

New spaces, new artists

by Louis Laganà

A few weeks ago at the refurbished Melita bar and restaurant on the periphery of Balzan, and very near to San Anton Gardens, three large rooms were inaugurated as exhibition space where local and foreign artists could exhibit their work. The artists, Maria Pisani, a new name in the Maltese art scene, and young photographer Andrew Rizzo explored different aspects of the human body. The exhibition, entitled Words We Whisper, is their first art show.

Ms Pisani selected a series of female images, most of them drawn with soft pastels on paper. Her figures are not simply a depiction of the feminine, but rather a visual expression of the dialogue between the inner soul and the projected self. For example, in the work called Drown the Wakeful Anguish of the Soul, the artist portrays a strange face of a woman without hair and with a penetrating ghostly gaze. The monochromatic effect of the blue composition and the light emanating from the background suggest a dramatic feeling, which is outside the colourful realm of life. Psychologically, crave for and use of blue colour in her paintings might signify the longing for a change and awareness of the "self". Such compositions reflect the true feelings of the artist towards the spiritual and the physical worlds.

Ms Pisani works mostly on female images, expressed with a simple and clear style permeated with many feelings and ideas. Most of them provide symbolic and metaphoric features of the experience of life. For example, in another work called Serene Dwelling Place, Ms Pisani created a female figure shown in an embryonic posture. Here the female is an obvious emblem of fertility. It is the beginning of life but it is also the end. In this exhibition Ms Pisani uses other female images which could be also associated with death. This is found in works like: The Heart Must Pause to Breathe, Pale Grew Thy Cheek and Cold, and A White Flower Froze on his Grave.

Photographer Andrew Rizzo presented a series of photos based on different studies of the human body. We know that there is a long history of how photographers depicted the female nude in art. In some of his work, Mr Rizzo expresses the nude female body as an archetypal symbol of nature and at times he merges these figures with ethnographic objects as in his work entitled Nymph.

The use of a "primitive" mask contrasts with the beauty of the female torso as seen from the back creating a reverent, powerful and haunting expression. Mr Rizzo blends creativity with an excellent use of manipulated photographic imagery.

Other works are about his recent experiments, mostly with faces. Today no one can deny that photography has become the vehicle to encounter faces. For example, in Silently, Silent, the artist manipulated the photographic image of a female face to release a strong, tense expression of a woman. He blends the real with the surreal. In another excellent



Ode to the Human Form:
Maria Pisani and Andrew Rizzo explore different aspects of the human body in their first joint art exhibition.

monochromatic detail of the face of a man entitled Words Unspoken, Mr Rizzo engages an excellent flow of lines, as well as lovely tones and contrasts to bring out this masculine expression. His black and white work called And the Story Begins shows the palm of an adult hand holding that of a newly born child and this is another demonstration of how photography today could be used as a means not just to show the force of creativity behind everyday objects and people but also to send a clear social message to the viewers.

Today we know that innovative artists in Malta are finding more opportunities than in former times. We need to keep all the doors open for this new generation of artists. This clearly shows that in the coming years more private spaces would be created to give an opportunity to emerging artists to show their work to a wider audience. We need creative people to keep the cultural climate fresh.

Times of Malta:

<file:///C:/Users/Mr.Lagana/Documents/PUBLICATIONS/weekender%20reviews/article.phpmaria%20pisani%20andrew%20rizzo.htm>