

the Architect

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THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE KAMRA TAL-PERITI



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the Architect

"The adoption and implementation of a coherent and well-thought out architectural policy will ensure that decision-makers at all levels and the public at large are aware of the positive benefits that architecture can bring to their daily lives."

Perit Vincent Cassar, KTP President, Page 8

What mood are you in?

Two surveys were recently published that caught my attention. ACE, the Architects' Council of Europe, published the results of a survey carried out among its Member Organisations on the impact of the global financial crisis on the architectural profession. Almost a week later, ECCE, the European Council for Civil Engineers published a summary of construction activity in Europe (as well as in Turkey, Switzerland, Norway, USA and Japan) which looked at the production, employment and enterprises in the construction sector. This document, was extracted from the FIEC (European Construction Industry Federation) brochure "Key Figures | Activity 2009 – Construction in Europe". The latter indicated that in 2009, 9.9% of the GDP of the EU27 countries was related to the construction sector, with Malta's construction industry contributing a mere 0.4%. It further indicated that 7.1% of employment was related to the industry in the EU27, with Malta having 12% of its workforce purportedly engaged in the construction industry.

Meanwhile the ACE report indicated that "a double dip recession is underway." This report is based on a bi-annual survey of architectural practices across Europe on the impact of the global financial crisis on architecture, and in which survey Maltese *periti* are invited to participate. This survey indicates that the level of optimism within the architectural profession in Europe has decreased again, in relation to the June 2010 results, with a higher level of pessimism (53.7%) being reported. The results also indicate that one in three offices have seen a decrease in staff numbers since the start of the crisis.

The local National Statistics Office, in its report on "Short-term Construction Indicators: Q3/2010" revealed that employment, wages and salaries, and hours worked fell by 8.1, 2.2 and 9.5 per cent respectively when compared to the corresponding period of 2009. It is therefore an undeniable fact that the local construction industry has been hit hard, and with it, *periti* are also feeling the crunch.

Besides providing valuable data, these surveys, on the other hand, highlight the lack of information that the *Kamra tal-Periti* has at hand in order to assess the mood of the

profession in this regard. The last survey of the profession was carried out in 2004. This survey had established the demography of the profession, the main areas within which *periti* worked as well as income trends – at the time the vast majority (90%) had stated that their income remained stable over the previous two years and that it was likely to remain the same in the forthcoming year. In the absence of updated information, one can only wonder what the results would reveal today.

Maintaining records and being able to analyse trends in the profession is, in my opinion, of paramount importance. The *Kamra's* proposal to Government for the introduction of a Cost Information System, is also an important goal as it would allow for the establishment of guidelines relating to the fees likely to be charged by *periti* for a particular service.

At the moment, however, the *Kamra* can only rely on information gathered by others. While this is still valid, it is my belief that the *Kamra* should maintain its own records and sample the profession on a regular basis in order to be more in touch with its mood and to be able to react to any trends that emerge from such analysis. At the last AGM in December 2010 the President of the *Kamra* made reference to this and said that such a survey should be a priority for the *Kamra*. All this should be read in the light of other challenges currently being faced by the profession and which have an effect on its performance – the MEPA reform, which has brought with it a number of increased responsibilities and requirements, and the proposed changes to the suite of legislation that affects the day to day practice of *periti*. This issue of tA looks into these matters in further detail.

On a lighter note, tA this time reviews two important architectural events – one local, namely the *Din l-Art Helwa* Awards for Architectural Heritage, and one international, namely the World Architecture Festival. Both have one thing in common – the celebration of architectural quality at its best!

Simone Vella Lenicker
Editor



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KAMRA TAL-PERITI

To support members of the profession in achieving excellence in their practice of architecture and engineering in the interest of the community

The Council of the Kamra Tal-Periti for the year 2011 consists of Vincent Cassar (President), Simone Vella Lenicker (Vice President and Honorary Secretary) and Council members Ruben Paul Borg, Jacques Borg Barthet, Keith Cole, David Felice, Anthony Fenech Vella, Danica Mifsud, Anton Valentino and Damian Vella Lenicker. The Architect is the official journal of the Kamra Tal-Periti. It is published on a quarterly basis and distributed with the Business Today newspaper. The Architect is not to be sold separately.

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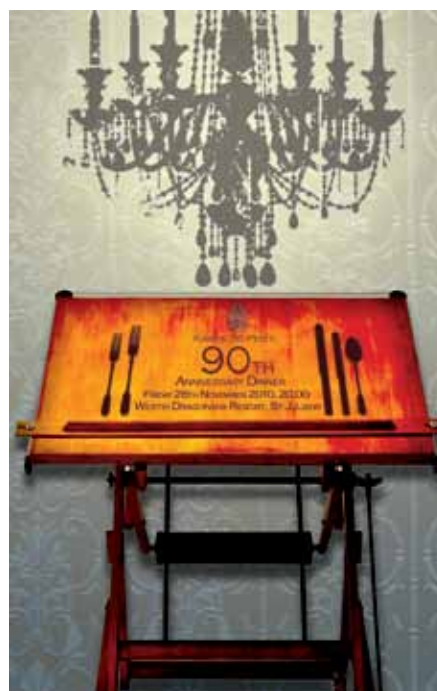
COVER:
Church of Our Lady of Victories, Mark Muscat.
See pages 16-17



90TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

The Kamra tal-Periti held a Celebration Dinner to mark the 90th Anniversary of its establishment by Government Notice No 202 of the 12th June 1920 under the signature of the Hon Edgar Bonavia, Acting Lieutenant-Governor and Chief Secretary to Government. This followed the approval by the Council of Government on the 5th July, 1919 of The Architects Ordinance, 1919 which was assented to by the Governor on the 25th July, 1919. The Celebration Dinner was held at the Dragonara Point Ballroom, Westin Dragonara Resort, St Julians on Friday, 26th November 2010.

The Dinner included a keynote speech by Dr Mark-Anthony Falzon titled "If you can't be an astronaut, or an architect, try anthropology!" Drawing on theory as well as on personal experience in the field, he spoke about anthropology as a form of space exploration. From ethnographic methodology to gated communities in Mumbai, festi to the transformation of land by hunters, regenerated Cottonera waterfronts to Piano's plans for Valletta, our work has a habit of boiling down to the subject of space. Architects and anthropologists seem far removed - architects wear hip black designer stuff, for example, anthropologists wear beards and smoke pipes. And yet it may well be that, concerned as they both are with filling space with meaning, their occupations are closer kin than one might initially suspect.



At the end of the Dinner, Past Presidents of the Kamra were presented with a token of the event by Minister George Pullicino and the Kamra's current President Perit Vincent Cassar. Overall it was a memorable evening and one which the Kamra hopes to repeat on a more regular basis.

OTHER EVENTS

The last in the Architecture Nights series for 2010 was held on the 19 November at the

Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Valletta. With the theme 'Concreteness of Modernity' this event featured IPOSTUDIO, an Italian firm which has been engaged on a variety of important projects, with vast experience in the design and planning of public buildings. In particular IPOSTUDIO has developed design and research projects in the following sectors: new technologies for houses and office buildings, analysis of architectural and technical solutions that are energy saving oriented, functional planning of layouts based on user needs and quality of indoor environment. During almost twenty years of activity IPOSTUDIO has developed a refined design approach that aspires towards architectural qual-



ity, whilst addressing also important factors with respect to the functional quality of the buildings, particularly end user needs, environmental awareness, the reduction of the running and energy costs and the durability of buildings and maintenance.

GENERAL MEETINGS

The Kamra's Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on the 10 December 2010 in Floriana, while an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) was called on the 18 February 2011 in order to discuss proposed revisions to the Periti Act and to other legislation that directly affect the profession. Further details can be found on pages 8 to 9 of this journal.

MEMBERS' DIRECTORY

One of the features on the Kamra's website www.ktpmalta.com is a Members' Directory. A section has recently been added to include also details of partnerships of warrant holders. All members interested in having their details listed on this page are invited to contact the Kamra for further details.

AIR MALTA

The agreement between Air Malta and the Kamra tal-Periti has been extended for another year that is from 01 January to 31 December 2011. A 10 percent discount will apply on published pricing for travel on Air Malta scheduled services.



Full Members of the Kamra can make use of this discount online by accessing <http://booking.airmalta.com/KM/login.html> and logging into the booking engine with a pre defined user name and password which is available upon request from the Kamra. The discount does not apply on promotional 'N' class fares.

NEW ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION DIRECTOR AT MEPA

Dr Petra Bianchi has recently been appointed as MEPA's new Environment Protection Director. She succeeds Martin Seychell, who is taking up a new post in Brussels as deputy director general at the European Commission's Directorate for Health. Dr. Bianchi holds a doctorate from the University of Oxford and obtained



Dr Petra Bianchi

an MBA from the Maastricht School of Management. She also graduated with a Masters and Bachelors Degree (Hons) from the University of Malta. She is the executive president of Din I-Art Helwa and the director of the British Council in Malta. She is also a board member of the Valletta, Mdina and Cottonera Rehabilitation Committees and a visiting lecturer at the University of Malta. Dr Bianchi's term of office commences this month. On behalf of the Council of the Kamra tal-Periti and its members, the Editorial Team takes this opportunity to wish Dr Bianchi all the very best in her new role.

AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE

The five projects selected for the 2010 Aga Khan Award for Architecture were announced at a ceremony held at the Museum of Islamic Art last November. His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani the Emir of Qatar and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser joined His Highness the Aga Khan in presiding over the ceremony. The five projects selected by the 2010 Master Jury were: Wadi Hanifa Wetlands, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Revitalisation of the Hypercentre of Tunis, Tunisia; Madinat Al-Zahra Museum, Cordoba, Spain; Ipekyol Textile Factory, Edirne, Turkey; and Bridge



The new museum serves as an interpretive centre and gateway for the excavated ruins of Madinat al-Zahra - a tenth-century Islamic palace city.

Photo: Aga Khan Award for Architecture/Fernando Alda



A classroom anchors either end of the Bridge School, while a library occupies the centre.

Photo: Aga Khan Award for Architecture/Li Xiaodong Atelier



The steel-and-glass Ipekyol Textile Factory in Edirne, Turkey, was designed by Emre Arolat Architects.

Photo: Aga Khan Award for Architecture/Cemal Emden

School, Xiashi, Fujian, China.

