



PRESS RELEASE

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SCIORTINO EXHIBITIONS TO MARK Xth GAMES OF THE SMALL STATES OF EUROPE

To mark the Xth Games of the Small States of Europe, Heritage Malta, in collaboration with the Ministry for Youth and the Arts, is organising an exhibition of sculptures by Antonio Sciortino. The exhibition, aptly entitled for the occasion, 'The Joy of Movement', runs from the 5th – 30th June at the National Museum of Archaeology, the Auberge de Provence, Valletta.

Background on Sciortino

The sculptor Antonio Sciortino was born in Zebbug, Malta, in 1879 to a farming family. Following early art studies in Malta he specialised in sculpture and monumental architecture at the *Regio Istituto di Belle Arti* in Rome where he settled as a professional sculptor and teacher. Having also studied at the British Academy of Art in Rome, he later became Director, and Professor of Sculpture, there between 1904 and 1936.

After a classical beginning, his work went through an impressionist phase strongly influenced by Auguste Rodin. Sculptures of this period include *Rimorso and Les Gavroches*. His work gradually developed into *Art Nouveau* (the *First Kiss*, the monuments commemorating the International Eucharistic Congress of 1913 (*Christ the King*) at Floriana, Malta, and the prize-winning *Taras Tchevchenko* (unrealised).

This was followed later by an extensive period where he formed part of the *Art Deco* movement. This phase, which lent itself particularly to works in a dynamic and rhetorical vein is best characterised by *Rhythmi Vitae*, which includes *Arab Horses, Speed, Tennis, Skating, Disaster of a Submarine* and the Monument to the Great Siege of Malta of 1565, in Valletta. Several of the works of this period are particularly distinguished by their treatment of movement.

Sciortino travelled widely throughout Europe also visiting Russia, the Balkans and South America where he modelled several society portraits and took part in a number of important competitions for public monuments. His works are believed to be in around twenty countries all over the world, but the whereabouts of several are still unknown.

In 1947, shortly before his death, Antonio Sciortino bequeathed a considerable number of his works, including several masterpieces, to the people of Malta. Several of his bronzes were shortly after purchased by the State while a few others are in Maltese private collections. Antonio Sciortino died in Malta in 1947 having spent the War years working as Curator of Fine Arts.

A number of Sciortino's works are exhibited at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta and some have also been shown at EXPO 70 in Osaka, Japan and Malta Week: 'Crossroads of Civilisations' at the United Nations European Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland in 2001.

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