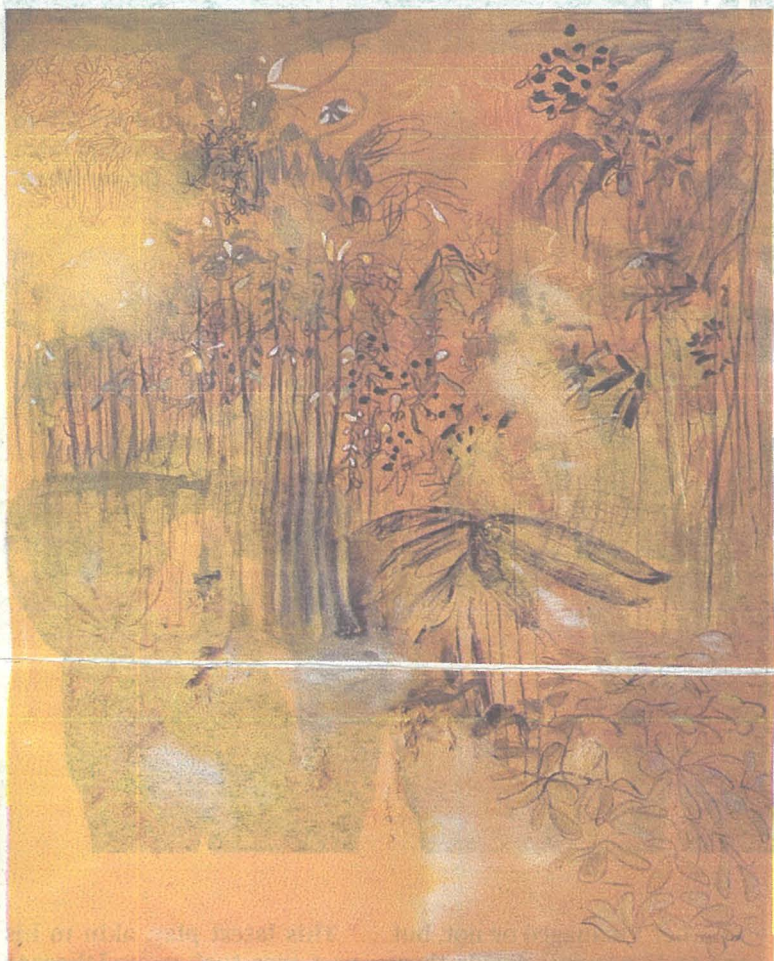


ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT ARTS



Trapped, 2023. PHOTOS: DANIEL VELLA



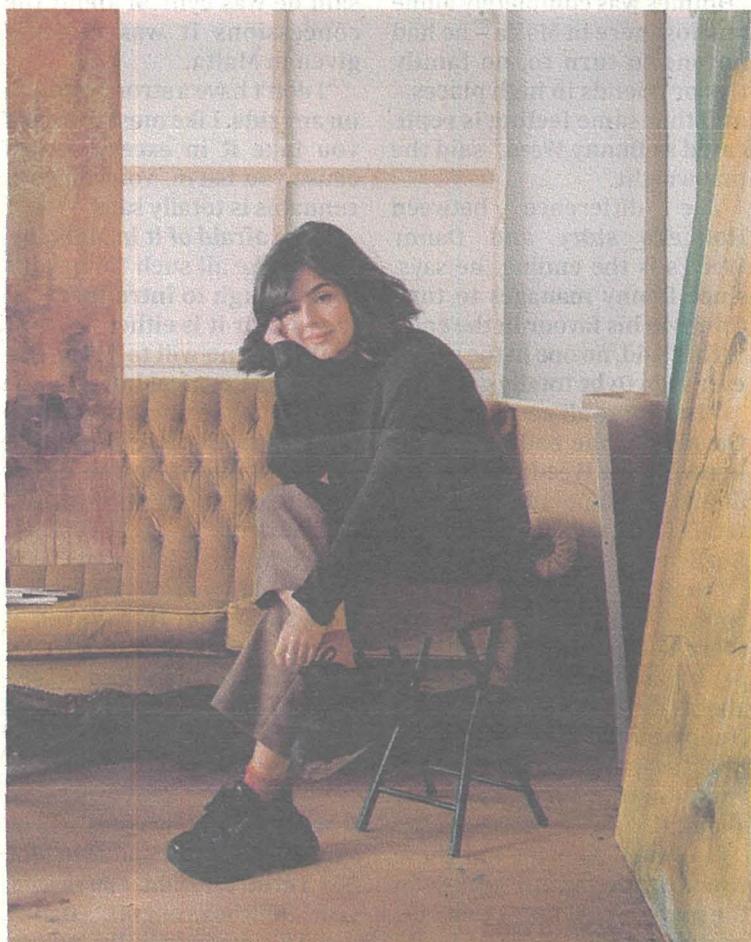
The moment I met it, 2023



Since, 2023

Critical junctures: Crux by Tina Mifsud

Lisa Gwen speaks to visual artist and painter **TINA MIFSUD** about her latest exhibition *CRUX*, a site-specific installation in Birkirkara, as well as the show's curator **ANDREW BORG WIRTH** about their long-standing collaborative relationship and how this exhibition has been assembled



Artist Tina Mifsud

LG: This is not the first exhibition in which the pair of you are working together, collaborating if you like; how has your artist-curator relationship developed since your first endeavour? And where do you think it's headed from here?

