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**Louis Laganà**

## **Sculpture by the sea**



Recently, ceramist and sculptor, Charles Sammut has been doing more outdoor artwork, and work with metal and other material. He is now one of the very few Maltese artists who are commissioned to embellish particular sites in public spaces. Mr Sammut's large scale urban sculptures are now an important part of his artistic development. A recent example is his latest work at the Cottonera Waterfront. Earlier this month, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi unveiled a spectacular iron sculpture by Mr Sammut which is 3.85 metres high and called by the artist Images From The Sea : Sails and Dolphins. It was placed under a structure of three arches in the inlet at Fort St Angelo, next to the Yacht Marina.

Mr Sammut has a strong sense of exploring many ideas using the elements of lines, planes and volumes in his sculpture. In the last few years he used techniques on large scale work which goes from smooth sanded geometric shapes with defining edges, to rounded naturalistic forms in a rough surfacing.

In this piece, Mr Sammut symbolises the three important elements of nature: air, water and earth. It is a contemporary message to show the viewers that these are the three basic elements for our existence. At a glance, the shape of the three-piece sculpture looks like sailing boats cruising the Mediterranean waters. Air is crucial for sailing boats to journey from one land to another. The air blows the sails to move forward the vessel which metaphorically means that life for humans must move forward. The three sails also represent the land of the three cities and the three inlets of the Grand Harbour. Malta, a rock, surrounded by the sea was always a place of refuge for seafarers and fishermen.

Mr Sammut's sculpture can also be interpreted as a "reminiscence of dolphins coming out of the sea as they travel along in their groups". We know that the dolphin is a sea mammal sometimes seen in Maltese waters. Before 1975 the symbol of two dolphins was also part of the Maltese emblem. They symbolise peace, harmony, and freedom. It is said that dolphins are one of the most intelligent species and that there is an analogy in the way dolphins communicate in the ocean depths.

I am sure that in the future we will see more monumental work in other public places by Mr Sammut. In Malta, we are witnessing the beginning of a new era in the application of art in

the public realm which will continue to grow in the coming days. Public developers with government aid and support should be encouraged to provide the necessary funding so that our urban areas in the country will benefit by the expert skill of interested artists. This will also lead in the promotion of towns and villages within the competitive restructuring of the economic growth of our islands.

Times of Malta:

<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20070317/arts-entertainment/sculpture-by-the-sea.179120>