



ART FOR RIGHTS

CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

PAINTINGS BY STUDENTS OF THE
INSTITUTE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS, MCAST



MCAST



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CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Inaugurated on 14th October 2025

by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon Anglu Farrugia and
the Parliamentary Ombudsman, Judge Joseph Zammit McKeon, Parliament House, Valletta

Foreword

Judge Joseph Zammit McKeon
Parliamentary Ombudsman of Malta



The 30th Anniversary of the Office of the Ombudsman is an occasion to celebrate our history, but also to look forward with renewed commitment. One way we have chosen to do this is through art.

This exhibition, *Art for Rights*, is a collaboration with eighteen students from the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology. It highlights the determination of young people to engage with the themes of freedom, justice, and human dignity. Visual art is a powerful medium, and here it becomes a stepping stone for the freedom of expression of a new generation.

The students were free to interpret human rights themes without limits. The results are bold, symbolic, and sometimes unsettling. Each work invites reflection on the realities of our time. These paintings do not come from established professional artists, but from young talent with a fresh voice. This makes them even more valuable, because they remind us that rights are not the



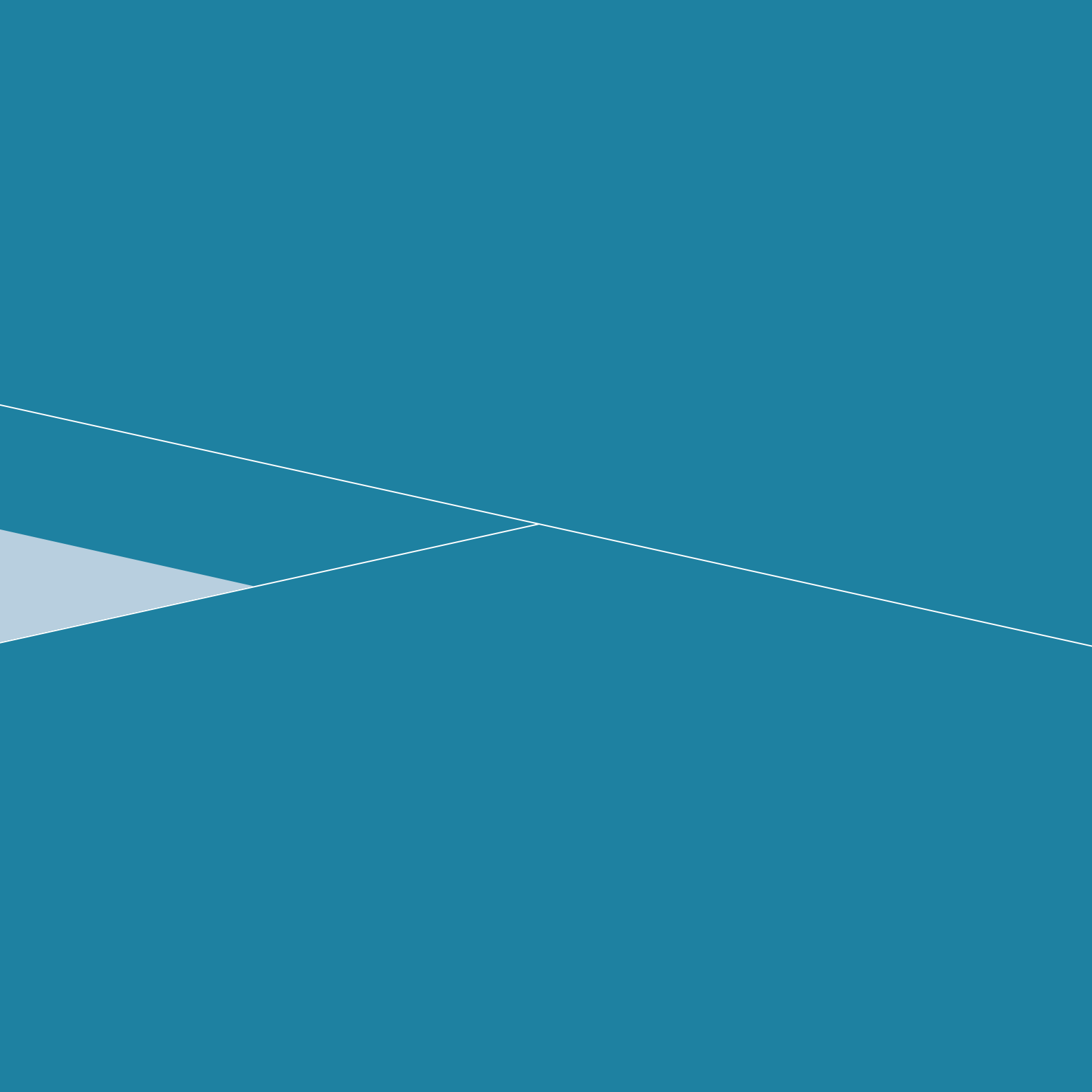
concern of lawyers and politicians alone, but living values that must be nurtured by citizens, especially the young.

