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*In Minor Keys*: Listening through the noise at Venice Biennale 2026

The Malta

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Anthony Hopkins, New York, 2001, Hannibal. Image courtesy of the artist, Lorenzo Agius

## LORENZO AGIUS: FRAMES THE ICONIC

The acclaimed British-Maltese photographer Lorenzo Agius brings his celebrated portraits of film legends to Corinthia Palace Malta.

>> Find out more on page 15.



Candice Breitz, *Hot Potato*, exhibition view KOW 2026. Photo by Ladislav Zajac

## Berlin Gallery Weekend

*"Berlin shows that artists can still be free, the market will recover, and the thirst for art will never go away."*

Giant commercial galleries like Esther Schipper Gallery and Galerie Max Hetzler showed colossal works. Up for grabs, was a Jeff Koons Cicciolina sculpture and XXX photo as well as the Tracey Emin video - currently also being shown at the Tate Modern - at her 'Second Life' show. This work resonates with me - showing the middle finger to the men and a community that slut-shamed Tracey in her youth.

Energy, after parties immersed in the ever present Berlin nightlife culture, the intellectual and stimulating generosity of gallerists, curators and artists is palpable. Definitely a fixture in my calendar!

>> Review by Dr. Joanna Delia, page 27.

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# REGGIE BURROWS HODGES *Mela*

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Lily Agius

**C** Contents / Highlights

HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE...



**EXHIBITION | MICAS** *Labour, Landscape and Light*  
Drawing inspiration from Malta and the dramatic influence of Caravaggio, Reggie Burrows Hodges presents a major new exhibition at MICAS. Created entirely on the islands, *Mela* explores themes of work, resilience and collective identity through some of the artist's most ambitious works to date.



**BOOK | RYAN FALZON** *From Malta to the World*  
With the publication of *You Know The Sun Bothers Me*, Ryan Falzon's celebrated novel *SAJF* makes its English-language debut. Bringing a distinctive contemporary Maltese voice to international audiences, the translation opens new conversations about place, identity and the changing realities of life in the Mediterranean.



**EVENT | SOUTH KOREA** *Bejn / in-between: Building Bridges Across Continents*  
Marking Malta's first national pavilion at the Gwangju Biennale, *Bejn / in-between* brings together artists, poets and technologists in a project that explores connection, difference and shared cultural ground.



**EVENT | STREET ART FESTIVAL** *[Error 404]: Human Not Found*  
As technology, conflict and social fragmentation reshape contemporary life, Sliema Arts Festival 2026 asks a simple but urgent question: where has the human gone?



**MUSIC | GHANA** *Songs Beneath the City*  
Beneath Valletta's streets, Folk Underground brings Malta's living tradition of ghana to new audiences through intimate performances rooted in storytelling, music and community.



**PHOTOGRAPHY | FILM** *A Homecoming in Portraits*  
*ICONS OF FILM* brings Lorenzo Agius's celebrated portraits of actors, filmmakers and cultural icons to Malta. In this interview, the artist and curator discuss cinema, identity, cultural belonging and the enduring power of the photographic image.



**FILM | ENVIRONMENT** *Deposizione: Art, Memory and the Wounds of the Mediterranean*  
Teresa's latest film extends research first developed in Malta through *Deposizione*, her site-specific work for maltabiennale. art 2024. Connecting art history, spirituality, environmental destruction and social injustice.



**REVIEW | VENICE BIENNALE 2026** *In Minor Keys: Listening Through the Noise*  
As the Venice Biennale unfolds under the shadow of loss, politics and global unrest, this year's edition explores poetry as a form of resistance. We reflect on a biennial where whispers compete with the noise of the world beyond its walls.



**REVIEW | BERLIN GALLERY WEEKEND** *Where Art Still Feels Possible*  
Across galleries, studios and unexpected spaces, Berlin Gallery Weekend revealed a scene that is politically engaged, intellectually generous and unafraid to experiment.

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# Malta International Contemporary Art Space formally opens new exhibition

## *Reggie Burrows Hodges: Mela*

**T**he Malta International Contemporary Art Space (MICAS) has opened its latest exhibition by Reggie Burrows Hodges (b. 1965, Compton, California), marking his first-ever European solo show.

Running until 30 August, *Reggie Burrows Hodges: Mela* presents the most ambitious body of work of the artist's career, with large-scale canvases filling MICAS's galleries. Among them is *Mamajamma*, a monumental painting over 4.5 metres tall and 8 metres wide, created in response to Caravaggio's *The Beheading of St John the Baptist*.

The exhibition marks a new chapter for MICAS, with Hodges relocating his studio to Malta to produce the works. The 30 paintings, all created locally, reflect his engagement with Maltese culture and challenge traditional postcard images of the island. Hodges describes the exhibition as "a poem to Malta".



Photo by Roberto Goodman courtesy of MICAS

MICAS executive chairperson Phyllis Muscat said the institution invites artists to immerse themselves in Malta's environment and society, fostering

genuine artistic engagement rather than simply displaying work.

Artistic Director Edith Devaney noted

that Hodges first visited Malta in 2024 before deciding to develop a new body of work inspired by the islands. His *Labor* series takes on a Maltese perspective, exploring themes of work, dignity, and environment through his signature shadow-like figures.

Hodges's use of dramatic light and shadow reflects the influence of Caravaggio, whose work he encountered early in his stay at St John's Co-Cathedral. The exhibition title references the Maltese word "mela", often used to introduce a thought, symbolising the artist's dialogue with place, people, and landscape.

Through subjects ranging from coastline to labour, the exhibition highlights themes of community, endurance, and human dignity. Hodges emphasised his commitment to capturing the spirit of Malta and its people through this work.

## RYAN FALZON'S *SAJF* Reaches English-Language Audiences Through New Translation

**O**n 16 June 2026, Maltese author and visual artist Ryan Falzon's acclaimed novel *SAJF* was launched in English as *You Know The Sun Bothers Me*.

