol” who betrayed his fellow-conspirators. The events and evidence presented make us question what we considered as historical facts and are an admonition that encourages us to seek truth in fact and documentation, not in speculative truisms. Among other illustrations in this chapter are two showing plaster busts of Mannarino created by Giuseppe Cali, which seem to fully corroborate the image given by Bonello of a devious, opportunistic individual.

This synergy between text and illustration is a continuing characteristic of the *Histories of Malta* series. The author often relies on illustrations, which are extensively researched and consistently well printed, to evoke the intangible characteristics of his subject that would be difficult to capture in writing.

A case-in-point is the chapter dealing with insanity in Malta at the time of the Knights. The intense illustrations accompanying this chapter speak volumes of the constant struggle that characterised the lives of individuals whose behaviour did not conform to the rigid social norms of the period. They illustrate the war waged by society to restrain, repress, and ‘cure’ these deviating specimens of humankind and oblige them to conform to acceptable social expectations. On the other hand, in an insular society that was constantly conditioned by the threat of external attack, internal stability was a fundamental value that needed to be safeguarded at all costs. Such was the social stigma attached to mentally unstable individuals that Bonello turns to private papers, rather than official records, for his investigation, as the latter are very parsimonious regarding the subject. At a time when there were no newspapers to report and record the trivial or uncomfortable facts of life, private diaries served this function admirably – although one has to keep in mind the bias, or potential ulterior motive, of the individual authors.

Reading through the chapter entitled *The internati – and who should be ashamed*, one soon feels that there are mechanisms at work that go beyond the author's usual empathy with his characters. This is a subject in which he is personally involved. He expresses in no uncertain terms his indignation at what he considers to be a grave injustice perpetrated by the British colonial government in 1942. In that year, a considerable number of Maltese who manifested Italian sympathies were interned in Uganda for the duration of WWII. The author's father, Vincenzo Bonello, was one of these eminent internees. Some of the illustrations here seem to have been taken from the family albums, making them even more poignant. These facts probably provided the seeds for the myth that the author harboured anti-British sentiments whereas, in fact, in a recently published article he refuted this, expressing his great admiration for British literature, history and humour.

Finally, I must say a word about the chapter dedicated to the artistic patronage undertaken by the Knights of Malta. The Maltese, particularly those who have an interest in the historical field, might seem to over-worship the Knights – an attitude that, to outsiders, might seem like yet another manifestation of the colonial syndrome, with the Maltese subjects delivering an everlasting eulogy to what were, after all, foreign and sometimes unjust rulers.

But at the core of this seemingly irrational infatuation with all things even faintly concerned with the aura of the Knights is the realisation that, had it not been for the fortuitous circumstances that brought them to Malta, this island would have a patrimony – putting to one side the prehistoric – that differs very little from that of other small Mediterranean islands such as Pantelleria. It was the financial resources of the Order, and the munificence of a number of Grand Masters and Knights, that allowed the Maltese heritage to be enriched with items of a standard far above what would have otherwise been possible. It is this heritage, and the circumstances that brought it into being, that the author explores in this chapter.

The entire *Histories of Malta* series is a collection of articles written over an extended period of time. At times they might seem erratic, akin to memories crowding one over the other and assailing the mind without an ordered pattern. They are a kaleidoscope of people, places, smells, sounds and colours. And faced with this torrent of information, the reader is at times enticed, at times amazed and at times overwhelmed – but always enriched.



Jewellery in Malta:

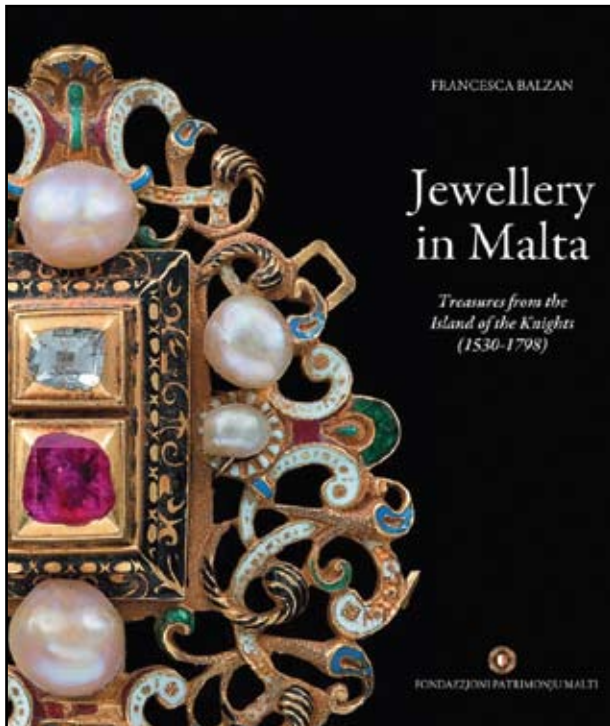
Treasures from the Island of the Knights (1530-1798)

Author - Francesca Balzan

Published by - Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti

ISBN – 978-99932-7-278-6

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



Victorious Knight, coral, ivory and gold.
Private collection



A thing of beauty is a joy forever. Although this phrase is often applied to the arts, over time what are defined as fine arts have extricated themselves from this binomial and have made expressiveness, rather than beauty, their banner. The absolute quest for beauty of the classical era, which was revived in the early renaissance, came to be considered as a limitation when art began to be thought of as the ultimate and highest manifestation of the human spirit which, as we all well know, can be beautiful but also perversely obscure.