I express my gratitude to the Principal and lecturers of the MCAST Institute for Creative Arts. Their guidance and encouragement have allowed these students to transform ideas into meaningful works of art. I also thank the students themselves for their commitment, their openness, and their courage in addressing difficult subjects.

Art for Rights is not a conventional exhibition. It is an effort to raise awareness, to provoke thought, and to awaken conscience. It offers the visitors an opportunity to admire the creativity of our young people and to engage with the message each work carries.

I invite you to view these works with the same curiosity and openness with which they were created. They are not only an artistic expression, but also a contribution to the wider cause of human rights.





About the project



Mr Darren Tanti

Senior Lecturer
Fine Art

Ms Andrea Tachelet

Institute Coordinator
Fine Arts



Mr Sean Pollacco

Deputy Director
Institute for the Creative Arts

This year, the Fine Arts students at the Institute for the Creative Arts, were approached by the Office of the Ombudsman to contribute, in the form of an art exhibition, to their 30th anniversary celebrations. The central concept of this exhibition revolves around the theme Art for Rights, a theme that aligns strongly with our approach to art education at MCAST. While art undoubtedly exists for its own sake, it also serves as a powerful tool

to address various societal issues. In the context of Postmodern and contemporary art, artistic expression is inherently political. Artists are often drawn to engage with social, cultural, religious, and civil matters. While traditional themes and aesthetic values remain central to artistic discourse, the role of the artist has expanded to encompass the full scope of human experience.

This exhibition provided our students with an opportunity to explore such themes through the medium of painting. They got to understand the broad and impactful work conducted by the Office of the Ombudsman and were encouraged to embark on a creative journey by selecting an area of interest, conducting research, documenting their process, experimenting with ideas, and ultimately developing a resolved, conceptually rich artwork.

It must also be highlighted that the students demonstrated remarkable commitment to this project, considering the challenges they faced during ongoing internal disputes related to an unresolved collective agreement. These disputes, in themselves, are a real-time manifestation of civil

rights being exercised in a democratic society, something in which the students were directly involved at various levels. Despite this conflicted and unsettled time, the students persevered with determination, resulting in the diverse and thoughtful body of work presented in this exhibition.

The Fine Art Department would like to thank the Ombudsman, Judge Joseph Zammit McKeon, and Mr Jurgen Cassar for providing our students with this opportunity; Dr Martina Caruana and Mr Sean Pollacco for their invaluable administrative support; Mr Mario Martinelli of *Pictures and Frames* for assisting the students with the framing; and Ms Andrea Tachelet and Mr Darren Tanti for their guidance throughout the learning experience.

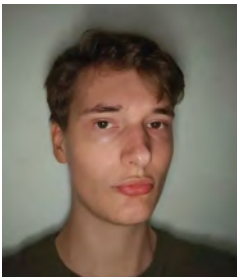
THE PAINTINGS

BY STUDENTS OF THE
INSTITUTE FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS, MCAST



Song and Dance

Oil on canvas
150 x 100 cm



Aleksandar Ivanov Popov

Aleksandar Ivanov Popov is currently studying Fine Arts at MCAST, with a focus on painting and mixed media. His work explores themes of human life, particularly the emotions tied to struggle, nostalgia, memory, and joy.