ABW: This is the fourth collaborative project we are embarking on together and, each time, there is an increased sense of trust in each other. It is quite important for us because Tina's exhibitions have been formative for us both. We are at an important juncture in our respective practices, and the decisions we make on collaborative projects help us forge the way we see ourselves working in the future and in other circumstances. This synergy is hard to come by, so we'll definitely be holding onto it.

TM: For *CRUX*, we have worked with several others to challenge the parameters of exhibition-making and create a site-specific installation where the paintings seem to unfold on the space they are set in. It has been really exciting to frame the works with the

help of designers Mark Pace, Tom van Malderen and Nick Theuma, whose work comes together to suspend and illuminate the paintings within a traditional Maltese mill room.

LG: Tina, your works seem to be created in series, not only thematic, but also chromatic – which hints at deeper and more profound powers at play. Could you expand on that for me?

“**CRUX speaks of a specific moment in time, when the space I was in formed the way that my memory of that time remains**

– **TINA MIFSUD**

TM: With this show in particular, colour has been an important device. The starting point of the project was an encounter with a bright orange net which I kept seeing as I crossed a path overseas. This colour, and the ways that it stood out for one moment and became part of the landscape the next, really stayed with me. I think colour is an important means by which I express how a particular moment or time felt.

LG: Andrew, you're a busy bee, working on multiple projects – from fashion to product design, to curatorial and more – what is it that binds all of your projects? Is there some common denominator, for lack of a better word, when it comes to choosing the projects you take on?

ABW: I am interested in the interdisciplinary, the collaborative and the disruptive. My work is always narrative-driven and fuelled by the people that I am working with. The 'curatorial' is about a position one takes, to forge new meaning out of things that don't necessarily share a



Bare, 2023



Warped, 2023



context until one brings them together. I find this exciting; and with Tina I get to do this more and more.

LG: Andrew, you're utilising a 'new' space – a virgin space, which is still in the throes of completion. What constraints, and what opportunities does this pose – curatorially, spatially, but also aesthetically? And as an aside – what do you look for in a space when planning an exhibition?

ABW: The mill room offered an exciting opportunity because it was in a liminal condition. It is no longer abandoned, but it is also not converted. There have been works and changes made, but the spirit of the place is still being developed. This I find really exciting. Even in *Point of you* (2020), we had taken over a commercial site in Iklin and used its nature as a construction site to envelope the paintings and their narrative. I feel this is important for Tina's work whenever it is confessional. There is an invitation into a personal and intimate space which contributes to the work and its display.

The constraints are obviously its exposure to the elements and its displacement from street level, but we managed to overcome these – despite the intense storm that postponed our opening night. Space is obviously an important component for my work due to my background as an architect, however I try to allow the art and artists I am working with to dictate where one installs.

LG: Tina, I believe your debut show featured a series of bathers as protagonist; gradually the figure seems to be receding, while nature seems to be succeeding; could you comment on the transition and perhaps tell your readers where you see yourself headed?

TM: I wouldn't like to position myself in either of the two categories because I love my figurative work so much. I think the last exhibition, *The Rainforest* (2022), presented both my previous figurative work and my newfound fascination with nature. With *CRUX*, I am honing in a bit further on the natural, but I intend retaining a practice that studies both. It is a lot about discipline and about training myself to remain at the cusp of something new, rather than remaining confined by my last presented work. There is something quite exciting (and fearful) about presenting work that is different to what your audience is expecting you to show.

LG: What is *CRUX* about? The word is defined as a question requiring resolve and resolution, while the curatorial note mentions fragility, abandonment, destruction and disposal... homecoming; what 'place' is this series of work coming from?

TM: *CRUX* speaks of a specific moment in time, when the space I was in formed the way that my memory of that time remains. The exhibition is an exercise in mark-making which attempts to create space. It emulates the depth of a path I crossed repeatedly, and negotiates the memory I retain from that experience.

ABW: As the sun's rays meet the masking foliage, and the bright, orange net abandoned upon the ground persists in her memory, she is drawn back to the feelings of intensity which came upon her while abroad.

TM: It is interesting that you speak of resolve and resolution, because creating work helps to come to terms with realities experienced earlier. This work is coming from a time of chaos and intensity, and its display helps

reconcile with a time which was critical.

CRUX is a site-specific installation in 2, Sqaq Vitorja, Birkirkara. Opening times: Fridays and Saturdays 6 to 9pm, and Sundays 10am to 1pm, till February 26.