As a result of these developments, the creation of beautiful objects increasingly became the remit of the so-called 'minor arts' and of craftsman rather than artists. In the case of jewellery, however, these distinctions tend to become less defined. It is probably no coincidence that some of the greatest artists of all time – such as Brunelleschi, Ghiberti and Cellini – had originally trained as goldsmiths. In his foreword to this book, Professor Mario Buhagiar seeks to find an adequate compromise in terms by defining jewellery making as "fine craft".

As is so masterfully exposed in this book, jewellery items, like works of art, are so much more than inanimate objects. Just as a work of art can stimulate an emotional response in our soul, so the sparkle of jewellery exerts a primordial appeal to our inner self. The shine of gold and silver, and the light refracted and reflected by gemstones, cast a spell that is very difficult to resist. Such is the tempting power of jewellery that in the 1780s a scandal, centred on a diamond necklace produced by Boehmer and Bassenge, shook to the core the court of Louis XVI of France and irremediably tarnished the reputation of Queen Marie Antoinette.

Making extensive use of primary sources, Francesca Balzan – Curator of Palazzo Falson – has uncovered a considerable wealth of information which, in turn, resulted in the first academically valid history of jewellery in Malta. Originally, this body of work formed part of her MA thesis in History of Art. Through her text, the author explores the multifaceted world of jewellery and the social background that emerges from its study. The status symbol *per excellence* jewellery was, and to some extent still is, a means of personal adornment but also a manifestation of power – economic or otherwise. Furthermore, its intrinsic monetary value and contained dimensions make it an ideal means of easily marketable and transportable wealth.

The book focuses on the Order's period (1535-1798) which, in the history of art, corresponds to the era from the High Renaissance to the early years of Neo-Classicism. One of the main points that emerges is that although modern culture has somewhat detached man from the ostentation of jewellery, during the period under review men adorned themselves as much as women. This form of male ostentation, however, had authority, rather than aesthetics, at its core. Men, in particular ecclesiastical dignitaries, demonstrated through these symbols the divine source of their power. Such ostentation was often in breach of sumptuary laws conceived and imposed by themselves, but to which they felt immune. Jewellery was, after all, essentially composed of two elements: natural materials, ie God's creation, and human endeavour – both of which were to be exploited in order to express the greatness of the church.

In a society saturated by religion such as Hospitaller Malta, jewellery was also often seen as the currency through which eternal salvation could be bought. A case in point is the extensively bejewelled silver *riza* ('robe' in Russian) of the St Luke Madonna, conserved at the Metropolitan Cathedral Treasury, Mdina. The practice of using *rizas* (a cover, often made of silver, that leaves exposed only strategic parts of the icon) originated in Byzantine art. The crown on this silver *riza* identifies the image as a Theotokos the Greek title of Mary, often used in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Its literal English translation may be given as "God-bearer" or "The one who gives birth to God".

The *riza*, as with every detail that has to do with icons, are far from being simple ornamental objects. They were, in fact, considered as a *tama*, which in Greek means ‘a gift to His name’.

A similarly endowed icon was that of the Madonna of Philermos. This icon, much venerated by members of the Order had four silver *rizas* all set with pearls and precious stones. An interesting drawing of one of these is reproduced in the book.

Malta, especially in the period under review, had all the characteristics to be considered a centre for the trading of jewellery. It was the home of members of some of the richest and most refined European families, it had considerable naval contacts and was situated on the routes through which some of the raw material used in the manufacture of jewellery passed. In addition, it was reasonably close to some of the better known production centres such as Trapani and Messina in Sicily, and the famous workshops of coral pieces at Torre del Greco, south of Naples.

The book is composed of two parts, the first of which contains a number of essays dealing with the historical aspects of jewellery in Malta, while the second part is devoted to analytical case studies of a number of items of jewellery. The details about trade practices contained in the first part are very interesting. Unfortunately, archival material revealing the identity of makers is scarce, as the main focus of most identified records is on the metal, stones and consequent commercial value. The materials employed were often considered more valuable than the finished item – an indication of the low regard in which trained craftsman were sometimes held.

Certainly the most intriguing topic covered by the author concerns the links between jewellery and superstition. A particular fossil obtained from Maltese rock, the so-called ‘snake eye’, was reputed to be a very effective talisman and was often mounted in rings and kept in constant contact with the skin to serve as an amulet against poison and poisonous animal bites. Since venomous animals were as scarce then as they are now, it is obvious what the wearers – apparently including Grand Master Verdala – were trying to prevent. To the less politically engaged it was a protection from the evil eye, a surrogate for the more expensive coral that was widely believed to be the most powerful deterrent against this form of evil, probably due to the fact that Christian symbolism associates coral with Christ’s blood.