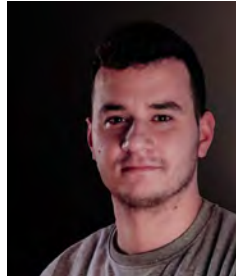
Description

This artwork was created for the Ombudsman's *Art for Rights* project. The chosen theme is the right to be a person. It reflects the song and dance of the uphill struggles of human life, where equality and freedom are celebrated in theory but often contradicted in practice.

The composition conveys this struggle through slanted positioning, with figures posed in rigid and contorted forms. Yet, within these movements emerges a sense of flow and determination, capturing the lengths people go to in pursuit of a better life, even at great personal cost. It is a reflection of humanity's resilience, but also of the harsh reality that progress is often written in sacrifice.

Humanitas

Oil on canvas
100 x 70 cm



Jacob George Azzopardi

Jacob George Azzopardi (b. Malta) is a visual artist whose practice bridges classical and contemporary traditions, merging the aesthetics of Baroque and Dutch Golden Age painting with modern themes. Currently in his final year of the Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), he is dedicated to exploring how traditional techniques can remain relevant in today's artistic discourse.

His work is characterised by detailed craftsmanship, an interest in local heritage, and a focus on universal human concerns. Through his paintings, Jacob seeks to balance technical mastery with deep emotional and philosophical meaning, often using the human figure as both subject and symbol.

Description

Humanitas explores the concept of human dignity through the universal act of carrying another person. The composition highlights both strength and vulnerability: the figure who carries embodies endurance and empathy, while the one being carried reflects fragility, mortality, and our shared dependence on care.

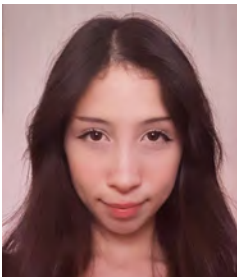
Contrasts of light and shadow emphasise the resilience and delicacy of human life. Muscular detail and raw skin tones root dignity in physical experience, through pain, endurance, and support. Expressive drapery functions as both covering and cloak, symbolising protection and respect. While recalling the classical imagery of the Pietà, the painting shifts the focus from religious salvation to human solidarity.

Humanitas stands as a reflection on our timeless duty toward one another: to uphold dignity, to support those who cannot stand alone, and to embody compassion as the truest measure of humanity.



Women's Dignity

Oil on canvas
80 x 80 cm



Amy Theuma

Amy Theuma, 20, is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art at MCAST. Her passion for art began in early childhood, when she would always carry a pencil and paper with her. Over the years, her interest in both art and its history deepened, shaping her decision to study the subject formally. At MCAST, she has explored her artistic abilities and is now developing her own contemporary visual language to communicate her ideas.

Amy often gravitates towards pastels and soft imagery, while also drawing influence from classical art traditions. Her practice spans oil painting, digital media, and pencil drawing, through which she seeks to merge traditional techniques with modern approaches to expression.

Description

Women's Dignity depicts four female figures painted in monochrome black and white. The mist-like background represents the loss of individuality, reflecting how women are often reduced to their gender alone. The vulnerable poses convey the feeling of being targeted, raising questions about safety, gender-based violence, abuse, healthcare inequality, and over-sexualisation.

The slightly unfinished appearance of the work adds to its rawness, suggesting the stripping away of identity. The piece challenges viewers to confront the persistent inequalities faced by women and the universal sense of vulnerability many experiences within society.

Expat or Immigrant?

Oil on canvas
50 x 70 cm



Annette Lillethun

Annette Lillethun is a Thai-Norwegian artist based in Malta. Having spent most of her life in Thailand, she has long pursued a passion for art that began in high school. She started her Fine Arts studies at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, before the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted her course. She later continued her education at the MCAST Institute for Creative Arts, where she first experimented with oil paints and discovered their expressive possibilities beyond acrylics.

