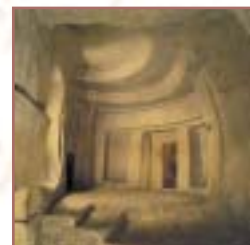




Heritage Malta Update

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Another Step Forward



This is the first ever edition of the official newsletter of Heritage Malta, the national agency entrusted with the management, conservation and preservation of our islands' rich cultural heritage. Through this traditional medium, Heritage Malta is seeking to establish an on-going link with its various stakeholders.

With over 20 sites in Malta and Gozo open on a daily basis, locals and foreigners alike are spoilt for choice. Our islands are teeming with archaeological richness. This is attested by the numerous megalithic temples dotting the islands' landscape.

The Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, a UNESCO World Heritage Site is a 'must see' for any visitor to our islands. The other six megalithic temples, also collectively listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are equally impressive as they take visitors thousands of years back in time when our ancestors were renowned temple builders.

In a bid to facilitate bookings for the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, Heritage Malta has recently launched an on-line booking system, whereby clients can secure a booking and settle payment on-line. Technology means that Heritage Malta can continue to upgrade its services to meet the ever-increasing needs of its clients.

Heritage Malta is continuously seeking to improve its product. To this end, the agency has set a number of ambitious targets to provide an enhanced experience to its customers. With more than 1.2 million visitors per year, the agency is confident that the number of visitors will continue to increase.

Easy accessibility and dissemination of information rank high on Heritage Malta's agenda. While most of its indoor sites are centuries-old buildings, which do not always allow for alterations to make a place easily accessible to people with special needs, the agency is leaving no stone unturned in its efforts to make the sites under its care more accessible. The recently refurbished Domvs Romana (see centre spread) is a case in point.

Heritage Malta has also introduced multi-lingual audio guides at the St. Paul's Catacombs in Rabat. Available in five languages, the audio guides provide a comprehensive insight into the mysteries of this underground complex. Audio guides are included in the normal admission ticket. This is an added incentive to visitors as they do not have to pay an extra fee for this service.

Multi-lingual audio guides will soon be introduced at the Palace Armoury in Valletta. Other sites will also benefit from such a service over the coming months.

At Mnajdra and Hagar Qim Temples, interpretation panels have been introduced to help visitors obtain a better understanding of the temple culture. Guided tours of the temples will complement this service.

Our work is never-ending as we continue to upgrade our product to ensure that we do indeed give a future to our past.

Subscribe to Heritage Malta's official newsletter *at no charge*. Simply send an e-mail to info@heritagenmalta.org and include your name, postal and e-mail addresses. The newsletter is issued three times a year. The next edition is due in October 2005.



The Art of Pain

An exhibition of authentic torture instruments

Record attendances are being registered at the Inquisitor's Palace in Vittoriosa following the mounting of a unique exhibition of torture instruments entitled, "The Art of Pain". The exhibition, which is being organised by Heritage Malta and the San Gimignano Museum in Italy was opened to the public in July last year.

Since then, more than 25,000 visitors have walked through the doors of the Palace to examine these gory instruments which were used to inflict the most unbearable pain and, in some cases, led to prolonged agony prior to death.

An eerie sight greets visitors as they venture into the courtyard of the Inquisitor's Palace where an imposing replica of a guillotine has been assembled. This instrument was extensively used in France during the French Revolution. This emblematic instrument of death was named after its inventor, the French physician Ignace Guillotine.

Another fascinating artefact on display is Falaride's Bull. This was invented by the great Athenian inventor Perillus for King Phalari, a cruel tyrant, who promised a prize for the most innovative method of creating a torture instrument that could be used on men. Perillus did not have time to enjoy his reward as the king decreed that the inventor himself must be the first one to experience the torture.

Torture instruments have been collected from the four corners of Europe over a long number of years. Several pieces dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are extremely rare. Others are exact replicas of originals. The collection includes devices and instruments used for torture, weapons used for capital punishment and public humiliation, as well as contemporary prints. The exhibition is complete with illustrations and multi-lingual informative captions.

This collection's uniqueness also lies in the unedited and perfectly sober manner in which it is displayed, depicting the atrocity of human rights violation in a crude but realistic manner. It is also for this reason that the exhibition has always been hosted in important historical buildings, which have an adequate atmosphere without inducing negative and artificial sensationalism such as cries of agony, blood stains or animated mannequins.

There are few phenomena similar to those presented in this exhibition, which have changed so little throughout the years, while having undergone such diverse variations.