Another local fossil similarly employed was known as the *Lingua di San Paolo* (St Paul’s Tongue). So called because they resembled a tongue, these were actually fossilised sharks’ teeth in which popular superstition discerned an image of the tongue of St Paul, on which divine power had been bestowed because it was originally used to convert the Maltese to Christianity. Like other fossils, the *Lingua di San Paolo* was held to be effective against poison but it was also hung around children’s neck to promote the cutting of teeth.

The author strives to define in broad lines what constitutes historical Maltese jewellery, that is jewellery with an intrinsic Maltese character. Jewellery was often put on records and classified by geographical origin such as *cinta fatta alla rhodiotta*, *gisirana d’oro di Portogallo*, or *filo di catena alla spagnola*. Chains worked in the ‘Gran Spinat’ technique are probably the best known type of so called “Maltese jewellery”. These flat chains, with half-round elements over the entire surface, are still produced to this day by a very labour-intensive procedure. However, the style came to Malta from the Iberian countries and probably originated in the East.

There are also a limited number of jewellery pieces that have a significant historical Maltese link, as a result of which they may be considered to be “Maltese”. Foremost amongst these are the sword and dagger, now preserved in the Louvre, presented to Grand Master de Valette by Philip II of Spain in recognition of his role in the great siege of 1565. Apart from their monetary value, these were

items of great prestige, treasured by the Order and used in various ceremonies. Another renowned item was the reliquary holding a bone fragment from the arm of St John. This, together with the icon of the Madonna of Philermos, was among the few items that Grand Master Ferdinand von Hompesch was allowed to take with him, following Napoleon’s invasion in 1798.

One outstanding item of jewellery that remains on the Island to this day is the Passalacqua Chain, which forms part of the treasure of the Carmelite Church in Valletta. It is composed of two sets of alternating links converging onto a large central link to which a pendant and suspended cross were later added. This magnificent object, crafted in silver, gold, diamonds, rubies, rock crystal, pearls, and diversely coloured enamels, was bequeathed to the *Veneranda Confraternita di Nostra Signora del Carmine* by its founder Cesare Passalacqua in 1683. A prosperous and well-connected merchant, but of humble origins, Passalacqua stipulated in his Will that the chain be placed on the statue of the Virgin on her feast day and on other *giorni solenni*. An interesting footnote informs the reader that Passalacqua also stipulated that, if requested, the chain must be lent to St Paul Shipwrecked Church to be placed on the statue of St Cajetan during the feast.

Every page turned assails the reader’s senses with images of opulence and exquisite craftsmanship. This volume has all the hallmarks of coffee-table publications: large format, over-the-top illustrations, an apparent frivolity of subject and all the gloss and glitter (we are, after all, discussing jewellery) one could ask for. Like the subject, all the seemingly superfluous adornment tends to be confusing and can easily lead to this publication being dismissed as a pretty container containing no substance. But one only has to allow oneself a few minutes of reading to understand that this magnificently presented text has all the substance bestowed by academic research. Francesca Balzan’s study makes an outstanding contribution to the research of her chosen subject and will be an indispensable reference point for future studies.



Sword presented to Grand Master de Valette by Philip II of Spain

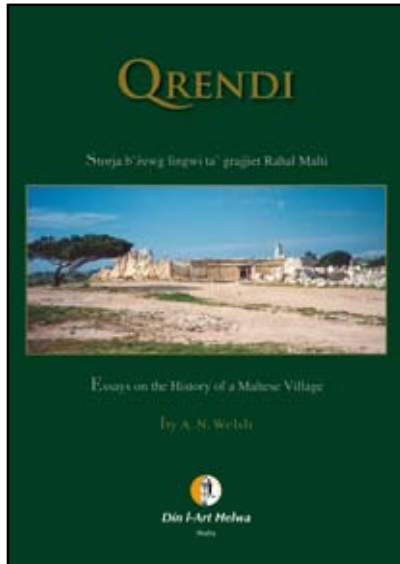
Qrendi - Storja b'żewġ lingwi ta' grajjiet raħal Mali

Author - Andy Welsh

Published by - Din l-Art Helwa

ISBN – 978-99909-980-6-1

Reviewed by Joe Azzopardi



This book is, as books often are, the result of a sentimental involvement on the part of the author with a particular location. More often than not, however, authors working in the historical field will write about their homeland and the areas where their roots are solidly grounded. Not so in this case. Andy Welsh (Welsh by name but not in fact, being of Scottish ancestry) has always been a citizen of the world. Having lived for quite a long time in Hong Kong, he then retired, so to speak, to our Mid-Med rock.

In such cases, the involvement referred to above becomes a wilfully sought relationship, possibly a means by which a foreigner can make his the land in which he has chosen to live, rather than the one in which he was by chance born. This gives Andy the added advantage of being a detached observer who interprets evidence put to him by his surroundings without the cumbersome cultural baggage, verging on parochialism, which often tends to undermine the objectivity of certain local authors working in the same field. Andy manages to strike a good balance, articulating his opinions and assumptions more clearly, while keeping the interpretation of facts and data objective and simple, but never simplistic.