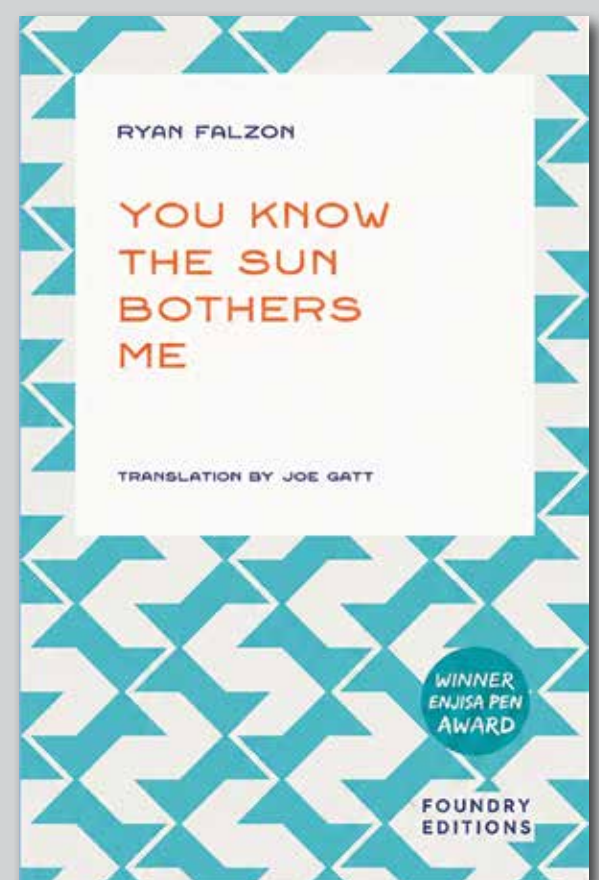
First published by Kotba Calleja in 2020, *SAJF* established itself as one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary Maltese literature. Set against a rapidly changing Malta, the novel follows millennials navigating shifting identities, nightlife, digital culture, and the realities of island life in the twenty-first century.

The English edition, published by Foundry Editions, introduces Falzon's work to an international readership. Rather than presenting Malta through familiar postcard imagery, the novel offers an intimate

and unfiltered portrait of a society undergoing rapid transformation, exploring themes of friendship, desire, alienation, and belonging.

Translated by Joe Gatt, the book preserves the novel's distinctive voice while making it accessible to new audiences. Its publication also highlights the growing importance of literary translation in bringing works from smaller language communities into wider cultural conversations.

Known for his work as both a writer and visual artist, Falzon frequently explores questions of place, identity, and social change. *You Know The Sun Bothers Me* extends these concerns to an international stage, offering readers a compelling contemporary portrait of Malta. **📖**



**+** News / Exhibition / Edwards Lowell



Laying Down, Emma Weller 2026

## HIJA: AN ART EXHIBITION GROUNDED IN PERSONAL MYTHOLOGY AND MATERIAL SYMBOLISM

**T**his September, Gozo-based artists Emma Weller and Mieke Buddenberg present *Hija*, an art exhibition grounded in personal mythology and material symbolism. Spanning sculpture, painting, drawing, textiles and installation, the exhibition is open to the public for one weekend only.

Through the upcoming exhibition *Hija*, meaning ‘she’ or ‘she is’ in Maltese, Weller and Buddenberg reflect on womanhood and engage with broader ideas surrounding identity and perception. Within the body of work, materiality and abstraction convey deep psychological states. Animal imagery also appears throughout the exhibition, serving as a metaphor for the wider human condition. Both artists work with significant materials, including Gozitan sandstone and natural earth pigments, alongside imagery shaped by personal psychology and a connection to place.

A short film exploring the processes behind *Hija* will be available to view throughout the exhibition, alongside a curatorial essay and poems written by the artists.

The exhibition will take place at Franka Inn, an intimate space in Fontana, Gozo, where atmosphere and architecture form part of the presentation. Existing for one weekend only, *Hija* invites visitors into an immersive viewing experience, encouraging individual reflection and interpretation beyond the conventions of the white-cube gallery setting.

The opening will take place on Friday 4th September from 7pm. **📍**

## EDWARDS LOWELL INTRODUCES ROLEX CERTIFIED PRE-OWNED AND UNVEILS NEW DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

**E**dwards Lowell, Malta’s long-standing Official Rolex Retailer, proudly announces the launch of the Rolex Certified Pre-Owned (RCPO) programme, alongside the unveiling of its newly redesigned website.

Marking a significant milestone in its enduring relationship with Rolex, this development reinforces Edwards Lowell’s commitment to excellence, authenticity and client trust—values that have defined the company since its founding in 1925.

This enduring relationship now enters a new chapter with the introduction of Rolex Certified Pre-Owned.

The Rolex Certified Pre-Owned programme offers clients the opportunity to acquire pre-owned Rolex watches that are officially certified, fully serviced and guaranteed by Rolex. Each timepiece undergoes a rigorous authentication process within Rolex’s own workshops, ensuring it meets the brand’s exacting standards and is accompanied by a two-year international guarantee.

Available exclusively through Official Rolex Retailers, the programme brings

added assurance and transparency to the pre-owned market—providing clients with complete confidence in the authenticity and performance of their timepiece.

The launch is further complemented by Edwards Lowell’s new website [www.elcol.com](http://www.elcol.com) designed to elevate the client experience both in-store and online. The platform offers a refined, intuitive interface where clients can explore the world of Rolex, including the newly introduced Certified Pre-Owned collection, alongside Edwards Lowell’s curated portfolio of luxury brands.

Together, these initiatives mark a new era for Edwards Lowell—one that honours its rich heritage while embracing innovation and the evolving needs of today’s client. **📍**

*The full Rolex Certified Pre-Owned collection can now be discovered at our Zachary Street Boutique in Valletta. For appointments call on +356 9905 1925.*

*The full Rolex Certified Pre-Owned collection can now be discovered at the Edwards Lowell Zachary Street Boutique in Valletta, or online at [www.elcol.com](http://www.elcol.com). For appointments, kindly call +356 9905 1925.*



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## BEJN / IN-BETWEEN

*Malta to debut first national pavilion at Gwangju Biennale 2026*

**M**alta will present its first national pavilion at the 16th Gwangju Biennale in 2026 with *Bejn / in-between*, a multidisciplinary project bringing together Norbert Francis Attard, PONKS (Sam Aleksandra and Julien Vinet), and sound artist Michael Quinton. The pavilion is managed by Toni Attard, with Yeoul Son acting as Malta–Korea liaison, and XR development led by Mark Anthony Sammut (Infinita).