Annette works across a variety of mediums including sculpture, mixed media, textiles, and multimedia, though painting remains central to her practice and the medium that first drew her into art.

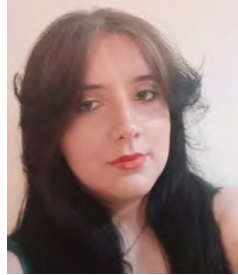
Description

Expat or Immigrant? questions the language used to describe people who move across borders. While definitions distinguish between those who relocate permanently (immigrants) and those who live abroad temporarily (expatriates), in practice the terms are applied inconsistently. An African farmer working in Malta with plans to return home would, by definition, be an expat, while a Spanish man retiring permanently in Malta would be an immigrant. Yet, the labels are often reversed, reflecting systemic bias.

Words matter. When misused, they reinforce prejudice and privilege based on skin colour, economic status, or nationality. This artwork depicts a migrant boat where the passengers have been replaced by figures inspired by men the artist observed on yachts in Malta's harbours, challenging viewers to reconsider the labels they use and the inequities they perpetuate.

Unseen Chains

Oil on canvas
100 x 70 cm



Cassidy Agius

Cassidy Agius, 21, is an emerging artist in her final year of a Bachelor's in Fine Art at MCAST. From a young age, she has been passionate about painting, often drawing inspiration from the expressive qualities of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. A devoted admirer of Vincent van Gogh, her work reflects heightened emotion and symbolic depth.

In her recent practice, Cassidy has shifted her focus to contemporary issues affecting women, particularly the fight for women's rights. Through her art, she explores subjects such as domestic violence and entrenched social norms, seeking to create awareness and provoke dialogue. Her work combines self-expression with social consciousness, positioning art as a tool for resistance and advocacy.

Description

Unseen Chains confronts the issue of women's rights, with a focus on the prevalence of domestic violence in Malta, where women account for the majority of victims. The painting depicts a woman restrained by multiple hands, a stark representation of domination, repression, and the suffocating grip of abuse.

Painted in monochrome, the work highlights both the brutality of these experiences and the resilience of the women who endure them. The subject's defiant expression becomes a powerful symbol of strength and resistance. By presenting this raw imagery, the artwork calls on viewers to reflect on the enduring struggle for equality, safety, and justice.



Path to Peace

Oil and acrylic on wood
84 x 60 cm



Jacky Zammit

Jacky Zammit is pursuing a Fine Arts degree with a special focus on ceramics, a medium through which she explores intricate techniques and expressive forms. Alongside this, she is developing her skills in painting, using it as a complementary outlet to articulate her artistic vision. Her long-term aspiration is to teach and share her knowledge with aspiring artists, recognising education as a vital tool for fostering creativity.

In her personal life, Jacky places great importance on maintaining a peaceful mindset, a principle that deeply informs her work. Nature and animals provide her with comfort and harmony, and she often seeks solace in the outdoors or in the companionship of animals when feeling overwhelmed. These experiences renew her spirit and inspire her creative practice, shaping artworks that reflect tranquility and the pursuit of inner balance.

Description

Path to Peace presents a figure floating above a harsh landscape dominated by menacing metal spikes. Although marked by injury, the figure remains resilient, embodying determination and the search for peace. The spikes serve as a metaphor for Malta's relentless construction environment, where cranes and building sites have become a daily reality, often evoking fatigue, frustration, and entrapment.

Yet, the painting seeks not only to highlight struggle but also to provide a contemplative space for viewers. It offers a moment of tranquillity and respite from the pressures of contemporary life. Through this balance of tension and calm, the artwork aspires to inspire reflection, foster hope, and create a sense of connection between the viewer and the work.



Hostage

Oil on canvas
70 x 50 cm



Sandra Grima

Sandra Grima is a Fine Arts student at MCAST, exploring painting as her primary medium of expression. Her practice engages with conceptual themes, often using visual metaphor and abstraction to address social and personal concerns. Through her work, she seeks to merge technical exploration with symbolic imagery, reflecting on contemporary struggles while leaving space for viewers to interpret meaning in their own way.

