

Opera house selling price put at €16,310

Waylon Johnston



Carmelo Camilleri describing the method he employed in building the Opera House model.
Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi.

An "almost perfect" model of the old Royal Opera House in Valletta is up for sale after two years of painstaking work by a 70-year-old former building contractor.

The detailed two-metre by one-metre model was built by Carmelo Camilleri on plans from a book about the theatre. The ruins were the inspiration, he said.

The model is not quite the right height but has everything from the individual bricks and the material that binds them together to the wooden window frames made of matchsticks.

The scale of the model gives a very good idea of what the old theatre was actually like. Mr Camilleri is selling the model because he lives on his own and his son is not interested in it. The price is €16,310.

The limestone model is built around a wooden frame based on plans contained in a book Mr Camilleri had bought. He then measured the extent of the ruins in order to be able to build the exterior part of the model.

Having worked in the construction industry since he was a young man, Mr Camilleri recalled that as a boy he would build miniature houses out of stone but they were soon destroyed by his friends in a bit of rough play.


He stopped work on the model when his wife Ġuza passed away because at the time he just did not feel like working on anything but the desire to conclude what he had started got him going again.

The Royal Opera House is not the only model Mr Camilleri has built.

Other models include Westminster Cathedral, the Burj Al Arab Hotel in Dubai and Ta' Pinu church in Ġħasri.

Asked what he thought about Renzo Piano's architectural plans for the opera ruins, he said he had some reservations because of Valletta's baroque style architecture.

Comments


Anthony Pace Gouder(3 weeks, 4 days ago) 

@ Colin , Manwel , George , Cecil , Joe , Charles Lawrence , and an unlimited Prosit to Mr. Camilleri for his masterpiece .

If EVER the Piano teatr in IS ERECTED , there will surely come a time when it shall be DISMANTLED from Valletta for good and used as a Roaming Venue for Summer festivals, concerts. ANYTHING under the stars. It will be removed and re-erected say every 2 or 3 weeks in (Preferential) Villaggiatura Areas like Bugibba , Qawra , Ġħadira , Marsascula , Birzebbugia and why not Marsalforn and Xlendi. At least the money spent would serve a Good Cause !

colin stanley(3 weeks, 4 days ago) 


And we were made to believe that the Maltese, are not capable to build the opera house, that we needed an outsider to show us how to plan a project like that, I think we were misinformed, look at this work of art. and this guy isn't even an Architect !!!! well done.

Manwel Debattista(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

Mr. Camilleri should put his works of art on show. Judging by the photo of his Opera House project, this is truly a fantastic effort and should be rewarded and appreciated. Tell us where we can come to view your marvellous works Mr. Camilleri. I will be there queueing up to see your masterpieces. I would not mind paying a modest entrance fee as well.

P.Cassar(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

BUT ARE WE REALLY NOT ASHAMED OF LEAVING OUR CHILDREN A POOR ROOFLESS RUBBLE INSTEAD OF THE MAJESTY OF THE THEATRE PAINSTAKENLY PRESENTED HERE!!!

Lawrence Fenech(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

The GonziPn should buy the master piece by Mr. Camilleri and send it to Mr. Piano in order that he may make himself aware of what the majority of the Maltese want. Well done mr Camilleri most pleasant to the eye.

George Vella(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 🗨️

Well done Mr. Camilleri, you did it right on time for all of us to see its splendor. This should be in Valletta life-size, yet imagine erecting it at the Smart City how awkward it would look!

Charles Micallef(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 🗨️

This should be bought by the Government and displayed in the new Opera House to be viewed by generations to come

cecil herbert jones(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 🗨️

Congratulations! But I really think he should have built it life-size.

Joe Cassar(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 🗨️

This is sheer cruelty. Why taunt us with this majestic beauty when we know that it will be replaced by something that looks like a permanent construction site that can double as a gorilla cage for a remake of King Kong?

C Cassar(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 🗨️

Nice model but it's of a building from the past. Valletta doesn't need stuffy old relics, it needs a new breath of life. Why or why can't the Maltese move on and look to the future? Join the train or be left behind.

jimgalea(3 weeks, 5 days ago)

Sure mr c cassar soon you will suggesting that we should demolish buildings in valletta and built some FRESH concrete monsters just like Tigne Point made by the rich for the rich.

wake up before its too late. Maltese are being robbed of what is by right thiers.

