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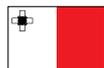
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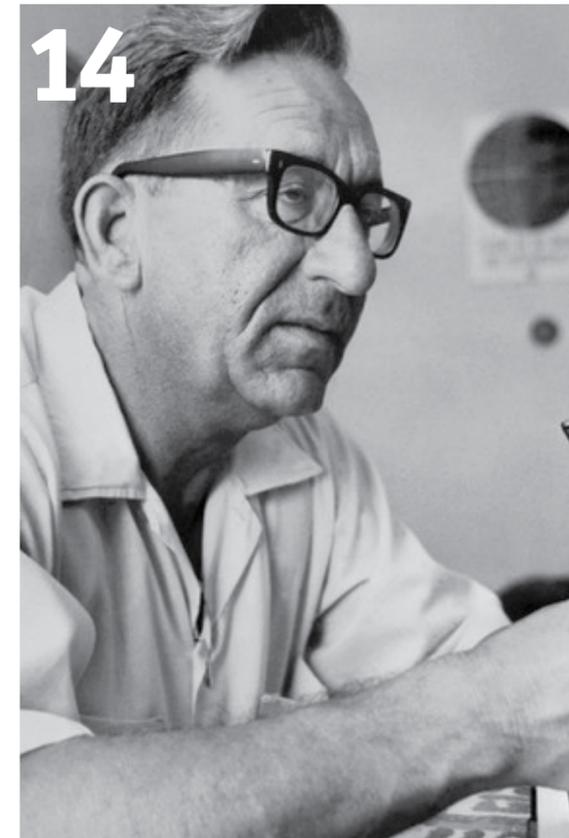
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# the Architect

"... he had wanted to engage none other than Le Corbusier as architect for buildings to replace the Mandraggio area in Valletta ..."

Richard England on Dom Mintoff (see pages 14-16)

# Valletta's dream – your dream

Malta's annals are full of milestones, and one which I am certainly looking forward to experiencing first hand is the year when Valletta will hold the title of European Capital of Culture – 2018 is marked in my mental calendar as one to be lived to the full, to celebrate the great history of our capital city and to look forward to seeing its regenerated spirit living on for decades to come.

My father's family hails from Valletta, and my childhood memories include weekly visits on Sundays to visit my grandparents in their apartment in Vincenti Buildings, the annual visit to follow the Carnival festivities in Republic Street and to enjoy *nanna's* prinjolata which she prepared religiously with the precision of a sculptor, and the mornings spent at the Upper Barrakka Garden where, I am told, I would spend hours feeding crushed biscuits to the ever-hungry pigeons. I remember going up (yes up) Old Bakery Street in my father's old Renault 6, shopping for presents with *nannu* on my birthday, and countless other snippets of memories that I still treasure. For a number of years, sadly, Valletta was practically absent from my life, until I began to work there about six years ago, and now I can say that it forms the backdrop of my days, my second home.

It is my experience and that of all who have ever lived in, worked in or merely visited Valletta that will forge the V.18 vision. All who have Valletta at heart are being asked to come forward with their ideas, thoughts and suggestions – to dream a city which belongs to all. Imagine 18!

The V.18 team worked hard in putting together Valletta's bid, and their excellent efforts have paid off. A note of congratulations to all is certainly due. However, the biggest task is yet to start – that of bringing together as many players of society as possible to work together in the creation of the biggest festival ever to hit our shores. Four central themes have been set, around which the events will focus. Among these, the one which interests me most is that titled "Cities" which seeks to foster a better understanding of our lived-in environment and of the importance of good design for Valletta and beyond. This theme will also seek to explore the debate on quality of life and the role of shared spaces in the European City.

Another theme, which is certainly no less interesting, is "Generations" – it will seek to bring together cultural practitioners and theorists, creatives and scientists, business and the arts, educators and our young people, to explore

and find routes to bridging the generational, cultural and geographic barriers to inclusion and participation in culture. "Routes" will focus on those aspects of Maltese society – such as close family ties, small urban communities and a strong culture of volunteering that anchor life on the Islands – that are remarked on by our visitors and have been noted by our young people as aspects of society to hold on to. This theme will explore ways in which these qualities might add to European-wide thinking on familial and societal change. The fourth theme is titled "Islands", and will focus on how the sea has shaped our culture, manipulated our trades and industries and influence many aspects of our lives. The events organised around this theme will promote a respect for our island environment by revisiting traditional ways of interacting with the sea and coast that use our maritime resources sustainably.

To quote Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, "I find that Malta has always been, despite its size, a fascinating laboratory for new experiences... In a sense, Malta, but especially Valletta, was then an experiment of that which would eventually bring Europe together. These experiences, in the city of Valletta but within the context of the capital of the Order were the beginning of a time of great change in Europe, from division to the rediscovery of its roots. The architecture of Valletta relates this story." And it is precisely the architecture of Valletta, its buildings, its gardens, its piazzas and streets that will provide the stage for what promises to be an unforgettable 2018.

## A note on this issue

This 60th issue of "the Architect" marks the passing away of one of Malta's most notorious periti, Dom Mintoff. Much has been said and written about the man, during his life and after his death, mainly about his political endeavours and how he marked the face of Maltese history like few others. Little, however, has been recorded about his exploits as a perit. The Editorial Team therefore felt that it would be a fitting exercise to begin to unravel this part of his life by speaking to three colleagues who worked with him and knew him well. Their reminiscences are just the tip of the iceberg, and it would be indeed an interesting task to delve further into this aspect of Perit Mintoff's life. We would therefore be happy to receive any information that may form the basis of a future publication.

**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 2012 consists of Vincent Cassar (President), Simone Vella Lenicker (Vice President and Honorary Secretary), Malcolm Gingell (Treasurer) and Council members Ruben Paul Borg, Keith Cole, Anthony Fenech Vella, Joseph Galea, Alberto Miceli Farrugia, Danica Mifsud, 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 MaltaToday newspaper. The Architect is not to be sold separately. The contents of this journal are copyright. Reproduction in part or in full is forbidden without the permission of the editor. The opinions expressed by writers of signed articles and letters appearing in the magazine are those of their respective authors, and neither the Kamra Tal-Periti nor MediaToday Co. Ltd is responsible for these opinions or statements.

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**COVER:**  
Front cover of the V.18 bid submitted to the EU Commission in September 2012. Image courtesy of the V.18 Foundation. See Editorial.

## RECYCLE YOUR SCHOOL

The Kamra tal-Periti is continuing its initiative towards introducing children to the built environment, and our role as Architects and Civil Engineers. In previous years, the scheme has aimed to work within the National Curriculum whilst emphasising project planning, draughting and design. The theme chosen for this year's program is Environmental Sustainability. In particular, sessions with the children will include energy-efficiency assessments, discussions on the regeneration of clean energy and the maximisation of spaces towards greater environmental sustainability within their school. Throughout this year, we will also be keeping a lookout for new ideas and themes that can be undertaken during the following year.

A meeting for those interested in participating in this project was held in October. Periti David Pace and Wendy-Jo Attard are co-ordinating, and anyone interested in participating is invited to contact them through info@ktpmalta.com. In addition, the programme is an excellent opportunity for advertising and sponsorship, and those interested in collaborating in this way are also invited to contact the Kamra for further details and information.

## DIN I-ART HELWA AWARDS 2012

As in previous years, *Din I-Art Helwa* requested the Kamra's participation in its Awards through the nomination of a representative to sit on its jury. The Kamra approached Perit Dr Conrad Thake, who has occupied this role in past editions, and who graciously accepted the nomination. The results of the Awards are expected to be published in November. *Din I-Art Helwa* has established a close working relationship with the Kamra tal-Periti, in encouraging and recognising the efforts of architects who seek design excellence in reviving historic buildings and spaces in a sensitive and sustainable manner that address contemporary needs and aspirations. The award scheme sends a clear message that old buildings can be successfully restored and that good contemporary architecture has an important



Children's workshop during Time for Architecture 2008 - Using waste materials to create buildings

role in enhancing the quality of our living environment. *Din I-Art Helwa* reports that a record number of ten applications for this year's Architectural Heritage Award Scheme have been received. All are of extremely high calibre showing that restoration and rehabilitation of Malta's old buildings has become a thriving concern for the island.

## ACE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Executive Board of the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) consists of 11 members, six of whom are elected and five of whom are nominated on a rotational basis in accordance with the rotation of the Presidency of the EU. Among the six elected members is the President of the ACE who chairs meetings of the general Assembly and of the Executive Board and who acts impartially of all national concerns during his two years mandate. It is Malta's turn to nominate a representative to occupy one of the rotational posts; Perit Vincent Cassar, current President of the Kamra, expressed interest in occupying this role, and the Council unanimously supported his nomination. Elections are due to take place at the end of November. The Executive Board manages and administers the day-to-day affairs of the ACE and pursues the policies

tory 2.75m, now considered adequate? While it is of the utmost importance to note that the concessions do not, in any way, sanction any development which does not conform to the legal requirements, it is indeed worrying that the Authorities felt that it was acceptable to grant such concessions regardless. In addition, the Kamra expressed its opinion that the current suite of Sanitary Regulations needs urgent review, and called upon those concerned to commence a comprehensive study that would lead to a much needed overhaul that would take into account modern building methods and technologies. Meanwhile, the Kamra has had regular meetings with MEPA in order to ameliorate the application process relating to such concessions. Any comments and suggestions on this topic are welcome; these may be forwarded to the Kamra on info@ktpmalta.com.

## DAILY FINES AND PENALTIES

Also in August, MEPA published two Legal Notices dealing with Daily Fines and Penalties (Legal Notices 276 and 277 of 2012 respectively). These Regulations aim to assist the MEPA in clamping down further on illegal development. In a statement carried in MEPA's newsletter "Outlook," Honorary Secretary Perit Simone Vella Lenicker noted that, "When the draft legal notices were issued for public consultation in January 2011, the Kamra tal-Periti had expressed grave concerns over the fact that these were ambiguous and left much to be desired. The legal notices as published are certainly an improvement on the drafts, and the Kamra notes with satisfaction that a number of its comments and proposals have been taken on board. The imposition of daily fines and penalties on illegal development is expected to serve as an important deterrent, particularly when one considers the amounts that will be imposed. The pegging of the penalties with the Development Permission Fees (DPF) paid, for instance, means that the fines due will be in excess of the DPF, thus making it more sensible for one to apply for development through the normal procedures. The main hurdle in the successful implementation of the provisions of the regulations will be the detection of the illegalities by MEPA's enforcement staff."

set out by the General Assembly.

## HOW BIG IS YOUR YARD?

Legal Notice 229 of 2012, published last August, stipulated a number of instances where illegal development may be granted a concession through an apposite application to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA). These instances relate primarily to situations where certain aspects of Sanitary Legislation were not abided by. In a statement to the press, the Kamra tal-Periti expressed its concern at the way in which this legislation was enacted. Although it did not object to the introduction of these concession, it felt the need to draw the attention of the General Services Board that, in its own words, the Board has established that "dwellings which have an internal or back yard less than half the size of what it should have otherwise been will not be acceptable as they pose a public health risk." By this statement the Board may be interpreted as establishing the principle that the minimum acceptable size for an internal yard or backyard which does not pose a health risk is half that which was acceptable to date. Moreover, is an internal floor to ceiling height of 2.6m, as against the statu-

**60TH ANNIVERSARY**

In October 1952, 25 students graduated as Bachelors of Engineering & Architecture from the Royal University of Malta. This was the first post-war course, and commenced with 45 students of which 25 eventually graduated, the highest number ever to do so, a number which remained a record for some 40 years.

**NEW POST-GRADUATE COURSES**

In the coming February, the recently established Spatial Planning and Infrastructure (SPI) Unit within the Faculty for the Built Environment of the University of Malta will be offering two part-time post-graduate courses leading to the professional degree of Master of Spatial Planning (MSP) and the policy oriented degree of Master of Science in Sustainable Infrastructure (MSc).

The MSP course, which will have a duration of four years, has been designed along the lines recommended by the Royal Town Planning Institute and with reference to the planning education framework of the European Council of Spatial Planning. The Council is currently working towards the recognition across Europe of spatial planning as a distinct profession. As is well known, the status of spatial planning varies substantially from country to country, with the profession being very well established in countries such as UK and the Netherlands, and relatively weak in others. Indeed, the Royal Town Planning Institute, which is perhaps the largest organisation of its type is offering its advisory services in order to ensure that spatial planning courses offered in EU Member States (among others) enjoy the type of recognition which is currently afforded to a limited number of planning education programmes.