When discussing the early history of Qrendi, a considerable degree of speculative work is required, as solid documentary evidence is completely missing. What the author does is look at the history of the whole Island and then imagine how a village such as Qrendi would have appeared and functioned within such a historical context. He distils the main ingredients that form the only existing evidence of authentic early Maltese history – stone, sea, religion and human nature – and from these derives some plausible conclusions.

The periods preceding the Middle Ages are covered by a series of insightful observations bridging the silent river of missing data. Original as ever in his approach, Andy looks south – a path not much travelled by Maltese researchers – to try to enrich the greater historical picture of the Maltese Arab period. His quest for architectural parallelisms between Arab Malta and Tunis yields some interesting data and seems to indicate that yet more might still be found.

Facts and figures start to enter in definite focus in the late Middle Ages with the arrival of the Knights of the Order of St John and the creation of the parish in 1618. From this point onwards, the story of Qrendi becomes similar to that of many other Maltese localities, with a number of small enclaves gradually conglomerating to form the villages we know today. A parallel conglomeration, fostered in no small measure by the Counter Reformation, occurred in the ecclesiastical ambit with the decline of the multitude of rural chapels and the consolidation of religious activity around the parish churches.

Of all the churches and chapels in Qrendi, Andy dedicates most of his attention to that of the Madonna Tal-Hniena. One can hardly blame him for falling under the spell of this lovely building, with its rural setting, engaging lines and aura of decay. The fascination with Tal-Hniena, and a considerable part of its heritage value, is derived also from its past role as a fulcrum of hope in largely hopeless situations.

Church of Il-Madonna Tal-Hniena, interior



A recurring issue presented by the author is the one by which he implies that many details regarding Malta's social and territorial history can still be determined by studying the appearance of the territory itself. He implies that much can be understood by literally working "in the field", rather than in archives. This sounds particularly true for the study of field boundaries and rural roads that can throw new light on the historical implications of forgotten territorial connecting routes.

This book, as books probably should, leaves the reader with more questions than it answers. It does, however, serve well what are probably its two main intentions: to provide readable historical material about their village for all Qrendin, and to stimulate the curiosity of "outsiders" and entice them to visit Qrendi and see for themselves the sites and items described within these pages.

Letters to Vigilo

These pages are meant to be
your voice for your heritage.

Please mark your letters
for the attention of
The Editor, Vigilo,
and send them to:

Din l-Art Helwa
133 Melita Street
Valletta

Or email the editor on:
joe.mnajdra@gmail.com

Nation without a cultural?

At the end of January, the press released the not so surprising news that a report published in December had put Maltese young people at the bottom of the Euro-heap when it came to culture and the arts. Malta did badly in all categories, with meagre youth attendance at most artistic activities from live performances to exhibitions. This was despite the fact that in 2008, according to official statistics, 70 more theatrical productions were staged than in the previous year. It is likely that the average attendance would be even lower, had the survey been extended to include the entire population. The problem is simply that most people are not interested in culture and fail to see its relevance to their everyday life.

Many factors are at play in determining this outcome. First and foremost, the fault is to be put squarely on the educational deficit. Most of the current population has gone through the national education system and our cultural standing today is the direct product of that system – an educational system that motivates its students only to achieve quantifiable results that can be plotted on some assessment sheet. Aspects such as creativity, lateral thinking, self-expression and an awareness of self, which can be fostered through art and which contribute to create fully-functional social individuals, are completely neglected because they are considered superfluous. Many families have also abdicated responsibility for the formation of their children exclusively to the system. This cultural deficit is creating unquestioning, uncritical, conformist citizens.

The other big issue concerns the cultural product on offer. It is a sad fact that much of this product is directed at a narrow part of the population, with all those involved continually circulating in the same self-congratulatory circles and avoiding disturbing the status quo and re-inventing themselves. Furthermore, a culture of constructive criticism is completely missing. In such an environment, what is St James Cavalier, the national centre for creativity, doing to foster creativity?

High quality cultural events such as the Caravaggio exhibitions of 2009 and the Fundazjoni Patrimonju Malti exhibitions are few and far between. Malta has a very rich heritage that needs to be known and understood first and foremost by the Maltese. Then there is the need for a modern and engaging public library. The Valletta Entrance Project is an opportunity missed in this sense. I am glad parliament is vacating the Palace, but a library built in lieu of Freedom Square would have been a palace for the people.

Yet another fundamental need is an open and interactive museum of contemporary art. This should become a focal point for the study of modern art in Malta, offering adequate exhibition possibilities to upcoming artists working in all sorts of media.

In February came the news that all the culture structures in Malta are to be amalgamated through a National Cultural Policy. The policy is to focus on developing cultural needs through improved cultural governance structures and international cultural cooperation. Following the launch, a number of workshops will be organised,

leading to a national forum due on 1 June, after which the final version of the policy document will be presented. Let us hope that this will be the starting point from which the current negative cultural trend will be reversed.

A nation without a cultural identity is a nation without a soul.

Marco Abdilla
Mosta

Does culture need to be to be young
or the youth need to be more cultured?