At the Award ceremony, His Highness the Aga Khan presented the Chairman's Award to Professor Oleg Grabar in recognition of his lifetime contribution to the field of Islamic art and architecture. The Chairman's Award was established to honour achievements that fall outside the scope of the Master Jury's mandate and is made in recognition of the lifetime achievements of distinguished architects and academics. It has been presented on only three previous occasions. The winning projects were selected by an independent Master Jury from a shortlist of 19 projects announced in May 2010. A total of 401 projects were presented for consideration for the 2010 Award.

In their statement, the Master Jury noted that a central concern in making their selection had been the issues of identity and plurality and their intersection in an



TA major redevelopment project in the Wadi Hanifa (Hanifa Valley) adjacent to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was planned by a joint venture of Moriyama & Teshima and Buro Happold.

Photo: Aga Khan Award for Architecture/Arriyadh Development Authority



A key element of the revitalization of Tunis's Hypercentre district was the restoration of the central market complex.

Photo: Aga Khan Award for Architecture/Salah Jabour

increasingly globalised world. They emphasised the generous and pluralistic visions reflected through the winning projects, and the transformative roles they have played in the improvement of the quality of the built environment both in places with a majority of Muslims and in societies where Muslims are in a minority.

Further information on the award and the winning entries can be found on www.akdn.org/architecture.

ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN AWARD FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the International Association for Sports and Leisure Facilities (IAKS) are launching the first Architecture and Design Award for Students and Young Professionals on innovative designs and concepts for sports, leisure and recreational facilities. Inspired by the IOC/IAKS Award (being the most important international architectural award for already existing and exemplary sports and leisure facilities), the IOC, IPC and IAKS now call on young architects and



designers to dedicate their enthusiasm and imagination to create areas and spaces for active living.

This award is aimed at young architects and designers currently studying architecture, landscape architecture, interior design and



general design, and at young professionals being in their first 2 years of their professional practice.

All participants must be under the age of 30 years to participate.



Eligible to enter the competition is any kind of design work which has as a theme the creation of spaces

and areas to be used for sports and leisure activities in the broadest sense. It is provided that the design concept targets on encouraging sports practice among the youth. By bringing sport to the youth, where they are (e.g. in an urban environment), the project should aim at creating a high sports legacy.

The complete competition rules and submission form of the IOC/IPC/IAKS Architecture and Design Award for Students and Young Professionals are also available at www.iaks.info. The closing date for document entry is the 30 April 2011.

UIA2011 TOKYO

In the coming Autumn, Japan will host the 24th World Congress of Architecture – UIA2011. The UIA World Congress is a major international event that attracts around 10,000 architects, engineers, researchers, students and others from some 130 countries and regions. The inaugural World Congress took place in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1948. Since then the event has been held in various cities at intervals



of approximately three years. The first World Congress in Asia was held in Beijing in 1999. This year Tokyo will become the second Asian host city.

The environment, communities, people... Contemporary architecture is intimately linked to all activities on the planet and has a significant influence on those activities. In the 21st century, architecture will be called upon to fulfil an even greater role and responsibilities in the creation of sustainable societies and attractive cities, and in the protections of human life and lifestyles. This is why "DESIGN 2050" has been chosen as the theme for UIA2011, which will bring together architects, engineers, researchers and students from every part of the world to create a vision for the future of architecture and cities, and to share the results of that work with the world.

In addition to presentations by some of the world's leading architects, the program for UIA2011 will also include technical sessions, international competitions, exhibitions, workshops, tours and many other activities. UIA2011 will be a highly significant event for the future of architecture. It will also be an excellent opportunity to experience the architecture and culture for which Japan is world-renowned. Further information can be obtained from www.uia-architectes.org.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING DEVELOPMENT ACT

Two draft legal notices were recently published for Public Consultation, one titled Daily Penalty Regulations and the other Schedule of Penalties Regulations. Both these drafts deal with the fees and penalties due by developers in the case of illegal constructions taken place on their property. The Kamra tal-Periti, while not having been formally consulted on the contents of these Legal Notices, participated in the Public Consultation Process and strongly opposed their proposed format. It is expected that over the coming weeks the Kamra will engage with MEPA and Government in further detail on this issue.

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ACE

The ACE (Architects' Council of Europe) was founded in Treviso in 1990, and celebrations were held at the end of 2010 to mark its twentieth anniversary. During this time

the ACE, of which the Kamra tal-Periti is an active member, has made a number of significant achievements and established itself as an essential interlocutor for EU policy and legislation that affects the quality of the built environment. In order to mark this occasion, the ACE organised a series of events in which included a high level Conference organised in the European Parliament in Brussels. It was addressed



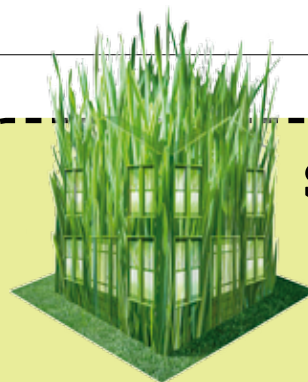
by a number of prominent personalities and experts who spoke about European level policy and legislation. A Ceremony and a Walking Dinner took place at the Palais des Beaux Arts in the centre of Brussels. The events also included an exhibition entitled 'Sustainable Architecture Across Europe.' The ACE invited all Member Countries to submit projects for inclusion in this exhibition. Following a call made by the Kamra tal-Periti to Maltese periti, one submission was received – the Malta Stock Exchange which makes use of active and passive interventions to control the climate within the building. This project was showcased alongside the other projects submitted by the various Member Countries.

ECCE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN MALTA

The next General Assembly of ECCE (European Council of Civil Engineers) will be held in Malta between the 6 and 7 May 2011. On the preceding day, that is the 5 May, an international conference with the theme 'Sustainable Development: Civil Engineering and the Built Environment' will be hosted. This conference is expected to attract attendance from many ECCE Member Organisations and from the local



profession. A call for papers has already been issued, and further details may be obtained from the Kamra's website www.ktpmalta.com. The Kamra tal-Periti, as an active member of ECCE, will be organising and hosting both the conference and the General Assembly.



SUSTAINABILITY SNAPS KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE JARGON AND WHAT'S GOING ON

A resource-efficient Europe is one of seven flagship initiatives as part of the Europe 2020 strategy aiming to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This flagship initiative aims to create a framework for policies to support the shift towards a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy which will help the EU to:

- boost economic performance while reducing resource use;
- identify and create new opportunities for economic growth and greater innovation and boost the EU's competitiveness;
- ensure security of supply of essential resources;
- fight against climate change and limit the environmental impacts of resource use.

In order to increase certainty for investment and innovation, this flagship initiative provides for a long-term vision and ensures that all relevant policies factor in resource efficiency in a balanced manner. It provides a long-term framework

for action in many policy areas, supporting policy agendas for climate change, energy, transport, industry, raw materials, agriculture, fisheries, biodiversity and regional development. The key components of the long-term framework will come in the form of a series of initiatives to be tabled in 2011. Some of these initiatives include:

- a low-carbon economy 2050 roadmap;
- a European Energy Efficiency Plan 2020;
- a White Paper on the future of transport;
- a new biodiversity strategy for 2020;
- measures regarding commodity markets and on raw materials;
- a roadmap for a resource-efficient Europe;
- reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, Cohesion Policy, energy infrastructure and trans-European transport network;
- an Energy Roadmap 2050;
- a 2020 energy efficiency plan.

Source: MEUSAC

TOWARDS FRUGAL ARCHITECTURE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM & WORKSHOP
2nd - 3th - 4th June 2011 MALTA



Letters to the Editor

Letters from our readers to be considered for publication are most welcome. Letters for inclusion in Issue 56 are to reach us by the 15th May 2011. Please write to: The Editor, "the Architect", Kamra tal-Periti, The Professional Centre, Sliema Road, Gzira GZR 1633, or send an email to thearchitect@ktpmalta.com. All contributions will be acknowledged.

Only time will tell...

BY PERIT SIMONE VELLA LENICKER, HONORARY SECRETARY

The past few months have been intensive for both the *Kamra tal-Periti* and the profession at large. A number of events have unfolded that have left, or will leave an impact, on the way the profession operates and on the day to day running of local practices. These events have also meant intensive work for the members of the Council of the *Kamra tal-Periti* who have striven hard to keep up with these changes, to keep the profession informed of what is going on and to address the difficulties being faced by members of the profession in their daily practice.

End of 2010

The two main events on the *Kamra's* agenda in December were its 90th Anniversary Dinner and the Annual General Meeting – the former being significantly better attended than the latter! The General Meeting was held on the 10th December at Project House, Belt is-Sebħ, Floriana. This time round, besides the 'usual' items on the agenda, the Council issued an invitation to young *periti* to present their work to those present. *Periti* Chris Briffa and Matthew Mercieca rose to the occasion and delivered two impressive presentations showcasing their work over the past few years. It was indeed refreshing to see the amount of work of true quality that is being produced by the younger generation. *Perit* Albert Cauchi, who although not so young in years assured us that he is certainly young at heart, also delivered a short presentation on the use of glass as a structural element.

The President's speech focussed on the work carried out by the Council of the *Kamra* during 2010. *Perit* Vincent Cassar explained how, besides the continuous ongoing discussions with Government on the issues outlined in the following two sections of this article, the *Kamra*

“The adoption and implementation of a coherent and well-thought out architectural policy will ensure that decision-makers at all levels and the public at large are aware of the positive benefits that architecture can bring to their daily lives. It is now more than ever important to put concrete actions behind the words of our position paper The Urban Challenge and to put into practice the concepts and ideas that were put forward in that paper.”

- *Perit Vincent Cassar, President Kamra tal-Periti*

was also active in a number of other spheres. He referred in particular to the project regarding Children and the Built Environment which started off two years ago as a pilot project with the involvement of two schools, one from the private sector and the other from the public sector. Following a seminar for teachers held in 2009 and at which seminar the results of the pilot project were explained to those present, eight schools participated in the programme in the scholastic year 2009/2010. There are now twelve schools wishing to participate in the 2010/2011 programme. The only problem being currently faced is the lack of adequate funding, and it is hoped that sufficient sponsors can be found to continue to maintain this programme and develop it further.

One dream that the *Kamra* has not as yet managed to achieve is the establishment of a Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment. This is naturally intrinsically linked to the availability of suitable premises, and while discussions with Government are still ongoing, suitable and available premises have not as yet been identified. The President here recorded the interest that has been shown by Minister George Pullicino in this idea and his involvement in trying to locate suitable premises.