During the course the students shall be expected to develop the ability to practice spatial planning at local, regional, national, and transnational levels, normally as leaders and/or coordinators of multi-disciplinary teams entrusted with the formulation and realisation of plans and policies, which according to the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter, give "... geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological



Course of Architecture and Civil Engineering 1945-52:

Top row: Joseph Boffa, Michael Attard, Edwin Abela, Emanuel Agius, Anthony Borg  
Second row: Louis Busuttill, Maurice Captur, Francis X Spiteri, Edward Camilleri, Andr  Zammit, Carmel Bonello, Joseph Borg Costanzi, Louis Naudi, Joseph Mercieca  
Third row: Joseph Perici, Arthur Cutugno, Godfrey Azzopardi, Julian Calleja, Edgar Caruana Montaldo, Joseph Genovese, Leonard Mahoney, George Muscat Fenech, Victor Calleja, Edward Overend (lab assistant)  
Sitting: Joseph Cachia Fearnie, Prof Carmel Coleiro, Prof Victor Galea, Prof Joe Terreni, Prof Joseph Manch , Prof Joe Colombo, Prof George Fenech, Michael Ellul  
(Image reproduced from "Our Architects" by Perit Andr  Zammit, with the author's permission)

policies of societies."

The MSc course focuses on the concepts relating to the development of a sustainable infrastructure equipping learners with tools that ensure that proposals related to infrastructural developments are assessed to factor sustainability issues. The classic pillars related to the social, economic and environmental aspects and how these relate to the urban and built environment and the infrastructure to serve it, will underpin the background for the development of good policies in the field of sustainable infrastructure as well as how to assess the sustainability of policies which are being proposed in particular sectors to ensure that these contribute towards national and European targets. These will be complemented by horizontal issues related to governance, indicators and impact assessment together with statistics and research methodology. The course will also refer to the vertical disciplines in order to present different facets of a country's infrastructure. These include water and waste management, transport and energy, land and buildings and the rural dimension. These will be coupled by modules on climate change and quantitative and qualitative techniques for public policy.

The full descriptions of these two courses can be viewed at: [www.um.edu.mt/ben/spatialplan](http://www.um.edu.mt/ben/spatialplan).

**RIBA GOLD MEDAL 2013**

The Swiss architect Peter Zumthor has been named as the recipient of the Royal Gold Medal. He will be presented with the Medal in February at a ceremony at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London, during which the 2012 RIBA International and Honorary Fellowships will also be presented. Known for running a small yet powerful and uncompromising practice, Peter Zumthor founded his own firm in 1979 in Switzerland.



Peter Zumthor - Copyright Atelier

His projects include the Kunsthau Bregenz in Austria, the Therme Vals (thermal baths) in Vals, Switzerland, and the Kolumba Art Museum in Cologne. He designed the 2011 Serpentine Pavilion and is currently designing a house in Devon for Alain de Botton's Living Architecture scheme. He is exceptionally talented at creating highly atmospheric spaces through his mastery of light and choice of materials. Zumthor's buildings, such as his small rural chapels and the Thermal Baths at Vals, are an experience for all the senses, with every detail reinforcing the essence of the building and its surroundings.

Given in recognition of a lifetime's work, the Royal Gold Medal is approved personally by Her Majesty the Queen and is given to a person or group of people who have had a significant influence 'either directly or indirectly on the advancement of architecture'. RIBA President Angela Brady, who chaired the Honours Committee that selected the Royal Gold medal winner, said, "Peter Zumthor's work renews the link with a tradition of modern architecture that emphasises place, community and material practice. His writings dwell upon the experience of designing, building and inhabitation while his buildings are engaged in a rich dialogue with architectural history. I will be delighted to present him with the Royal Gold Medal." This year's RIBA Honours Committee was chaired by RIBA President Angela Brady with architects Peter Clegg, Yvonne Farrell, Professor Adrian Forty, Niall McLaughlin and Sarah Wigglesworth.

Source: [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

**MIES VAN DER ROHE AWARD 2013**

As in previous years, the *Kamra tal-Periti* was invited to nominate five projects for consideration by the jury of the Mies van der Rohe Award, the principal objectives of which are to recognise and commend excellence in the field of architecture and to draw attention to the important contribution of European professionals in the development of new concepts and technologies. The Prize also sets out to promote the profession by encouraging architects working throughout the entire European Union and by supporting young architects as they set off on their careers. The *Kamra* issued a call for local professionals to submit their projects for consideration, and received five responses – all five were, in fact, nominated, and it is now in the hands of the international jury to assess these projects



TreeHouse by Perit Monica Audrey Galea, in collaboration with Perit Anthony Galea. Photo: Homeworks



Aragon House by BCS Periti. Photo: Perit Ivan Pace

along with all the other nominated works, and to make a selection of shortlisted and finalist works.

One of the projects nominated by the *Kamra* was "TreeHouse" – a residential adaptive reuse project by Perit Monica Audrey Galea, in collaboration with Perit Anthony Galea. TreeHouse represents the timeless expression of Maltese contemporary residential values. By challenging the traditional concept of the dwelling and reinterpreting the role of local techniques and materials, the design explores sustainable adaptive reuse in a dynamic context. The fluidity of space is expressed horizontally in the open plan layout and vertically via the stairwells that flow through and fold in on the various levels, creating a vibrant backdrop to the lifestyle of the residents.

Aragon House Business Centre was submitted by BCS Periti – this business centre was constructed as a structural steel frame with composite concrete floor slabs, providing maximum planning flexibility. It can cater for a range of layouts having lettable areas from 90sqm to 1,100sqm. Emphasis was made on achieving a high energy rating through technical innovation, high quality materials, low



Hanging House by Chris Briffa Architects. Photo: David Pisani

emissivity selective glazing incorporating the latest aluminium fa ade systems, and energy efficient building services controlled by a building management system.

Another of the nominated works is "Hanging Home" by Chris Briffa Architects. This home is a good example of what the typical mid-

**SUSTAINABILITY SNAPS**

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

**SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN MALTA**

The Institute for Sustainable Development is organising its first national conference entitled Sustainable Mobility in Malta: Transport Research in Practice. The conference will be held at SmartCity Malta in Ricasoli on the 30th November 2012.

Malta has unique characteristics that stem from its geography and size, population, industries and culture. In the transport sector Malta leads with high levels

of private car ownership, a growing cruise liner industry, a geo-strategic freight hub and a growing air transport sector supporting increasing tourism travel.

These are putting substantial strain on the sustainability of the islands, particularly the levels of congestion on the roads inhibiting movement and effecting economic growth, the environmental impacts of air pollution affecting the islands' air quality, tourism product and public health, and the need for better infrastructure to support growing industries.

Although a considerable body of literature exists in the areas of land, air and sea transport in and around urban areas, there is very little that deals with such concerns in small islands. For further information, visit the conference website on [www.um.edu.mt/isd/](http://www.um.edu.mt/isd/) or contact the organisers on [isd@um.edu.mt](mailto:isd@um.edu.mt).

**LET'S SPEAK SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION**

In response to the need for more sustainable construction, new concepts, phrases, terms and expressions are being used in the construction industry across Europe. These concepts are aimed at improving the environmental, social and economic impact of the industry and its outputs. From Air Source Heat Pumps to Net Zero Carbon Buildings; from Whole Life Costing to Photovoltaic Electricity; from Recycled Resources to Passive House; it is important that the industry reaches a common understanding of these terms – to speak a common language for sustainable construction – in order to provide a base for harmonised development in the future.

The European Concrete Platform working together with the Architects Council of Europe believed it valuable to gather together these terms and establish a 'working' glossary of the concepts currently in use in a concise, easily accessible form. This can then be used to disseminate information about sustainable construction more widely across the industry. The glossary is designed to provide ready access – with guidance on:

- A definition
- Its relevance to sustainable construction
- Where examples can be found (preferably with links to websites)
- Where more detailed information can be found (preferably with links to websites)

It is divided into sections based on the construction process – from concept, through design and construction to facilities management; and includes groupings around energy efficiency in buildings and systems.

The multilingual guide may be downloaded from:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/eesc-2011-01-en-fr-de-es.pdf>.



The double-helix timber staircase at St Barbara's Bastion. Photo: David Pisani

dle-class suburbia of Malta could look like. The demanding nature of the brief, coupled with strict zoning regulations required that the architect had to very much push the envelope of his own creative and technical abilities. It is ironically these same regulations (which may have made the plot unsuitable for a family of this size) which presented a spacious and elegant solution.

Quantum House, another of the nominated projects, was designed by Perit Dr Pierre Farrugia in collaboration with Mr Maik Metz. It is designed as an energy efficient and sustainable building. The materials and components of the building are designed and detailed to incorporate passive and active systems. Meticulous detailing involving the combination of insulation systems, aerated concrete and aerated blockwork, insulation materials, thermally efficient curtain glass façade, ventilated spaces, water cooling and PV systems, are used to reduce energy consumption for heating, cooling and lighting to a minimum.

Architecture Project's submission for this edition of the Award consisted of an office at St Barbara's Bastion in Valletta. The brief involved the re-use and conversion of an old house to cater for a residential apartment on top, and two offices on the floors below. Planning regulations stipulate separate entrances for residences and offices - a solution was found in the design of a double-helical staircase in the centre of the building. This added a new and unique identity to the property: a sensation of walking through a giant tree bark, with an

element of playful hide-and-seek between one staircase and the other.

#### GARDMED

The Malta Launch of the project GARDMED by the Hon. Mario De Marco, Minister for Tourism, the Environment and Culture was held on the 2 October at Argotti Botanical Gardens in Floriana. GARDMED, under the Italia-Malta 2007-2013 Operational Programme, aims to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of gardens, by highlighting and promoting these heritage assets. This will be done through the establishment of a network of Mediterranean



Palazzo Parisio, one of the gardens participating in the project



3D render (by WH Works Ltd) of Quantum House designed by Perit Dr Pierre Farrugia

gardens. It currently incorporates gardens from Malta and Sicily. GARDMED is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and has four partners: University of Catania, University of Malta, Floriana Local Council and the Municipality of Syracuse. The representative local partners are University of Malta with Argotti Botanical Gardens; Floriana Local Council with The Mall Gardens and King George V Recreational Grounds; Zejtun Local Council with Tal-Kmandant Gardens; The President's Kitchen Garden and Villa Bologna in Attard; and Palazzo Parisio in Naxxar.

Anna Guglielmo, Director of the Orto Botanico

in Catania, said during the launch in Malta, "The coming two months will see us reach many important milestones: we will take delivery of the GARDMED Garden Sustainability Manual which is currently being developed by Maltese and Italian experts to assist our gardens understand and prioritise the works necessary to make their gardens long-term sustainable; we will complete our work on a marketing plan for the gardens of the network and on the creation of a website that will boost the creation of our virtual community. We also aim to include, as soon as possible, gardens from other countries in the Mediterranean: Greece, Spain, Morocco, Tunisia, with which we are already in contact. The first stage of the project will be completed in early April 2013. The final output of this formative stage will be presented at a large conference in Siracusa, early next spring. At the conference we intend to illustrate the roadmap for the future of GARDMED and its international community, including the legal structure that will host the gardens and that will be responsible for promoting and developing the GARDMED future. This legal structure is currently being developed for us by Maltese legal experts now."

#### IN MEMORIAM

Two members of the profession sadly passed away, within a day of each other. The 20 August 2012 saw the demise at the venerable age of 96 of Perit Dom Mintoff, known more for his political than for his professional career. In this issue of "the Architect" we interviewed some

of his fellow periti who worked closely with him (see page 14). Just a day later, on the 21 August 2012, Perit Godwin Drago passed away at the age of 88. Perit Drago was director of Public Works between 1974 and 1979, when he was in charge of the transformation of the old hospital of the Order of the Knights of St John and the adjacent derelict yard in Valletta into the Mediterranean Conference Centre, and director of Public Works from 1980 to 1985. On behalf of the Council of the *Kamra tal-Periti* and its members, the Editorial Team would like to extend its condolences to their families and friends.

#### WORLD ARCHITECTURE FESTIVAL 2012

Cooled Conservatories at Gardens by the Bay, Singapore, has won the World Building of the Year Award at the prestigious World Architecture Festival (WAF) Awards 2012. The project was designed by Wilkinson Eyre, Grant Associates, Atelier One and Atelier Ten. Chosen from over 500 entries on display at this year's festival, the event was the most well attended since it began in 2008, with over 2000 architects and designers present. Located in Marina Bay, Gardens by the Bay is a key project in delivering the Singapore



Gardens By The Bay

Government's vision of transforming Singapore into a 'City in a Garden'. At a total of 101 hectares, the Gardens by the Bay project comprises three distinct waterfront gardens - Bay South, Bay East and Bay Central. Sitting in the heart of Bay South Garden, the Cooled Conservatory Complex provides a spectacular, all-weather attraction, comprising a 1.28 hectare cool dry conservatory (the 'Flower Dome') and a 0.73 hectare cool moist conservatory (the 'Cloud Forest'). Each has its own distinct character, but both explore the horticulture of those environments most likely to be affected by climate change.