Mr Martin Scicluna's article in Vigilo (Oct. 2009) is, in my view, a biased and distorted critique of a project with which I have been professionally involved for a number of years.

In the first instance, Mr Scicluna refers to the "shocking" news that Valletta's World Heritage status may be under threat. It is not true that Valletta's World Heritage status is under threat because of the development at Tigné Point. In fact, at its last meeting in June, the World Heritage Committee took no decision that threatens the WH status of Valletta. Dr Ray Bondin (ICOMOS Malta) has also pointed out that he has often warned Government that Valletta is in breach of WHC regulations due to a number of shortcomings, such as the lack of a buffer zone around the city. There has been no buffer zone since 1980, when Valletta was admitted onto the List, and therefore Malta was in breach of WHC regulations from the very beginning. If what has been reported is correct, the "threat" to Valletta's status has nothing to do with what is happening on the Tigné peninsula, as Mr Scicluna implies in his article, but is related to obligations that Malta was meant to fulfil from 1980, and has not done so.

Mr Scicluna then proceeds to remind us that, before the development in question, Tigné Point consisted of "elegant and handsome buildings". This description certainly does not apply to the area where MIDI's Tigné Point, or the Fort Cambridge development, are rising. The Fort Cambridge development replaces a 1980s' hotel. The site of MIDI's Tigné development consisted of 19th and 20th century barracks that were badly mutilated in the 1980s when they were converted for use as social housing.

Mr Scicluna uses many adjectives and clichéd descriptors, in an obviously derogatory context. For example, he uses the terms "faceless" and "high-rise apartments", in succession, implying that high-rise apartments are obviously and always faceless. In the first instance, what does Mr Scicluna mean by high-rise – is seven or eight storeys considered "high-rise"? If this were the case, then most of Valletta must be considered as "high-rise". He uses the words "dominate the peninsula" when referring to the Fort Cambridge and Tigné Point developments, but then what, pray, does Valletta do but dominate the Sciberras peninsula? Is this "domination" – an undeniable fact – an intrinsically 'bad' thing?

He glibly states that the aforementioned developments represent "in the starkest possible way, all that is wrong with our built environment". With respect, Mr Scicluna's expertise with regard to built environment issues is probably not much more than my expertise in soldiering. He states, for example, that the two developments "wilfully violate the organic texture of the town on that peninsula". To which 'organic town texture' is he referring? The deliberately regimented layout of the army barracks, which the MIDI development replaces, was certainly not organic, and not quite a town. He claims that the developments destroy the street-line. There was certainly no street-line to destroy on the site of the MIDI development. There was a line of barracks – which has been preserved – on one side of an enormous

**This is an extract
from the original
letter sent
to Vigilo by
Prof. Alex Torpiano**

Tigné Peninsula





The Tower of Fort Tigné

parade ground, and the Garden Battery on the other side of the parade ground, which has also been preserved. The master-plan is based on the creation of a large public urban area, with radial roads that allow the sea (and Valletta) to be seen from every point, and the construction of residential blocks, which stand back from Fort Tigné – contrary to the original barracks layout and configuration, which blocked the view of Valletta and the sea. The original barracks also encroached on the glacis of Fort Tigné – to the extent that the foundations of the buildings built by the British Army caused significant damage to the underground heritage

counter-scarp tunnels, under the same glacis around the Fort.

He also claims that the developments destroy the skyline – my question is why he should consider the MIDI Tigné apartments, which rise to from eight to eight floors, as destroying the skyline, when the developments immediately adjacent, from the Hotel Fortina (16 floors) all the way down to the Strand – most of which rise to the same heights – are not considered in the same light? He claims that the developments were the result of piecemeal development. Surely, an unbiased observer would call MIDI's Tigné Point development anything but "piecemeal".

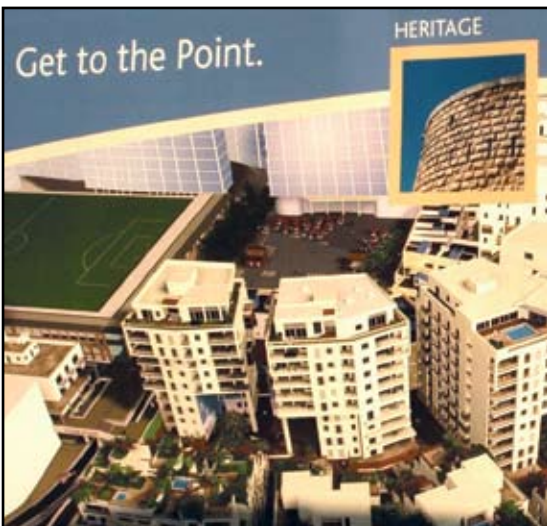
He goes on to consider the developments as an "affront to indigenous architecture". To which "indigenous architecture" does he refer? The architecture of Valletta, which was imported by the Knights from Renaissance Europe, or the architecture of 19th century Sliema, which borrows from neo-classical Britain or Italy? And what does the term "indigenous" mean, in any case? Can it be applied to anything other than the vernacular of our farmhouses and rural villages – which is, in any case, derived from North African models?