Description

Hostage reflects on the constraints placed upon human freedom and creativity. The fragmented body, painted with deliberate abstraction, symbolises a person restrained both physically and psychologically. The title emphasises captivity—not only in its literal sense but also as a metaphor for social, cultural, or systemic pressures that limit self-expression.

The work's disjointed composition, marked by reckless placement of forms and contrasts of light and shadow, mirrors chaos and tension. Colour is applied intuitively rather than systematically, enhancing the feeling of disruption while maintaining consistency within the visual structure. In this way, the painting embodies both disorder and unity, conveying the struggle between repression and resilience.



Metamorph

Oil on canvas
100 x 68 cm



Paul M. Cassar

Paul M. Cassar began studying art at the age of ten under the mentorship of Gozitan artist George Scicluna. He later pursued his studies at secondary school with Manuel Mizzi, attaining an O Level in Art, and continued at A Level under the guidance of Mario Cassar.

Alongside his academic work, Paul has gained experience in stage design, creating scenery for several musicals staged at the Oratory Don Bosco, including *My Fair Lady* (2022), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (2023), and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (2025). He has also exhibited his work at the Għaqda Dilettanti Ġimgħa il-Kbira Għawdex (Good Friday) exhibitions and at the President's Palace in Malta. He is currently reading for a degree in Fine Arts at the MCAST Institute of the Creative Arts.

Description

Metamorph explores the theme of cultural change in Malta. While the island is rich in heritage, the artist reflects on how this is gradually deteriorating with time. By blending elements of the past with the present, the work highlights the stark contrasts between traditional ways of life and modern realities.

Through this juxtaposition, the painting seeks to raise awareness of cultural decline and provoke reflection on the importance of preserving heritage as a defining part of community identity.

Unity of Diversity

Oil on canvas
40 x 100 cm



Tatiana Gauci

Tatiana Gauci is a Fine Arts student at the MCAST Institute of Creative Arts, where she is pursuing a BA in Fine Arts. Her practice moves between realism and abstraction, using painting to explore memory, place, and cultural identity. She is particularly interested in how places hold stories, shaped by both individual and collective pasts.

Through her work, Tatiana reflects on traditions and the small moments of everyday life as threads that weave a sense of belonging. Her creative process often begins with familiar imagery, encouraging viewers to connect their personal experiences with broader cultural narratives. In this way, her art acts as a bridge between the intimate and the shared, creating a space for reflection and connection.

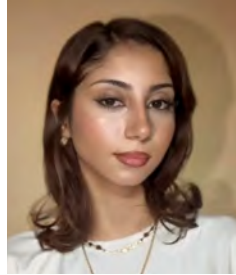
Description

Unity of Diversity invites viewers to pause and acknowledge the quiet yet powerful presence of cultural identity in everyday life. The painting celebrates the different traditions and communities that have found a home in Malta, portraying individuals of varied origins in interaction with one another.

By presenting Malta not only as a place with a rich history but also as a meeting point of cultures, the work becomes an invitation to engage with humanity in its many forms. It honours both diversity and heritage, suggesting that identity is most meaningful when understood as a shared human experience.

The Voice of the East

Oil on canvas
70 x 50 cm



Yousra El Migrab

Yousra El Migrab is a Maltese-Libyan artist whose practice is rooted in the exploration of cultural identity, memory, and heritage. Drawing on both personal experience and historical narratives, she works across painting, photography, textiles, and mixed media. Her art weaves together Maltese and Arab influences, reflecting on how tradition and contemporary expression intersect.

Through her work, Yousra considers how art can serve as a bridge between past and present, while emphasising the importance of memory in shaping identity.

Description

The Voice of the East portrays Oum Kalthoum, the Egyptian singer whose voice united audiences across the Middle East and North Africa. Known as “The Voice of the East,” Kalthoum performed sung poetry drawn from classical Arab poets, creating a cultural legacy that continues to resonate.

For the artist, this work is both personal and cultural. As someone of Arab heritage, Yousra sought to honour a figure who embodies resilience, artistry, and pride. Kalthoum’s success was remarkable in a conservative society where women’s public performances were often stigmatised. Through determination, she earned respect and authority in a male-dominated world of music, becoming a cultural icon.