He further referred to the number of public and educational events organised by the *Kamra* during 2010 including the “Architecture Nights” and the “Civil Engineering Encounters” series of lectures that continue to draw good numbers of participants each time they are organised. On a different note, *Perit* Cassar recalled the need for the drawing up of a draft National Policy for Architecture for discussion and eventual approval and adoption by Government. He noted with regret that due to various reasons, particularly

lack of time and resources, the Council had not been able to accomplish this task, and pointed out that most EU Member States have already taken up this initiative and have completed and published their National Policy for Architecture. “The adoption and implementation of a coherent and well-thought out architectural policy will ensure that decision-makers at all levels and the public at large are aware of the positive benefits that architecture can bring to their daily lives. It is now more than ever important to put concrete actions behind the words of our position paper The Urban Challenge and to put into practice the concepts and ideas that were put forward in that paper.”

In conclusion, *Perit* Cassar stated that “One of my key priorities as KTP President is to ensure that the Chamber continues to fully support and promote the profession, and work towards improving the conditions that regulate the profession. We need to emerge stronger than before to meet the challenges of the new economic climate and the new scenarios, opportunities and challenges being presented to us locally and abroad. I am proud to be part of this challenge and I only hope that many more will join the Chamber and take an active part in its proceedings and activities.”

MEPA reform

2011 commenced with the coming into force of Chapter 504 of the Laws of Malta – the Environment and Development Planning Act. The introduction of this new legislation as well as the introduction of new submission requirements, the use of the online e-apps system and the introduction of the new Environment and Planning Commissions was not as smooth as one would have hoped. There are still a number of problems that require resolv-

ing from MEPA's end, such as the apparent incapacity of their hardware to handle the voluminous submissions being made on a day to day basis by *periti* and consultees, not to mention some procedural 'mishaps' that have affected some applications that got caught up between the old and the new regime.

There is, naturally, also the issue of dealing with the learning curve until *periti* become accustomed to the new requirements and procedures. Not that MEPA is making this particularly easy – the lack of up to date standards and procedural guidelines, and the fact that these change depending on the officer interpreting the requirements makes it quite difficult for *periti* to be always au courant of such requirements. The MEPA reform has also meant stricter requirements on the information to be submitted by *periti*, and this has been met with some resistance.

At the invitation of the Hon Mario de Marco, the *Kamra tal-Periti* now participates on a Procedures Commission set up precisely to tackle the day to day inconsistent situations being faced by members of the profession. *Perit* Vincent Cassar as president of the *Kamra*, together with *Periti* Victor Torpiano, Anthony Fenech Vella and yours truly, meet with MEPA officials on a weekly basis in order to thrash out the details of the system, with the *Kamra* making numerous proposals and suggestions in this regard. Although some of the issues brought up by the *Kamra* have been, or are being, addressed by MEPA, a number of others remain outstanding and need to be tackled – it is sincerely hoped that the coming weeks will see some improvements in this respect.

To assist it in this task, the *Kamra* has set up a dedicated email address, mepafeedback@ktpmalta.com, to which *periti* can submit the difficulties they are encountering, and which the *Kamra's* representatives are forwarding to MEPA for answers and solutions. The response has been overwhelming (and in this case it is not necessarily a good thing!) and the *Kamra* invites all *periti* to continue to use this facility in order that it can continue to receive their concerns and to be of service to the profession during this period of transition. All comments are also being uploaded on the *Kamra's* website www.ktpmalta.com, and as soon as the relevant

answers are received from MEPA these will also be uploaded.

Meanwhile, the *Kamra*, this time represented by *Perit* Jacques Borg Barthet, has also been invited to participate on the Permanent Policy Reform Commission, which has as its main aim the review of MEPA policies and the proposal of recommendations for their revision. This Commission is also entrusted with identifying the need for new policies and to identify which current policies are obsolete or conflicting. The *Kamra* welcomes any suggestions from *periti* in this regard. While there are several aspects of the reform which are positive, and while it acknowledges that the transition phase may continue to pose a number of teething problems, the *Kamra* continues to hold fast on its position as stated in July 2009 following the publication of the 'Blueprint for MEPA's Reform,' namely that there is one fundamental aspect which is completely absent. This is a commitment to quality and the understanding that the real measure of MEPA's performance can only be the quality of the living environment that its policies and decisions result in. In its reform proposals the *Kamra* had placed Vision and Quality at the heart of its proposals and it continues to insist that better living environments must be at the heart of MEPA's outlook at all levels. Whereas 'consistency, efficiency, accountability and enforcements,' the main pillars around which the current reform revolves, are sine qua non practice conditions for a just and effective administration of any public agency and for the effective administration of policy, quality is the only foundation on which the proposed four pillars can stand if they seek to achieve real benefit.

Legislative framework affecting the practice of *periti*

As if the MEPA Reform was not enough to deal with, the 27th January 2011 saw the publication by the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment of a Public

Consultation document dealing with proposed amendments to the *Periti* Act and other legislation that directly affect the day to day practice of *periti*.

This document came about after almost three years of discussions with the Ministry following a series of proposals made by the *Kamra*. The process was initiated by the *Kamra* itself as far back as 1997 and which came to fruition at a conference entitled "Building the Future – Towards a Renewed Profession" in December 2007. The proposals made at this conference were debated in great detail, following a period of consultation with the profession, at the *Kamra's* two Extraordinary General Meetings held in April of 2008 where a series of motions endorsing the Council's proposals were approved. These proposals were subsequently put forward to Government for its consideration.

This process was part of a Quality Agenda that the *Kamra* had embarked upon and which was aimed at improving the delivery of the services provided by *periti* to their clients, in the interest of the built environment, the community and the profession. For this to be successful this Quality Agenda had to

address a number of fundamental issues in a holistic manner and come up with the required and necessary recommendations and actions for the essential changes to take effect. It is therefore with regret that the *Kamra* notes that its position as conveyed to Government in the various meetings held and in correspondence that was exchanged was not fully reflected in the Public Consultation Document.

The Public Consultation Document puts forward a number of proposals, dealing mainly with the composition of the Board of Professional Conduct, the introduction of a new Code of Professional Conduct, the introduction of compulsory professional indemnity insurance, the liability period applicable to *periti*, the introduction of Continuing Professional Development, and amendments to the *Periti* Tariff. While this is not the appro-

priate forum to look into each of these aspects in detail, the *Kamra tal-Periti* has expressed its regret at the fact that Government opted to select a few of the proposals that had been submitted to it for its consideration, and in some cases not taking on board the *Kamra's* proposals. This has resulted in a situation where, instead of considering the overhaul of the legislative package that regulates the profession in a holistic manner, a piecemeal approach has been taken.

Following the publication of the Public Consultation Document, the Council of the *Kamra* formulated a Position Paper which was circulated to all Warrant Holders for their consideration. On the 18th February, an Extraordinary General Meeting was held at the Aula Magna in Valletta in order to discuss both the proposals being made by Government and the position on each of the proposals taken by the Council. The General Meeting approved the position paper published by the Council and approved some modifications in those cases where the Council did not have a mandate to take a stand on its own. The position paper issued by the Council, together with the proposals approved by the General Meeting, were forwarded to Government by the close of the Public Consultation period.

The way forward is not as yet clear. At the time of writing of this article, no reaction had as yet been received from Government on the *Kamra's* submissions. It is sincerely hoped that Government will consider the voice of those who have participated in this consultation process and react accordingly. The *Kamra* meanwhile commits itself to continue to keep all members of the profession updated on any developments, and invites all *periti* to continue to follow the process and to continue to contribute towards its implementation.

What next?

These important changes that are currently facing the profession have a significant bearing on the profession and those working within the construction industry. It is still too early to assess the impact of these changes on both the profession and the built environment. Unfortunately one has to rely on the idiom that 'only time will tell' ... and hope that there are no casualties in the interim.





EFAP and the Urban Intergroup cry alarm over the future of European cities

The European Forum of Architectural Policies in collaboration with the Urban Intergroup organised a conference titled "NON-CITY? New urbanity - Innovative visions towards the European Urban Agenda" held on the 9 February 2011 at the European Parliament in Brussels with the participation of well-known architects, such as Winy Maas, Jacques Ferrier, Jana Revedin, members of the European Parliament and representatives of various EU authorities. The central question tackled by the conference was whether the European City as we know it, is still the valid economic, social and cultural model for the creation of the future European metropolis.

This conference marked the first time that architecture was present at the European Parliament. The year 2011 will be a turning point for the European Union. In the context of the 2020 strategy and the preparation of the new Union policies with regard to cohesion and urban areas, research and culture, architecture cannot miss the opportunity to be included as a key interest.

Today vast geographical areas are neither countryside, nor city. In view of the fact that these in-between zones, called "the Non-Cities", are where the majority of the European populations live, they need overall thinking or vision by planners. Our urban thinking is too often stuck in perceptions based on the old centres of medieval cities and the surrounding suburbs of the 20th century industrial era.

However, recent European Union policy initiatives such as the 2020 Strategy and the Lisbon Treaty's underlining of the need for social and territorial cohesion, raise hopes for a new urban agenda that will focus on the role of innovation, creativity and a greater democratic involvement. The populations in "the Non-Cities" could be turned into participants and creators of new urban life rather than passive consumers.

By showcasing examples of how this is already happening, the conference explored



how the current demands of mobility, migration and ecology could become part of the metropolitan planning in tomorrow's Europe.

It seems obvious that the enormous societal problems that the European metropolis is facing require more creative solutions and affable approaches. So how can teams of architects and researchers escape from the traditional paths of urban planning and produce a new type of urban project to tackle the metropolitan questions and build on the future Urban Agenda? How can we create safe urban living environments for European citizens? How can we overcome the fragmentation of governance, the rigid regulatory framework and limiting building standards? How could public governance influence the private sector?

At the end of the conference, the following statement was released to the press:

"The president of the French National Federation of urban planning agencies and the mayor of L'Aquila in Italy joined forces alongside leading European architects in the debate today in the European Parliament to signal that there is urgency for the future of the European city.

Invited by the Urban Intergroup and the European Forum for Architectural Policies, the Deputy Speaker Parliament Isabelle Durant regional policy director Rudolf Niessler shared the view of architects and philosophers: The European cities that are today admired around the world were all built by architects, artists and artisans with boldness and inspiration. But today, uncontrolled suburban expansion, dominated by the market, is all too often producing a banal, low-quality architecture that increasingly frames life in the urban areas where 70% of the Europeans live.

It is time to seize the full potential of this urbanity and bring in a new perspective, argues the philosopher Thierry

Paquot. Because better solutions do exist: Vincent Feltesse, President of the Urban Community of Bordeaux, advocates the belief that prior to any planning, urban projects must be thought through by experts that will help to intelligently define the city and its contours. The quality of life of the European city should not be subject to deceitful Greenwashing, but must rely on sensory qualities, said the architects Winy Maas and Jacques Ferrier.