This marks a significant step for Malta's contemporary art scene. Commissioned by Arts Council Malta, it places Maltese artists within one of Asia's most established biennales while opening a working relationship between Malta and South Korea that extends beyond the exhibition itself.



Image courtesy of the artist, Michael Quinton

The 16th Gwangju Biennale, titled *You must change your life*, takes its name from the final line of Rainer Maria Rilke's poem *Archaic Torso of Apollo*. Led by Artistic Director Ho Tzu Nyen, together with curators Che Kyongfa, Park Gahee, and Brian Kuan Wood, the Biennale will take place from 5th September to 15th November 2026.

The edition focuses on the transformative power of art in response to the multiple crises and urgencies of our time.

*“Bejn / in-between* centres on the idea of the space between things. It looks at where identities, histories, and places meet, overlap, and sometimes conflict. Rather than treating separation and unity as opposites, the project approaches them as conditions that shape each other. The pavilion builds a shared ground between Malta and

*“Bejn / in-between centres on the idea of the space between things. It looks at where identities, histories, and places meet, overlap, and sometimes conflict. Rather than treating separation and unity as opposites, the project approaches them as conditions that shape each other.”*



Norbert Francis Attard in the studio, image courtesy of the artist

Gwangju through installation, sound, poetry, and live exchange,” the team behind the pavilion writes.

The exhibition unfolds across three connected environments at Horangassy. In the Art Polygon, Norbert Francis Attard presents a spatial intervention drawing from both Maltese and Korean visual languages. References to the Maltese ‘festa’ sit alongside the Korean colour system Obangsaek. Through tension, colour, and reflection, the work looks at balance, conflict, and collective memory, while responding to the urgency of the current global polycrisis.

In the Glass Polygon, PONKS present *Rope Temple*, a large-scale participatory installation built as a temporary site of ritual. Hundreds of ropes form a central

structure. The space is enveloped in a living anthology of Maltese and Korean writing. Here, poetry is treated as something shared and built collectively rather than presented as a finished object, creating the largest collaboration between poets of both countries. An anthology gathers these contributions into a physical form that visitors can take with them.

The Base Polygon extends the project into sound and digital space. Michael Quinton’s soundscape draws on recordings from both countries, creating an environment that moves between presence and abstraction. Alongside this, a VR-based portal developed by Infinita enables performances and interventions to move between the two locations. Taken together, the pavilion

functions as a system rather than a single work. It moves between physical installation, sound, and live connection, focusing on exchange, participation, and process.

As Malta’s first participation in the Gwangju Biennale, *Bejn / in-between* reflects a wider shift towards more collaborative and outward-facing practices. It introduces Maltese work to new audiences while creating a framework for continued dialogue between two distinct contexts.

At its core, the project suggests that meaning does not sit in fixed positions but emerges in the space between them.



*The Malta Pavilion at the 16th Gwangju Biennale is commissioned by Arts Council Malta. Supported by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Malta, Visit Malta, Cultural Diplomacy Fund.*



**bejn / in-between**  
Malta Pavilion  
Gwangju Biennale  
2026



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**MALTA**



Horanggasy Art Polygon, Korea. Image courtesy of the Horanggasy Creative Studio



Sam Aleksandra and Julien Vinet at JAOU Biennale 2024, Tunis. Photo by Mehdi Ben Temessek

# BY HUMANS FOR HUMANS

## Sliema Arts Festival 2026

**H**as humanity become the missing element in contemporary public life? This question lies at the heart of the artistic framework for the Sliema Arts Festival 2026, 17 – 19 July.

Presented under the public campaign *By Humans, For Humans*, the festival, organised by the Sliema Local Council, will transform Sliema's public spaces into a platform for artistic encounters, bringing together art, music, performance art, and participatory practices.

The 2026 edition is developed under the artistic direction of Rachel Formosa, whose curatorial framework [*Error 404*]: *Human Not Found*, serves as the conceptual foundation for the festival's artistic programme.

Borrowed from the language of digital systems, the familiar error message is reimagined as a cultural and political metaphor.

The "error" is not technological.

The "error" is ethical.

The "error" is social.

The "error" is political.

The "error" is cultural.

The framework finds its voice within street and underground cultures, where questions of visibility, identity, resistance, and belonging have long been explored. The artistic practices brought together within the programme speak the languages that have occupied the margins of society: street art, graffiti, punk culture, electronic music, and other forms of grassroots cultural expression. Collectively, they provide important points of departure for the programme - not simply as artistic



Mural by Sock WildSketch

genres, but as spaces where alternative voices, communities, and ways of being continue to emerge.

In a world marked by war, displacement, environmental crisis, rapid urban development, technological acceleration, and growing social fragmentation, where do we encounter empathy, solidarity, vulnerability, and care? What happens when human experience becomes secondary to systems of efficiency,

consumption, spectacle, and control?

Positioned at the intersection of contemporary art and street culture, Sliema Arts Festival 2026 seeks not to provide answers, but to create spaces where the human can become visible, heard, and collectively imagined. 📍

Further information about the artistic programme and participating artists will be announced shortly.

## FOLK UNDERGROUND INVITES AUDIENCES INTO THE WORLD OF GHANA

**B**eneath the streets of Valletta, within the historic stone vaults of Sala San Duminku, Folk Underground invites audiences into the world of Ghana, Malta's distinctive tradition of folk song, storytelling, and acoustic guitar. Performed by celebrated folk masters alongside a new generation of musicians, these weekly intimate acoustic evenings offer a rare opportunity to experience a living cultural tradition beyond its usual village and community settings. Songs of love, loss, humour, resistance, and everyday life unfold through powerful voices, intricate guitar playing, and centuries-old oral traditions. Far from being a relic of the past, Ghana remains a vibrant and evolving art form that continues to inspire contemporary performers and audiences alike. Folk Underground presents Malta's musical heritage where it belongs: live, shared,



and deeply connected to the people who continue to carry it forward. 📍

Visit [folkunderground.com](http://folkunderground.com) for more information and tickets.