The painting also carries familial significance: Yousra’s father grew up surrounded by Kalthoum’s music, and through his stories she inherited an appreciation for the values of pride, beauty, and belonging within Arab culture. The work reflects this intergenerational connection, where music becomes a bridge between past and present.



**Tiżfnu
Għad-Daqqa
tal-Iżviluppaturi!**

*Oil on wood panel
90 x 122.5 cm*



Amy Theuma

Amy Theuma is a Maltese fine artist, student, and activist currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology. Her practice spans multiple mediums and is often influenced by nature, literature, myth and paganism, history, and activism. She seeks to create works that pose questions and provoke reflection, frequently supported by research and accompanied by her own writings. Outside her studies, Amy devotes her time to new experiences, participating in Malta's alternative scene, and caring for animals.

Description

Tiżfnu Għad-Daqqa Tal-Iżviluppaturi! was conceived as a direct response to overdevelopment and the erosion of Malta's cultural and natural heritage. It channels exhaustion, anger, and love for the artist's homeland into a work that functions both as artistic expression and civic outcry.

Inspired by Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People*, the composition reimagines Malta as a nation where citizens rise to defend the future, quality of life, and collective well-being. The infernal landscape, populated by pigs, is presented both literally and metaphorically, symbolising greed, the destruction of agricultural land, the loss of ODZ areas, and the erasure of history for financial gain.

The work is contextualised within ongoing threats posed by proposed legislative reforms, including Bill 143 and Bill 144, which grant extended powers to the Planning Authority, dismantle existing safeguards, and weaken citizens' ability to challenge unsustainable development. In this sense, the piece not only reflects an artistic vision but also amplifies a civic demand: to protect Malta's heritage and resist destructive forces.



No Space to Breathe

Oil on canvas
90 x 125 cm



Mariah Buhagiar

Mariah Buhagiar, 24, is a Maltese artist currently reading for a Bachelor's degree in Fine Art at MCAST. Her practice focuses primarily on oil painting, with a special interest in human figures and portraiture. Recently, she has expanded her artistic exploration to include photography and film, adding new dimensions to her creative expression.

Mariah is dedicated to refining her skills, experimenting with varied techniques, and developing her artistic voice. Her work reflects both a commitment to technical mastery and a desire to confront contemporary issues through a personal yet socially engaged perspective.

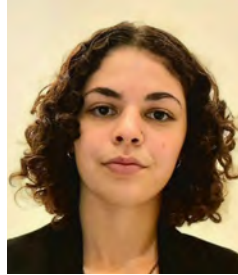
Description

No Space to Breathe responds to the pressures of overpopulation and overcrowding in Malta, one of the most densely populated countries in the European Union, with nearly 1,800 people per square kilometre. Inspired by a BBC article that described Comino as "hell on earth," the painting captures the suffocating reality of crowded spaces during the summer season.

Figures are shown packed tightly together, yet many strike posed gestures, referencing the habitual act of photographing so-called idyllic spots. This ironic contrast between staged imagery and lived experience highlights the dissonance of "Instagram vs. reality." The work invites viewers to reflect on the environmental, social, and emotional strain of overdevelopment and tourism on a small island nation with limited space.

Moira Leaving the Red Centre

Oil on canvas
70 x 100 cm



Casey Caruana

Casey Caruana is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice explores memory, identity, and the tension between past and present. Her work was recently showcased in the exhibition *Dreams of Past and Present* at the Citadella, Gozo, in July 2025.

Drawing on personal experience and a strong interest in storytelling, Casey builds narratives that convey diverse perspectives and messages, often inviting viewers into layered and thought-provoking worlds. Currently based in Malta and pursuing a Fine Arts degree, she continues to develop her visual language through themes of nostalgia, emotional resonance, and narrative depth.