Is he not aware that architectural design, all over the world, has always been influenced by experiences and experiments from everywhere else? What should the appropriate style be for architecture in Malta in the 21st century? Copies of Valletta? Copies of 19th-century Sliema? Stone arches and closed timber balconies? Does our 21st-century civilisation have no right to leave its mark on our built environment? And if not in Sliema, then where? And what about the sustainability of using globigerina limestone, a non-renewable resource, with poor water-proofing characteristics, relatively poor durability and very poor insulating qualities (especially when wet), in the construction of the houses for the future?

Mr Scicluna then comes back to the issue of whether all of this development, which, in his wisdom, he deems "ugly", is relevant to the matter of Valletta's World Heritage Status. He also acknowledges that the WHC has asked Government to establish clear policies regarding building heights within Valletta, and "its environs" – without defining the limits of such environs. Mr Scicluna has clearly decided that such environs should include Tigné Point. But is this the truth?

Finally, I would like to make it clear that I have never tried to fob off the World Heritage Committee; I have a lot of respect for this Committee, even though it has not always been infallible. Nevertheless, I do object to people putting words in the mouths of the WHC, words that the WHC has not said, or even implied.

*Prof. Alex Torpiano
Lija*



Asked for his comments, Martin Scicluna said:

"The article in question, 'Two Peninsulas: Valletta and Tigne', was of course about the WHOLE of the Tigné Peninsula, not just Tigné Point. To paraphrase Shakespeare, methinks the good Professor doth protest too much."

Fort Delimara

Fort Delimara, details

When one considers the pitiful state into which historical gems such as Forts St Angelo and St Elmo have been allowed to fall, it is hardly surprising that the little known Fort Delimara is also at risk of collapse.

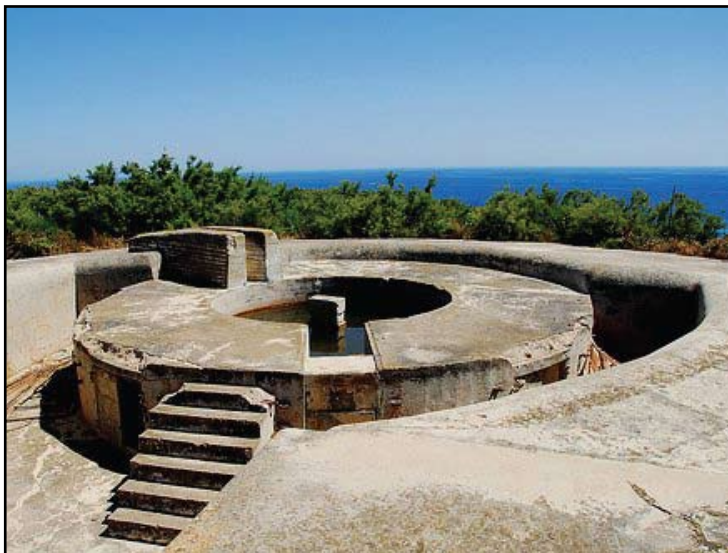
If forts that are, so to speak, in the public eye are left to deteriorate for decades, what hope is there for forsaken Fort Delimara? A similar fate would surely have befallen the nearby lighthouse, had it not been for the intervention of Din l-Art Helwa.

I find it quite disturbing when people in some quarters argue about the supposed distinction between the north and south of Malta. Frankly, I find it stupid that a place the size of Malta should have such a distinction. But the claims of some who say that this difference does exist seem, in such circumstances, to be vindicated. The Delimara/Birzebbuga area, in particular, has been selected as the recipient of large-scale industrial installations. It may be true that these are necessary for the economic growth of the country but, if so, the area and the people who live in it surely deserve to have something in return.

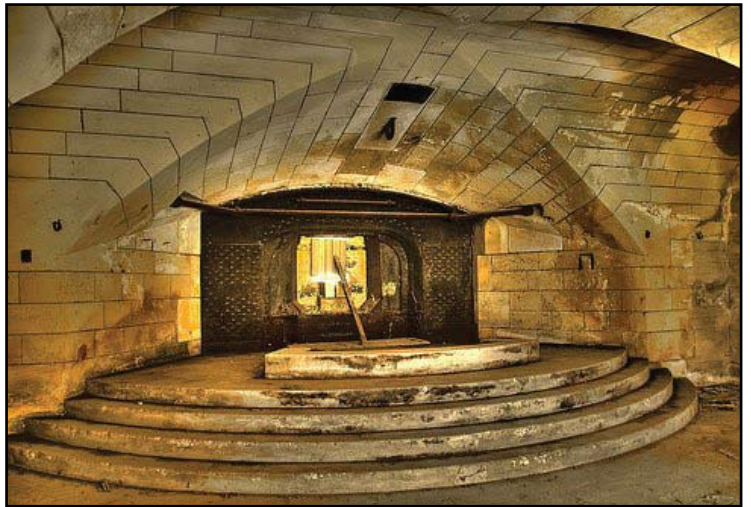
As things stand, the only body that has bothered in any way about the heritage of the area is Din l-Art Helwa, with its Delimara Lighthouse project. The other two major heritage assets in the area – San Lucjan Tower and Fort Delimara – are both heavily degraded.