Both conservatories have a dual system structure of gridshell and arches to permit as much light as possible through to the planted displays within. The gridshell portion is very fragile and is designed to only support its own weight and the weight of the glass. Wind loads are resisted by the arches that are set away from the surface of the envelope and arranged radially in line with the geometry of the gridshell. The commission to design the 54 hectare Bay South garden was won in 2006 by a team led by Grant Associates, including Wilkinson Eyre Architects, Atelier One, Atelier Ten, Land Design and Davis Langdon and Seah. Wilkinson Eyre Architects developed the Cooled Conservatories.

Speaking on behalf of the festival's super-jury Paul Finch, WAF Programme Director, said: "This project was a fine and deserved winner, especially as it was an immensely collaborative effort. It features a series of radical and technical examinations, comprising

some truly experimental aspects and lines of enquiry that will be immensely useful to the profession."

This is the 5th year the World Architecture Festival Awards have been presented. Previous winners of the World Building of the Year Award include Luigi Bocconi University, Milan, designed by Irish practice Grafton Architects (2008), Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre in South Africa, designed by Peter Rich Architects of Johannesburg (2009), MAXXI (National Museum of the 21st Century Arts) in Rome, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects (2010), and the Media-TIC building in Barcelona, designed by Cloud 9 (2011).

#### NEW WARRANTS

Warrants were awarded to 8 new periti earlier this year, namely, Wendy-Jo Attard, Bernard Brincat, Marcia Calleja Haber, Carmelo Ebejer, Martin Peter Grech, Raymond Said, Rachelle Spiteri and Manuel Zammit. Congratulations to all, and best wishes in your career!

#### NEW COMMISSIONER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

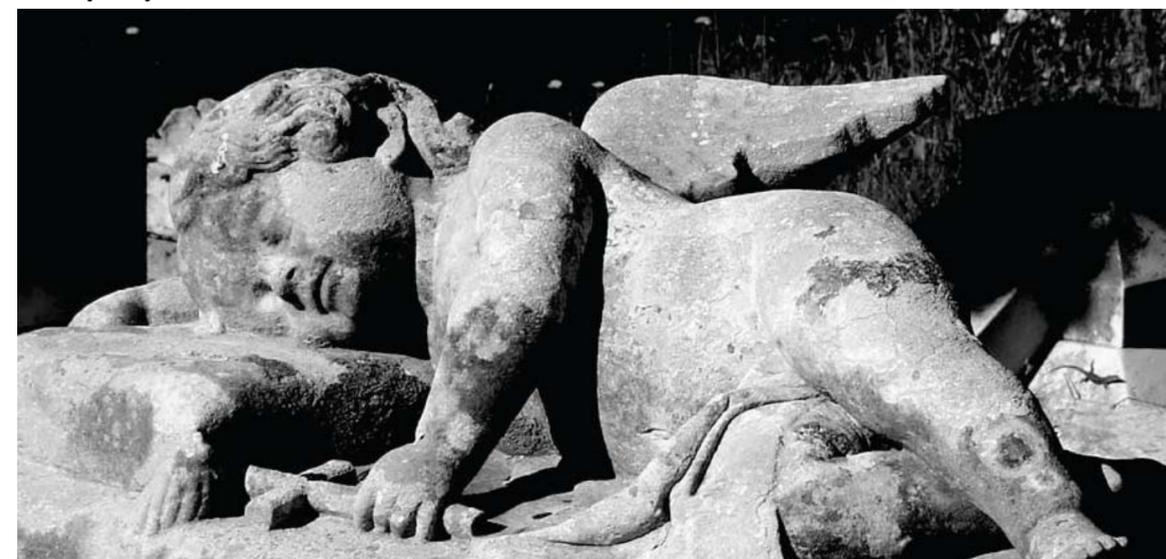
Perit David Pace was appointed as the new Commissioner for the Environment within the Ombudsman's office. Perit Pace is well known among the profession, having occupied a number of roles within the *Kamra tal-Periti*, including that of President, for a number of years. On behalf of all members of the *Kamra*, the Editorial Team would like to extend its congratulations to Perit Pace and to augur him well in this new role.

#### ARCHITECTURE FOR THE AFTERLIFE

The Department History of Art, University of Malta, is organising a conference on the subject of funerary architecture in Malta during the 19th century. The conference will be held at the church of Sta Caterina d'Italia, Valletta on Wednesday 7th November 2012 at 6.00pm. Speakers will include Prof Keith Sciberras, Dr Conrad Thake, Janica Buhagiar, Mario R. Borg, Matthew Gauci and Prof Richard England.

#### Letters to the Editor

Letters from our readers to be considered for publication are most welcome. Letters for inclusion in Issue 61 are to reach us by the 15th December 2012. 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](mailto:thearchitect@ktpmalta.com). All contributions will be acknowledged.



Architecture for the after-life; Funerary Architecture in Malta during the 19th century



# ACE – working at the heart of the EU

THE ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE, OF WHICH THE KAMRA TAL-PERITI IS AN ACTIVE MEMBER, HAS BEEN WORKING HARD AT EU LEVEL ON A NUMBER OF ASPECTS OF THE PROFESSION AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, CONTINUING IN ITS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A MORE SUSTAINABLE AND MORE PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT WITHIN WHICH ARCHITECTS CAN ACHIEVE BETTER QUALITY PROJECTS. HERE, "THE ARCHITECT" TAKES A LOOK AT SOME OF THE ASPECTS OF ACE'S INVOLVEMENT OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS.

## CONSTRUCTION 2020

ACE recently welcomed the new EU Strategy to promote the Construction Sector as a driving force for the creation of jobs and sustainable growth in Europe. On 31 July 2012, the Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship, Antonio Tajani, presented the five key objectives of this plan, which are:

- stimulating favourable investment conditions;
- improving the human-capital basis of the construction sector;
- improving resource efficiency, environmental performance and business opportunities;
- strengthening the internal market for construction;
- fostering the global competitive position of European construction enterprises.

Building regulations and public investment have a major influence on the sector in terms of cyclical stabilisation of macro-economic trends. Furthermore, the construction sector is affected to a large extent by other legislation concerning the protection of the environment, energy efficiency, safety at work, social security, VAT, liability regimes, public procurement, etc. At the same time, the competitiveness of the construction sector depends on:

- the commitment of the market operators towards a better quality policy;
- sustainability development objectives;
- research and innovation activities;
- improved skills and qualifications of its workforce and management.

The European Commission, in partnership with the industry and the Member States, aims at developing an ongoing competitiveness strategy about the response of the construction sector to major European and international challenges of the future: the globalisation of the markets, economic and employment growth, energy and climate change, the

protection of the environment, demographic changes, social cohesion, and safety and health of the citizens, among other criteria. The European Commission Action Plan can be viewed at Link 1 below. This link contains a country by country status report, including an overview of the Maltese situation.

## PUBLIC PROCUREMENT DIRECTIVE

ACE recently submitted draft amendments in response to the proposed modernisation of the Public Procurement Directive. While welcoming the Commission's decision to modernise the Directive, ensure efficient use of public funds, improve the business environment and generally increase SME access to the market, ACE reiterated the fact that current access to public contracts for architects is virtually non-existent. An ACE study of professional practice reveals that the application of turnover requirements would exclude 90% of architectural firms from public procurement contracts. As a consequence, the ACE submission seeks to facilitate participation of architectural firms (mostly SMEs) in public procurement, promote selection procedures and award criteria based on quality and ensure that the specific nature of intellectual services is taken into account. If adopted on 10 October 2012, the Directive will have to be implemented by Member States by 30 June 2014 latest. To download the ACE submission to Marc Tarabella, the European Parliament Rapporteur, go to Link 2 below.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY DIRECTIVE

Late on 13 June 2012, all three European legislative bodies reached a last minute agreement on the Energy Efficiency Directive. Shepherded by the Danish Presidency of the Council of Ministers, negotiations between MEPs and Member States were tense and new additional exemptions and measures had to be added late in order to save the deal. Unfortunately, given the manner in which it was agreed,



many observers fear that Europe will not meet its pledge to reduce energy consumption by 20% by 2020. In fact, most of the European Commission's ambitious proposals for immediate binding national targets have been erased. In particular, the Directive has abandoned the proposal on public building renovation requirements (article 4), which called for 3% renovation of the total floor area (over 250sqm) of buildings owned by public bodies each year. Instead the new Directive would require Member States to renovate 3% of the total floor area of heated and/or cooled buildings owned and occupied by their central government and would only apply to buildings with a total useable floor area of more than 500sqm. As a result, the provision will only affect a small percentage of all public buildings (10%), which is considerably below initial expectations. Nevertheless, to offset the watering down of the renovation of public buildings proposal, the European Parliament introduced a promising measure in article 3a of the Directive, requesting EU Member States to draw up a roadmap to make the entire building sector more energy efficient by 2050. This long-term strategy for the renovation of the entire building stock should be finalised by April 2014 and give new hope to the construction sector. On 12 July 2012, Parliament's ITRE Committee adopted unanimously the EED deal. To download the ACE Position on EED, go to Link 3 below.

## SCOPE OF SERVICES (SOS)

One of the Work Groups set up by ACE was

established in 2010 to examine the scope of services generally offered by architects in each of the Member States of the European Union and draw conclusions from that information. To determine the current state of play in Europe, the Work Group launched a survey asking for detailed replies from Member Organisations. The answers have been analysed during summer and the summary will be presented at the ACE second General Assembly at the end of November 2012. In the coming months, the Scopes of Services Work Group will organise a joint meeting with Liability and Insurance Work Group in order to explore future steps towards developing a common core liability and insurance policy based on the scope of services survey results.

## LINKS

Link 1 - [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/construction/competitiveness/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/construction/competitiveness/index_en.htm)

Link 2 - [http://www.acecae.eu/public/contents/getdocument/content\\_id/1393](http://www.acecae.eu/public/contents/getdocument/content_id/1393)

Link 3 - [http://www.ace-cae.eu/public/contents/getdocument/content\\_id/1415](http://www.ace-cae.eu/public/contents/getdocument/content_id/1415)

## ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE GENERAL INFORMATION

The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) was founded in Treviso (Italy) on the 11th May 1990 by the merger of the former Liaison Committee of the Architects of the United Europe (CLAEU) and the former Council of European Architects (CEA). Since then its governance has steadily evolved in order to achieve its aims and objectives.



# Kick-Starting Academic 2012

SACES started the academic year 2012 of with yet another successful exhibition displaying the blood, sweat and tears of architecture students presenting their work of the previous year. For the second year running, SACES are proud that their exhibition was a part of what is becoming a wonderful yearly tradition: Notte Bianca. This year's exhibition 'Work in Progress' was held at the General Workers Union, Gallerija Libertà in Valletta.

The exhibition strived to show not only the final product that an architecture student creates but also the thinking process that the students must go through. From preliminary sketches, site analysis, concept design to refined plans and models; irrespective whether a first or final year student, there is always a process. Held on the 29th of September, the opening of the exhibition was a great success with a mixed crowd of viewers ranging from architects and architecture students to Ministers and people who simply stumbled upon the event while enjoying *Notte Bianca: Lejl lmdawwal*.

SACES's biggest yearly event is now just around the corner. Every year around 100 architecture students spend a weekend roughing it out in a remarkable location



in Malta. In the past, workshop locations have included Bighi, L'Ospizio, Manoel Island, Hal Ferh and many more. SACES strives to choose locations with both historical value and architectural interest. The students, guided by professional architects, spend the workshop brainstorming, creating and constructing an installation according to a given theme. These will then be presented on the last day of the workshop. This year's workshop is being held at



the amazing Fort Ricasoli in Kalkara from the 2nd to the 4th November. This magnificent Fort, built by the Knights to protect the Grand Harbour, was active in the defence of Malta from its construction up to the Second World War. In light of this, the theme of the workshop is about defence and rebuilding after an attack, however with the recent hype about 2012 seeing the end of the world SACES felt



it was only appropriate to somehow rope this in with the theme.

Therefore this year's workshop, 'Fort Ricasoli: The Epilogue', urges the participants to imagine our final chapter of the world as we know it and to envision both how we will defend ourselves from what might be coming and what we will do once this has come. To treat architecture as a defence mechanism or a building block, to imagine, create and design for before or after The Apocalypse. After the workshop SACES looks forward to a number of activities such as the continuation of the Archibabble talks as well as Eco Week, the Easter Workshop, architecture get-togethers and so much more!