Description

Moira Leaving the Red Centre captures the pivotal moment in *The Handmaid's Tale* when Moira, an oppressed Handmaid-in-training, escapes the regime. Depicted as both defiant and hopeful, she becomes a symbol of resistance for others. In her left hand, she grips the cow taser once used by the Aunts for discipline, reclaiming it as a tool of empowerment. With her right hand, she casts aside her red cloak, her clenched fist raised as a universal gesture of strength and revolt.

Behind her, the regime's "Sun" emblem is transformed into a radiant halo, elevating Moira to a saint-like figure of resilience. A soldier salutes her, unaware of her disguise as an Aunt. Through these symbols, the painting calls for gender equality and demonstrates that resistance, even when subtle or non-violent, can be transformative.

The work draws inspiration from Margaret Atwood's novel: "Moira stood up straight and looked firmly ahead... and disappeared." (*The Handmaid's Tale*, p.116)

Peace

Oil on canvas
59.4 x 84.1 cm



Emily Schembri

Emily Schembri is a developing artist whose practice engages with surrealism, realism, and horror themes. Currently studying Art and Design at MCAST, she uses painting as a form of self-expression and as a means to explore broader social and cultural issues. Inspired by surrealist traditions and symbolic imagery, she creates artworks that invite viewers to reflect on universal values such as empathy, unity, and coexistence.

Emily places strong emphasis on symbolism as a way of communicating ideas that transcend words. Through the use of visual metaphors, she captures complex emotions and experiences, often drawing from personal reflection. As she continues to refine her practice, she remains committed to balancing technical skill with meaningful narrative, using art as a platform for reflection, awareness, and change.

Description

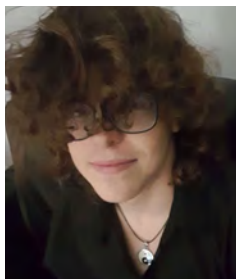
Peace reflects a deep contemplation on the meaning of harmony and the individual's role in fostering it. A dove, traditionally recognised as a messenger of peace, is positioned at the figure's mouth, symbolising the power of voice, dialogue, and expression in building unity. From the eyes, olive branches emerge, a metaphor for vision rooted in reconciliation and the belief that peace must first be imagined before it can be realised.

A peace symbol on the figure's cheek underscores the importance of identity and the responsibility each person carries in shaping a compassionate society. The contrasts within the sky highlight both the difficulties and the possibilities of achieving lasting peace. Through this composition, the artist invites viewers to reflect on their own part in nurturing understanding. Ultimately, the work stands as a reminder that peace is not passive but an active pursuit requiring imagination, courage, and empathy.



The Right to Create

Oil on canvas
100 x 80 cm



Jake Psaila Wareing

Jake Psaila Wareing is an aspiring artist currently studying at the MCAST Institute for Creative Arts. His work often explores the strange, uncanny, and unsettling, with a particular interest in the human body and its parts, both literal and conceptual. While much of his practice draws on elements of “body horror,” Jake adapts his methods and structures to align this theme with a wide range of subjects.

For Jake, the creative process itself takes precedence over the final product. He values enjoyment, experimentation, and discovery in each brushstroke and compositional choice. He believes that genuine pride in one’s work arises from this passion, and that when an artist enjoys the process, it inevitably shows in the outcome.

Description

The Right to Create reflects on an often-overlooked right essential to artistic life: the freedom to create, to make, and to build. With the mantra “to make for the sake of it,” the artist employed a collage-inspired method, fragmenting anatomical body parts and reassembling them into a chaotic yet purposeful composition.

The abstract design, built from reckless placement and stylistic distortion, conveys both complexity and freedom. A block-like shading pattern emphasises form, while colours were deliberately mismatched yet anchored to specific body parts, creating a sense of consistency within disorder. In this way, the painting celebrates creation as an act of freedom and play, highlighting the intrinsic value of making without external justification.



Female Rights, Firm Stance

Oil on canvas
80 x 60 cm



Aliyah Zarb

Aliyah Zarb, 19, is a Fine Arts student whose passion for art was first inspired by her grandfather. Painting has always been her preferred medium, with a particular admiration for the depth and precision of realism. Over time, she has explored different styles and techniques, each allowing her to express concepts and emotions in new ways. For Aliyah, art is both a lifelong dialogue and a skill, a space where tradition meets experimentation, shaping her artistic development and influencing her outlook on the world.

