

Verdala Palace painted wooden ceilings being restored

Four painted wooden ceilings at Verdala Castle are being restored in a project launched in April and sponsored by Bank of Valletta.

President George Abela announced the project today and described it as 'priceless' in the context of preserving the palace for future generations.

The paintings date back to the 1700s and consist mostly of designs and emblems. The timber has suffered the ravages of time and damp and the paint has flaked in some sections. The ceiling of a fifth room was dismantled some years ago because of its deterioration but there is hope that it too may be restored.

Dr Abela refused to disclose the value of the work. He said the restoration is being carried out by experts engaged by Heritage Malta assisted by students of restoration.

The site of Verdala Palace was originally a small hunting lodge built by Grandmaster Jean Parisot de la Vallette between 1557 and 1568. The present structure was erected by Grandmaster Fra Hugues Loubenx de Verdalle in 1586 planned a fortified structure to provide a minimal form of defence against the Turks who attacked Malta from time to time.

The first floor of the palace was remodelled in Baroque times during the Magistracy of Grandmaster Dom António Manoel de Vilhena (1722-1736). The decorated ceilings date to this intervention.


The four ceilings follow the same typology with a central medallion and framed segments carrying different references to the Magistracy of Vilhena, his coat of arms and armorial references. The wood soffits on which the paintings have been executed have suffered changes in atmospheric conditions over almost three hundred years and this has resulted in considerable damage'.

Apart from being an architectural gem and the President's summer residence, Verdala Palace, has played many roles in its history. These include acting as a repository for the National Museum of Arts during the second world war and has hosted distinguished dignitaries during their stay in Malta such as King George V and Queen Mary in 1912, Prince Albert in 1913 and later King George VI in April 1943 among many others.


"Bank of Valletta has become synonymous with the conservation and restoration of historical buildings in Malta" said BOV chairman Roderick Chalmers. "The restoration of the Cupola at the St Catherine of Italy Chapel in Valletta, currently nearing completion and the Christ the King statue in Floriana are fine examples of Bank of Valletta's contribution to the community in which it operates".

“We are proud to collaborate with the Office of the President in this project and look forward to the first open day at Verdala Palace, when these ceilings, restored to their former glory, can be enjoyed by the Maltese people”.

Comments

Jesmond Micallef(3 weeks, 6 days ago) 

Restorations like these are worth every single penny. This place is a palace afterall. With regards to the ceiling which was painted over by the British with oil based paint, thats very unfortunate as the oil does penetrate quite deeply too into the wood by simple capillary movement within the pores of the wood grain. Maybe students who are receiving tuition on restorative techniques in this specialised area could conduct some experimentation on a small sample somehow. Very well done indeed.

charlie cauchi(3 weeks, 6 days ago) 

il poplu malti missu jigi iktar informat dwar ir restawr u il konservazjoni tal binjiet taghna bhakk japprezza aktar ix xoghol li issir fuqhom

marlene pullicino(3 weeks, 6 days ago) 

It was high time the Palaces serving as official residences for our Heads of State received the attention they so desperately require. President Abela not only proved himself exceptional in the way he made an absolute success of I-Istrina...of unifying our nation...but is also striving to save our Heritage while saving and not squandering public money .He took it upon himself to seek sponsorships , and is trying to do away with crippling and extremely costly bureaucracy , in order to minimise having to dig into the public coffers .

It would be very rewarding if leaders of this country follow the President's example and get things done as sensibly and efficiently.

R.Borg(3 weeks, 6 days ago) 

Your Excellency,

Thank you for the personal interest you are showing in the fine restoration of our cultural heritage, continuing on the work of your predecessors.

Malta tkun tafulek.


And just do not take notice of what certain individuals write. What are these exactly doing for their country?

I admit: your honeymoon is over.


But do not be afraid: the majority, including myself, support and trust you.

David Caruana(3 weeks, 6 days ago)

What are YOU doing for your country? Questioning authority is healthy in every democratic society - it helps others to be aware that what is broadcast on both party's media (and sometimes even on independant ones) can be 'fairly' biased and it keeps the authorities in check. Now please explain to us what's wrong with that.

wally vella-zarb(3 weeks, 6 days ago) 

Yet another instance of a national treasure that was vandalised by the British during their occupation. (Listen carefully to the President at 01:12 onwards in the video clip)

David Caruana(3 weeks, 6 days ago) 

The restoration and maintenance of such heritage cannot be but commended.

What's worrying is the President's refusal to disclose the value of the work.

It's OUR heritage and OUR money we're talking about here!

What happened to transparency?

Fenech M D(3 weeks, 6 days ago)

Dawn l-affarijiet ma tantx tista' tistmahom minn qabel ghax minghalik ikun hemm haga u ssib ohra. Allura trid timxi fuq li ssib u tirranga, wara kollox dan wirt pajjizna. Taqbel li ghandna nhalluh jaqa' bicciet? Kieku din kienet darek ma tirroranghiex? Igalea(3 weeks, 6 days ago)

David Caruana what is there to be worried about because the President doesn't want to disclose how much it is going to cost? Isn't BoV sponsoring the project? So what if BoV itself doesn't want to disclose it? Do you mean to tell us that we should let everything go to ruins? Why is it that you are NOW criticizing the President and I've never seen any post from you criticizing anything when the President was an ex-PN? Sour grapes perhaps?

David Caruana(3 weeks, 6 days ago)

Fenech M D

Go on google and type "define:commended"

David Caruana(3 weeks, 6 days ago)

Igalea

You need to look up the definition of "commended" as well.

And no, no sour grapes, if you really follow my posts you would realise that I don't wave any political flag - I only wave the Maltese flag - that is mine, and yours.

It's overwhelming how some people measure everything with the partisan stick!

Vince DeBono(3 weeks, 6 days ago)

I guess it is BOV's prerogative when it comes to publishing the cost. They owe it to their shareholders - and in fact they probably would do so without fanfare in the End of Year Accounts. I am not sure if the President said "I refuse to reveal the costs" or whether he said "I cannot (meaning the Bank knows while I don't know the value of the bank's gift)". Some seem to assume the President is hiding something. Could be the meaning changed in translation?