

## Cubism Beyond Paris (Malta, 15 Dec 17)

University of Malta, Malta, Dec 15, 2017

Deadline: Aug 31, 2017

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Cubism Beyond Paris: Mediterranean interpretations and the crystallisation of cubism  
A Maltese test case

Cubism is recognised as the first avant-garde movement to radicalise the vision and conception of reality that led painting down an unprecedented path of discovery. Albeit its brevity, the cubist movement created by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque continued to cause shockwaves across the global artworld for decades. Artists working in and outside of Paris adopted its aesthetic and compositional fragmentation. This gave rise to numerous variations, understandings, and renditions of the cubist philosophy, many far-removed from its original manifestation. A plurality of examples exist wherein both European and non-European artists explored and transformed the aesthetic possibilities incited by cubism.

The idiom was transformed and simplified by artists such as Juan Gris, Jean Metzinger, and Albert Gleizes who presented a formalist reading of the movement's aesthetic investigations termed as crystal, or crystallised, cubism. This emerged in the immediate wake of Braque and Picasso's cubism, evincing the fluidity of the idiom's understanding and aesthetic potential. Artists all over the world reinterpreted cubism; Diego Rivera in Mexico, Amadeo de Souza Cardosa in Portugal, Gino Severini in Italy, Natalia Goncharova in Russia, and many others.

In Malta, two leading modern artists, Frank Portelli and Esprit Barthet, adapted the cubist idiom to their local experience, developing a vernacular language born from that of the influential international movement. Although stemming from a deep respect for Picasso and Braque's revolution, the Maltese artist's importation of the term was both chronologically and conceptually distanced from its nascent form and the socio-political context of pre-WWI Paris. Portelli described his style as a form of crystallised cubism, linking him to the second generation of cubist painters in France.

This situation arouses questions of visual translation across diverse cultural spaces and the contingency of artistic meaning when the non-canonical enters into the domain of the canonical.

The aim of this conference is to study the proliferation of cubism and of cubist tendencies in the Mediterranean region and other global cultural contexts. Rather than comparing the differences between cubism's conventional historicisation and the art that exists outside of this framework, the objective is to analyse how artists from different cultural backgrounds interpreted and adapted its appearance and philosophy according to particular and regional spheres of knowledge. The intention is to challenge the dominance of cubism's pervasive influence by opening up discourse

to the contentious trajectories that exist beyond cubism's established categorisation.

The conference is being organised by the Department of History of Art, Faculty of Arts, University of Malta as part of its annual international conference series on Maltese and global modern art. It will take place on Friday December 15, 2017 at the University of Malta.

Academics and researchers are invited to submit proposals for papers of 20 minutes in length. Abstracts of not more than 300 words are to be sent to Dr. Giuseppe Schembri Bonaci ([giuseppe.schembri-bonaci@um.edu.mt](mailto:giuseppe.schembri-bonaci@um.edu.mt)) and Ms. Nikki Petroni ([nicola.petroni.09@um.edu.mt](mailto:nicola.petroni.09@um.edu.mt)) by August 31, 2017. Submissions must include a recent academic CV. All applicants will be informed of the status of their submission by September 21, 2017.

Reference:

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