Visit us on [www.sacesmalta.org](http://www.sacesmalta.org)



# HERITAGE IN PERIL - A TALE OF TWO BUILDINGS

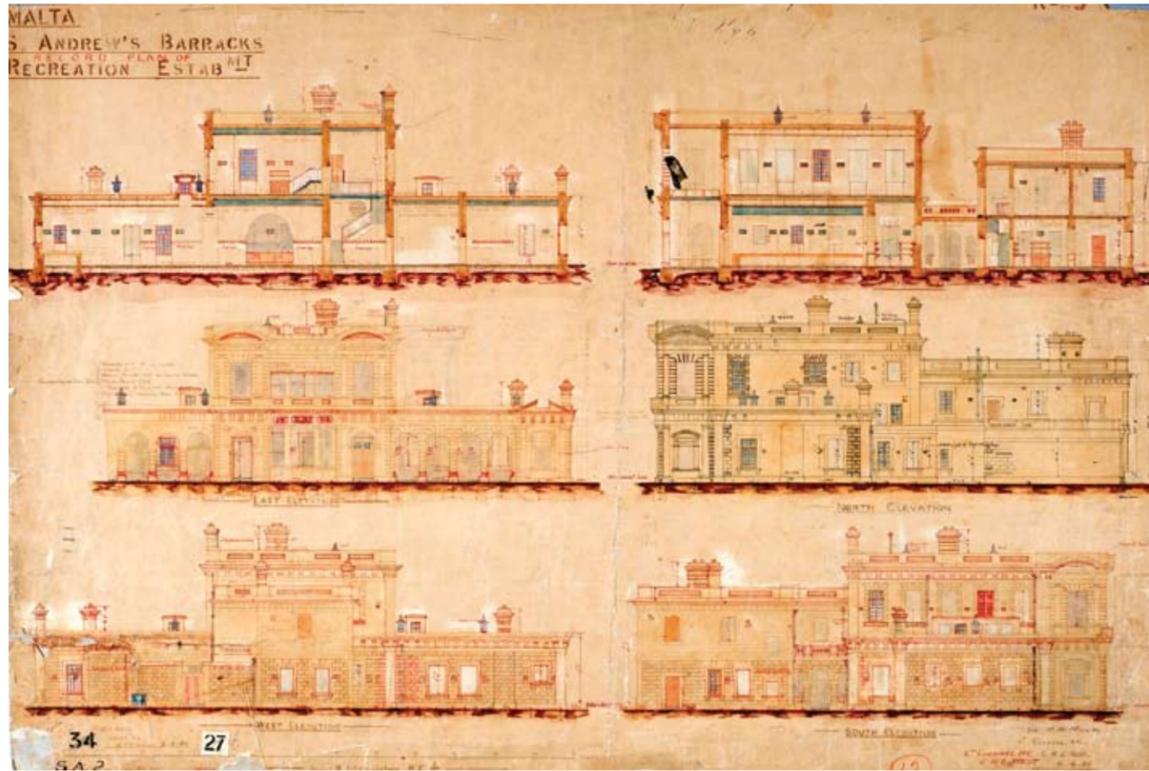
HERITAGE IN PERIL

HERITAGE IN PERIL

BY PERIT DR CONRAD THAKE

This is the story of two colonial-period buildings in St Andrew's, Pembroke, designed and constructed by the British military authorities during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Recreation Establishment building, better known as the ex-Raffles building, and the former Australia Hall, were both conceived to cater for the social and communal needs of military personnel stationed in St Andrew's barracks. They were certainly not spectacular from an architectural point of view but were dignified and imposing buildings, primarily utilitarian in their external appearance. Both buildings exuded the spirit of rigour, discipline and attention to building construction detail - all hallmarks emanating from the drawing office of the Royal Engineers. For several decades they served their purpose well, as vintage photographs testify.

During the course of my research at the drawings section of the National Archives at Santo Spirito, I came across a hand-drafted drawing of the Recreation Establishment which delineated in meticulous detail all the floor plans, elevations and sections. The bottom right-hand corner of the drawing bears the signature of the Royal Engineer Lt Col. C.R.E. West and is dated 1901. The level of detailing specifying precise dimensions, building materials and services is impeccable. Chimney flues, rainwater drain pipes, staircase balustrading, soffits and ventilators



Recreational establishment - hand-drafted drawing by Royal Engineer Lt Col. C.R.E. West

are drawn to the minutest detail. The building was efficiently constructed as per plans within a year, as the date 1902 incised in the stone pediment over the main entrance porch proudly testifies.

Fast forward to the early 1980s when following the closure of the British military base, the building was converted to a discotheque and nightclub, popularly known as Raffles. This was the era of glamour pop and disco

music, as patrons swung their hips on the dance floor gyrating to the tunes of John Travolta's Grease and Saturday Night Fever. I even recall one particular evening when the guest of honour was the former British pop singer and model of The Sun page 3 fame, Samantha Fox. What a transformation from the recreational clubhouse of British soldiers and officers to Samantha Fox being ogled by hordes of young men as she sang her number one hit "Touch Me (I Want Your Body)". One fateful night in the late-eighties it all went up in flames.

For the past two decades the building has lain in a derelict state, targeted by arsonists, graffiti vandals, drug pushers and squatters. Parts of its roofs have caved in and collapsed, walls blackened by soot and covered with graffiti, and broken stone slabs, glass and syringes strewn all over the floor. It is a pitiful carcass of a once dignified building that has



Australia Hall interior



Australia Hall was built in 1915 by the Australian Branch of the Red Cross



The Recreational Establishment today

been totally abandoned and purged from our collective historic memory and responsibility. Apparently the building, together with Australia Hall, had been granted on perpetual emphyteusis to the Labour Party and is currently the subject of a protracted and complex litigation case in court. In the meantime MEPA have scheduled the building as a Grade 2 building but given its current pitiful state I cannot comprehend how the building is being actively protected. Various parliamentary questions and official statements have not been particularly revealing as to when one can realistically expect a breakthrough to this impasse.

In the meantime, literally a few metres away, a similar historic building which used to serve as the Canteen building of the British services has been rehabilitated and is currently used by the Luxol Sports Club as a combined restaurant/bar and administrative offices. The ex-Raffles building is crying out to be restored and rehabilitated to a use which would serve the needs of the local community. This begs the question as to how long all parties involved will continue to close a Nelson's eye to this shambolic situation.

The former Australia Hall has also suffered a similar fate to the Ex-Raffles building. During World War I (1914-1918), Malta had a special role to play as a nursing station within the Mediterranean where several hospitals and convalescent camps were set up to tend to the casualties of the war. Australia Hall was built in 1915 by the Australian Branch of the Red Cross who raised funds to finance a com-

binated recreation centre/theatre building that would serve to entertain wounded soldiers belonging to the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC). In its heyday the hall could accommodate up to two thousand men as stage productions, dances, and other forms of recreation were regularly held there. Later a library and reading room were introduced and around 1921 a projection room was added to the structure so that the hall could also be used as a cinema. When the British military facilities in St Andrew's Barracks were closed down in 1978, it was returned to the Maltese government and transferred to the Labour Party in exchange for other property.

In December 1998, an arson fire gutted the hall's entire roofing system of metal trusses and sheeting. Only the external masonry shell has survived. Today the roofless carcass of the building is subject to the natural elements and vandals have left their marks on what remains of the building.

The Ex-Raffles building and former Australia Hall were important landmarks in the military camp of St Andrew's. Not all colonial buildings in Pembroke have met this fate. The former soldiers' barracks accommodation just down the road from Australia Hall has been restored and converted into an English language school for foreign students and an

IT educational facility. They are thriving environments which are relevant to the needs of contemporary society.

Public consciousness and awareness of the need to safeguard our historic architectural heritage has increased notably in recent times. However, I suspect that our appreciation for buildings and structures dating to the time of the Order of St John is distinctly greater than that of British colonial architecture, this being even more so in the case of military architecture. British military buildings and complexes have explicit political associations loaded with the trappings of colonial rule. In asserting our identity as an independent island-state we appear to have unconsciously rejected the legacy of our former colonial masters. In this regard it is fitting to acknowledge the contribution made by the NGO *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna* under the dynamic stewardship of Mario Farrugia in appropriating and embracing colonial military architecture as an integral part of our heritage - Fort Rinella being the flagship project that has challenged and subverted the trend of expunging such buildings from our collective memory. One hopes that this new consciousness also permeates the Pembroke scene. Hopefully, the two highlighted buildings will rise phoenix-like from the ashes.



Australia Hall today



# IL-PERIT

THE USE OF THE TITLE “IL-PERIT” IS ONE THAT MOST MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSION ARE FAMILIAR WITH WHEN USED IN THEIR REGARD. HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE PERSON FOR WHOM THIS TITLE WAS USED BY ALL AND SUNDRY.

IL-PERIT, DOM MINTOFF. BORN IN BORMLA IN 1916, HE GRADUATED AS AN ARCHITECT AND CIVIL ENGINEER IN 1937. HE WAS FIRST ELECTED TO PUBLIC OFFICE IN 1945 TO THE GOVERNMENT COUNCIL AND WENT ON TO BECOME ONE OF MALTA'S MORE NOTORIOUS PRIME MINISTERS. HIS PASSING AWAY LAST AUGUST BROUGHT ON A MYRIAD OF REACTIONS AND COUNTLESS ANECDOTES RECOUNTED BY THOSE WHO KNEW HIM AND WORKED WITH HIM. FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS HE HELD THE DUBIOUS HONOUR OF BEING THE MOST SENIOR LIVING PERIT IN MALTA; HIS WARRANT NUMBER, 006. THE EDITORIAL TEAM FELT THAT IT WOULD BE A FITTING TRIBUTE TO ASK SOME FELLOW PERITI TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND MEMORIES OF DOM MINTOFF WITH OUR READERS.



Perit Dom Mintoff, the Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction, looking at the plans for new buildings in Cospicua in 1947. (Photo published in “Too Early For Freedom” by Dennis Sammut).

## ON HAVING THE LAST WORD

BY PERIT VINCENT CASSAR

The first time I met Perit Dom Mintoff was some time in mid 1974 while I was a Junior Architect employed at the Works Department, responsible for Schools and Hospitals in Malta and Gozo. It was at a meeting at his office at the Auberge de Castille, when I had accompanied the then Chief Government Medical Officer, the late Dr Alfred Grech, in order to discuss development plans for the three major hospitals (St Luke's, St Vincent de Paule, and Mount Carmel). I can still remember Dr Grech's words whilst walking up Merchants Street on our way to the Auberge de Castille: “This is going to be your baptism of fire!” Since then my connection with *il-Perit* was a constant one. I must say that he took a liking to me and that he was always receptive to what I had to say, even though at times our relationship went a bit sour. However, looking back I can say that it was a wonderful experience to work with him. Although he always wanted to have his way on all matters of design, it must be said that I always managed to have my say, and at the end

of day also managed to reach a suitable compromise.

My dealings with him were not related only to hospitals but involved also schools, housing, the conversion of properties taken over from the British Services, the Marsa Power Station, the Marsaxlokk Container Terminal, the Fort Chambray Development and the controversial development of Fort Saint Angelo.

I would spend hours on end in meetings with him. His working hours were not very obliging. One had to attend meetings either in the morning or late in the evening. Those in the morning would start at 10:00hrs and end at above 14:30hrs, while the evening meetings would start at 19:00hrs and end at about 01:00hrs of the next day. The only problem would be that *il-Perit* would expect you to achieve results on actions decided upon in the morning or evening meeting by the time that the next meeting was due. This was not always easy!

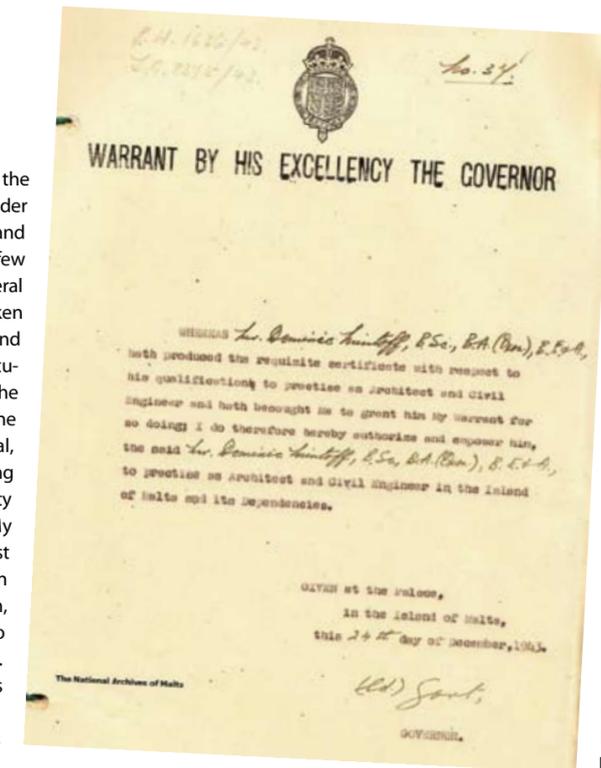
There are several instances that marked our relationship. I will relate just two of these. The design and construction of the Karin Grech Hospital was my first major job as an archi-

tect of Health Care Facilities. When the hospital was almost complete and commissioned *il-Perit* had put forward the idea of building a Geriatric Unit at St Luke's Hospital. The only area where this could be built was next to the Karin Grech Hospital and I immediately undertook the design of this new unit and its subsequent construction. Naturally enough, all plans were discussed with *il-Perit* who took a personal interest in the project. *Il-Perit's* idea was to have this unit as a convalescent and rehabilitation unit for elderly patients that were housed at Saint Vincent de Paule Hospital and who needed constant medical care. This, he argued, could only be given within the confines of St Luke's Hospital. When the structure of the Geriatric Unit was almost ready and the E&M services were being installed, the Health Department had opined that putting a Geriatric Unit next to a Paediatric Hospital did not make sense, and that it would have been more opportune to house a Maternity Unit next to the latter and develop a “Mother and Child Complex”. No one, however, wanted to or was bold enough to approach *il-Perit* with this idea. I was, however, ordered by the Health Department

to commence the conversion of the yet Geriatric Unit that was still under construction into a Maternity and Gynaecology Unit. This was a few months before the 1979 General Election. With the decision taken by the Health Department, I found myself in the uncomfortable situation of reporting to *il-Perit* on the ‘progress’ being achieved on the non-existent Geriatric Hospital, whilst at the same time converting this same Hospital into a Maternity and Gynaecology Hospital. My predicament came to an end just after the General Election when the then new Minister for Health, Dr Censu Moran managed to explain the situation to *il-Perit*. Surprisingly enough *il-Perit* was not upset. I still wonder why. I am sure that he knew what was happening all along!