## Malta-Based French Artist Julien Vinet Exhibits in Tokyo Group Exhibition *AFTERMATH*

**F**rench artist Julien Vinet is among four artists featured in *AFTERMATH*, a group exhibition currently on view at FOAM CONTEMPORARY in Tokyo's prestigious Ginza 6 complex until 12 July 2026.


Curated by Japanese artist Naoya Inose, *AFTERMATH* explores the lingering reverberations that follow major events and the transformations that emerge in their wake. Bringing together artists Naoya Inose, Julien Vinet, Masakatsu Kondo and Toru Ishii, the exhibition reflects on how contemporary art can respond to an increasingly fragmented world where information is abundant but meaning often remains elusive.

For this exhibition, Vinet presents works that investigate the threshold between decay and renewal. Through the interaction of chemical transformations in metal and the expressive qualities of ink, he explores the concept of "aftermath" as a space where destruction



Photos by Joanna Delia

and regeneration coexist. His practice frequently examines processes of change, material memory, and the hidden forces that shape landscapes, objects and histories over time.

The exhibition also includes the special Embark Bag project, in which visitors acquire a sealed set of four small artworks without knowing their contents beforehand, encouraging the start of a new generation of collectors. 

Organised by Ginza Tsutaya Books, *AFTERMATH* opened on 13 June and remains on view through 12 July 2026 at FOAM CONTEMPORARY, one of Tokyo's prestigious galleries.

Vinet, who is based in Malta and works internationally, is also one half of the artist collective PONKS. He is currently preparing both as an exhibiting artist with PONKS and as Artistic Director of Malta's first-ever national pavilion at the 2026 Gwangju Biennale in South Korea.

Watercolour that flows

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San Gwann | [vgb.mt](http://vgb.mt)

**VEE GEE Art BEE**

A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie is running through a lush garden. He is holding a light-colored hat in his right hand and a brown bag in his left. He has a surprised or excited expression on his face. The garden is filled with large green plants and a path leads through it.

CORINTHIA PALACE MALTA PRESENTS  
LORENZO AGIUS:  
**ICONS  
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26 JUNE - 31 JULY 2026

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Q Interview / Photography / Lorenzo Agius



## Framing the Iconic: Lorenzo Agius Brings Cinema's Most Recognisable Faces to Malta

As *ICONS OF FILM* opens at Corinthia Palace, we speak to internationally acclaimed British-Maltese photographer Lorenzo Agius and curator Prof. Charlene Vella about the exhibition's journey from London to Malta, the enduring power of portrait photography, and the stories behind some of cinema's most recognisable faces. >>

Tilda Swinton, Glasgow, 2005, Telegraph Magazine. Image courtesy of the artist, Lorenzo Agius

**Q** Interview / *Photography* / *Lorenzo Agius*

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>> *Continued*

**F**eaturing celebrated portraits of actors, filmmakers and cultural icons, the exhibition, presented by Corinthia Palace Malta in collaboration with Visit Malta and Arts Council Malta explores the space between celebrity and humanity, revealing the personalities behind the public image. In this interview, Agius reflects on his creative process, photographing actors, and the emotional significance of presenting the work in Malta, while Vella discusses the exhibition's curatorial vision and its place within a wider celebration of film, identity and cultural exchange.

**How does the Malta exhibition build on or differ from your Corinthia London presentation?**

**Charlene Vella, Curator:** The Malta exhibition builds on the spirit of *ICONS OF FILM*, but it is not simply a reduced version of the London presentation. In Malta, the exhibition takes on a more intimate and site-specific character. At Corinthia London, the project was presented within an international cultural context, foregrounding Lorenzo Agius's contribution to contemporary image-making and celebrity portraiture. At Corinthia Palace Malta, the emphasis shifts slightly. Here, the exhibition becomes a homecoming of sorts, not only for Lorenzo, who was born in the UK to Maltese parents, but also for the images themselves, which are being encountered by an audience deeply attuned to ideas of identity, visibility and cultural belonging.

The Malta presentation is also conceived in dialogue with the Mediterranean Film Festival. This gives the exhibition a particularly cinematic resonance. Rather than being viewed purely as portraits of famous actors, the photographs are experienced as part of a broader celebration of film, performance and visual storytelling. The works move through the hotel almost like scenes in a film, inviting visitors to encounter them gradually, across different spaces and moods.

Pierce Brosnan, 2001, Esquire Magazine Cover, James Bond: Die Another Day.  
Image courtesy of the artist, Lorenzo Agius



*Sometimes the most truthful image comes from wit, elegance, creativity, absurdity or a fleeting look between poses.*

**What is it about photographing actors that continues to inspire you, both creatively and artistically?**

**Lorenzo Agius, Artist:** Actors are fascinating subjects because they understand transformation. They spend their lives moving between themselves and the characters they inhabit, so there is always a layered quality to photographing them. You are not only photographing a face. You are photographing presence, memory, performance, vulnerability and control, often all at once.

What continues to inspire me is that no two sittings are ever the same. Some actors arrive with a very clear idea of how they want to be seen, while others are more open to discovery. My role is to create a space where something interesting can happen and let stories unfold. Sometimes that is glamour, sometimes humour, sometimes stillness,

and sometimes a moment when the public image drops slightly, and something much quieter appears. That tension is what keeps the work alive for me.

**When you are photographing well-known figures, how do you balance their public image with capturing something more personal and authentic?**

**Lorenzo Agius, Artist:** With celebrities, the public image is always in the room. It cannot be ignored; in many ways, it is part of the subject. The challenge is not to erase that image, but to work with it and move beyond it. I am interested in the moment when the image people think they know becomes slightly unsettled.