'The sustainable city won't happen by accident. If we want to secure a new livable, urbanity both the architects and the EU must engage and take responsibility,' argued EFAP President Rob Docter, who encouraged the European Union to assume its sole as regulatory body. The EU should seek to:

- Embrace the architectural and landscaping expertise and hold off market influence
- Start conceiving projects in terms of quality-of-life objectives rather than technical standards
- Stop limiting architecture's role to isolated iconic buildings and begin favouring the everyday living environments.
- A new European Urban Agenda is currently being prepared by policy makers. The conference strongly argued the need to start seeing creativity as an added European value.

President of the Urban Intergroup, MEP Jan Olbrycht, said, 'Europe's thriving cities are the ticket to the EU's global competitiveness. We need a debate on the role of European cities and the problems they face. If we don't have clear ideas, urban sprawl, for example, will be very evident.'

The vision of the medieval city must be reviewed in light of the visions proposed by the architects. They must be given an upstream role to renew the European urban projects upstream before it is too late."

The European Forum for Architectural Policies is a network bringing together ministries, local authorities, professional organizations and architectural centres from all Europe. The Kamra tal-Periti is one of the bodies representing Malta on this Forum.

The Urban Intergroup is an informal group gathering more than 70 MEPs from different countries and different political groups and cooperating with several external partners.

"The sustainable city won't happen by accident. If we want to secure a new livable, urbanity both the architects and the EU must engage and take responsibility."

- EFAP President Rob Docter



Restructuring... a follow up

Is it working?

As a follow-up to the article published in the last issue of the magazine where the Dean of the Faculty for the Built Environment, Prof. Alex Torpiano, gave an overview of the new course structure, we decided to interview a number of students who have just completed the first semester of the new Foundation Course in order to get their view on the new system.

The group of students interviewed consisted of first time architectural students and also students who know the previous system because they have had to repeat the year and attend the foundation course. The responses to the questions reflect the common reaction of the group.

What is the main difference between this Foundation Course and the standard first year course?

The Foundation Course is mainly centred around design-based subjects as opposed to theory-based subjects. It is intended to give us a basic understanding of the requirements of the future years of the course and help us develop the tools we need for the coming years. A greater focus is being placed on group work and assignment based examination as opposed to written exams.

Do you find this greater emphasis on group work an advantage or a disadvantage?

"Definitely an advantage, I felt that it has helped me develop many skills needed for working with groups and I believe that this will prove to be an advantage in the future years of the course and in my profession as an architect".

Is training given with regards to the various computer programs which architecture students use?

Students are given a basic understanding of the various programs available to them and which programs will be useful for them as students. Tutors give lessons on the basic tools needed for the use of such programs, but part of the course is still based on the students learning the programs on their own.

As part of the course, students are also given training in graphic editing programs such as Photoshop. "In certain areas I still feel that I do not know enough, but then again I do not know what is intended to be taught in the coming semesters and years so I'm not sure if a more advanced level of computer design will be offered later on. Perhaps it could be a little more stretching".

Is part of the foundation year based on helping students develop non-computer based architectural skills as well?

"Yes, as opposed to previous years more time is spent in the studio developing drawing and sketching skills and we are also given the opportunity to choose credits which will help us develop model building skills". Whereas students in the past were only given a basic knowledge of such skills, the course is now based on elaborating on these skills and fine-tuning them.

"Whereas before I entered into the foundation course I used to be scared of sketching out my ideas in front of people, I now feel that I have developed more confidence and skill with a pencil and am able to clearly display my ideas".

What other advantages do you believe you have over past students which have not had the opportunity of attending the foundation course?

We are also given a better understanding of art with more credits based on art and the history of art. This gives us a great advantage over previous years.

Do you believe that this foundation course will enhance your architectural design skills?

"Definitely, I believe that it is working as intended".

How demanding would you say that this foundation course is?

"It is not excessively demanding and it leaves us with enough time to experiment and practise our skills as well as participate in extra-curricular activities".

"I believe that this is an improvement time since in the past students had to cope with developing these skills on their own while at the same time coping with architectural theory and building design based lessons".

Is any part of the course based on studying and developing architecture?

"As such, no. Subjects relate a lot to architecture but we do not as such study or develop our architectural skills. All the credits are based on giving us a foundation for next year where we will then begin to study architecture related subjects".

"We have credits based on giving us presentation skills and advice on how to display our message to an audience, which many students will find very useful in future years when presenting their work to a board of examiners or even clients".

"We are also introduced to the basic requirements of product and furniture design in certain subjects which require us to design furniture such as chairs but we have no credits relating to the design of buildings or architecture". Even the theory related subjects are more

oriented towards art and a general knowledge of history rather than architecture. Architecture based subjects shall be covered next year.

What is your main complaint about the course?

"What most students complain about is that no student seems to know what future subjects or credits will be taught to us. Since we are the first cohort to undergo this foundation course, we cannot look towards previous years in order to see what we will be taught in the next semester or next year."

Does the fact that the course has been extended from a 5 year course to a 6 year course bother you?

"No not at all, actually I now feel that I have an advantage over students who have not had the opportunity to attend a foundation course since I have had more time to focus on and fine tune certain required skills".

"I also believe that it has helped me determine where my weak and strong points are and in the future I believe it will play an important role in my choice of stream; be it Architecture, Civil engineering or Urban Studies."

"I believe that in the future, students who have gone through the foundation course will be grateful for having the opportunity to pass through it and even the ones that may be complaining at the moment will realise its value".



Awarding Architect

REVIEW BY DR CONRAD THAKE

The Din L-Art Helwa (DLH) Awards for Architectural Heritage has now firmly established itself as an annual event. The Annual Awards scheme was launched in 2005 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of DLH, and has now reached its sixth edition. As Martin Scicluna, Chairman of the Awards Jury stated during the presentation ceremony, "the Architectural Heritage Award scheme was created primarily to encourage better architecture. We wanted

to reward any building project which made an outstanding contribution to architectural excellence in a Maltese context. We were greatly encouraged in this venture by the Kamra tal-Periti who were most positive in their advice and support and with whom we continue to work most closely. Their message to us throughout was that good architecture was not simply a technical discipline, but also reflected good design in keeping with our cultural heritage."

For the 2010 edition there were five submissions. In the category dealing with the rehabilitation and reuse of a building three entries were submitted – the Pietà boathouse, Palazzo de Piro in Mdina and the Annexe to Palazzo Spinola, Valletta now serving as the adjunct offices of the Lombard Bank. The Jury awarded the Prix D'Honneur to the restoration and re-use of the Lombard Bank Annexe which is accessible from Frederick Street, Valletta. The

Jury were impressed by the sensitivity demonstrated by Perit Paul Camilleri in pursuing a meticulous restoration process of an early seventeenth century building in synergy with minimalist modern interventions that highlighted the salient architectural features of this historic building. In particular the introduction of a glazed space-frame over the internal court was instrumental in providing an ambience flooded with natural light with the added benefit of enhancing the vaulted arcade at ground level.

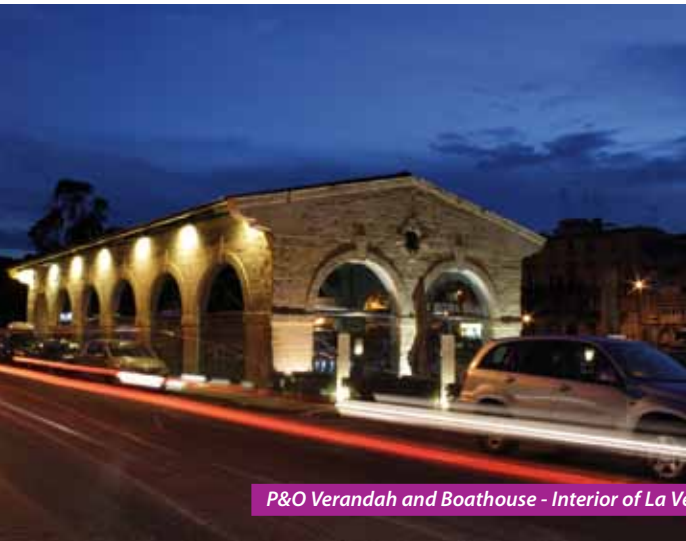
An extract from the Jury's report states that "this was an outstanding project bringing this architectural gem in the Baroque style most successfully into the 21st century without losing any of the key features which made this – one of the oldest buildings in Valletta – such an impressive building. The open loggia and portico and the magnificent barrel-vaulted entrance hall have all been strikingly restored to their former glory. Modern interventions in steel and glass have been most tastefully and unobtrusively inserted." This project was also awarded the overall Silver Medal for all categories in the 2010 Award Scheme.

The judges considered the conversion and rehabilitation of the former P&O Shipping Verandah and Boathouse, or the Pietà boathouse as it was popularly referred to, into 'La Vecchia Dogana' restaurant, as the worthy winner of the special diploma in this category. This landmark building had been in a dilapidated state for several years. The building's exterior was faithfully restored and complemented by sophisticated modern interiors that do not detract from the visual and aesthetic integrity of the building. The promising young Perit Kurt Camilleri Burló was responsible for the restoration and interior design of this project. Also, worthy of mention is the sensitive restoration of Palazzo De Piro in Mdina as an ecclesiastical museum. The project was undertaken by the Perit Martin Xuereb and Associates.



Lombard Bank Annexe - Winner of Prix d'Honneur in its category and of overall Silver Medal

ectural Heritage



P&O Verandah and Boathouse - Interior of La Vecchia Dogana restaurant



of the opinion that this project was an "excellent example of winning back for the people of Valletta the beauty of our public urban areas with the restoration of what was once a strategic gateway into Valletta." Other projects submitted in this category were the reconstruction of the St Anthony of Padua chapel in Fort Manoel as part of the Manoel Island and Tigné project and the restoration of the facade of the Oratory of the Blessed Sacrament in Żejtun. The Awards Ceremony was held last December at the headquarters of Din L-Art Helwa in Valletta and was presided by Dr Mario De Marco, Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism, Culture and the Environment. The members of the Jury



Victoria Gate



Winners of the DLH 2010 Awards

In the other category relating to the restoration and conservation of historic buildings the Prix d'Honneur was awarded for the restoration of the Victoria Gate in Valletta. The restoration project of the late eighteenth

century gate designed by Emmanuel Luigi Galizia (1830-1907) was undertaken by the Valletta Rehabilitation Project under the direction of Perit Claude Borg. The project did not limit itself to the restoration of the

monumental gate itself but also entailed the re-instatement of the footbridge and the widening and re-paving of the street leading from the Notre Dame de Liesse church to the Victoria Gate. The Jury was

were Mr Martin Scicluna, vice-president of Din L-Art Helwa (chairperson), Ms Maria Grazia Cassar, Dr Keith Sciberras and Perit Dr Conrad Thake as the representative of the Kamra tal-Periti.