My contact with him continued also after he resigned as Prime Minister but continued to co-ordinate and/or interest himself in projects. This was the time

Mintoff's Warrant, courtesy of The National Archives of Malta



when we had a major difference of opinion and clashed badly, to the point that I left his office telling him that I would never return. A

couple of days later I received a visit from a mutual friend who informed me that *il-Perit* wished to see me. So upset was I at that time, that I refused the invitation. However, this mutual friend returned a couple of days later with the same request. I could then see that *il-Perit* must have been upset with my reaction and that he had realised that I was right, and therefore I accepted the invitation. As was his custom, when I reappeared at his office he greeted me with the usual name of “Fonz” – a name he used to call me since the first days I met him (I still wonder why he had conned that name for me). However, without much ado and without offering any apologies, he continued from where we had left, making my arguments his and trying to convince me that what he

was saying was right. This was *il-Perit* Dom Mintoff. The same Dom Mintoff that I had known for almost fifteen (15) years.

## ON PROJECTS AND DEADLINES

BY PERIT MICHAEL BUSUTTIL

I joined the Public Works department in 1945 after a call for the employment of five architects and civil engineers. The salary then was £30 per month, that is £1 daily. Perit Dom Mintoff had graduated a few years before me and had been appointed as Minister of Public Works serving in the Labour cabinet headed by Prime Minister Pawlu Boffa. This was in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and most of the focus was on post-war reconstruction of buildings damaged during the war. Mintoff was very much involved in overseeing these reconstruction projects mainly in Valletta and the Three Cities. Another main concern of his was spearheading an

aggressive slum clearance programme, the most notable being the clearance of the *Mandraġġ* in Valletta. I remember Mintoff as being a very energetic and dynamic minister of works.

On a personal note I remember being initially posted to serve in Gozo. My mother at that time was in a poor state of health and my father had passed away during the war. I asked the then Minister Cole if he could intervene on my behalf so I could be transferred back to Malta in order to be able to support my ailing mother. He consulted Mintoff who agreed that I could be posted back to Malta after serving in Gozo for six months. Subsequently there was a roster and architects were deployed in Gozo for six month periods.

My later experiences with Mintoff were in the 1970s when he was Prime Minister. I recall his personal hands-on involvement in two other projects in particular – the airport runway at Luqa and the Mediterranean Conference Centre, Valletta. Mintoff would, every year, announce new capital projects and would impose deadlines for the completion of projects, and these were taken very seriously. I remember the battle against time to finish the Mediterranean Conference Centre in order to host the conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979, with all concerned masons, foremen and architects working around the clock including Saturday evenings and Sundays. Another episode I recall was when it was decided to create another road linking the

Senglea waterfront to Cospicua that would entail the road passing through the historic Maçina building. The structure had very thick walls and masonry vaults, and there were reservations about how the road could be implemented while preserving the overlying structure intact. Finally a meeting was called on site between the then Minister of Works Lorry Sant and Mintoff himself to decide the best course of action. An experienced master mason was also asked to attend and he convinced Mintoff that the safest and cheapest solution was to create a breach in the structure by the demolition of an entire segment of the *Maçina* and rebuilding afresh the part over the new road. In fact that was the solution adopted.



Left to right: Commissioner for Gozo, Mr Edgar Montanaro, a public works official and the then Minister of Public Works Perit Dom Mintoff, (both with their backs to the camera), and Mintoff's secretary Mr Mamo Dingli; Second row standing along the wall: Director of Public Works, Perit Micallef, civil servant Mr Gigi Cassola, and Perit Michael Busuttill at the time assigned to work in Gozo. Perit Michael Busuttill was then 25 years of age and recently celebrated his 90th birthday. Perit Mintoff would have been 31 years of age. (Courtesy: Perit Michael Busuttill)

# ON MINTOFFIAN ECHOES, TANGLES AND TRIBULATIONS

BY PROF RICHARD ENGLAND

My earliest reminiscences of Dom Mintoff date back to my pre-teen years. My father and Mintoff were close friends and I still vividly recall his visits to our house. He was then Minister of Public Works & Reconstruction and had handed his office projects over to my father. First impressions often turn into indelible memories. I particularly remember, as a 9 year old, acting as ball boy at tennis between my father and Mintoff. Even then, I was quick to notice that he was not a person prone to losing and his fire and brimstone character soon emerged whenever he happened to be at the losing end of a game. I recall one particular occasion, as light was fading and my father was winning, he had instructed the people watching to switch on their car headlights for the game to proceed in order to give him the possibility to secure victory.

Years were to pass before our paths crossed again. In the early '70s he had instructed me to design the new Parliament Chamber at the Palace in Valletta (emphasising at our very first meeting that this was a job to be done without remuneration). Dealing with such a controversial character as a client was a fascinating, if at times tempestuous and often perilous experience. On the other hand, many episodes emphasising his negotiation skills come to mind, especially his dealings with Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme in persuading him to have the Chamber furnishings manufactured in Sweden and offered as a gift to Malta from the Swedish Government. During my relationship with him in the process of this project, I soon learnt that he was a man of many twists and turns. On a one to one basis he could be delightfully charming, while at others, especially in the presence of his lackey acolytes, he could be extremely difficult and demanding.

On one of my visits to Stockholm, I had been instructed to approach a firm specialising in audio equipment suitable for the Parliament project. At a Malta meeting with a visiting engineer, Mintoff with his tight-fisted economic

beliefs, soon tired of the presentation, curtly dismissed all proposals as being either too sophisticated or too expensive, ending the meeting by stating that "two cans connected with a string will be sufficient for us!"

Years later however, our relationship deteriorated. I had published a strong worded article calling for the immediate halt to explosive quarrying of rock (erroneously termed Malta Marble) in the all too perilous proximity of the Neolithic Mnajdra Temple Complex; explosions which were likely to not only cause structural damage, but were also visually altering the surrounding landscape, so pertinent to the siting and location of the temple. Summoned by police escort to Castille, in the very early hours of the post-publication morning, in the presence of a number of other Cabinet ministers, I was strongly reprimanded by an obviously very angry and intimidating Mintoff. Days later, taken to Mnajdra, again under police surveillance, I was ordered to sit on one of the megaliths of the Temple while Mintoff, accompanied by his ever present entourage of admiring acolytes, megaphone in hand, ordered the ignition of the explosives. With each blast my 5,000 year old seating accommodation rocked perilously, while Mintoff stubbornly kept insisting that the vibrations could not reach or in any way cause damage to the temple. Why the article had caused Mintoff so much angst remained difficult for me to fathom. Perhaps there was some acolyte interest in the enterprise, or it might have been just because I had so strongly rebuked government for allowing the quarrying.

Regretfully our tainted relationship lingered on. Years later, in the early '80s, on the receipt of professional fees for work I had undertaken in Iraq (channelled through the Central Bank of Malta), part of which was due to consultants in the UK (subsequently transferred again through the Bank's channels) I was indicted on grounds of illegal importation and exportation of funds and the violation of some weird Barter Agreement which Mintoff had concocted between Malta and Iraq. Following a hazardous, rough, long-winded sojourn in



Interior view of the current House of Representatives, designed by Richard England. (Photo courtesy of Richard England)

the Floriana police lock-up, a two year trial ensued with an eventual long delayed, but much welcomed acquittal. The bitterness of this obviously took time to fade away. However, recent episodes offered some form of reconciliatory closure to my tremulous relationship with this mercurial character, who over the years had so dominated public life in Malta as no other.

Some three years ago, it had come to my knowledge that, while Mintoff was Minister of Public Works & Reconstruction in the late 40s, he had wanted to engage none other than Le Corbusier as architect for buildings to replace the Mandraggio area in Valletta which had been demolished during his Ministerial tenure. To my mind this had to be verified and the only way was to establish some new form of personal contact. A letter requesting verification was sent. Months elapsed before any response materialised. Then surprisingly, one night, having a late summer open air dinner with my family at home, the garden was invaded by a troupe of agitated policemen, excitedly informing me that Mintoff was outside wanting to see me. Refusing my invitation to enter, he instructed me to sit next to him in the driver's seat. He did in fact confirm that he had the intention of commissioning Le Corbusier for the project, but after his initial attempts to contact the celebrated architect proved difficult, he had abandoned the idea, as in his words, "I had a more important baby to attend to ...the Malta Labour Party". Had his plans been made manifest, Malta might well have had a series of *Unité d'Habitations*

atop the Valletta Marsamxett bastion walls ... PERILOUS THOUGHT!

Later he carried out many more visits to my house; meetings which were always held in the car, as he repeatedly refused my invitations to enter. In at times ranting discourses, he covered many subjects, the Samaritani, his fascinating and turbulent encounters with numerous international personalities and precious acid quips on current local politics and politicians. At a later meeting at his house I had tried to draw out information about his architectural philosophy and practice; but he was beginning to tire and his hearing and memory were failing. At our farewell at the door, in enduring docile tone, he said "I regret I have nothing to give you, but on your way out, you can take some oranges from the garden". As I was about to take my pick, the old Mintoffian tight-fistedness re-emerged, and as his voice once again echoed its public meeting declamatory tone, forcefully adding, "not the ones on the trees ... those on the ground!"

Despite the messy, jagged, rumbustiousness of our relationship, I feel clemently gratified for a reconciliatory closing before his demise.

## THE INTERVIEWEES

**Perit Vincent Cassar**, current President of the Kamra tal-Periti, worked with Perit Mintoff for a number of years as a Junior Architect at the Public Works Department. He eventually moved on to become Assistant Director, and subsequently Director General of the Works Division, and retired a few years ago after occupying the post of Permanent Secretary in the Ministry for Youth and Arts and subsequently in the Ministry for Urban Development and Roads.

**Prof Richard England** requires little introduction. An award winning architect of international acclaim, he has worked in the capacity of Architectural Consultant to both governmental and private institutions. He has also been active in the academic field, both locally and abroad.

**Perit Michael Busuttill** had a long distinguished career as an architect and civil engineer in the employment of the Public Works Department. He also served as Director of Public Works in the late-1970s/early 1980s. Together with Periti Michael Ellul and Roger Degiorgio, he is one of the most senior architects in Malta today. Last month he celebrated his 90th birthday, and it is now he who holds the earliest surviving Warrant: 007.

# The Venice architecture Biennale

BY ARCHITECT  
TOM VAN MALDEREN

The 13th International Architecture Exhibition titled *Common Ground*, and directed by David Chipperfield opened to the public on August 29th and can be visited till Sunday November 25th.

The Architecture Biennale is the younger component of the Art Biennale that has been running for over a century and has become one of the most prestigious cultural institutions. The Biennale's mission exists in remaining at the forefront in research and the promotion of new artistic trends, while leading international events in the field of contemporary arts. Over the past thirty years, the Biennale has given growing importance to the Architecture

Exhibition that was first held in 1975. The previous edition attracted 170,000 visitors from around the globe and is therefore the world's largest celebration and showcase of the design of buildings. Since architecture is both an art and a business, the exhibition hovers between being a cultural festival and a trade fair. Apart from setting the theme of the exhibition, one of the challenges faced by the directors of the successive exhibitions lies in making sure the event is more than a display of competing architects.