That can happen through gesture, lighting, humour, composition or simply through conversation. A portrait session

is a collaboration. I try to build trust quickly so that the person in front of the camera feels they can play, relax, or reveal something unexpected. Authenticity does not always mean solemnity. Sometimes the most truthful image comes from wit, elegance, creativity, absurdity or a fleeting look between poses.

**Looking back at your body of work, are there particular themes or approaches that stand out to you now, and how have they influenced this exhibition?**

**Lorenzo Agius, Artist:** Looking back, I can see that I have always been interested in character, atmosphere and the construction of an image. Even when the photographs appear effortless, they are carefully composed. I like the space between spontaneity and structure. Many of the images have a cinematic quality, which perhaps comes >>



Angelina Jolie, Los Angeles, 2005, Mr And Mrs Smith. Image courtesy of the artist, Lorenzo Agius



Richard Gere, New York, 2008, Nights In Rodanthe, Warner Bros, The Silver Fox. Image courtesy of the artist, Lorenzo Agius

Q Interview / Photography / Lorenzo Agius

>> Continued



Bill Nighy, London, 2005, Telegraph Magazine. Image courtesy of the artist, Lorenzo Agius

from working so closely with actors and film culture over the years.

Another recurring theme is the idea of icons as human beings. Some of the people I photographed were already very famous; others were just beginning to become internationally recognised. What interests me now is how these photographs have taken on new meanings over time. They are portraits, but they are also part of the visual memory of particular moments in cinema and popular culture. That sense of time, memory and recognition has strongly shaped this exhibition.

**How did audiences respond to the exhibition in London, and did that change the way you think about the work?**

**Lorenzo Agius, Artist:** The response in London was very warm, and what struck me most was how personal people's reactions were. Visitors did not simply recognise the actors. They connected the photographs to films they had loved, moments in their own lives, or particular cultural memories. That reminded me that portraits can live beyond the original sitting. Once they are exhibited, they begin to belong to the viewer as well.

It did make me think about the work differently. When you spend years making images, you are often focused on the shoot itself, the person in front of you, the composition, the commission, the deadline. Seeing the photographs gathered together in an exhibition allows you to understand them as a larger body of work. It reveals connections you may not have fully seen at the time.

**Does showing the series in Malta give it a different meaning for you, considering your personal connection to the island?**

**Lorenzo Agius, Artist:** Yes, absolutely. Malta has always been part of my story, even though my career developed largely in London and internationally. Showing the work here gives the exhibition a different emotional weight. There is something very special about bringing these images to a place connected to family, heritage and identity.

It also feels meaningful to present this work in Malta at a time when the island is increasingly positioning itself as a place of cultural exchange, including through film. The exhibition allows me to share a part of my world with a Maltese audience, but it also allows the work to be seen through a different lens.

In Malta, the photographs are not only about cinema and celebrity. They also become part of a conversation about belonging, return and international creative identity.

**What would you like the audience to take away from the exhibition beyond the photographs themselves?**

**Charlene Vella, Curator:** I would like audiences to come away with the understanding that this exhibition is not only about recognising famous faces. It is about looking more carefully at the power of portraiture, at how images shape cultural memory, and at how photography can hold together glamour, performance, intimacy and humanity.

It is also important that this exhibition is being shown outside the conventional gallery space. That decision is deliberate. By presenting Lorenzo Agius's work at Corinthia Palace, in collaboration with Arts Council Malta and Visit Malta, and in dialogue with the Mediterranean Film Festival, the exhibition reaches a broader and more varied audience. It allows people to encounter the photographs in a living space, almost unexpectedly, as part of a wider celebration of cinema, culture and creative exchange.

For me, there is also another important layer. These extraordinary images were created by a Maltese artist who, with humility, discipline and remarkable visual intelligence, has built an international career over more than thirty years. Many people may not realise that Lorenzo was behind some

of the legendary images associated with *Trainspotting*, released in 1996, photographs that became part of the visual language of a generation. His work has helped shape the way many of us remember some of the most recognisable figures in contemporary film.

That achievement should be celebrated. The exhibition is therefore not only a celebration of cinema and its icons, but also of Lorenzo Agius himself: a Maltese creative figure whose artistry deserves to be seen, recognised and appreciated here in Malta.

**Lorenzo Agius, Artist:** I hope audiences enjoy the familiarity of the faces, but also look beyond recognition. These photographs are about encounters. They are about moments shared between photographer and sitter, and then between the image and the viewer. I would like people to leave with a sense of connection, perhaps to cinema, perhaps to memory, or perhaps simply to the beauty of a well-made image that still has the power to surprise. <sup>3</sup>

*Corinthia Palace Malta presents Lorenzo Agius: Icons of Film, a celebration of cinematic portraiture running from 26 June to 31 July 2026 at Corinthia Palace, De Paule Avenue, San Anton, Malta. The exhibition coincides with the launch of the hotel's reimagined rooms and suites, and is presented in dialogue with the Mediterranean Film Festival and in collaboration with Arts Council Malta and Visit Malta.*



Jude Law, United Kingdom, 2003, Cold Mountain. Image courtesy of the artist, Lorenzo Agius



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SOFIA BALDI PIGHI

# Teresa Antignani and the Mothers of the Wretched of the Earth

## *The Story of Isabelle Bonnici*



Teresa Antignani, *Deposizione*, 2024, Grand Master's Palace, Malta Biennale 2024, curated by Sofia Baldi Pighi. Photo by Julian Vassallo, courtesy of the artist.

**O**n 13 June, Spazju Kreattiv, Malta's National Centre for Creativity in Valletta, hosted the national premiere of *Martyrion: The Story of Isabelle*, a short film by Teresa Antignani and Luca Ciriello. The screening was followed by a conversation with Isabelle Bonnici, Teresa Antignani and Andre Callus from Moviment Graffiti. As the discussion unfolded, the audience listened as the conversation moved from Maltese to English to Italian without ever settling in one language. This was not decorative multilingualism. It was Malta itself appearing in the room: an island shaped by crossings, colonisations and migrations, where stories of struggle and exploitation in the Mediterranean coexist, overlap and sometimes collide.