COMING OUT O

BY CHARLENE VELLA



Between Shadow & Stone is a very adequate title for a book of photography of architecture by Timmy Gambin. It makes you wonder about the implied intermediate quantity. The title gains in significance when one considers that the photographs capture the architecture of Richard England, in which the play of light and shade is an essential ingredient. Perhaps the "in between" is the soul of each building.

The book is really a comprehensive catalogue of the exhibition of the same title that was held at St James Cavalier Centre

of Creativity throughout November 2010. The photographs that make up the book are largely monochrome, although some colour does feature. They can be described as photographic essays for they do speak for themselves.

What is abundantly obvious is Gambin's admiration for Richard England's architecture. Gambin is a marine archaeologist and an academic by profession. But there is much more to him, and this book projects him as an artist of the camera with an uncanny ability to delve direct into the

essence of the building by carefully selecting the essential qualities and eliminating the rest.

This is remarked on by Rev Professor Peter Serracino Inglott who compares them to the philosophical approach of Socrates. Very aptly he calls these photographs "the soul of Richard England's art".

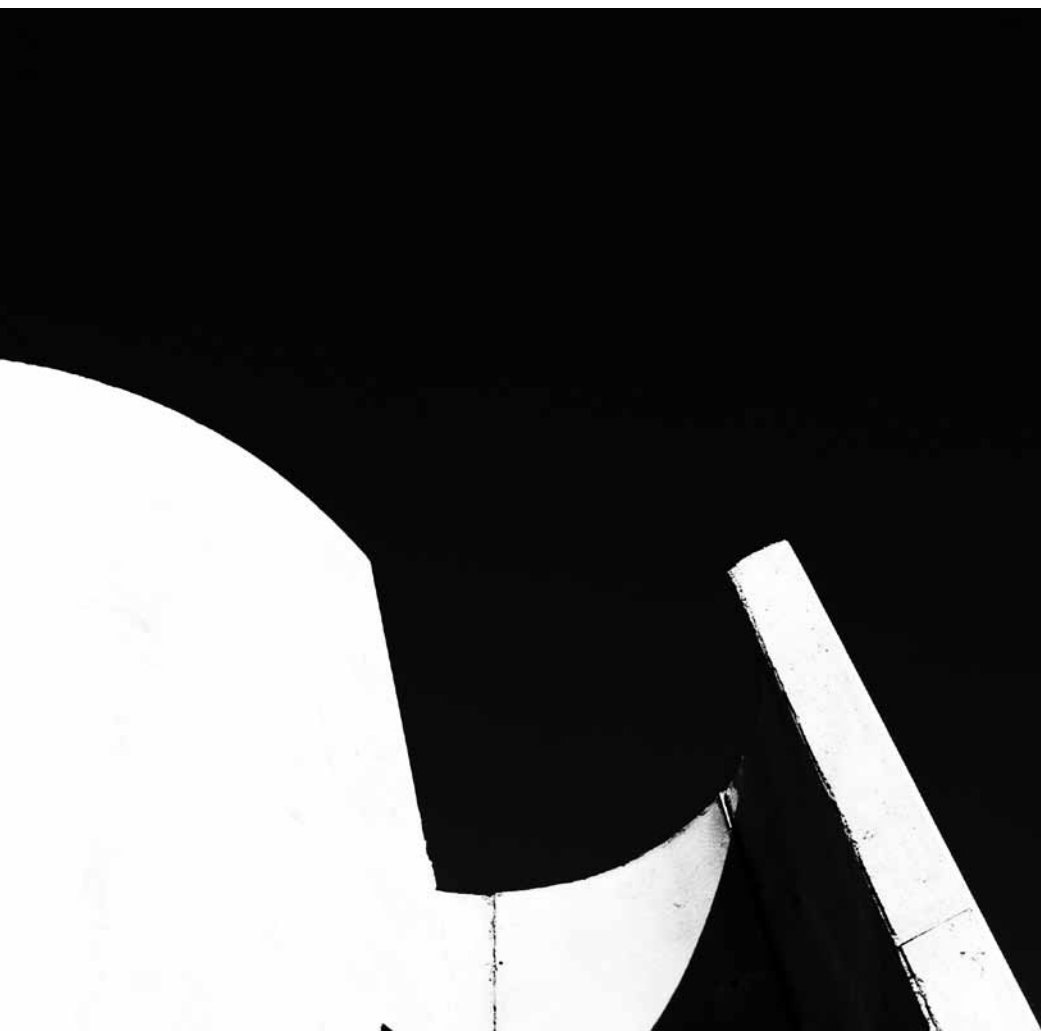
Gambin has searched for and captured only that which is essential. His approach is therefore minimalist, and this makes his images all the more enduring. Richard England calls the process surgical abstrac-

tion, and Gambin has superbly risen to the occasion.

Gambin's eye is exceptionally well trained and remarkably perceptive. For him, simplicity is the noble form of visual expression, which it really is. It is a simplicity that exudes elegance. Shadows play as important a role as the architecture itself. To those who know him only as an archaeologist and a researcher, all this comes as a revelation.

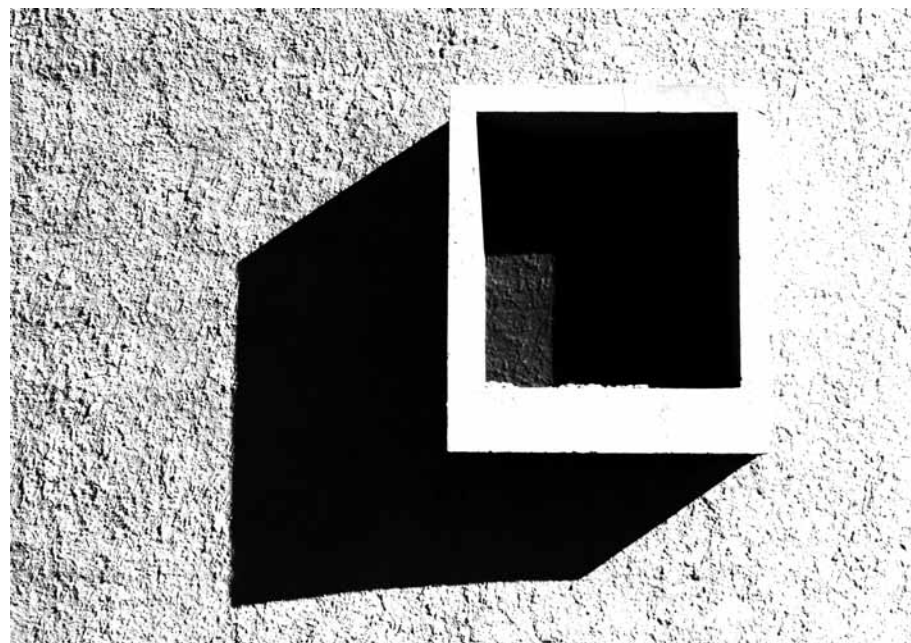
The sheer stark contrast between light and shadow is the protagonist. Each photograph records a detail of England's build-

F THE SHADOW



ings and resolves itself into a composition of various shapes with solids and voids playing an equally important role. There is in Gambin's photographs an obsessive need to go back to the same building to study it at different times of the day. His aim? To chase shadows, or to capture them, rather. *Between Shadow & Stone*: a visual exploration of Richard England's architecture is a limited edition book of artistic photographs that more often than not have an abstract quality about them. This infuses them with a magical quality

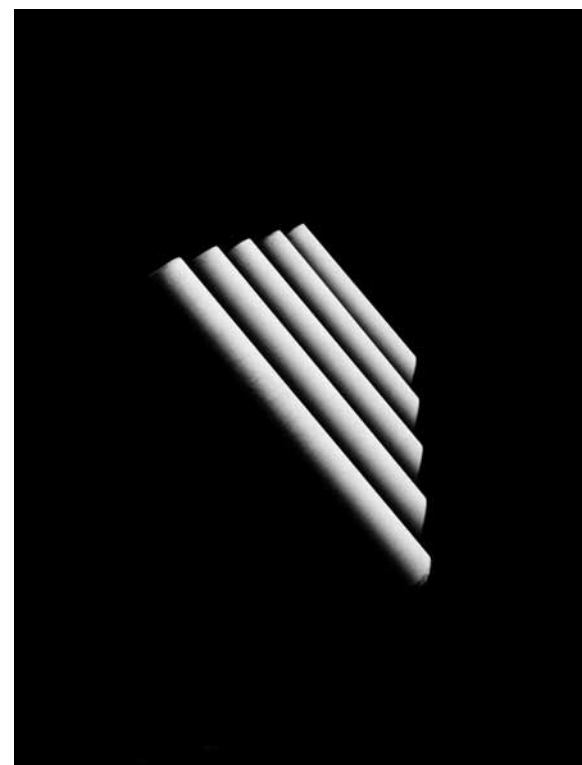
that borders on the mystical. The photographs are complimented by concise yet pertinent contributions by Timmy Gambin himself, Dr Conrad Thake, Professor Richard England and Rev Professor Peter Serracino Inglott. Each essay sheds more light on the subject at hand in an unobtrusive manner. The contributions range from critical appreciations of Gambin's photographs and work, to a history of the art of photography of architecture. Good taste and artistic sophistication are essential ingredients. The photographs are divided into sections



according to the building they depict. Each of these sections begins with a thorough history of the photographed building, beginning with the St Joseph Church at Manikata, that includes a pen sketch of the building by Professor England himself. The book adequately ends with a biography of each of the contributors. This is a book to treasure.

This article was originally carried in The Sunday Times of the 26 December 2010.

Between Shadow & Stone: a visual exploration of Richard England's architecture, Midsea Books, 2010, 103 pp., €25.00



Shape – Colour – Composition

Art and Architecture

FOR THIS ISSUE, tA MET UP WITH YOUNG ARCHITECT AND ARTIST MARK G. MUSCAT TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT WHAT DRIVES HIM TO PAINT AND HOW THIS AFFECTS HIS WORK AS AN ARCHITECT

tA: Mark, what has inspired you to take up art and painting and what is your artistic background?

