



STATE OF THE ARTS

MALTA NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM 2024

RENEWING COMMON PATHWAYS

24TH & 25TH OCTOBER 2024
UNIVERSITY OF MALTA - VALLETTA CAMPUS



The State of the Arts Symposium is back in October. As we look back at and critically engage with what has been achieved in the past editions, we would like to **renew our common pathways** adopting a hands-on and solution-oriented approach. We aim to co-create a safe space that can reshape individual and collective efforts, leading to a more thriving artistic and cultural sector. Earlier this year, Arts Council Malta published a post on its social media channels, inviting the public to share its thoughts on what themes feel urgent and crucial to discuss at the Symposium. This has informed and inspired the content thematics and development of the Symposium's programme.

In making and organising our creative and cultural processes:

- How can our actions and thinking impact structural changes?
- How can structural changes impact our individual realities?

Making things with others and recognising our interdependence is **a practice of commoning**.

The commons are all around us, quietly shaping our lives. These tangible and intangible assets exist in our Maltese neighbourhoods, in Mediterranean cities and in the wider European and international context. But what exactly are they? The commons are the natural, cultural and social resources held in common by a community and accessible to all members of a society, supporting the quality of life we experience. Practical examples of the commons include: air, sunlight, forests, rivers, the sea, the coast and a liveable Earth; local parks and community gardens; a local language and shared knowledge; user generated contents on the web and open source software; an artistic movement and public art; security and justice.

Sometimes our understanding of the commons and our engagement with them emerge from cooperation, other times from conflict. At its core, **the commons benefits society as a whole**, transcending individual, sectoral or generational interests, recognising planet Earth not as a mere shared treasure but, moreover, as an equal co-player. The commons invite us to act as responsible citizens within interconnected social webs. However, in our contemporary political landscape, scepticism looms large. Individual freedom in private markets often overshadows the role of citizens serving, engaging with and passing on the commons in good condition – an act of care that we may describe as commoning.

Art and culture provide tools to dream and **reimagine ways of doing and being**, allowing people to connect and share. How can art and culture keep the commons alive? How can the commons sustain art and culture? As inspired by the thoughts that the public shared, the Symposium aims to interrogate and debate on:

- How can a practice of commoning sustain the socio-economic status and working conditions of creatives?
- How can commoning processes challenge the current limiting and limited art funding structures?
- How can spaces and infrastructure become more available, accessible and affordable through commoning practices?
- How can shared values and an ethics of care open up access to a wider group of practitioners with different needs and experiences, leading to better equity?
- How can a process of commoning provide a wider variety of artforms and practices, relevant to more diverse audiences?
- How can a practice of commoning unify and consolidate efforts towards the development of formal and non-formal learning?

DRAFT PROGRAMME*

THURSDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2024

- 09:00** Arrival and Registration
- 09:30** **Opening the day's conversation**
Abigail Mallia - Director and Producer, Take//Two
- 09:40** **Invite to reflect**
Bianca Elzenbaumer - Director, Brave New Alps
- 10:25** **Meeting the hosts**
Arts Council Malta
Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government
- Launch of the National Charter for the Status of the Artist**
Arts Council Malta
- 11:00** Coffee Break
- 11:30** **Fishbowl conversation: The socio-economic status of the artist**
Lenn Cox - Community Organiser, Designer, Educator and Board Member, Broodfonds Arnhem
Floréal Comte - Performing artist, France's model for the intermittent artist status
Alisha Doody - Socially Engaged Artist and Educator, Ireland's Basic Income for Artists
Abigail Mallia - Conversation Moderator
Erica Muscat - Stage and Screen Actor, Writer and Dramaturg, Malta's COVID-19 Wage Supplement for Artists
Elena Polivtseva - Cultural Researcher and Policymaker (EU affairs)
- 12:35** Snack Break
- 12:45** **Parallel Sessions**
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- 14:15** Networking Lunch
- 15:00** End of day 1 - See you tomorrow

* The organisers reserve the right to change the current programming as they deem proper and/or should the need arise.

