

Lifestyle & Culture

The common heritage mankind: Our response



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The 2020 edition of the APS Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale, under the artistic direction of Professor Giuseppe Schembri Bonaci, will feature many international and local artists all discussing the relationship between the spiritual and the environmental focusing on the links with the protection of the planet, all species, human or otherwise and the notion of spirituality within this seminal debate.

In the 1960s and 70s, Malta spearheaded this concept of the Common Heritage of Mankind. Prof. Schembri Bonaci's relationship with Arvid Pardo is recalled in this year's edition of the biennale. Their relationship developed into a full scale collaboration resulting in an enriching exchange of ideas between the two. The 2020 Mdina Biennale will regenerate and re-ignite Pardo's political philosophy which did radically change the whole structure of international law. Pardo's struggles in the 60s and 70s, alongside Mann Borgese's, have been immortalised in International Law in spite of the fact that the contemporary neoliberal objectives in today's society is reopening a violent abuse of the planet negating the question of the continuity of humanity's home.

Pardo, a diplomat, scholar and professor, born to a Maltese father and a Swedish mother is nowadays known as the "the Father of the Law of the Sea conference". In many ways, his prophetic speech in 1967 at the United Nations General Assembly paved way for a new wave of thinking. His work contributed to the study and creation of the modern law of the sea, taken up by the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea. Pardo, being the first Parliamentary representative of Malta, targeted the unfair exploitation of natural resources in high seas, criticising the efforts of developed countries to exploit what was being naturally produced in the ocean as their own without any limits. Pardo challenged this and claims arose after no well-defined legal framework was set up.

Pardo criticised the resource manage-



Forgive us for we have misunderstood

ment that was adopted allowing common resources that were being utilised unreasonably by the public, corporate and national authorities. He imperatively claimed that the oceans should not be considered as resources that fall in natural jurisdictions but become more what he is most commonly known for "the common heritage of mankind". This speech became the basis of the Consultation for the Oceans and was adopted in 1982 when a send of fostering started making its way through the ranks in order to maintain peace and security. Industrialised UN member states did not concur with Pardo and his claim for

the common heritage and opposed this law, taking the opportunity to take advantage of this freedom. Following this issue, Pardo realised his disappointment in 1982, outlining more cases of misuse making this concept of common heritage a shot at promoting freedom in exploiting natural resources and disguising this under the pretences that it is being done for the benefit of mankind. Pardo's revolution seeped into other fundamental modes of international behaviour such as cultural heritage, space and cosmos, informative technology, genetic engineering and climate.

Is our climate crisis at the moment a result of many exploits that developed countries have overused and are now dependent on it? The relationship between spirituality and the environment is an intriguing concept that once researched somewhat becomes clearer. What happened? What is our relationship with the environment and where did it start? Biblically, all references point to the Garden of Eden and the creation of Adam and Eve. However, nowadays, the root of what can count as spiritual is humans' fear of extinction. Many activists who have made it their life's mission to work against the many opposing forces to substantiate what inevitably will be the end of the world. The latter will result in the longing to have faith that the environment will heal itself in one way or the other. Many participating artists in this year's exhibition have explored this relationship, some even going back to the Bible and working their way into interpreting what is going on in the world today.

Avaritia, a powerful piece by Tony Cassar will discuss greed, as an artificial and rapacious desire to acquire material possessions. This project asks the spectator to reflect their position in society. Whether passive or active in protests, one must not deny that the world is currently experiencing the power of destruction fuelled by greed. On the other hand, Darren Tanti questions the relationship between humans and nature in *Forgive us, for we have misunderstood*. This hybrid artwork, which will allow the visitor to manipulate it, explores humanity and its automatic right for exploitation of its surrounding environments. The banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after their defiance fuels the concept of this artwork outlining how humans inflict suffering on the urban and natural worlds.

International artist Thomas C. Chung references the same biblical tale in his work "And then the sun was gone..." In this video installation, Chung imagines the world as pure, drifting over time and feeling displaced. The apple, symbolically referring to youth and wisdom, is also seen as the origin of sin and love. The latter features again in Michael von Cube's *Adam & Eve & la m&e* where the world's economy prides itself on creating something better but at the same destroying it by turning soil and air into poison.

The APS Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale is open from 13 March until 18 April. For more details and to keep updated visit www.mdinabiennale.com