I consider myself quite lucky in this respect because ever since I can remember I was exposed to the world of art. My parents, especially my father, are both very keen on applied arts and fine arts. I can literally say that I grew up surrounded by antique furniture and paintings. With this exposure and the encouragement and support I received from my parents, it was natural for me to nurture this interest in art. Looking back today I can see that my father tended to push me towards the fine arts from a very young age. I always did well in art at school, whether at nursery school, St Edward's College or St Aloysius College.

My father's friends and acquaintances included Maltese artists, art critics and Maltese Museum Curators, and also

renowned international art critics and restorers. For example I had the privilege to meet art critics of the standard of Prof John Spike and Dr Keith Sciberras, the late Dennis Vella who was Curator of the Museum of Fine Arts and Rev Fr Edgar Vella, Curator of the Cathedral Museum, Mdina. This is what I consider as my real significant inspiration and baptism into the world of art.

From an early age I attended art lessons at St Edward's College and later studied under the tutorship of two well known artists, Winston Hassall and Harry Alden. At St Aloysius College I chose Art as one of my subjects and sat successfully for the Art A-Level examination in my first Sixth Form year.

The skills I had acquired during these formative years made it quite easy for me to opt to study Architecture at the University of Malta. I never regretted this decision and graduated with a first class honours degree

from the Bachelor of Architecture & Civil Engineering course.

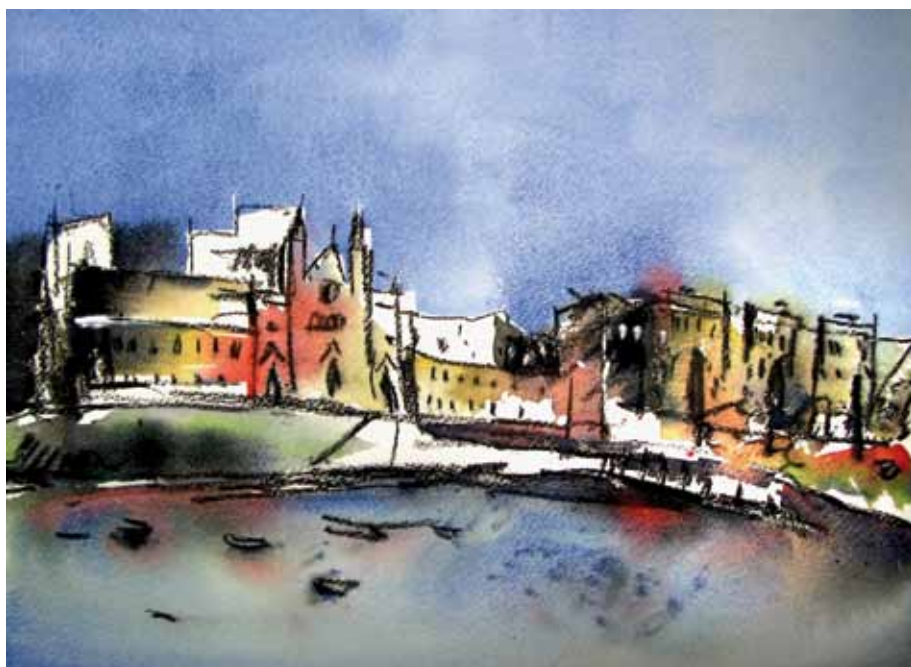
My first public Exhibition was in 2007 when, together with a friend of mine, I participated in a two-man exhibition at the Manoel Theatre Courtyard. The works that we both exhibited were very favourably received both by the media and the general public.

tA: A number of your paintings draw inspiration from the urban landscape. Being also an architect, do you think that you view the urban landscape differently to other artists and how is this reflected in your works?

Being an architect by profession, I am usually interested in certain specific details which other artists might possibly consider of no interest at all. This happens of course in all spheres of life. Having said this I must stress that my concept of art is not meant

to be a photorealistic re-representation of a scene because if this were the case it would be best to use a good photographic camera which would certainly give more accurate detail.

My thought process involves focusing on the most important elements of the urban and rural landscapes; these could be the cupola of a church, a clock or bell tower, trees and vegetation and even more mundane objects such as ironwork, motor vehicles, cranes or television antennae. Starting from this I proceed to form a composition based on the chosen elements, purposely leaving out what I consider as unnecessary or possibly obtrusive details. An underlying factor in all my works is that I portray the subjects as I see them. I do not try and romanticise a scene by ignoring unsightly objects such as electricity poles and cables or road signs. These all form part of the modern day environment and are a sign



NEO AND NOUVEAU (Balluta, Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel)



GANTRY CRANES (Kalafra, Freeport)



CONSTRUCTION IN PROGRESS (Sliema, It-Torri)

of our times, hence they should not be omitted.

tA: How do you feel that observing the urban landscape through your art affects your work as an architect and what are your observations on Maltese contemporary architecture?

I believe that the best way of analysing an object is by sketching it. The drawing process allows the brain to absorb details which otherwise could have gone unnoticed by simple visual analysis. Edward Lear's sketches drawn from nature are very good examples of this concept. His sketches contain hand written notes describing hues, species of vegetation and other details which are

conceived through the sketching process. They would later be incorporated in the finished painting.

Through my sketches, I can observe particular traits in the Maltese landscape. Despite not having a direct relationship to architectural design, these visual notes are always at the back of my mind when designing. Looking at villages as a whole allows you to appreciate the precise equilibrium between the built environment and the nature that surrounds it. When designing a new building I always consider the visual implications of my proposals within its surrounding environment. Many buildings might seem good and acceptable when in isolation, but when placed within an urban context they tend to be more of an eyesore than a



CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF VICTORIES (Valletta, Church of Our Lady of Victories)

beautiful building.

On occasions I choose industrial and contemporary subjects, objects like the dockyard and its shipping cranes, construction sites and multi-storey apartments. I do this with the aim of breaking away from the anachronistic idea of vernacular architecture in the Maltese village context. While I obviously agree with the preservation of the characteristics of the traditional Maltese village, I believe that we need to move forward and embrace a contemporary and well thought out architectural language which respects our past but also looks forward to the future. In a few words we need to strike a balance. We otherwise risk one of two totally diametrically opposed results - either becoming stagnant and showing no originality in our architectural output or alternatively, overdeveloping without any respect for the past and with lack of foresight and thus risk losing our heritage and our countryside or, to be precise, what remains of it.

tA: Tell us about your upcoming exhibition ...

The exhibition is entitled Shape Colour Composition. The works exhibited will be in watercolour and were all painted over the last two years. My earlier years tended to be rather figurative. Back then my aims and intentions were different from what I am aspiring to achieve now. My belief is that before one can develop his own personal stylistic expression, one needs to be well trained and fully understand the basic concepts of drawing and also be able to master the use of colour. One cannot simply move into his own stylistic idiom before being able to fully comprehend these fundamental artistic aspects. In my previous exhibitions I fully understood

the importance of having mastered these essential concepts and consequently I was able to handle the brush with confidence. My forthcoming exhibition will display works which bring out the simplified geometry and fundamental shapes of the scene. Collocating and combining objects and shapes ensures that the painting does not become a simple technical exercise but a true artistic expression. I feel that this exhibition will be an important milestone in my evolution as an artist because it is my first real attempt to create my own expression which is free from direct influence of my past tutors. Having said this I hasten to add that had it not been for the contribution of my tutors, who are themselves well known artists, I would not have reached this stage and have had the boldness to take such a step. I must therefore express my gratitude to all of them.

In this respect I also feel indebted to my father for his sage advice by passing on to me all that he had learned from artists, art critics and museum curators and of course his and my mother's continuous encouragement. I must also thank the Parliamentary Secretariat for Tourism, the Environment and Culture for giving me the opportunity to hold my exhibition at the Auberge D'Italie where several renowned Maltese artists have also exhibited in the past. Last but not least I must thank the institutions who after evaluating my works, appreciated my artistic output and were generous enough to sponsor the exhibition.

It is my hope that this exhibition will serve another useful purpose, namely that it will document through art, distinct historic, topographical and contemporary scenarios of Malta and Gozo as they are today, but from a different artistic perspective.

Biography

Mark Geoffrey Muscat was born in Gozo, Malta on the 6th July 1986. He studied art under Charlot Cassar, Harry Alden, Winston Hassall and Jessica DeBattista. He studied at the University of Malta (2004-2009) and the Politecnico di Milano (2007-2008) and completed a bachelor's degree in Architecture & Civil Engineering. At the University of Malta he studied art under Anton Grech and Ruth Bianco. He also studied architectural photography under Professor Marco Introini during his studies at the Politecnico di Milano. He currently works as an architect for Paul Camilleri & Associates, Malta.

SHAPE COLOUR COMPOSITION will remain open until the 31st of March at the Auberge d'Italie, Valletta. More information about Mark's art is available on www.markgeoffreymuscat.com.



CHURCH OF ST. CATHERINE (Valletta, Church of St. Catherine)

A celebration of architecture

The World Architecture Festival 2010 took place between the 3 and 5 November in Barcelona. tA correspondent **Ann Dingli** gives a vivid description of the experience of the festival and of the project that stole the limelight.

Three days of architects talking about what they have done and why it will change the face of world architecture might, at a superficial glance, project itself as being a pursuit of intense self-exaltation. The World Architecture Festival is, essentially, a very large, elite community of architects engaged in the activity of slapping an epic pat on each other's back, and more importantly, onto their own.

However, it remains true that this festival is possibly the only event which provides an accurate description of global contemporary architecture in a very short time frame, and in a condensed yet stimulating manner. It allows its visitors and participants to truly be able to position themselves at a standpoint where they are capable of measuring both the triumphs and the flaws of current architectural activity.

The festival's format, although not without setbacks, is fast-paced and well organised. It conventionally functions with two parallel running programmes: the seminar programme, where high profile speakers from the profession give lectures on topics most relevant in the industry at present;

and the shortlist presentation programme, where the architects chosen to compete with their project are allotted ten minutes each to describe their scheme, and convince panels of judges that theirs is ultimately the best building in the world. This year's festival also saw a third concurrent programme integrated with the rest of the activities, the Art and Work programme, which was treated as an award in its own right, and was comprised of various on site lectures and discussions dealing with art and the workplace.

The first day of the festival is dedicated to the showcasing of the top picks of built projects in the various categories dictated by the competition structure. Undoubtedly, out of the ten sub-categories (Culture, House, Housing, Learning, Office, Holiday, Shopping, Sport, Display, and Health) there stood alone a couple which were saturated with star projects. The Housing category was one of these, with its winner being the Pinnacle @ Duxton project located in Singapore and executed by ARC Studio Architecture + Urbanism. This project was immense in its scope, featuring the world's two longest sky gardens of 500m each, on

both the 26th & 50th floor, and having all of its seven towers representing the tallest public housing buildings in the world. Other interesting projects in this category included the formally daring project by Danish architects Henning Larson Architects, entitled The Wave, which projected a housing scheme onto a prestigious site in between the city of Vejle and its famous fjord. Its form arises from its relation to its narrow site. With its frontage on the waterfront, its main design ethos was transparency, having the need to create unobstructed views to the water from behind the building as its key design motivator.

