

Lifestyle & Culture

Experiencing the Modern and Contemporary in a Baroque context

■ Hannah Dowling

More often than not, when curating a museum's collection, one often tends to take a chronological approach when grouping certain paintings together. This is certainly the case when it comes to the Mdina Cathedral Museum, where each room holds a number of works from a particular period or master, as is the case in the Baroque Hall and the Dürer collection respectively. However, whilst all of these works date more or less to a similar time period, there is one work in particular that stands out; the work by Anton Inglott.

Inglott was a Maltese artist of the 20th century who became particularly notable in his artistic career during the latter years of his life. In terms of artistic background, he received training much like every other artist during the 1930s and was a contemporary of great Maltese masters such as Esprit Barthes, Emvin Cremona and Willie Apap. Inglott, along with his contemporaries attended the Reggia Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome. However, his style is considerably different to those of his artistic peers.

What is interesting to note is that Anton Inglott is one of the only 20th century artists that has a work on display in the Mdina Cathedral Museum, despite it being relatively sectioned off from the rest. The link between the traditional art collection, the modern, and the contemporary is essentially what the APS Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale targets; fusing the past with the present. Under the artistic direction of Giuseppe

Schembri Bonaci, this magnificent Baroque building serves as the foundation for the contemporary artworks that are to be installed in the coming months. Much like Inglott's work, current-day artists are to be presenting their works among the great works of Maltese Baroque giants, however, instead of being separated by the time period, they are going to be fused together, resulting in a beautiful interrelationship between the art of the Old Masters who certainly left their footprint in the history of Maltese art, together with new and upcoming artists, both local and international, who will be exhibiting contemporary digital installations dealing with the theme of the current environmental crisis. Through this comparison, one is truly able to see and appreciate how much art has evolved throughout the years.

Inglott is best known for his spiritual and mystic style, and spirituality is a core characteristic in all the APS Mdina Biennale editions. Presently, a substantial number of his works are being exhibited on Gozo at Il-Hagar Museum in Rabat. Through this exhibition of portraits, sacred scenes, still lifes, landscapes, studies, and sketches, one can truly appreciate the development of his style from a relatively conservative one to a mystic and spiritual one which has become pivotal in Maltese Modern art dealing with the sacred. The exhibition is currently open and runs until the 27th November 2019. Thematically, one could say that the art of Inglott and the collection of the Mdina Cathedral Museum create a beautiful har-



Anton Inglott, St. Francis (Image courtesy: Mdina Cathedral Museum)

mony together, because it is very much indebted to the religious and secular themes that were central to the Baroque period. He tackles these subjects with a new style, mainly with a monochromatic palette. Interestingly, it is these types of transformations that will be seen in the installations that are to be presented at the APS Mdina Biennale. Artists will be presenting works that defy the norms and transform the ideals with regard to their own perceptions, all of which will be immersed in this beautifully classical setting, thus providing a great contrast.

Much like the beauty of the exhibition showcasing the life and art of Anton Inglott, the APS Mdina Biennale will also showcase not one artist in particular, but several. Each of the installations will be telling a story within the works that they will be presenting, all of which fall under the common theme and concern for the upcoming edition; Regaining a Paradise Lost, which is currently a primary topic of international discussion. Held within the closed walls of the beautiful Cathedral Museum, it is thanks to events and exhibitions like these that one can truly appreciate the relationship between the art of the past and the present. One may even come to notice classical artworks and contemporary installations that tackle more or less a similar theme, the only dividing factor being their very distinctive styles.

The APS Mdina Biennale will be held at the Mdina Cathedral Museum and will run from 13 March until 18 April 2020. www.mdina-biennale.com

Teatru Manoel and MADC to stage Oscar Wilde classic 'The Importance of Being Earnest'

Following their successful collaboration on The Jew of Malta, Teatru Manoel and the MADC have joined forces once more to bring Oscar Wilde's perennial favourite, The Importance of Being Earnest, to the Manoel stage.

Popular ever since its 1895 debut, the play is a comedy teeming with genteel characters and farcical situations that poke fun at Victorian mores. It is the epitome of Wildean output, and its dialogue is peppered with the witticisms penned by a beloved author who remains quotable to this day.

For the production of this classic comedy, Teatru Manoel and the MADC have brought together a superb ensemble, including Davide Tucci, Edward Caruana Galizia, Maxine Aquilina, Michela Farrugia, Marylu Coppini, Isabel Warrington and Michael Mangion.

Tucci stars as John Worthing, a carefree young gentleman who creates a fictitious brother named



Ernest. Ernest's wicked ways afford John an excuse to leave his country home from time to time and journey to London, where he stays with his close friend and confidant, Algernon Moncrieff. It is not long, however, before the existence of this alter ego leads to much confusion, comedy, and ultimately, love.

The Importance of Being

Ernest is directed by veteran playwright, actor, and director Malcolm Galea, and he is clearly very excited to be working on the production. "The Importance of Being Earnest is my absolute favourite play," he says enthusiastically. "Reading it for the first time when I was about 21 years old made me decide to become a playwright. Directing it at the



beautiful Teatru Manoel, the national theatre of Malta, is a dream come true. Those who are familiar with the play will certainly appreciate the opportunity to see it on such a scale, whereas those who are yet to discover it and Oscar Wilde's inimitable wit are in for a royal treat."

The Importance of Being Earnest



will be performed at Teatru Manoel on 31 January, and 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9 February 2020. Friday and Saturday performances at 8pm, Sunday performances at 7pm. Tickets are at €10, €20, and €25, while discounted tickets are available for students and senior citizens. Bookings is on 2124 6389 or via www.teatrumanoel.mt - Classification 12+