Isabelle Bonnici is the mother of Jean Paul Sofia, who died at twenty on 3 December 2022 after the collapse of a building under construction in Corradino. Malta is an island of continuous construction. Between 2010 and 2022, at least forty-nine workers died on Maltese construction sites.\* Through her public campaign, Isabelle Bonnici demanded justice and obtained a public inquiry.

Teresa Antignani (Italy, 1991) is an artist and activist whose practice is rooted in Southern Italy, sacred iconography and eco-feminist struggles. Since 2020, *Martyrion* has developed as an itinerant research project across territories marked by industrial abuse, environmental devastation and political



neglect. Moving through what Teresa Antignani calls the cathedrals of profit, the project gathers testimonies from communities affected by extractive economies and corrupted policies. Its use of Christian female martyr iconography does not sanctify suffering. It offers a structure through which bodies, landscapes and local struggles become public evidence.

I was there not as a distant observer. My encounter with Teresa Antignani's work had begun many years earlier, and our paths crossed again during the Malta Biennale 2024, which I directed with the curatorial collaboration of Emma Mattei and Elisa Carollo. There, Teresa Antignani presented *Deposition*, an oil painting conceived for the Grand

\* Public Interest Litigation Network and The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, *Victims of Malta's Construction Boom: The Fatal Wait for Accountability*, June 2023.

SOFIA BALDI PIGHI is a curator and researcher working between Italy and Malta. She is a practice-based PhD candidate in Critical-Curatorial Practices of Contemporary Creation at the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts in Turin. Her research investigates European borders, especially in the central Mediterranean, where artistic and civic practices of resistance contribute to new imaginaries of the sea. She was Artistic Director of Malta Biennale 2024 – Insulaphilia. In 2023 she joined the curatorial team of the first Italian Pavilion at the 14th Gwangju Biennale in South Korea, and since 2023 has curated *Una Boccata d'Arte*, by Fondazione Elpis with Galleria Continua and Threes Production.



Photo by Marija Grech



Teresa Antignani - Martyrion, Pietà, 2024. Photo by Sara Terraciano, courtesy of the artist

keeping political accountability visible. For artists working site-specifically, movements such as Moviment Graffiti can operate as a living cartography of the territory. They know where conflict has accumulated, which spaces have been privatised, which communities have been silenced, and which legal procedures have turned violence into paperwork. I asked Teresa Antignani what it means to confront such a difficult story as an Italian artist, as a *barrani*, a foreigner on the island. Her answer pointed to mechanisms that are not identical but structurally familiar: power masked by bureaucracy, responsibility diluted through procedure, territories consumed by profit, families forced to become investigators.

Through Teresa Antignani's research, Isabelle Bonnici's story could have been framed as the story of a mother and her loss. It was not. Isabelle Bonnici is not a figure of passive mourning. She is a mother who produces political pressure. She turns grief into a civic demand. *Martyrion* is an example of art as political technology. Not art as ornament. Not art as consolation. Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, from the French *damnés de la terre*, names those whose lives are made precarious by structures of domination and exploitation. Within Teresa Antignani's work, attention moves to the mothers who refuse to let these deaths disappear into statistics, bureaucracy or public amnesia. Across the Mediterranean, these women become carriers of memory and agents of transmission. Through them, grief acquires a public voice and art becomes a vehicle through which stories of resistance can travel across borders, connecting struggles, preserving memory and creating new forms of solidarity. 🇵🇹

Master's Palace in Valletta. Also intended as a tribute to Jean Paul Sofia, the work displaced sacred iconography into Malta's present. Valletta appeared behind rubble, a mason's helmet and fragments of a city still marked by construction sites and occupational fatalities, the so-called "white deaths" in Italian.

The short film by Teresa Antignani and Luca Ciriello opens another possibility for this story to travel. It allows Isabelle Bonnici's demand to move beyond the Maltese context and reach new publics without being detached from the struggle that produced it. Teresa Antignani stages a *tableau vivant* with Isabelle Bonnici, drawing on Annibale Carracci's sacred compositions and the visual language of the *Pietà* (1600

ca, Museo nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples). By placing Isabelle Bonnici's body within an iconographic structure traditionally associated with mourning and sacrifice, the short film connects a contemporary struggle for justice to a longer history of collective grief made visible through art.

During the evening, the death of Jean Paul Sofia was often described as an accident. Yet the available data and the public inquiry shift the question from accident to institutional responsibility. My question to Andre Callus, one of the most recognisable figures of Moviment Graffiti, a Maltese grassroots organisation active in social, environmental and urban struggles, concerned the role artists can assume in

collaboration with civic movements. In his response, he stressed the importance of narrating stories of resistance without neutralising them and of



Teresa Antignani, *Martyrion - Story Of Isabelle*, 2025. Frame from the video by Luca Ciriello, courtesy of the artist.

ANDREW BORG WIRTH



PERSIST THROUGH  
THE NOISE  
IMPRESSIONS FROM THE  
VENICE BIENNALE D'ARTE 2026

ANDREW BORG WIRTH (Malta, b.1993) is a curator and architect with an interdisciplinary practice interrogating disciplines of architecture, contemporary art, theatre and design. He creates collaborative situations between artists and collectives; architecture, fashion and design studios; and public and academic institutions across a variety of projects.



**I** f I must die,  
you must live  
to tell my story  
to sell my things  
to buy a piece of cloth  
and some strings,  
(make it white with a long tail)  
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza  
while looking heaven in the eye  
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze –  
and bid no one farewell  
not even to his flesh  
not even to himself –  
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying  
up above  
and thinks for a moment an angel is  
there  
bringing back love  
If I must die  
let it bring hope  
let it be a tale

– If I must die, Refaat Alareer

My first encounter as I arrived at the Arsenale on my second day at the Venice Biennale, brought the experience before, and thereafter, into perspective. The poem *If I must die* by Palestinian poet, writer and activist Refaat Alareer is hopeful. He is dead, as is Koyo Kouoh, the curator of the biennale. His words are a premonition of the Israeli air strike which would kill him. Her imperative was to deliver quiet whispers. The world outside the venue's doors is screaming.