The category named New and Old, which showcased excellence in intervention projects also had some very worthy contenders for building of the year. The project for the intervention at London's Victoria and Albert Museum by MUMA, or McInnes Usher McKnight Architects, was one of the more remarkable projects to be presented at the event, winning two honourable mentions during the course of the festival. The project was designed for the South East corner of the museum. The main drivers in the cre-



Benjamin Garcia Saxe - A Forest for a Moon Dazzler
Image courtesy of World Architecture Festival 2010

ation of the intervention designs were the need to refrain from making use of mechanical humidity and cooling control mechanisms, as well as the desire to create a clear distinction between the restoration work and the new additions to the site. The design team made use of materials like concrete in order to "celebrate the new", as their young spokesperson declared whilst explaining their choice for the use of glass and concrete in their project. The project is the first new built space in one hundred years that the museum has allowed. Its sensitivity to the site, its delicate use of light and reverence towards modern materials made it deserving of at least a category award win. This however, was awarded to the project entitled DDB Office, designed by the office of Erginoglu & Calislar Mimarlik Insaat Ticaret ve Turizm Limited Sirketi, from Turkey. The Display category was also populated with heavy contenders, chief of which was Miralles Tagliabue presenting her project for the 2010 Shanghai World Expo Spanish Pavilion, which a year earlier had won in the same category for future projects. Tagliabue expressed how in the thought process for the creation of the pavilion, there was a desire to create a vision of Spain without drawing on cultural clichés and overtly obvious allusions. The idea of piazzas and open space combined with the notion of transparency as communicated through the material used for the most part of the structure of the pavilion: wicker. Through the use of

Miralles Tagliabue - Spanish Pavilion for the 2010 Shanghai Expo
Image courtesy of World Architecture Festival 2010



this material, the design team sought to exalt the tradition of Spanish handcrafts, and examine the notion of scale by turning an activity used conventionally in small-scale production into something functioning on an amplified level. In addition to the interest in scale and materiality, the team also treated the wicker naturally to create variation in its colour, which, when like a garment was laid over the steel skeleton structure of the pavilion, would display large scale messages of harmony which were read in traditional Chinese calligraphy from aerial view. This design feature was what Tagliabue said



The Wave - Henning Larson Architects
Image courtesy of World Architecture Festival 2010



MAXXI National Museum of XXI Century Arts - Zaha Hadid Architects
Image courtesy of World Architecture Festival 2010

served to marry the Spanish and Chinese cultures together. The project spoke most importantly about scale, and organic use of material. It was the winner of the Display category for 2010.

A quirky project that stood apart from its peers was the La Fosca Beach Hotel designed by Will Aslop at RMJM. The design was in tune with Aslop's signature obsession with unharnessed form. It is sited in the town of La Fosca in Spain where a small family hotel currently stands. Its context is of a humble nature with a forest of Umbrella Pine trees to the north of the site and a town hall adjacent to it. The hotel's form emerged out of one of Aslop's paintings - a collection of dense linear forms upon which a series of clustered nest-like bundles are rested. These so-called tree houses are singular units which are each supported by three columns which from ground floor level appear as organic forms similar to those found in the nearby forest. The seemingly haphazard programme is merely an aesthetic observation, while on closer inspection it is clear that the hotel has been designed to provide a luxury experience for residents, with privacy remaining the essential concern to the designers. Its design ethos runs in line with Aslop's notion of art and architecture having no boundary line of separation. In his lecture on Transforming Work and Public Space with Art, which he gave as part of the Art and Work seminar programme, Aslop speaks of how "art eliminates that extraordinary boredom that surrounds us all" and how architects should return to sketching and painting in order to breathe life into their projects. The La Fosca Beach hotel does emulate this exact sentiment.

One of most warming presentations out of the numerous in the festival was delivered by Benjamin Garcia Saxe, an architect, sculptor, designer and visual artist who works in Costa Rica and London. He presented a house that he designed for his mother, which he called A Forest for a Moon Dazzler. His personal



IMAGEBY ANN DINGLI

account of how he built a home for his mother who he had lived with in great poverty throughout his childhood described how through architecture he was able to achieve his life-long dream of creating a sanctuary where nature and security are combined to create a home. His depiction of the house was conveyed in a highly poetic manner in his presentation, yet it was his use of materials and building techniques which stood out as the project's most redeeming feature. This was the winning project for the House category.

Without doubt, and as testified by the packed lecture hall for its category, the Culture section certainly represented one of the richest groups of projects out of the whole festival. The winning project was in fact one included in this collection of projects. The Maxxi National Museum of XXI Century Arts, by Zaha Hadid Architects was started over twelve years ago as a competition entry. Its site is a former military barracks area with a particular L-shaped space. The architects working on the project wanted to create a

building which would work towards opening up the narrow site. A series of linear curves along the site began to take the form of a type of line graph which eventually translated into a building plan. The leading feature of the building's plan was fluidity, placing emphasis on creating form which moves with minor punctuation. The longitudinal elements made up to create each level also allow natural light into the building, and light in turn serves to heighten the fluid experience of the building's programme. Art galleries and suites within the museum are connected with internal bridges so that differing planes merge into one another with ease, allowing visitors to wonder seamlessly through the space with an uninterrupted dedication to the works housed within the building.

The WAF 2010 building of the year was certainly deserving of its title. Not just for its formal beauty but also for what it represented on a cultural note. The overriding feeling at the festival was that architects, although quite happy with themselves, need to emulate something abstract or intangible in their work that only works have art have successfully captured. That sense of awe and inspiration that derives from a work of art was seemingly the element which many of the best projects did capture, or came close to capturing. The Maxxi National Museum of XXI Century Arts was chosen as the ultimate example of this kind of success. Kim Nielsen, who formed part of the super jury for the festival, asserted about the project that it is "very rare that an architect makes art, and it functions". So, for creating art and being able to use it as architecture, certainly that epic pat on the back is well-deserved.





Perit Silvio Mercieca
(Photo courtesy of Mr Martin Mercieca)

Born on 6th May 1888, Silvio Mercieca became a successful architect, developing his own distinctive style. His known works markedly show a desire to break away from traditionalist norms. Like other contemporaries of his including Gustavo Vincenti and Joseph Colombo he manipulated familiar elements such as the Maltese balcony and gave them a cleaner, more geometric shape, very much in the Art Deco manner. In 1936 he won the prestigious Architecture Award for "Muscat's Garage" on Rue D'Argens, Gzira, placing first with a unanimous vote. This building was blitzed during the war and later replaced with the present structure. The jury described Mercieca's creation as a "20th century attempt to solve a 20th century problem." They further praised the design by stating "The style suits the purpose for which the building is meant and it is also the first effective deviation in Malta from the usual style of local architecture" (1).

In the first decades of the 20th century, Ta' Xbiex was fast becoming a popular residential neighbourhood for wealthy families. Architects were engaged to create suitable designs that reflected their social and financial statuses. Most of the stately villas built here in the 1920s were designed in the traditional Maltese Baroque idiom. By the beginning of the next decade almost all the seafront sites had been taken up. Land-owner and architect Silvio Mercieca purchased one of the last remaining plots, designed and built two houses for his family.

Being an avid follower of Italian culture

The Architecture of Silvio Mercieca (1888-1954)

BY PERIT EDWARD SAID

Mercieca purportedly named them Ebe and Cloe after two famous opera singers Ebe Stignani (1910-62) and Cloe Elmo (1903-74). His admiration for the Fascist movement in Italy was manifested in the designs he drew up for the houses. Villa Cloe was the last home of acclaimed chief justice and politician Sir Arturo Mercieca (1878-1969). Silvio Mercieca is also reputed to have used part of the house in which he resided as his studio.

Marcello Piacentini (1881-1960) is regarded as the main exponent of Fascist architecture which as a style lies somewhere halfway

between what was called Novecentism, a movement yearning Classical ornamentation, and Rationalism which was pioneered by the functionalist *Gruppo 7*. Piacentini's approach has been defined as "simplified neoclassicism" and this is epitomised in his Rome projects of *Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana* at the E.U.R. (1935). He is sometimes regarded as Mussolini's Albert Speer(2). Silvio Mercieca was evidently familiar with Piacentini's work. In most of his facades Mercieca incorporated a stylisation of the *fasces*, which he did using columns profiled with deep flutings sometimes broken

by intermittent straps. He borrowed such a feature from one of Piacentini's lesser known creations, the *Arco della Vittoria* in Bolzano (1926).

Another iconic opus of the *Stile Littorio* which the Maltese architect must have been familiar with was the *Palazzo delle Borse* in Milan designed by Paolo Mezzanotte (1878-1969), completed in 1932 and which he has now been named after. The almost prophetic post-modernist language of Mercieca's elevations at Cloe and Ebe draws certain parallels with the enormous facade of this Italian public building.

Giant fluted panel on one of Ta'Xbiex seafront villas





Monumental portal of Villa Cloe sporting two stylised fascias complete with axe-heads crowning the giant pilasters

At Ebe and Cloe which after all he had a personal interest in, Mercieca boldly applied this leitmotif in the pronounced flutings and giant pillars one either side of the main doorway complete with crowning axe-heads. These pillars are in themselves stylised *fascie*. Externally, the complete composition can certainly be described as imposing. The angular mouldings around the windows, the deep balcony at the corner made possible with the use of ferro-concrete echoes the essence of Palladianism. Mercieca ingeniously used the challenges presented by the significantly angular site to further emphasise his desire for statement-making.

Neo-Classicism has been stripped down further to a more rectilinear form. This is statement-making at its strongest and Silvio Mercieca wanted to do just that. He clearly strove to move away from Traditionalism which characterised most buildings so far

sprouting in Ta' Xbiex. Many of these are also quite Colonialist in character and given his political views, Mercieca would have wanted to rebel somewhat against this, sending his message through the designs of Cloe and Ebe. It is interesting to note that this architect also owned, designed and later sold the pair of villas next door which although show his *fascies* hallmark at practically every corner, the concept here is a compromise that still recalls Colonialism particularly with the gabled bay-windows on the main facades.