San Lucjan Tower was commissioned by Grand Master Wignacourt in 1610 and was originally armed with six cannon. It was one of the few fortified positions of the Order to offer resistance to the forces of Napoleon when they invaded Malta in 1798. It is said that the garrison continued to fire on the French troops until the ammunition had run out. Between the late 1940s and early 1960s, San Lucjan Tower was used by the RAF as a bomb depot. For a time it also served as a military prison. Presently it is allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and houses the National Aquaculture Centre. With such a historical background, and its prominent location, there is no lack of potential to turn it into an interesting cultural attraction.

Fort Delimara was built by the British between 1876 and 1888 to up-date the defence system that protected Marsaxlokk harbour. It was used, or rather abused, as a pig farm between 1982 and 2005, when it was taken over by Heritage Malta who, however, did nothing more than put in place a few elementary measures to secure the fort and put a stop to vandalism. The Delimara area could easily be included in a heritage trail starting at Marsaxlokk, and comprising the Maghluq Marsh natural reserve, the Tas-Silg archaeological complex, It-Tlet Hofriet and Xrobb l-Ghagin Fort (Island Sanctuary) with its environs.



Fort Delimara



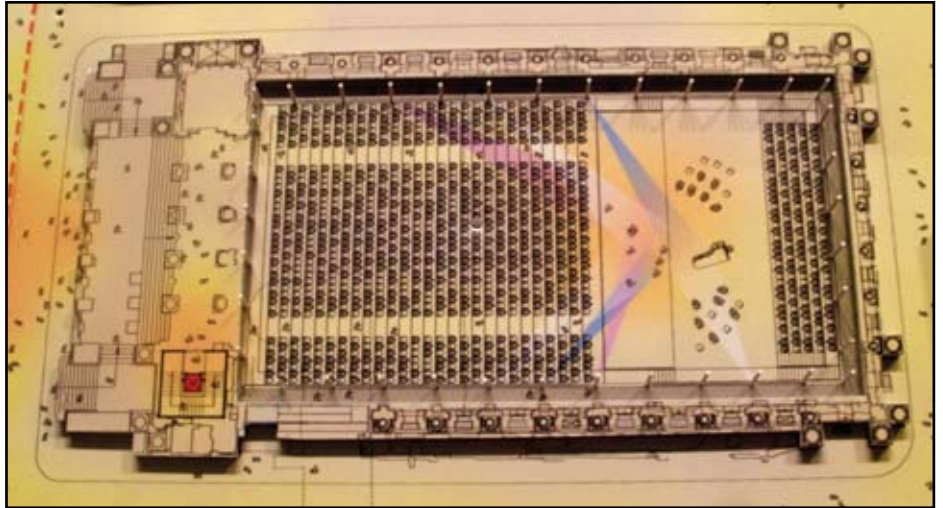
In February, Culture Minister Dolores Cristina was reported as saying in Parliament that there was “no plan for the immediate restoration of Fort Delimara”. The unfortunate thing is that time is running out for the fort. The rate of erosion of the chalk cliff on which it stands has accelerated, probably due to the construction of the power station a mere 400 metres away. In the words of geologist Peter Gatt: “The coast at the power station has been covered with concrete so waves accelerate along the coast, resulting in greater erosion under the fort”. One would suppose that a government that has found so much money to spend on a polluting power station extension would find the cash to restore this important element of our heritage.

*Mario Briffa
Santa Luċija*

Valletta City Gate Project

The face of Valletta is set to change forever by having the scar that is Freedom Square removed and replaced by a project by one of the most visionary architects our times have produced. Although contested by many, this project will bring Valletta into the 21st century in a dignified manner.

Two of the issues that are most forcefully put forward by the people opposing the project are the loss of parking spaces and the fact that the Opera House site will house an open-air theatre.



Plan of the opera house site project

As Renzo Piano himself once wisely said, when asked why he did not provide parking for his London Bridge Tower project, as long as people keep being offered parking spaces, they will continue to use cars. Cars kill urban spaces with their presence, kill people with their fumes and kill the planet with their emissions. Trees, such as the ones being proposed for the ditch garden, on the other hand, remedy all these ills. So gardens are the best replacement for car parks.

