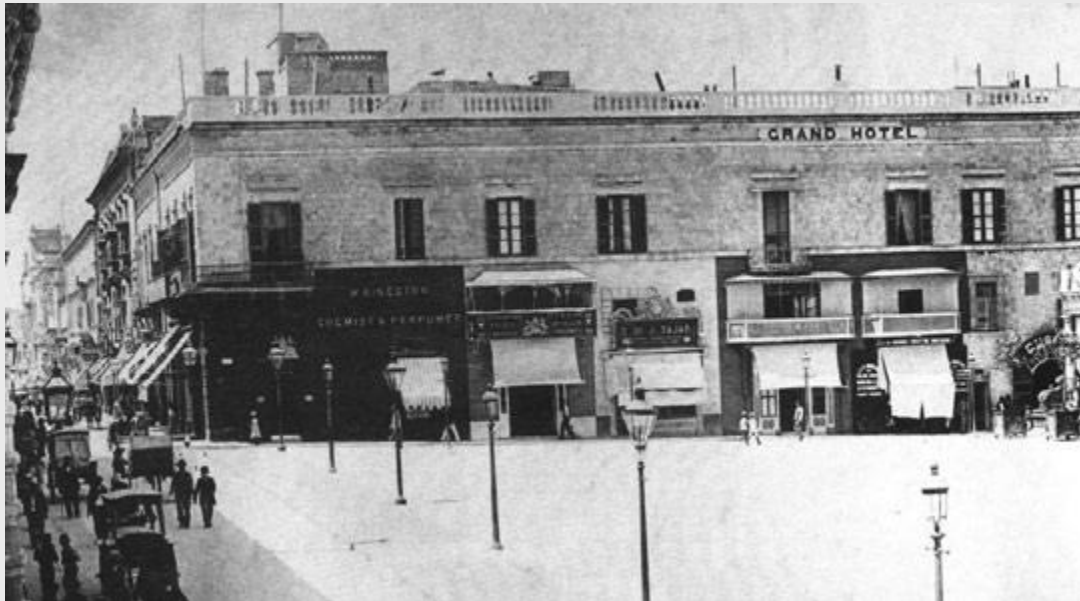


Modernising St George's Square (1)

Ray Bondin, Għajnsielem



I cannot but agree fully with what Konrad Thake wrote in his letter Cut And Paste Architecture, (June 10) with regards to the new paving project in St George's Square, Valletta. Everyone agrees that this project is necessary but once more we are rushing into a project without making sure that the detailing is correct.

I have already written substantially about this matter and will not repeat my arguments. I wish however to point to the photo that appeared with the article, by our best known historian of modern and contemporary architecture, and reinstate what I have always said. This is the fact that there was a clearly identified street. Making the whole area of the square come right up to the Palace is not acceptable because this is ruining the grid pattern of Valletta which is one of the original elements of the urban design of the city. In all the historic photos I have seen, contrary to what the current Valletta Rehabilitation Project states, the street was clearly identifiable, so much so that the square was cut off from the rest with decorative lamp-posts. This photo reconfirms this point. Furthermore, I know for certain its from the time that I was in charge, that the original lava paving is still there (even though not in its totality).

I wish to also mention two other elements. The first is that I cannot simply understand the argument that the trees are damaging the underground tunnels. There is simply no proof of this. To be fair, the original trees in the square were in boxes but the memory of the square is with the planted trees. The tunnels are not in front of the Main Guard and

as far as I know (but I may be wrong) the two restaurants that are adjacent to the part where the Italian Cultural Institute is have never complained that the trees are damaging these "tunnels".

Finally, those proposed lamp-posts! St George's Square deserves to be restored to its original elegance. While it is true that this is a modern intervention, the square must not be treated as if it is in some modern area of our island such as Sliema or Paceville. The design must respect and reflect the historic and architectural importance of the square.

One last question: Are the works undertaken being supervised by an archaeologist? From what I have seen there is no supervision. I have no doubt therefore that the original clay piping to the fountain will be destroyed when these deserve to be conserved.

Comments

laurence schembri (2 days, 9 hours ago)Ray, thank you for the photo, the elegance of the square glares at you.The sign `Grand Hotel` really stand out.

John Carmel Navarro (2 days, 9 hours ago)

St George's Square regeneration project is now well underway very much against the wishes of most Maltese. I cannot understand how the views of Ray Bondin and others that do have the City of Valletta close to their heart are just brushed aside. Whoever rubber stamped the design has done so in a very reckless manner, the choice should have for the nation rather than a personal one. I dare say some future comments on this issue would try and discredit anyone who does not agree with what is going on as being against the government. This is far from the truth and a very blinkered view.

Galea. L (2 days, 11 hours ago)Ray Bondin

Totally agree with you.

The proposed modernization is a blasphemy in a city built by gentlemen for gentlemen. Why are not lamp posts similar to those in the photograph not going to be used? Please stop destroying our heritage.

martin portelli (2 days, 12 hours ago)

Hear Hear

I have nothing against contemporary design, but really how respectful is this proposed design to the historical drama that St.George's square has witnessed? Should it be rendered a soulless space? Disregarding the historical narrative is an excercise in disrespect.