A long series of novelties appear, however they all share the common denominator of ignominy and the exploitation of human suffering. Previously, torture was used in an ostentatious manner and was approved by the law. Today, although illegal, it is still practised discreetly in various parts of the world.

The Art of Pain exhibition runs till the end of December 2005

Admission fees: Adults (18-59yrs) – Lm3

Students (12-17 yrs) – Lm1.50

Senior citizens – Lm1.50

ISE, ISIC, ICOM, Euro >26 Card Holders – Lm1.50

Children (6-11yrs) – 75c

The Inquisitor's Palace is open daily between 09.00 and 17.00hrs. Last admission is at 16.30hrs.

The Palace is closed on Good Friday, 24, 25, 31 December and January 1.



Treasures from our collections:

A COPTIC TEXTILE FRAGMENT FROM LATE ANTIQUITY

The Apostle St. Mark introduced Christianity into Egypt during the second half of the first century, giving rise to the Christian Coptic Church. At the time Egyptian culture was imbued by Greco-Roman or Hellenistic influences grafted on to the old ways of the Egyptians. By the end of the fourth century, Christianity had made deep inroads into Egyptian society. The pervasive lavish and highly decorative Hellenistic art of Alexandria, featuring pagan motifs, mythological scenes and subjects, including the nude figure, was assimilated into early Christian Coptic art.

The Ancient Egyptians were skillful weavers. Egypt remained an important centre for the production of linen and woolen textiles well into the Christian era and beyond the Islamic conquest. The Copts were very adept in making dyes and their application to textiles, a skill which they inherited from the Ancient Egyptians. Early Coptic textiles were enhanced by monochromatic decorations executed in a dark purple hue differing from the later more varied range of colours. A distinct achievement of Coptic weavers was the development of pattern weaving featuring dyed wool woven into natural unbleached linen. Due to the natural tendency of flax fibres to rotate anti-clockwise, a characteristic of Coptic textiles became the so-called S-twist thread. Although wool yarn tends to remain straight it was also spun using the S-twist technique.

Coptic fabrics served a variety of purposes. Most commonly, textiles were used for clothing, which frequently took the form

of a rectangular shirt-like garment or tunic. Tunic decorations consisted of bands and square, oval or round tapestry inserts. Decorative patterns were commonly derived from vegetable, geometrical and figurative renderings found on Hellenistic sculptures and mosaics of the time.

Heritage Malta owns a small collection of Egyptian antiquities, largely the product of a donation made by Lt. General Lord Grenfell, at the end of his tenure of office as Governor of Malta in 1903. Included, is a fragment measuring approximately 30 x 30 cm., of a Coptic tunic. Sewn onto a natural flax fabric, is a composite linen-wool monochrome square tapestry of clear pagan Greco-Roman inspiration dating to the late antiquity.

The iconography represented is Hellenistic and consists of five roundels, four illustrating corresponding pairs of Myriads and Tritons riding dolphins and a fifth, larger, central roundel depicting a nude male figure, armed with a shield and sword, attacking a Centaur. Along the edge are four menacing mythical sea-monsters, half fish, half animal. The ensemble is composed and united into a coherent whole by means of a sinewy vegetal motif and is edged by a thick dark border enhanced by tassel-like design and stylized floral patterns.

Probably dating to the fourth/fifth century AD, this charming Coptic textile fragment stands witness to the transition marking the end of ancient pagan classical civilization and the emergence of Christianity in the Eastern Mediterranean basin.



THE SPLENDOUR OF

Situated on the outskirts of Malta's silent city Mdina, the

February 26th, 2005 marked a historic day for Heritage Malta as the Domus Romana (formerly known as the Roman Villa), re-opened its doors to the general public after three years of extensive works. Prime Minister Dr. Lawrence Gonzi officially inaugurated the site in the presence of Ministers, members of parliament, ambassadors and other distinguished guests.

The Domus Romana is the first project to be undertaken by Heritage Malta. The site has been completely refurbished and is now fully accessible to people with special needs. This was achieved through the erection of an internal and external walkway, as well as a lift. Apart from the infrastructure, the museum was upgraded with the installation of a number of interpretation panels that provide an explanation of the numerous artefacts on display, as well as various aspects of Roman life, customs and traditions. Although the interpretation panels carry information in English and Maltese, visitors not familiar with these two languages may be provided with gallery site sheets in various languages including French, Spanish, Italian, German and Chinese. These sheets provide a synopsis of the text that is featured on the interpretation panels.