Description

Female Rights, Firm Stance addresses the ongoing struggle for women's rights, a subject that remains urgent and relevant today. The artist depicts herself in an army uniform, a role often stereotyped as masculine, to emphasise the strength and resilience of women.

The composition conveys intensity through bold, rough brushstrokes and a strong, upright posture. These elements symbolise confidence and determination. The work functions as both a personal statement and a wider reflection on the continuing fight for equality, reminding viewers that the pursuit of justice remains unfinished in the modern world.



The Worth Within Us All

Oil on canvas
(paintings) and pen on
passepartout (poem)

Construction worker
30 x 24.7 cm

Farmer
40 x 30 cm

Herdsmen
30 x 40 cm

Housewife
30 x 25 cm

Poem
40 x 30 cm



Maddalena Mifsud

Born and raised in Xagħra, Gozo, Maddalena Mifsud is an aspiring artist in her final year of a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Fine Art at the MCAST Institute for the Creative Arts. Her interest in art began in childhood and strengthened through her secondary education in Applied Art. She has also gained experience working alongside a local ceramic artist.

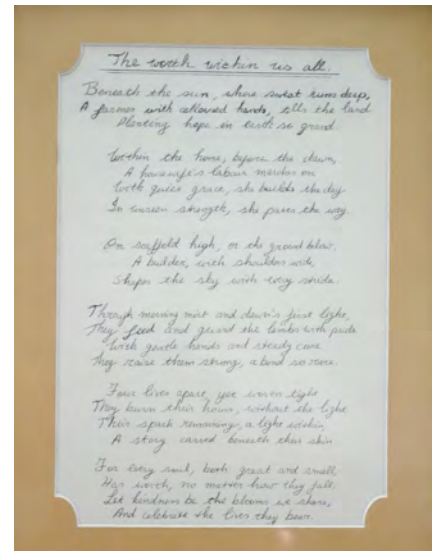
Maddalena's practice spans oil painting, sculpture, photography, and, more recently, embroidery. Her work is heavily influenced by nature, flowers, bright colours, and rich textures. Beyond her studio, she enjoys reading and engaging with the local art scene. Her long-term goal is to inspire future generations to embrace the art world as a space for creativity and free expression.



Description

The *Worth Within Us All* centres on the theme of human dignity, highlighting the indispensable value of workers in labour-intensive yet often underappreciated roles. The series consists of four portraits: a construction worker overseeing a site, a farmer tending a field, a herdsman feeding a lamb, and a housewife engaged in household duties. Each painting draws attention to the unseen effort and responsibility carried by individuals whose work sustains daily life.

Accompanying the portraits is a poem that further emphasises the struggles and importance of these figures. Collectively, the works serve as a reminder that without the contribution of such workers, society would face significant disruption. The series is both a tribute and a call to recognise dignity in all forms of labour.



Rubble and Hope

Oil and acrylics on wood
60 x 80 cm



Daniela Galea

Daniela Galea is a Fine Art student whose practice is rooted in mixed media, with a strong focus on abstraction and material experimentation. While much of her work explores non-figurative expression, this painting marks a departure from her usual approach. By turning to figurative subjects and employing oil paint alongside acrylics, she sought to engage with themes of history and memory through a more narrative visual language.

Her artistic exploration reflects an interest in how creative expression can connect to cultural and historical contexts, expanding her practice beyond abstraction while maintaining her commitment to experimentation with materials.

Description

Rubble and Hope is set against the ruins of wartime Malta, capturing a moment of everyday resilience. Women are shown conversing and washing dishes while children play among the rubble, embodying a community's determination to endure despite destruction.

Rendered in monochrome tones, the work reflects both the hardships of war and the spirit of perseverance that emerged from it. By highlighting the resilience of ordinary people, the painting also points to the historical experiences that continue to shape values of strength, solidarity, and endurance in Maltese society today.