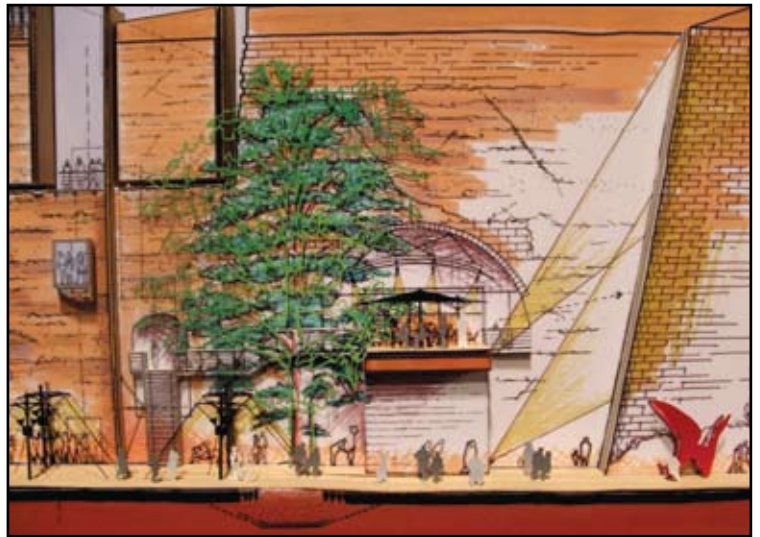
As to the Opera House site issue, covered theatres are already in good supply in the area, with the Manoel Theatre, the Mediterranean Conference Centre, MITP, the City Theatre and the Catholic Institute theatre in Floriana. However, there are precious few open areas and squares. A roofed theatre would serve the few, while the area concerned, when not being used for performances, will be enjoyed by all.

Drawing of the proposed ditch embellishment

Finally, somebody commented that parking in the ditch incurs no running costs, while a garden does. Well I am sure that, with all the money spared from the setting-up and management of an opera house, government will be able to afford to maintain the ditch garden.

Renzo Piano also said: "Architects have to dream, we have to search for our Atlantises, to be explorers, adventurers, and yet to build responsibly and well". I feel he has achieved this with his Valletta project.

Rashdy Aquilina
Senglea



Commemorative monuments

The temporary removal of the Sette Giugno monument from St George's Square has reopened the issue of public monuments in Valletta and their proper siting. While fully aware of the historic importance of the events recalled by this monument, I do agree that it was ill-positioned and that its removal to a different location will ultimately result in an enhancement of both its original location and of the prestige of the monument itself, which will no longer stand in a glorified parking lot.

I would also like to point out that, contrary to what has been said, Valletta is not overcrowded with commemorative monuments. On the contrary, the city still lacks at least two fundamental ones. Both the founder of the city, Grand Master de Valette, and its architect, Francesco Laparelli, should be permanently commemorated within the capital. This could be a good opportunity to put to work the many talented artists that Malta has and come up with original designs for such monuments. It is true that the epitaph to Sir Christopher Wren epitaph in St Paul's Cathedral in London: "If you seek his memorial look around you" might apply in this case, but a tangible memento to both men is surely long overdue.

Ivan Muscat
Floriana

Solar water heaters

The efforts that government is making to increase the generation of power through renewable sources are remarkable and commendable. The most forward-looking of these measures must be the invitation made by the Ministry for Resources to private companies to install photovoltaic solar panels on the roofs of government buildings. This is the type of flexible and innovative policy that can help maximise the limited resources our Island has at its disposal.

Such far-sightedness, however, was not demonstrated when government offered indiscriminate assistance to any citizen that opted to install a solar water heater on his roof. Together with these incentives, government should have issued clear guidelines as to what types of solar water heaters are acceptable in which areas. The indiscriminate profusion of these systems has meant that now they have become the highlight of many a historic skyline, competing for predominance with domes, belfries, flag poles and statues, among others.

It seems that such massive invasions of the Maltese urban landscape have a cyclical pattern. In his book entitled 5000 years of architecture, Leonard Mahony makes an unflattering comment about the traditional Maltese wooden balconies: "...they [wooden balconies] encroached, like a cancerous growth, on almost every façade...". They have, however, managed to find a dignified place in the urban landscape. The same cannot be said of the TV antennas that, in the 1960s and 70s, became the alien protagonists of the urban landscape – followed in more recent years by dish antennas.

I am not saying that solar water heaters should be banned from urban conservation areas, but that their installation must be closely monitored. Clear guidelines should be given as to their design and placing when installed in a village core or urban conservation areas, so that the beneficial results they might bring are not nullified by the deleterious effect they have on Malta's unique urban heritage.

Going back to government policies, I must say that it escapes my comprehension how, on the one hand, government can put so much effort into such initiatives and then, on the other, plan to invest millions in a polluting extension to the Delimara Power Station. Any positive impact these initiatives might have on Malta's carbon count will soon be lost through this new project.

*I Cassar
Hamrun*



Birgu historical urban context

Hagar Qim and Mnajdra covers

I refer to the October 2009 issue of Vigilo in which reference is made to three projects with which I have been involved. Mr Joe Sultana's letter on the last page was very satisfying, because he acknowledges that people are often too quick to write in criticism without knowing the issues and without even visiting a place and making up their own minds. Your article on the Hagar Qim and Mnajdra shelters gave a very well written exposé of the work we carried out to reconstruct the two collapses of Mnajdra – and one in Hagar Qim.

However, I would like to offer one correction, or additional fact, to your write-up. The 2000 Cabinet decision that the four major prehistoric temple sites – Hagar Qim, Mnajdra, Ġgantija and Tarxien – would be covered by protective shelters was based on a condition report prepared by the undersigned and Dr Marc Bonello, and presented orally to Cabinet, on the initiative of the Minister then responsible for Culture, Dr Louis Galea. The matter was subsequently referred to the Scientific Committee for its endorsement.

*Prof. Alex Torpiano
Lija*



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