The refurbishment project also included the conservation treatment to the artefacts and mosaics on display. The mosaic pavements in the Domus Romana rank amongst the finest and oldest mosaic compositions from the Western Mediterranean, comparable with those of Pompeii and Sicily. Visitors marvel at the famous mosaic known as the 'Drinking Doves of Sosos' which dates back to the 2nd century B.C.

Numerous visitors have enquired on the change of name from a Roman Villa to a Domus Romana. This change occurred since the term Roman *villa* denoted a

Admission Fees: Adults 18-59yrs – Lm2.50 / €6.25 • Students, ISE, ISIC, ICOM, Euro > 26 Card Holders – Lm1.25 / €3.12



THE DOMVS ROMANA

The Domus Romana is a must see for tourists and locals alike.

country house. This Roman house, which dates to the 1st Century BC, was a town house, within the boundary walls of the ancient town of Melite. It has therefore been appropriately renamed **Domus Romana**. The current display is based on the domestic aspect of Roman Malta, to reflect the various characteristics of a town house and the way of life of its inhabitants during the Roman Republic period. This display shows a remarkable selection of domestic Roman artefacts, such as amphorae, perfume bottles, hairpins, weaving looms, as well as spectacular statues that used to adorn the Roman buildings found within the Roman city of Melite.

Interestingly, the Domus Romana was one of the first visitor centres to be built in Malta and was erected in 1882 to protect the Roman mosaic floorings that were discovered during the excavations of 1881. There is also a section devoted to the Muslim presence in Malta, with a reproduction of a Muslim tomb, since when the site was discovered a number of Muslim tombs were found overlying the Roman remains. The Roman remains located outside the building have also been integrated as part of the walk-through to enable a better understanding of the site.

The first of a series of museum shops operated by a private consortium is also found at the Domus Romana. Heritage Malta is planning to open a number of similar outlets in its main sites over the coming months. A site catalogue depicting the displayed artefacts can be bought from the Museum Shop.

Like most of Heritage Malta's sites, the Domus Romana is open to the general public daily between 9.00am and 5.00pm. The site is closed on Good Friday, 24, 25, 31 December and January 1. There are ample parking bays within walking distance of the museum and the site is also served by public transport.



ts 12-17yrs – Lm1.25 / €3.00 • Senior Citizens – Lm1.25 / €3.00
 m1.25 / €3.00 • Children 6-11yrs – Lm0.75 / €2.00



The American Dream that never came to be

Interview with Saviour Debrincat

Heritage Malta was created in 2003, yet, most of its employees had been working for the former Museums Department for years on end. This page pays a tribute to some of our long-serving members of staff.



Saviour Debrincat is one of the longest-serving officials at Heritage Malta. Born and bred in Gozo, he was employed as a substitute guide way back in December 1966, when our islands were still basking in the euphoria of independence.

He was immediately assigned to the Ġgantija Temples and the Museum of Archaeology. The prehistoric temples of Ġgantija have always been a fascinating sight to both tourists and locals.

It was only sheer chance that prevented Salvu from emigrating to Canada. He had his mind set on pursuing a dream in another continent and had already finalised the travelling plans. However, since it was December, he was reluctant to take to the seas during the winter season, let alone experience the harsh sub-zero temperatures that greeted newcomers to Canada, so he asked for the next person on the waiting list to replace him.

Luck was on his side, as within a few days, he came across a vacancy at the Museums Department. After submitting an application and successfully completing his interview, Salvu re-thought his strategy and decided to stay put in his beloved Calypso's island.

He vividly recalls an incident which occurred during his first few years on the job. Salvu used to cycle from Victoria to the Ġgantija Temples. Opening times were very much the same as they are today. One day a terrible storm hit the island. Salvu tried to get home by wheeling his bicycle against the torrential currents, however it took him more than five hours to cover the short distance.

There was no land-line at the time and obviously no mobile phones and his poor mother was worried stiff that something terrible had happened to her son.

Saviour Debrincat is currently a front office assistant, mainly in charge of the Folklore Museum, which is situated in the heart of the Citadel. The museum was inaugurated just over twenty years ago, although two more annexes were added in 1985.

Spread over two floors, the museum depicts the practices of various trades and crafts such as carpentry, lace-making and blacksmith. Once one steps inside the museum, it is like taking a trip inside a time machine to days gone by. Each exhibit depicts images of hardworking men and women, who made a living by working hard in the fields or workshops. Even though machinery and technology were still in their infancy, our forefathers always managed to innovate with the little tools they had.