This is the climate of this biennial: quiet corners, louder pathways. Walking through the main exhibition at the Giardini, the curator's plan, pursued by her chosen team, unfolds with people bustling across the rooms. The rain outside is drowning the pavilions, but the carefully chosen artworks invite contemplation, albeit amongst the noise of art buffs sheltering from the outside's rain. Inside, I got lost in the beauty of some very different gardens within the work of Wardha Shabbir. The Pakistani artist creates geometric mazes of wild, beautiful and dangerous gardens. Her work is laborious but symbolic, painting hopeful pastures amidst a strained environmental, political and social backdrop. The very small whisper at

the end of her brushstroke is a hopeful gesture which extends what Kouoh reads in Alareer's poem.

This exploration of poetry manifests in so many ways in the main exhibitions, beyond just the printed fragments penned across the world. In the Arsenale, the towering *Disease Throwers* of Guadalupe Maravilla are magnificent thrones of healing. Constructed with many carefully assembled pieces, including objects collected from a ritual of retracing the artist's original migration route, the sculptures map the El Salvadorian artist's personal geographies onto larger contemporary political realities.

The series of Joly Screens by Dublin-based artist Alan Phelan revitalised

a 19th century colour photography process, creating still lives embedded with memory. The LED panels, lit from behind, are ubiquitous. They are as much from 1894 – when the process was created by physicist John Joly – as they are from today. They chart the important political potential that floral still lives have held since times of empire, pursuing reflections of queer realities, and even using images by Steven Meisel for Jonathan Anderson in 2015, reinterpreting the work of legendary florist Constance Spry. They are labelled as being 'counterfactual' histories; notes for all of us on what could have been.

*Time Capsules* by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige toe the line between nature and culture, showing geological >>



El Brujo, *Disease Thrower*, 2024. Photo by Andrew Borg Wirth

☆ Review / Venice Biennale 2026

>> Continued

excavations which expose the impact that humans have upon the land. Core samples collected from construction sites in Beirut, Athens and Paris work as storytelling vessels which expose hidden stories of human activity. It shows the immense archive that lies beneath our feet, uncovering layers that have been erased and operating at the cusp between moments of clarity and blurred disfigurements of memory. Poetry in this biennial is a constant dance between truth and fiction.

The quieter moments are what remain with you after a chaotic week in Venice. The turbulence of the whole experience must mean that the curator saw poetry in more places than most would. So, whilst *In Minor Keys* does not immediately feel like a silent whisper, the noise actually becomes the point. The curator invites us to dive deep and hear the sounds being drowned out. She creates shared territory for layered voices from across the world, attempting to challenge the wider zeitgeist of loud statements and tense politics. The biennale for which she chose Alareer's poem, would become the biennale when artworkers held a historic 24-hour strike – the first in its history – amid a worsening genocide in Gaza, the one where e-flux announced the resignation of the international jury, and the police would push back on Pussy Riot's protest-performance at the threshold of the Russian pavilion. Nothing about this felt minor.

At the start of the Arsenale exhibition, the biennial teases an image of the world as an archipelago of islands. Following, no doubt, in the thinking of Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant, the curatorial team speaks of “convivial universes that refresh and sustain”. Painting visual images through the mention of “oases, gardens, courtyards, compounds, lofts and dance



Ei Arakawa-Nash, Japanese Pavilion. Photo by Andrew Borg Wirth



Ei Arakawa-Nash, Japanese Pavilion. Screenshot by Andrew Borg Wirth

floors”, we understand that what Kouoh wanted more than ever is to take us where the cacophony is; to focus on the undercurrents in a world consumed by metanarratives, but to do this from the centre and not the periphery; to be in Venice but celebrate with voices from everywhere. This pedagogy - which, at times, can be hard to decipher, and may appear cluttered and convoluted - considers a worldly, rather than a continental gaze. It approaches from the South, rather from the West. It could be seen as a reading of Glissant's *mondialité*, which understands the world as a tapestry which needs threads from everywhere to remain preserved and unfrayed. His is an argument for dialogue which challenges erasure.

This is in direct contrast with the long-contested method of nationalistic pavilions which one encounters after walking through the curator's main exhibits. The most 'minor' experience was most definitely the encounter which the Japanese pavilion offered. In the simplest – but admittedly bizarre – installation, everyone stood carrying a life-size, and realistically-weighting doll of a baby. QR codes linking visitors to fragments of poetry were revealed when undressing the dolls on nappy changers upstairs. The artwork was conceived after the artist, Ei Arakawa-Nash, and his husband, became fathers to twins. In a gesture which transcends language, *Grass Babies, Moon Babies* was an experience of care, an investigation of parenthood, an encounter with queerness and a performance from within a theatre of the absurd. It had a lot to say about the world which we live in, as strangers held plastic babies in a joint performance of prosthetic intimacy.

At the flipside of this tactile artwork, the Danish pavilion positions audiences into a massive film

installation which speculates on a pornographic gaze in light of a global fertility crisis. Curated by Chus Martinez, *Things to Come* by Maja Malou Lyse is staged within a sperm bank in 2045. As you stand in the space, it is again familiar, but absurd, in a completely different - but similar - way to Arakawa-Nash's work. In parallel to the pavilion's launch, an event called *Cicciolina's Dream* was held in collaboration with the Italian pornstar and politician.

In artworks calling for a collective radical rethinking of social structures and hierarchies, these pavilions were a direct, performative confrontation in comparison to Kouoh's attempts at sottovoce. The loudest and most provocative of them all came in the Austrian pavilion, the images of which everyone in and out of the art world has seen. The now much-shared bell performance outside was just one of a number of different performative actions on the inside. The urgency of this pavilion really made its intentions clear: we live at a time of great crises and sounding the alarm is no longer enough.

In contrast, the Spanish pavilion, with an artwork by Oriol Vilanova felt like a welcome extension of Kouoh's curatorial attempt. Featuring walls of forgotten postcards, arranged to systematically create swathes of colour, the pavilion was a soothing contemplation on the power of images. In recalling the old act of sending postcards, and the timeless behaviour of collecting and hoarding, the pavilion is a strong gesture. In a fever dream packed with politically explicit work, this had the implicit poetry that the biennial promised.