David Chipperfield, who enjoys international status for his sensitive architecture and was awarded the Royal Gold Medal for architecture in 2011, was appointed director for this edition and has set the tone by choosing 'Common Ground' as his theme. "The empha-



The 13th International Architecture Exhibition, President Paolo Baratta and director David Chipperfield at the press conference

"With this year's theme, we go back to talking about architecture - explains Paolo Baratta - to help architects emerge from the crisis of identity they are going through, and at the same time offering the public a chance to look inside architecture, make it familiar and discover that something can be asked of it, that something different is possible, that we are not condemned to passive acceptance."

sis of the 2012 Biennale," explains Director Chipperfield, "is on what we have in common. Above all, the ambition of *Common Ground* is to reassert the existence of an architectural culture, made up not just of singular talents but a rich continuity of diverse ideas united in a common history, common ambitions, common predicaments and ideals."

For the past two decades, our sector has been dominated by big names and spectacular projects, and there are still big names aplenty at the exhibition, but Chipperfield emphasised shared ideas over individual authorship, and initiated dialogues rather than simply making a selection of individuals. "We began by asking a limited group of architects to develop ideas that might lead to further invitations: everyone was asked to propose a project along with a dialogue that reacted to the theme and showed architecture in its context of influence

and affinity, history and language, city and culture," and in his opening speech at the press conference he emphasised "this biennale isn't an X Factor of who's hot right now." Chipperfield also wants to reposition architecture to be inclusive and anti-elitist, and explains, "Common Ground of course also refers to the ideas that we share about architecture, within and beyond our own professional boundaries. Architecture requires collaboration. It is difficult to think of a peaceful activity that draws upon so many diverse contributions and expectations. It involves commercial forces and social vision, and it must deal with the wishes of institutions and corporations and the needs and desires of individuals. Whether we articulate it or not, every major construction is an amazing testament to man's ability to join forces and make something on behalf of others. The fact that



Vessel from O'Donnell + Tuomey at the Arsenale

Vessel is based on an Irish poem and is a site-specific response to the theme of *Common Ground*. The Irish architects produced a contemplative space, hollowed out of solid matter, which is at once a passage, a light funnel and a lantern. The sculpture composed of stacked wood exploits the historic link between timber and brickwork, epitomised by its Venetian setting.

this effort is so often regarded as negative rather than amazing is a communication failure on our part."

Similar to previous editions, mixed reactions from press and architecture critics followed soon after the opening. Positive reactions spoke about a welcome change of priorities at this year's event, more serious and engaging. The mood is indeed calmer and slower and more space has been given to drawings and handmade models alongside the occasional large-scale gesture. Controversy followed when architect Wolf D. Prix of Coop

Himmelb(l)au questioned the relevance of the exhibition and the exaggerations made in the media. He compared it with a Venetian carnival that is no longer about lively discussion and criticism of topics in contemporary architecture, and pleads for a reorganisation of the Biennale. Without actually visiting the event and possibly misled by the 'common ground' exhibition title it became clear that his critique applied to previous editions, and this exhibition is probably the most politically-engaged Biennale we had in a while.

It can be argued whether the exhibition is

political enough or not, but many contributions are reflecting the reality of a deepening economic crisis; not just with doom and gloom but with an optimism tempered with realism, admitting both an awareness of our economic reality as well as the architect's potential role as facilitator, an expert who can use his/her knowledge to aid a community. "Never before has the Biennale had such a strong social thrust; never before was it such a mea culpa on the part of the profession. All good architects sincerely believe they are contributing to society," said Chipperfield at the opening

press conference. "But society is mistrustful. It sees them as self-promoting, autobiographical animals."

The exhibition itself is vast and can be overwhelming and ideally one should dedicate a couple of days to visit the biennale and the wonderful city hosting the event. A couple of bridges away from the Piazza San Marco you will find the Arsenale, an old naval building, with the first half of the exhibition curated by Chipperfield and temporary national pavilions spread out through its vast halls and the outdoor spaces alongside. The Giardini park is another few bridges further along the lagoon and has the second half of the main exhibition in the central pavilion and a series of permanent national pavilions positioned around the park. More national pavilions and 18 collateral events are set up throughout Venice. Chipperfield's Common Ground exhibition has a total 119 participants contributing and is complemented by 55 national participations with their own display and approach to the theme.

Some people have asked me whether it is worth going. My answer is a definite yes. If you have some time and a little budget available, use our privilege of having a direct air-connection to the world's grandest celebration on architecture, a showcase that is pulling in people from all over the globe. To give you a little taster, I selected a number of pictures with guiding notes on some of the many highlights of our Common Ground.



**Radix, Aires Mateus' contribution to the 'Common Ground' in the Arsenale**

The open and closed arches of Radix, a structure clad with rusting steel panels on the outside and with a golden shimmer inside, are a continuation of the arches of the shipyards of the Arsenale. Radix combines historical awareness and sensitivity with modern technology, and suggests an approach that promotes continuity instead of seeking novelty.



**Robbrecht en Daem Architecten and 'Copycat' by Cino Zucchi in the Arsenale**

Robbrecht and Daem's model for a new semi-open pavilion in Antwerp's Middelheim Museum is anything but a white cube, and has been purposely laid out at diagonal angles to weave into the surrounding landscape. In the background you can see a glimpse of Cino Zucchi's Copycat, in which he used a variety of different collections to create a cosmos of similarities. This contribution got a special mention from the jury.



**'architecture possible here? home-for-all' at the Japanese pavilion, winner of the Golden Lion**

The pavilion presents a project on the tsunami devastated region, as Jury member Kristin Feireiss explains "First of all, the project itself is impressive and to present it as Japan's contribution is really bold. Curator Toyo Ito doesn't present something finished and perfect, but instead an on-going process. A community, moderated by an architect, tries to develop a step-by-step strategy after a natural catastrophe."



**Olafur Eliasson's little sun at Venice biennale**

As part of the opening days, the Icelandic designer/artist was introducing his 'little sun' project to visitors. This hand-sized solar-powered lantern is created for distribution in developing countries and off-grid locations; improving living conditions and quality of life in areas that often rely on kerosene lanterns. They are available to us as well but at a higher price, making sure they become even more affordable to people who really need them.



**Reduce/Reuse/Recycle at the German pavilion**

It is becoming an increasingly common challenge within our architectural practice to look at developing what already exists. The work of 16 firms shows different conversion strategies for already built environment. In line with the Reduce/Reuse/Recycle theme of the exhibition, the pavilion is cleverly organised with a minimum of means and energy.



**O&O Baukunst in the central pavilion at the Giardini**

To complement their presentation on European Ground, O&O Baukunst invited the Ernst Bush Academy of Dramatic Art for a performance. Showing here: "I didn't know that architecture could be so much fun."



**The Polish Pavilion, with a special mention of the jury**

The pavilion is simply as beautiful as its title, "Making the walls quake as if they were dilating with the secret knowledge of powers". A great part of their budget was spend on renovating the ventilation system of the Polish pavilion and turning it into an 'eavesdropping machine' by tapping into the sounds of neighbouring pavilions. Various sounds, noises and vibrations are transferred...to feel the sound of the Common Ground.



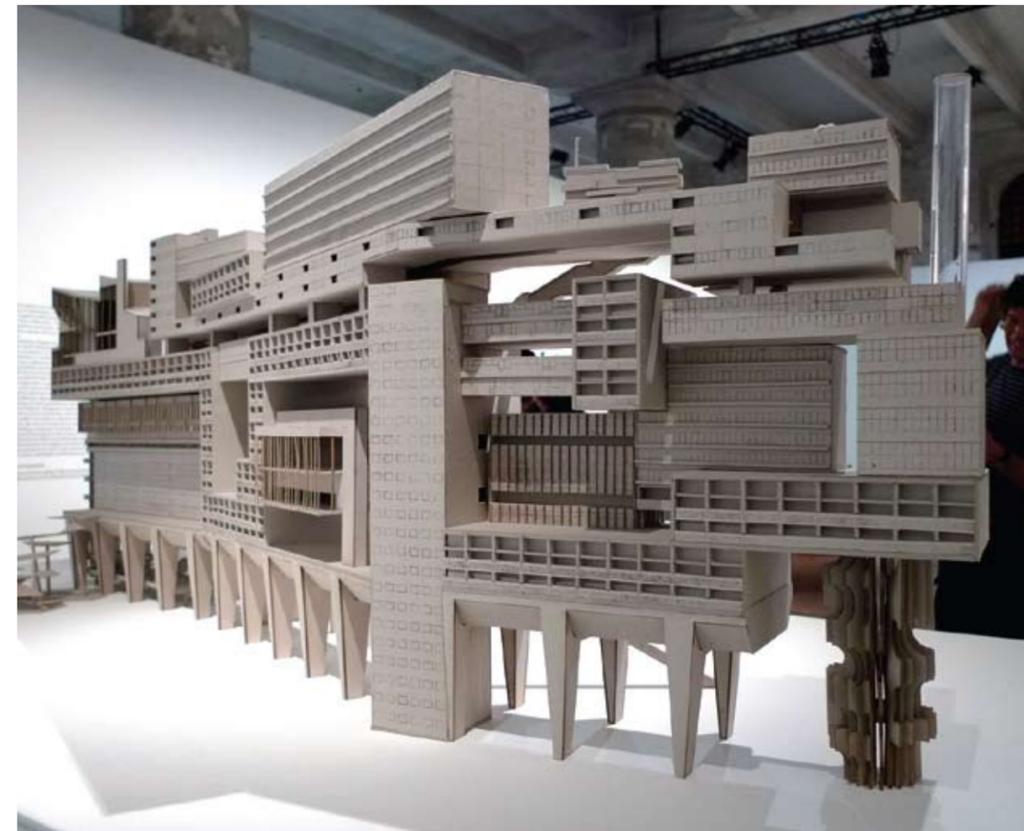
**Re-Set at the Dutch pavilion**

Expressing the idea that architecture possesses the power to start anew is very much on the order nowadays. Whilst responding to the existing structure of the pavilion through a relatively simple but constantly changing intervention, one can experience a poetic transformation every 5 minutes. The rhythm, the sound of the track, the changing light and reconfiguration of the existing space stimulate looking at underused space.



**Architecture as New Geography by Grafton Architects, winner of the Silver Lion Award**

The jury was impressed by their presentation of the winning design for a University campus in Lima; the way their presentation connects Grafton's university campus and Mendes da Rocha's Dourada Stadium as two 'figures' forming a sense of Common Ground, demonstrating how 'openness to influence' is a starting point and a prerequisite for good architecture.



**Monument for modernism, Robert Burghardt at the Arsenale**

This model composed out of fragments of famous modernist buildings was built to intervene into an ongoing discussion about urban space in Berlin. Contrary to the discussion that favours rebuilding the original City Palace, Burghardt proposes a collage of existing modernist architecture that at the first instance is dysfunctional, but opens up space for individual or collective purposes and imagination.

Tom Van Malderen is an architect at Architecture Project and Local correspondent for A10magazine. All pictures © Tom Van Malderen.

# Qui-Si-Sana

BY PERIT EDWARD SAID

**Hallih ir-rih jibghat fwieg il-majjistral, Fuq xattek bil-blajjet puntati zonqrin; Hallih jonfoħ iż-ziffa ħelwa u friska Fl-ghodwiet xemxja u fl-iljieli qamrin.**

So goes the opening stanza of Raymond Grech's latest poem "Ix-Xatt Ta' Kususana (Qui-Si-Sana)". His hometown, as is mine, is Sliema, a favourite subject amongst his writings, as is also mine. It is after all undoubtedly Malta's most (how to put this objectively?) ... architecturally challenged locality.

Now, those who know Sliema, know that there is Sliema and there is Sliema. Other than the parishes, minor localities are known by curious popular names such as Lazy Corner, Savoy, The Ferries, Ghar id-Dud, Tigné, Qui-Si-Sana and (more-recently) Midi. To the more discerning eye, it is evident that many of these areas have their own stylistic traits when it comes to old buildings, old as in pre-1970s. For a long time I have wanted to write about those of Qui-Si-Sana.

Recently I came across an internet social network forum set up by present and former residents of this area who posted some poignant photographs taken years ago,

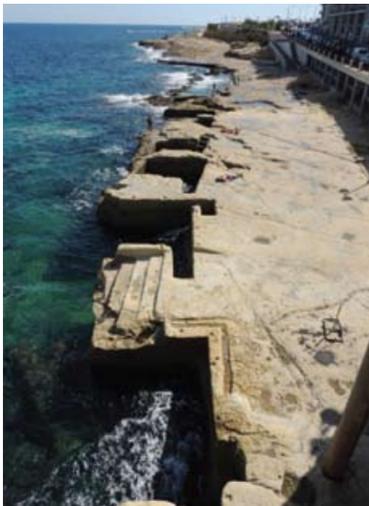
accompanied by equally evocative remarks. The images featured streets with a character that is so typical of this neighbourhood. Armed with a new camera I went there some weeks ago just as autumn was setting in, on a quest to capture these idiosyncrasies, or rather, what was left of them.