Step into vaulted rooms, which date back some four hundred years and savour the delight of this marvellous place, which now greets hundreds of curious people who visit the site daily.

There is a twinkle in Saviour's eyes as he glances at the various exhibits on show. The museum has undergone very little change since its opening, but has somehow lost none of its appeal.

School children feel very welcome as Salvu enthusiastically explains how the tools were used. He firmly believes that young people should only be taken to one museum per outing, or else they tend to get bored with too much information on a variety of subjects, which may not be necessarily related.

Dim light re-enacts the conditions under which tradesmen used to work to earn their living. The museum is open daily from 9.00am till 5.00pm. Last admission is half an hour before closing time. The admission fee is Lm1.00. The museum is closed on Good Friday, 24, 25, 31 December and January 1. Visitors can also opt to purchase a Citadel ticket for the price of Lm2.00. This will enable them to visit the Old Prisons, the Archaeology, Folklore and Natural Science Museums, which are all within walking distance in the heart of the Citadel.

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FORTHCOMING HERITAGE MALTA EVENTS

Keeping you updated



Open Day at the National Museum of Archaeology in Valletta:

Following the resounding success of its open day policy, Heritage Malta will be organising an open day at the National Museum of Archaeology on Sunday 24th July. Admission to the museum and the exhibition of Contemporary Maltese Artists will be free of charge and a number of guided tours will be held at different times during the day.

Exhibition of Chinese Coins at the Medieval Hall of the National Museum of Archaeology



Following an agreement with the Chinese Cultural Centre in Malta, Heritage Malta will be hosting an exhibition of Chinese Coins at the Medieval Hall of the National Museum of Archaeology. The exhibition will feature a selection of Chinese coins representing different epochs. The exhibition opens on August 15th and runs till October 2nd, 2005.

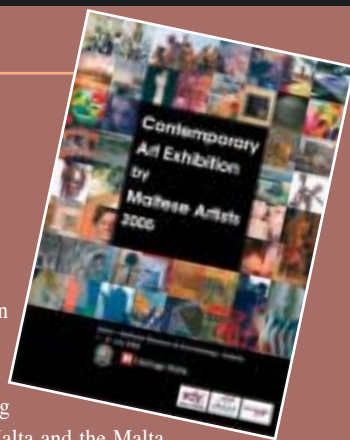
'Beyond' – Heritage Malta's policy of providing exhibition space at its Head Office in Merchants Street, Valletta means that both established and upcoming artists have an alternative venue where they can exhibit their works. To date, a number of exhibitions have been held at Head Office attracting hundreds of art enthusiasts. Between August 8th and September 11th, Antonella Grima will be exhibiting her work at Head Office. Entitled 'Beyond', the exhibition will feature a wide selection of works. Admission to the exhibition is free of charge. The exhibition is open from Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 3.30pm. Antonella Grima's exhibition will be followed by Chris Zarb's exhibition of oil and acrylic paintings entitled 'Contemplation'. This exhibition, also at Heritage Malta's Head Office, will be inaugurated on September 13th and runs till October 2nd, 2005.



Exhibition of Contemporary Maltese Artists 2005

At the Salon of the National Museum of Archaeology – Exhibition of Contemporary Maltese Artists 2005.

This exhibition is being organised by Heritage Malta and the Malta Society for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. A total of 26 artists will be exhibiting their work during this month-long exhibition, which was inaugurated by The Hon. Dr Francis Zammit Dimech, Minister for Tourism and Culture on July 1st, 2005. The exhibition runs till July 31st, 2005.



Heritage Malta now also has an area office in Gozo in the heart of the Citadel Victoria. Besides serving as an administrative hub for Heritage Malta activities in Gozo, the office also has an area reserved for exhibitions. Between September 5th and November 27th, the office will be hosting an exhibition entitled: 'Shedding new Light on the Egyptian Statue of Neferaabet'. The theme will be the ancient imported statue from Egypt, which currently forms part of the reserve archaeological collection.

Autumn Equinox at the Mnajdra Temples in Qrendi – 22nd September 2005. Witness the phenomenon of the rising sun on the first day of a new season as the sun's rays pass directly through the main doorway, straight down the central axis and reaching the innermost central apse. Heritage Malta will be organising a special guided tour of Mnajdra at sunrise. Only a limited number of visitors will be allowed access to this special sunrise tour. For bookings please phone 22954000.

For any further information on any of our forthcoming events, please visit our website: www.heritagemalta.org