In the Arsenale, and after exploring for two days, I am reminded when visiting Malta's pavilion, that the island is microcosmic. In *No Time to Sparkle*, the absurdity, political complexity and memory-stricken malaise explored throughout other pavilions, face each other off in three works by Charlie Cauchi, Adrian Abela and Raphael Vella. A massive couch invites you to a moment of slumber curated by Margerita Pulè, as moments of spectacle, protest and coinage offer departure points to explore contemporary Malteseness.

If poetry is what Koyo Kouoh set out to give us, the boldest experience of it lay outside of both the Arsenale and Giardini. *The ear is the eye to the soul* – the Holy See Pavilion curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Ben Vickers – moved you through a series of islands within the Mystical Garden of Carmelitani Scalzi. Proposing a sonic lament, piecing together a soundscape with the help of 24 poets and musicians including Patti Smith, FKA Twigs, Brian Eno and Moor Mother, the pavilion is sublime. It forces you to slow down; makes nature talk to technology and establishes relationships you wouldn't expect to come by. In a biennial overwhelmed with visual stimulation, it is radical to propose listening as the primary act.

Alareer's kite hangs over the whole experience. Koyo Kouoh, through the artists she invited and poets she cited, is adamant in her assessment: persist through the noise. 🗣️

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JOANNA DELIA is a medical doctor who specialises in cosmetic medicine. She is also a cultural consumer and art collector who tirelessly supports local contemporary art and culture.



DR JOANNA DELIA

# Berlin Gallery Weekend



Andreas Blank, *Picnic Table* (2025), Alabaster, Marble, Limestone, Serpentinite, Sandstone, Lapislazuli. Photo by Andreas Blank



☆ Review / *Berlin Gallery Weekend*

>> *Continued*

*Berlin shows that artists can still be free, the market will recover, and the thirst for art will never go away.*

**M**y love for the art gallery re-charged  
Berlin Gallery Weekend held this year on the 1st to the 3rd of May was exciting, inspirational and accessible - made more accessible through an arm of Momentum's Rachel Ritz-Volloch - the red headed sweetheart who connects as much as she profoundly engages. As usual, there is hardly enough time to see all there is on offer, so a curated tour was necessary - and it did not disappoint! Here are my highlights, and as you will read, a lot of familiar faces turned out!

Shows ranged from the eponimously named EPIC collaboration between celebrity photographer Lorenzo Agius and Berlin based artist Izzy Weissgerber in the decommissioned St Elisabeth-Kirche to the politically charged performance, 'Do Not Poke the Bear' by Candice Breitz - a show called 'Hot Potato' at KOW's new space with the backdrop of works reminiscent of Jane Eyre schooling style punishments -the artist 'self flagellating' in a tongue in cheek way to her 'cancelling' after showing pro-Palestine support. The show also included a multi part documentary film - A Song for Esther - with interviews with anti-fascism activist, Auschwitz's survivor Esther Bejarano - who



Candice Breitz, 'Private Dancer,' 2004-2026. Appropriated performance (after Mark Wallinger). Photo by Armin Marewski



Andreas Blank, *Monument* (2026), Marble, Alabaster, Serpentine, Amazonite, Basalt. Photo by Eric Tschernow

speaks passionately against the Israeli state behaviour. This was, for me, the most powerful work this gallery weekend.

Next came a couple of studio visits to Momentum artists Nina Schönefeld and Inna Artemova - both of whom showed in Malta at the show 'Deep Throat' at Valletta Contemporary. I had the privilege of having a private screening of a few of Nina's works on film - a series of futuristic Dystopic works - exploring imagined post-apocalyptic scenarios - beautifully rendered.

At one of my favourite galleries, AOA87, I was shown around by uber-charismatic gallerist Angie - who will show two of my favourite Malta-based artists Madeleine Fenwick and Kane Cali during Berlin Art Week in September. The gallery showed artist Holger Schmidt Huber who has become a staple of the city's art scene.

Philip Groezinger at 68 Projects, run by Kornfield Gallery, put up a colourful and playful body of work. Playfulness is clearly back in Berlin indicating a clear necessity to escape to innocence and connect with our inner child, perhaps in the rather dreary state we find ourselves in as humans. >>

☆ Review / *Berlin Gallery Weekend*

>> *Continued*

Alexander Levy Gallery had on an eclectic group show with more playful works varying from ethereal, in horse hair and dandelion seeds by Christiane Loehr, to mobile sculptures - robotic giant teapots and kinetic water columns which was further testament to this need for colour, naivety and nature.

I met up with artist Andreas Blank at Contemporary Showroom (CSR.art) in the Bikini Building run by Stephanie and Andreas Kramer who run the Art@Berlin platform - and tried convincing them to visit Malta as soon as possible - as usual in my mission to increase the visibility of the thriving scene. The group show 'REAL?!' with works by Andreas Blank but also Rene Wirths, MK Kaehne and Nazar Kwazar deals with issues surrounding truth and reality in these increasingly confusing world were we are being held under water drowning in Ai generated imagery and narratives in every medium possible.

The magical works of Sasha Frolova - works in expanded latex which skew the human form into surreal shapes where on show at xxxxx while an old butcher shop turns into a pop-up collective aptly named 'Fleisch' (meat) - with powerful works by artists - big and emerging including a work in metal by the same Nina Schönefeld.

The giant commercial galleries like Esther Schipper Gallery and Galerie Max Hetzler this time showed some colossal works - up for grabs were a Jeff Koons Cicciolina sculpture and XXX photo as well as the Tracey Emin video - currently also being shown at the Tate Modern - at her 'Second Life' show. A work that resonates with me - showing the middle finger to the men and community which slut shamed Tracey in her youth.

Energy, after parties immersed in the ever present Berlin nightlife culture, the intellectual and stimulating generosity of gallerists, curators and artists is palpable. Definitely a fixture in my calendar. Berlin shows that artists can still be free, the market will recover, and the thirst for art will never go away. 🍷



Candice Breitz, *Hot Potato*, exhibition view KOW 2026. Photo by Ladislav Zajac

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