Historically, the area, once the largely stark garigue waste forming part of Il-Qortin, became popular in the early years of Sliema as a seaside resort. Here, by the way, stood Malta's most iconic Neo-Classical dwelling, Palazzo Sliema, belonging to the Hughes-Hallett family and used by Charles MacIver of Cunard as well as Sir Adrian Dingli. This beautifully colonnaded villa was demolished in the early 1930s to make way for higher density habitations. By this time, Qui-Si-Sana was very much sought after by people coming to take the curative marine waters generated by the mistral currents. Many were the public baths that had opened along the shores of Sliema and St Julians yet none were as effective and frequented as those on the coastline beyond Ghar il-Lenbi. Here one did get healthy, thus *qui si sana!*

The early decades of the 20th century saw a boom in residential constructions in this part of Sliema. Due to proximity of Qui-Si-



One of Locker Street's houses awaiting demolition Sana to the newly enlarged military establishments at Tigné, many British families made their homes here, and like much of the northern side of the growing town the styles chosen echoed English fashions. An assortment of houses and apartment blocks was built along Qui-Si-Sana Place and upwards into streets named after British personalities MacIver, Thornton, Locker and Hughes-Hallett with the exception of Dragut Street



The Qui-Si-Sana baths, once a mecca for those seeking health improvement.

which separated civil from martial society. On the latter incidentally stood Alcazar, Malta's only known Neo-Perpendicular creation which luckily Perit Conrad Thake managed to photograph and admire just before its destruction a few years ago.

Whilst the facades of some of the apartment blocks attained simple, straightforward designs, others reflected what the Royal Engineers had employed on their barrack blocks, particularly the use of heavy rustications, pilasters and balustrades. A number of them were Modernist particularly the Hotel Tigné Court, itself replacing an even more daringly conceived block. Unsurprisingly, nothing of note stands in their stead today. Ritz Flats in Hughes-Hallett Street embodies much of what I believe is the quintessential Qui-Si-Sana style; from its name, to the heavily-louvered apertures, from the chunky balconies to their rilled parapets. Tigné Mansions on the seafront was designed to impress if not intimidate. Its heavily rusticated facades, almost bastion-like protruding bay windows guarded against the elements by dark green jalousies. Interestingly, this building is unique for an unlikely reason; it appears to have a coastal artillery beach post on its roof!

On the houses of Qui-Si-Sana a number of Maltese timber gallariji are (well, were) distinctive; their upper windows with their cruciform transoms recalling Art Deco fenestration design, supported on masonry bases and parapets decorated with equally Deco rills, a motif favoured by local Italianate Rationalist Perit Silvio Mercieca (1888-1954). Windows and doors were in some instances set in concentric outlines forming jagged or rilled arcelli not unlike stylised medieval church doorways. Frontispieces, cornices, corbels and wrought ironwork formed in Art Deco and Eclectic designs decorated their facades.

Writing from Israel some years ago Daniela Londner Salamone, originally from 'Quissy', lamented the loss if its "...stately and beautiful buildings." She describes it today as "a grey maze" filled with blocks that are "lifeless-from-the-outside". In conclusion she chides us architects for our lack of sen-



Detail from houses in Hughes-Hallett Street

sitivity and how she "fled" from Qui-Si-Sana during her latest and last visit. Whilst the buildings may have gone and the automobile now reigns supreme, at least the softstone coast has stayed the same and the wholesome sea there still lives up to its name. For those however who cherish its past, swimming in Qui-Si-Sana, and indeed the rest of Sliema has become a somewhat bitter-sweet experience. Raymond Grech:

**Kullmeta inżurek jaqbzuli d-demghat... llqaghani w fissidni, ghannaqni w tluq qatt.**

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NOW TO 27 NOVEMBER 2012; GALLERY 2, RIBA, LONDON, UK

#### AFTER THE PARTY - THE LEGACY OF CELEBRATION

Everyone likes a good party and the Diamond Jubilee and Olympic Games in 2012 have given the UK plenty of opportunity for celebration. Thanks particularly to the Olympics it has a new set of buildings and public spaces. But how will they fare after the party is over? The pre-planned legacy of the Games was a key factor in London's winning bid. But can legacy really be predicted or planned? And is a legacy sometimes much more significant than the event itself? Drawing on the RIBA's unique collections, this exhibition explores these questions by considering how past celebratory events – victories, national expositions, anniversaries and previous Olympics – led to the creation of some of the most extraordinary structures ever built. The legacies of many of these were not only architectural but also social, economic, cultural and technological. Some had lasting urban impact, transforming entire cities, while others provide more cautionary tales. [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

NOW TO 6 JANUARY 2013; ARKITEKTURMUSEET, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

#### PROVISIONS

The anniversary exhibition of the Swedish Museum of Architecture transfers the visitor to one of the most frequented spaces of everyday life - the grocery store. Architecture and design are essential for all people, like provisions. The commercial space is a part of the main question: What kind of society do we want, and how should we act? Shelves and counters are filled with a great assort-

ment of photographs, drawings and models from the museum collections. The terms "ware" and "fare" take on substantial double meanings in this exhibition environment. We are playing with the idea of architecture, form and design as "provisions": possibilities and methods to fulfill the basic needs of every human, from nutriment to gratification. As a visitor, you will face different choices and issues: does architecture have a best-before date? Can design be unique and mass produced at the same time? What is the shelf life of form? Can the city be preserved? In what environments does the individual become the product? What range of action do I have as a citizen? What could be the future consequences of the choices I make today? [www.arkitekturmuseet.se](http://www.arkitekturmuseet.se)

NOW TO 13 JANUARY 2013; BARBICAN ART GALLERY, LONDON, UK

#### EVERYTHING WAS MOVING: PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE 60S AND 70S

This exhibition presents some of the most inspiring voices in 20th century photography, in order to reflect on the world then – and now. [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

NOW TO 26 JANUARY 2013; SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM, LONDON, UK

#### THE WORLD MONUMENTS FUND: 50 YEARS OF KEEPING THE WORLD FULL OF PLACES WORTH VISITING

The World Monuments Fund is the leading non-governmental organization for the protection of cultural heritage. Founded in 1965, and based in New York, the Fund has affiliate offices across the globe, including the one in London which is the largest office

outside its headquarters. The Fund secures the future of exceptional, endangered works of architecture through fundraising, conservation management, education, advocacy and partnership building. [www.soane.org](http://www.soane.org)

NOW TO 24 FEBRUARY 2013; DESIGN MUSEUM, GENT, BELGIUM

#### SHIRO KURAMATA (1934-1991)

Nothing is more sought after these days than the designs by Shiro Kuramata. His transparent design objects in acrylic, glass and steel wire are some of the most representative and creative of late 20th century design. [www.design.museum.gent.be](http://www.design.museum.gent.be)

NOW TO FEBRUARY 2013; THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

#### ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2011

The Engineering Excellence Awards exhibition is a collaboration between the Powerhouse Museum and the Sydney Division of Engineers Australia. The exhibition provides an opportunity to appreciate contemporary Australian engineering projects that have taken place in Australia and other countries. All awards have been peer reviewed. The judging panel comprise engineering and scientific practitioners and academics, company chairman and directors, and consulting specialists. Each year, the most outstanding project receives the Bradfield Award, named after the Australian John Job Crew Bradfield (1867-1943), the Chief Engineer for the Metropolitan Railway Construction and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. [www.powerhousemuseum.com](http://www.powerhousemuseum.com)



Ritz Flats in Hughes-Hallett Street has so far survived largely intact.

## Can you name this building and its architect?



The winner of this competition will be entitled to a copy of the book reviewed on page 22. 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](mailto:thearchitect@ktpmalta.com). The first correct entry drawn on the 30 November 2012 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 59 is Mr Giuseppe Gauci. Congratulations! The image published showed the Lady Gordon Memorial chapel, at Ta' Braxia cemetery, designed by Architect John Loughborough Pearson.

COMPETITION

# A Printed Thing - Writing Architecture Project

REVIEWED BY  
PERIT DR CONRAD THAKE

*"When an architecture practice undertakes to commit itself to print, what is the result? Here is one, an architecture practice attempting to lay itself bare – open submissions, a project defined by its content [...] This then is the result. A 'book' of comment, theories, illustration, photography, prose. An act of definition through experiment. A printed thing."*

The practice Architecture Project (AP) has evolved and matured since its inception over twenty one years ago into one of the island's leading architectural practices. It has become synonymous with a number of high-profile projects ranging from amongst others the restoration and re-adaptation of the former Garrison church in Valletta into the Malta Stock Exchange, the new premises of the Malta Maritime Authority, the Kenuna communications tower in Nadur, Gozo, and the Valletta Cruise Passenger Waterfront project. Other high-profile projects such as the Upper Baracca Lift are still in the process of gestation. This medium-sized practice has, over the years, earned a reputation for being a dynamic incubator and executor of new architectural and planning ideas. It is conspicuously different from other local architectural practices in that it is very cosmopolitan in its composition attracting several young architects and students from all over the European continent and even beyond.

A cautionary word of warning is in order - this is not a book for the faint-hearted. It is certainly not your typical architectural monograph with its standard format of a linear sequence of glossy photographs of projects supplemented by the usually-laudatory reviews. 'A Printed Thing' is a compilation of ten offerings whose authors are engaged in different disciplines ranging from architecture to criticism, education, art, writing, photography and cultural anthropology. The list of contributors is as cosmopolitan as it can

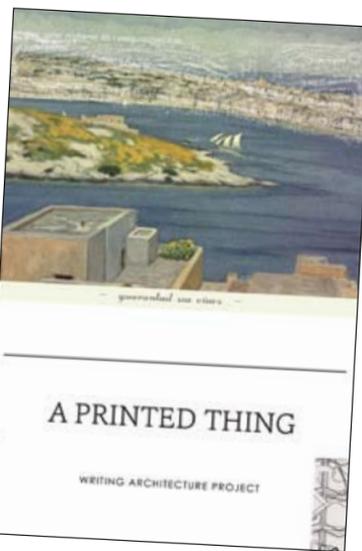
be – Bettina Hutschek, Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Ephraim Joris, Franziska Von Stenglin, Hans Ibelings, Riet Eeckhout and Jon Tarry, and Guillaume Dreyfuss. This is totally in sync with the international ethos of AP as practice - never insular and inward-looking but projecting itself as an experimental architectural laboratory that engages in discourse and ideas well beyond our shores. In addition there are also the contributions of three notable locals, Mark Anthony Falzon, Pierre J. Mejlak and Konrad Buhagiar. There is not one unifying theme to the various texts and one is ad lib to choose, pick and read a la carte in no particular order. They are in essence trajectories of ideas and reflections that have more to do with the way we experience the city and buildings rather than adhering to a straight-jacketed discourse on architectural design matters. They are intended to provoke the reader to think and react rather than merely to inform. Some of the titles of the papers are intriguing and provocative in themselves. Bettina Hutschek's 'Columbidae' comes with an alluring (and even morbid) introductory preface: 'Dear Grandmother, This morning I found a dead pigeon on my balcony and had to think of Grandfather.' The plight and travails of pigeons becomes a metaphor for dissecting the dynamics of the city of Valletta.

Mark Anthony Falzon, the head of the Sociology department at university coined the title 'The house may conceal, but it will never steal'. He conjectures spaces of concealment and 'forgotten spaces requiring work to be accessed'. Falzon recalls texts from Tomasi di Lampedusa, Gaston Bachelard and Umberto Eco and weaves them together in shedding light on a 'systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives'. Von Stenglin's contribution is totally devoid of text and her offerings are a series of photographs of what prima facie appear to be rather mundane objects and elements that are in fact the tesseræ of daily life in this architectural office – a simple coat-hanger overlaid with jackets, a rugged cardboard box

with pantone markers, a chaotic heap of architectural drawings and paper with a pair of headphones laying on top. Timothy Brittain-Catlin's 'Is it old or is it new?' is a rather informal narrative of the main projects Architecture Project has embarked upon during these last two decades. This he does without going into the formalities of giving a blow by blow account of the aesthetic philosophy and building process of each project. The next contribution by Ephraim Joris takes a more theoretical stance on the interface of research and practice. Architect and journalist Hans Ibelings interviews the firm's principal partners, all architects – Konrad Buhagiar, David Drago, David Felice and Alberto Miceli Farrugia. On 'Being Maltese' is the heading of the interview and the main thrust is about changing attitudes in Maltese society with respect to architectural design.

The demolition process of the old-Fascist style City Gate in 2011 is the subject of the joint contribution by Riet Eeckhout and Jon Tarry. 'Drawing out collapse' explores themes related to the process of demolition and fracturing of the structure and debris. Although a brief contribution, it presents a series of thought-provoking questions as to 'what is seen in the world through observation, action, idea, interrogation and conveyance'. 'Novelletta', by Guillaume Dreyfuss, explores the idea conceived as a manifesto based on the research, explorations and realisations of the practice. As in the spirit of most architectural manifestos it makes some outlandish claims – 'NOVELLETTA is a continuous, cyclical and open-ended proposition which is informed by the daily activities and developments of the firm and which in turn initiates and influences future processes within the firm's architectural practice.'