Josef Caruana(3 weeks, 3 days ago)

If joining the train means having starbucks/debenhams/Mc Donalds/ Marks & Spencers and Blackwell shops in every town square like in the UK (Check Bill Bryson), than I would rather let the train pass by and enjoy what is truly Maltese.


The feeling that we need to 'modernise' is an inferiority complex by people who look at foreign places as superior to Maltese places, and feel that we need to emulate them in order to appear more 'civilised' by their standard., This ultimately means throwing away our culture in a bid to become a bog standard place, like which you will find hundreds all over the world.

On the other hand keeping our characteristics, although it might be described as cute and quaint by some, is what makes us Maltese. National pride starts being lost when; whilst having a look around you, you are not able to distinguish whether you are in your own country or somewhere 'modern' which could be any of 200 cities. So yes please I would rather have something that had stood in that place before, rather than something new.

John Grima(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 🗨️


I am certain that Carmelo Camilleri is not a "world renowned architect like the Prof. Renzo Piano. But I am damn sure that Mr. Camilleri has built his model with passion, with his body and soul, and the love that only a Maltese architect would have for his

heritage. Yes indeed. Not only this model belongs in a Museum, but it should be displayed side by side with, that other, model, a skeleton of its former self, being displayed at the Museum on Republic Street. So that everyone can compare the two models..... Perhaps even put a ballot box on each, and see which one will fill up first.

George Debono(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

Now, who can tell me that it would not have been wonderful to have a majestic building like that to grace the entrance to our beloved Valetta?

Instead we get - rammed down our throat - a useless cheapo version. Like this, there will be enough cash left over to build parliament. Of course we, the very people who voted for the MP who are now robbing us of our theatre, get second priority; like little kids, we have to make do with what we're given - the left-over crumbs .


Eric Gahn(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

@ Mark Mifsud Bonnici: Why should the Govt buy this model? It has a roof.


Victor Laiviera(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

How sad - what a reminder of what we had and (apparently) we cannot have again,

We should send pictures of this to Prof Piano - maybe it will persuade him to ditch the construction-site fantasy once and for all.

Mike Magri(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 


A very professional job by a very experienced gentleman. Maybe Mr. Renzo Piano and the Prime Minister, should BOTH take a VERY DEEP GOOD look at Mr. Camilleri`s model, and see what the Maltese Nation will be unfortunately DEPRIVED of, if the powers that be, GOD FORBID, Stubornly decide to build the theatre on Mr. Piano`s Very Unpopular and Out Of Subject `tennis court like`, supposidly theatre plan, to say the least... Mr. Prime Minister, for a very easy Decision, just put Mr. Piano`s model near Mr. Camilleri`s, and THERE YOU HAVE IT.. SHOULD BE LIKE MR. CAMILLERI`S MODEL..... PERIOD..

George Manduca(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

Wonderful masterpiece... I can relate to the artist's motivations. Yet I have this nagging feeling that this is as far we're going to get as far as the Opera House is concerned!

Before they used to build Plastic Models and Limestone Buildings.
Today we're getting Limestone Models and Plastic Buildings!

Now let's hope we get more than just this limestone model.
We want the real opera house back!

Raphael Zammit(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

WOW!!! amazing talent, this model brings tears to my eyes, remembering that we shall never ever see this state of the art opera house being built to its original state...

pity :'(

Godfrey Camilleri(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

I consider €16,310 to be quite low for such work of art. I suggest that Mr Camilleri gets a more professional opinion to establish a price. Very well done. Prroset tassew.


Stefan Camilleri(3 weeks, 4 days ago)

I agree, this really looks beautiful, and worth far more than the asking price.

Chris Grech(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

wow! well done!!

that's all i can say...!!

MARK MIFSUD BONNICI(3 weeks, 5 days ago) 

Government should purchase this model as an exhibit for the Museum of fine arts.

It is the most detailed reminder of what we could once consider an architectural gem.

Surely Euro 16,310 should be affodable to a government that intends spending millions on the same site.

C. Scerri(3 weeks, 5 days ago)

I think that the idea of govt buying this model is a good one and hope that it is taken up. As for Mr Camilleri's remark about Valetta's baroque architecture, I hope that he realises that the Old Opera House is not in the Baroque style.