The culmination of this dynamic period of architectural morphology was reached when architect Salvatore Ellul constructed his own personal residence at the end of the seafront close to Cloe. Villa Ellul was built in the late-1930s and its owner, like Mercieca, clearly wanted to break free

from Maltese stereotypical styles, this time however exploiting the benefits of reinforced concrete to create a building designed on the philosophies of the Italian Rationalists and Le Corbusier (3) where perhaps form and function have now reached equilibrium.

Another outstanding building designed in the 1930s by Mercieca is a house in Old Bakery Street. Here again, the architect has moved away from the norm, something which was very avant-garde in pre-war Valletta. The dominating features on the facade are the curvy balconies with specially designed flower pots in their bases which are in fact miniature versions of the balconies themselves. The contrast between this building and the neighbouring Renaissance and Baroque facades is quite striking, a style which not even Vincenti dared venture into with his insular apartment block further down the road.

A curiosity about Mercieca's career is that he in fact is the official architect of Tower Lodge (later known as Casa Said) on Tower Road, an iconic Art Nouveau building known to have been designed by Andrea Vassallo (1856-1928). The registers at the Public Works Department show that the application was submitted on behalf of Dr. E. Said in 1911 by Mercieca when the latter was just 19! Norbert Attard in his thesis on local Art Nouveau architecture suggests that the young Merceica was working with Vassallo at the time and may very well have been significantly involved in the building's design (4).

It is worth mentioning that Silvio Mercieca designed the ballroom



Stylised fascias on another villa in Ta' Xbiex by Mercieca

of the Casino Maltese in Valletta and is commemorated on a plaque in the building. He was also involved in the restoration of the spire of St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral in 1944 after it was damaged during the war. A number of buildings in Sliema are attributed on stylistic grounds by the present author to Mercieca as their facades feature a number of motifs which are trademarks of his, particularly the *fascies* elements.



Mercieca's desire to break away from traditionalist architectural norms at Villa Cloe, Ta' Xbiex

- (1) Camilleri, G.E., The Architecture Award (1936-9), article in Treasures of Malta, No.45, 26
- (2) Taylor, R.G., The Fiat Colonia: Architecture of Authority, Unpublished thesis submitted at the University of British Columbia 1991
- (3) Thake, C. & Q. Hughes, Malta War & Peace: An Architectural Chronicle 1800-2005, 150
- (4) Attard, Norbert, Art Nouveau Architecture in Malta, unpublished B. E. & A. (Hons) dissertation, May 1977

COMPETITION



This photograph depicts the view that a visitor to Valletta would have experienced in the 1850s. By the 1860s both buildings visible in the foreground were demolished to make way for the Palazzo Ferreria and E.M. Barry's Royal Opera House. Can you identify the two buildings?

The winner of this competition will be entitled to a copy of the book "Modernist Malta: The Architectural Legacy." Send your entries to: The Editor, The Architect Competition, Kamra tal-Periti, The Professional Centre, Sliema Road, Gzira, or by email on thearchitect@ktpmalta.com. The first correct entry drawn on the 30 April 2011 will win. Only residents of the Maltese Islands are eligible to participate. Members of the Editorial Board and their families are not eligible to participate.

The winner of the competition carried in Issue 54 is Claude-Josef Sapiano. Congratulations! The image published showed the memorial chapel at Ta Braxia cemetery, dedicated to Lady Rachel Hamilton Gordon, wife of Arthur Gordon, Baron of Stanmore and at the time British governor of Ceylon. Lady Gordon died in Malta at the age of 60 years and was buried at Ta Braxia cemetery on 28th January 1889. The Chapel was designed by the famous Victorian architect, John Loughborough Pearson (1817-1897).



ON PERMANENT DISPLAY; NEW LONDON ARCHITECTURE, LONDON, UK

LONDON 2012 – OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

The Olympic Park is the defining element of the London 2012 Games. During the Games it will provide a central circulation spine and parkland setting for the sporting venues, and after, it will be transformed into the largest urban park created in Europe for more than 150 years. This permanent exhibition displays plans for the Olympic Park and the Olympic and Paralympic venues, and will be updated as plans progress. www.newlondonarchitecture.org

ONGOING; DANISH ARCHITECTURE CENTRE, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

MANMADE ENVIRONMENT



Through projects from the Nordic countries, the exhibition, Manmade Environment demonstrates that landscape architecture is about so much more than aesthetics. Used strategically it can supply sustainable solutions, promote health and improve living conditions for people in both urban and rural areas. It brings attention to the importance of finding alternative, interdisciplinary planning methods; strategies that emphasize conscious use of natural resources and combine new expertise and technology with awareness of local conditions, culture and identity. www.dac.dk

NOW TO 30 APRIL, 2011; ARCHITECTURE MUSEUM
– LA LOGE, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

THE FANTASTIC ARCHITECTURE OF ALBAN CHAMBON

First a manual worker, then industrial artist who trained at Parisian decoration companies in the 1860s, Alban Chambon went on to become an architect of renowned talent, honoured with commissions from Brussels, London, Amsterdam, Vienna, Paris and Ostend. www.fondationpourlarchitecture.be

NOW TO 30 APRIL 2011; MUSEUM OF FINNISH
ARCHITECTURE, HELSINKI, FINLAND

BEAUTY, FUNCTIONALITY, DURABILITY

Two Centuries of State Building and Development in Finland 1811–2011
Public building in Finland can be said to have been initiated on 3 September 1811, when the Russian Czar established the Intendent's Office "to supervise architecture that is both useful and embellishing for all nations". Over time, the Office was succeeded by the Board of Public Buildings, the

National Board of Public Building, the State Real Property Agency, and lastly the current Senate Properties. On display are remarkable public buildings from the days of Carl Ludvig Engel, the second Intendent, to the present day. The exhibition also presents visions of the Senate Properties for the design of future work environments. The exhibition has been designed by architect Hannele Grönlund. Producers: Museum of Finnish Architecture, Senate Properties www.mfa.fi

NOW TO 03 MAY 2011; RIBA LIBRARY, LONDON, UK

SAVING LOOS: THE UNKNOWN LEGACY OF THE BRITISH ARCHITECTURAL LIBRARY

The Adolf Loos exhibition is extended by previously unknown material from the RIBA collections whose Library helped save the Adolf Loos Archive during the Second World War. This display examines English influence on Loos's design thinking. Also on view is a special display of RIBA photographs and documents of Loos's buildings and projects in Austria, France, Switzerland and America as well as his polemical books and periodicals. www.architecture.com

NOW TO 08 MAY 2011; VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON, UK

THE ARCHITECTURE OF HOPE: MAGGIE'S CANCER CARING CENTRES

A display that, for the first time, explores the architecture of the Maggie's Centres which provide welcoming and uplifting spaces for those affected by cancer. Each of the seven existing centres, designed by architects including Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid and the 2009 RIBA Stirling Prize winning building by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, are examined through models, drawings, photographs and film. Six models for future centres, including designs by Wilkinson Eyre and Kisho Kurokawa, are also on display. www.architecture.com

NOW TO 30 MAY, 2011; MOMA, NEW YORK, USA

BUILDING COLLECTIONS: RECENT ACQUISITIONS OF ARCHITECTURE

Presenting a selection of models and drawings acquired by the Department of Architecture and Design since 2005 - the vast majority on view for the first time - Building Collections underscores the rationale and motives of collecting architecture at MoMA. The exhibition is organised around several themes, including ornament and abstraction, modernist urbanism and utopias, Latin American modernism, the revival of Berlin architecture since reunification, and the role of process in architecture since the digital revolution. Featured works date from 1890 to the present, and represent such diverse figures as Louis Sullivan, Le Corbusier, Bodo and Heinz Rasch, Jean Tschumi, Ant Farm, Paulo Mendes da Rocha, Sauerbruch Hutton, Barkow Leibinger, UN Studio, and Seung H-Sang of Korea. www.moma.org

NOW TO 12 JUNE, 2011; THE ARCHITECTURE CENTRE, BRISTOL, UK

SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS

Presenting some of the best examples of sustainable schools from the UK, Europe and around the world, this exhibition provides an opportunity to learn about practical ways to achieve carbon reduction as well as to see inspiring and innovative buildings. From hand made to high tech,

sustainable schools come in many shapes and sizes (and price brackets). Some of the schools featured are examples of a truly holistic approach from their use of local labour to using the building to teach environmental sustainability. Others provide exciting and exotic ideas that may not translate directly to the everyday but which inspire us to think differently. All have one thing in common – they have actively considered and reduced their impact on the environment. www.architecturecentre.co.uk

NOW TO 19 JUNE 2011; ARCHITEKTURMUSEUM
DER TU MÜNCHEN, GERMANY

PHOTOGRAPHY FOR ARCHITECTS – THE COLLECTION OF THE

Photographs convey architecture and usually also shape its perception. Since the invention of photography, photographs have served both for the presentation of buildings as well as for the training of architects. The subjects, tasks and possibilities of photography for the conveyance of architecture



are shown with examples from the large stocks of the Architekturmuseum. In a first section the motifs and forms of this architectural sample collection are presented with famous names from the pioneer era of photography, such as Édouard-Denis Balus, Bisson frères and Pascal Sébah, followed by examples illustrating the use of photography for design. Finally, the cooperation between architects

and photographs – Eero Saarinen / Ezra Stoller, Alfred Roth / Hans Finsler or Paul Schneider-Esleben / Albert Renger-Patzsch – with regard to well-directed camera work for the publication of buildings rounds off the insight into hitherto hidden treasures of the Architekturmuseum, which unfold a panorama of photography from its beginnings until today. www.architekturmuseum.de

NOW TO 11 SEPTEMBER 2011; MAK GALLERY, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

SPAN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGNS - FORMATIONS

Matias del Campo and Sandra Manninger, former participants in the MAK Schindler Scholarship Program in Los Angeles, founded the Vienna office SPAN architecture & design in 2003, which designed the Austrian Pavilion at the EXPO 2010 in Shanghai jointly with Zeytinoglu ZT. Based on geometries of organic systems, the team develops visions of the architecture of form. Interactions between idea and medial application aid conceptual manipulation, and lead to unusual results. www.mak.at

NOW TO 20 SEPTEMBER 2011; THE SAATCHI GALLERY, LONDON, UK

PROJECTORY

Phillips de Pury & Company presents Projectory, the second installment of Phillips de Pury's pop-up program in Saatchi Gallery, London. The program launched in May 2010 as Connectors, is a unique selling exhibition of contemporary design with a manifesto predicated on forging bonds with contemporary artists through a greater understanding of process, medium and ethos. www.phillipsdepury.com