Pierre J Mejlak's 'Fil-bar ta' Livia' is a fictional account which takes the reader through a quasi-surreal process of conjecturing a utopian city in the making and all of this within the confines of Livia's bar. Shades of Fellini! The final contribution is that of architect Konrad



Buhagiar – 'Some thoughts on a libretto for a Maltese opera' where the main plot revolves around the tragic true story of an Irish sailor McSweeney who having, upon provocation, hit his superior lance sergeant James T. Allen and involuntarily caused his death, was sentenced to death and was hanged aboard the HMS Rodney, that was moored in the Grand Harbour, whilst hundreds of people watched from the bastions around. 'A Printed Thing' is a kaleidoscope of different trajectories colliding and intersecting in different directions. It is intended to stimulate, be fuzzy, provoke, and at times even disorient you as one navigates through its pages. It defies convention and rational logic without offering any apologies. As Jon Banthorpe stated in the foreword 'This printed thing is as much a product of confusion and growing pains, as it is of embracing the architectural essentials of experiment, exploration, tradition, and an attempt to move forward.' And it is precisely this realm of undefined boundaries that makes this publication appealing.

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# Reducing Energy Costs



IN A SCENARIO OF EVER-INCREASING UTILITY BILLS AND AN ENVIRONMENT THAT NEEDS PROTECTION, ALBERTA INVESTS HEAVILY IN CHAMPIONING ENERGY-SAVING AND COST-CUTTING HEATING AND COOLING SOLUTIONS



Waving the green flag, alberta knows that the economical way to run a business is to make use of available energy, like the sun and the wind, and cut down on expensive fossil fuels. So alberta promotes solar heating, photovoltaic systems, intelligent plugs, window films, heat pumps, wind turbines and solar blinds.

"Dependency on traditional electricity is one of the biggest threats our environment faces today," "This reliance, and resources which become increasingly scarce, are leading to sky-high utility bills which prompts all of us to seek alternative solutions that make money sense and save on scarce resources."

To see to the need of a business, alberta recommends an energy audit to determine the best energy solutions to cut down on energy waste and make the most of resources available.

"Having different requirements, every business needs a tailor-made solution to be run effectively and efficiently, as we go along, we continue to realise that traditional resources are unsustainable and sooner or later we have to make the shift towards cleaner energy. What before was considered a concept has now become reality at affordable prices."

Photovoltaic system is a money-making machine that does not depreciate in value. "Apart from cutting down on electricity bills, such a system allows you to sell electricity units to the government

with guaranteed return on investment. A residential photovoltaic system has a performance guarantee of 25 years and is paid back in full after 5-6 years." The larger the installation, the faster the system pays itself and the better it performs. It all depends on roof space availability; what is crucial is that a domestic system is usually installed in a day and does not mess up existing installation or require any structural changes to the house.

If we look at a domestic scenario as a comparative benchmark, an average Maltese terrace house usually can take at least 8 photovoltaic panels. Such a system would save the household nothing less than €1,000 annually.

The idea of energy harvesting is picking up. Owners of large areas of land may invest in photovoltaic systems to farm energy and sell it back to government. This is another way of making future investments and Alberta is interested in

entering partnerships when such land is available but the owner has no money to invest in the system, he says.

Government also comes out with different grant schemes to give incentives on such systems. This is where alberta's advice comes in useful. "When customers keep in touch with us, we advise them of any new incentives announced by government."

On the other hand, solar water heaters receive a €300-€400 government rebate with return on investment after 4-5 years.

Alberta's solar water heaters are manufactured in Turkey, a country renowned for its technology in the systems. "Our choice of supplier came after diligent study of the market to ensure that our product is durable, especially in a Maltese climate and hard water. That is the reason why our solar heaters are glass-lined and the photovoltaics are salt-mist tested.

Alberta's line-up of specialised products

also includes heat pumps to heat pools, for example, and underfloor heating and cooling. "Contrary to perception, these systems are affordable. To install under-floor systems for heating and cooling, an average household would cost about €3,500 and can be installed under raised flooring. There is also the possibility of ceiling cooling installed within soffits, for example. For a complete insulation, window films and solar blinds against ultraviolet rays reduce room temperature by at least 2 degrees.

"Equipment left on standby is another source of energy waste. To give an example, a television set left on standby every night for a year uses up to 20 watts per hour which will amount to €50-€60 a year. An intelligent plug will switch off equipment on standby thus reducing waste." For energy audits and cost-efficient energy solutions contact Alberta's Renewable Energy Engineers on, on 2549 0466 or send an email to info@alberta.com.mt.

# Make your home more energy efficient.

Let us help you save on your electricity bills

Reducing the energy needs of your home will save you money and help reduce carbon emissions. Whether you are building or renovating, or just want to help make a difference, Electrofix can help.

## E-Box energy saving device

The e-Box is an energy saving device that fits between the electricity supply and the lighting distribution board, reducing consumption and therefore the cost of your electricity typically between 20% and 40%.

## Photovoltaic Panels

### Short payback period

Strong warranty on products as well as performance.

With a good PV system an average family of 4 will save over €540 per year on electricity bills.



## Nansulate®

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Save between 20%-40% on your energy bills

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## Solar Waterheater

A good solar waterheater will save you up to 90% on your electricity bill.

An average family of 4 will save over €525 per year on electricity bills and still have hot water 24 hrs a day!



## Spaceloft® Nano Insulation

Spaceloft® is a flexible, nanoporous aerogel blanket insulation that reduces energy loss while conserving interior space. Spaceloft® is a proven, effective insulator providing the highest R-value of any insulation material for maximum energy efficiency in walls, floors, roofs, framing, and windows.

## Climablock

### The biggest invention after the brick

Climablock is an innovative system that guarantees high energy savings through insulation. A wall of only 39 cm in thickness built with the Climablock system provides the same levels of insulation as walls of 65cms built with traditional products.

## Diamon-Fusion®

### Makes Your Life Easier

A revolutionary nano-technology product that improves and protects the surface of glass, tile, porcelain, granite & most silica-based surfaces.

A simple one-off application will make surfaces UV stabilised, easier to clean and provides insulation allowing you to save on your energy bills, maintenance and cleaning products.

# LATEST PRODUCTS IN ENERGY EFFICIENCY...

## SUNVIA LIGHT TUBE - THE NATURAL LIGHT BULB

The Sunvia Tube channels the sun's light and provides light for free. SUNVIA SV550 has the equivalent lighting performance of 400W power bulb.

### How does it work?

- An Acrylic dome placed on the roof passes daylight through a reflective pipe.
- The reflectivity of the pipe acts like a mirror in which light is transmitted to the reflecting diffuser
- Light is distributed homogenously providing natural illumination.

Lighting areas and power values depend on: the strength of the sunlight available, the height of the diffuser from ground, and the length of the reflective pipe.

### The benefits include:

- Provides energy savings – reduces energy costs
- Reduces heat load caused by artificial lighting – i.e. decreasing the need for air-conditioning
- Does not require continuous maintenance being self-cleaned during rainfall
- Statistics have shown that natural daylight has improved individuals' performance at school & work. As a matter of

# Sunvia



fact time recovery in hospital has been significantly reduced  
Sunvia Tube is a product of Sunvia Daylighting Systems.

### Features:

- Efficient light efficiency transmission of 92% (DIN 5036)
- Impact strength of 12 KJ/m2 (DIN 53453)
- Pipe
  - high reflection coefficient of over 98% (98.5% DIN 5036-3, 99% ASTM E-1651)
  - UV-resistant
  - 99.99% silvercoated
  - Produced from 99.85% purity aluminum

## Aeropan - THE THINNEST, LIGHTEST AND MOST RESISTANT PANEL AVAILABLE FOR INSULATION

Aeropan is the latest panel created for thermal insulation using nanotechnology. It consists of a nanotech thermal insulator in Aerogel as well as a transpiring membrane. It produces a thermal barrier which guarantees the best thermal insulation possible with the least use of space and of accessory construction works.

### How does it work?

The Aeropan panel is semi-rigid and easy to handle during its application. It is laid on the existing support with the classic glue-on system. The surface texture ensures a solid gripping base for the subsequent skim coat - In fact a superficial skim coat can be applied directly.

### The benefits include:

- lightweight
- rapidly installed
- effective resistance to UV rays, water and weather conditions
- absolute stability in any weather conditions
- sound absorbing
- easy to work with and reduces dust emission

### Features:

- 10 mm thick
- Has a thermal conductivity (λ) of 0.013 W/(m.K), stable from -200°C to +200°C.

# AEROPAN

NANOTECH THERMAL INSULATION



- Composed of a flexible insulating reinforcement in nanoporous Aerogel combined to a special thermoformed fiber-reinforced structure. Aerogel is:
  - extremely low thermal conductive
  - resistant to compression
  - hydrophobic
- Mechanical resistant and is capable of absorbing superficial collisions without the risk of deformation
- Aeropan and Spaceloft will retain their properties throughout the lifetime of the building, without practically any degradation from compression or humidity. In the long term – typical of the building industry - they will provide best insulation solution.

Aeropan is one of the newest products produced by Aktarus Group. Other products include Glass and silica protective coatings, Nansulate paint home insulation and industrial thermal insulation Spaceloft.

Sunvia Tube and Aeropan are both represented locally by ElectroFix of Valletta Road, Qormi. ElectroFix has established itself as one of the leaders in the energy efficiency market in Malta. They represent leading global brands including German Conergy, Masdar PV, Stiebel Eltron, Lorentz and leading solar water-heater brand, Solahart

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# From Terrorists to Apostles

Any company, regardless of which field it operates under, will not succeed in making a lasting impression on its clients unless it ensures that the customers will get, and know that they're getting; far more for their money's worth.

Imagine a grape you have just picked, but you do not know how you should press it to find out whether it is ripe to eat, how it should taste, or what the better colour is; blood red or pale green. So you ask the fruit vendor for the best grape. Once at home you start to savour it; calamity- it's a bad bunch of grapes! The next day you do not only go to the fruit vendor to complain, but you moreover spread the 'bad news' among your acquaintances - what in marketing is known as acting as a terrorist client.

Those customers who after a bad experience are not satisfied in the least with a product, will therefore spread the word within their friends' realm. Spreading a bad review may reach as many as twelve people, with the expectation that those bad reports will convince their friends from buying the same product, going to the same vendor, thus avoiding a negative purchasing experience.

But not all is bad news in the marketing field. There are also apostle clients; when the company is able to meet the expectations of its customers with value added service. Hence, on such occasions, a positive purchasing experience will make them predisposed to spread the good word as if they were preaching the gospel.

Now one might wonder what the relationship between Flock Image; a company mainly specialising in liquid elastomeric waterproofing and industrial flooring systems, and all that previous hot air, could possibly be. Well, the answer is straightforward. Substitute the bunch of grapes with a waterproofing system and you

will end up asking the same question. How do I know it is a good quality product with a supportive after sales service? When referring to exclusive products, only specialists know what they are talking about. The man in the



street hasn't the foggiest on how to appreciate and value them in terms of quality. And great reviews from other satisfied customers will lead him into the right direction.

Flock Image hits the bull's eye when it comes to customer service and satisfaction. Several clients' testimonials are proof of it, from a church dome restoration project in Gozo, Mater Dei Hospital's main entrance, to a new Nestlé company warehouse floor.

Their entrusted projects constantly receive rave reviews, highlighting a unique ability to adapt to highly customised and specific requirements, attesting always to their professional attitude, meticulous organisation and capacity to finish the projects in time with the highest of quality standards.

"Organisational skills... teamwork capabilities... technical excellence... We found that Flock Image had it all," confirms Mr. Graham Bell of Stirling Lloyd, UK, contractors of the prestigious Mater Dei Hospital. Mr. Martin Vella of Halmann declares that, "Highly professional and meticulously organised... Flock Image are capable of meeting last-minute deadlines.

"At Tigne Point, we have very high standards to attain but with Flock Image quality is never compromised." And Radisson Golden Sands Hotel CEO Winston Zahra Jnr reaffirms, "We could not have hoped for anything better. When it came to choosing our materials, their guidance was noteworthy for its value as well as for the amicable manner in which it was offered."

A word to the wise; take your time to ask your prospective supplier's customers. Do try to draft a historical profile of the company and check how many satisfied and non-satisfied customers they have had. You will thus know what to expect.

Flock Image has been successfully applying Flowcrete's and other quality products successfully for the past 15 years with many prestigious projects completed. These include works at various Hotel kitchens like the Radisson Golden Sands, The Coastline Hotel and The Westin Dragonara as well as areas at pharmaceutical places like Arrow Pharm (Malta) Ltd and Actavis. Flock Image has also applied dissipative flooring at Dedicated Micros Ltd, Prominent Fluid Controls and ST Microelectronics.

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