DRAFT PROGRAMME*

FRIDAY, 25TH OCTOBER 2024

- 12:00** Arrival and Registration
Drinks and snacks
- 12:30** **Opening the day's conversation**
John Mallia - Director, Mediacoop
- 12:35** **Cultural and Creative Practice Survey**
Arts Council Malta
- 12:50** **Panel conversation: Access and accessibility in the arts world, within a context of diversity**
John Mallia - Conversation Moderator
Deborah Falzon, Julienne Schembri - Co-Founders, Dance Beyond Borders
Alexander Farrugia - Director (Culture), Culture Directorate
Rhoda Garland - Commissioner, Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
Britt Jurgensen - Board Member, Homebaked CLT
Greta Pace Buch - Facilitator, Creative Coach and Communications Mentor
- 13:50** Light Lunch Break
- 14:20** **Parallel sessions**
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- 15:55** Coffee Break
- 16:25** **Call to action**
Joe Gatt - Editor, Aphroconfuso
- 17:10** **Closure**
Mary Ann Cauchi - Director Funding and Strategy, Arts Council Malta
- 17:20** End of day 2

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PARALLEL SESSIONS

THURSDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2024

THE SESSIONS WERE SELECTED FOLLOWING AN OPEN PUBLIC CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MOULDING CONNECTIONS IN CLAY: RETHINKING SOCIAL PRACTICE ARTS THROUGH PLAY

Format: Hands-on workshop

Language: Bilingual - Maltese & English

Presenters:

Martina Camilleri & Raffaella Zammit -
Gabriel Caruana Foundation

The hands-on, interactive experience is intended to allow room for critical reflection, exchange of experiences and collaborative learning to appreciate the current specific ecology around social practice arts. Participants will be invited to artfully envision a future where social practice arts can be meaningfully sustained, using clay as a tactile and malleable material to communicate reflections, identify the needs and challenges of social practice art, facilitating further conversation.

PLACEMAKING AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Format: Thematic and matchmaking forum

Language: English

Presenters:

Regional Councils: Northern Region, Eastern Region, Gozo Region; KT Thomas; Arts Council Malta

How can the artistic and cultural scene broaden knowledge, expand programming and build connections by working with local communities? What are the benefits of working locally, regionally, but also internationally and translocally? How can we secure social sustainability while addressing the diverse needs and experiences of practitioners and audiences alike? The presenters of this forum will share their regional and international experiences, culminating in a matchmaking activity for regional councils, creative practitioners, cultural managers, researchers, policymakers and other interested members of the public.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

THURSDAY, 24TH OCTOBER 2024

THE SESSIONS WERE SELECTED FOLLOWING AN OPEN PUBLIC CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

THE FUTURE OF WORK IN THE ARTS

Format: Interactive roundtable discussion

Language: English

Presenters:

National Skills Council & Arts Council Malta

What are the current available career opportunities in the arts, and where do we envisage them heading in the future? Which areas within the Cultural and Creative Sector have experienced growth, and how has education kept abreast of these unprecedented developments? How does commoning influence the development of future careers?

Participants will have the opportunity to engage in a participatory roundtable discussion with industry professionals to collectively explore these questions, emerging careers, and the evolving landscape of opportunities in the arts.

VALLETTA LIVEABILITY AND THE UNCOMMON

Format: Seminar

Language: Bilingual - Maltese & English

Presenters:

Graziella Vella & Valerie Visanich - Culture Venture

How are Valletta's communities, shared spaces and the city's cultural fabric impacted by the current wave of changes brought on by various factors? How are the social and cultural resources held in common by the communities in Valletta and the threats to these resources impacting their quality of life? The contribution sheds light on ongoing research using a mixed methodology including ethnographic research and Artificial Intelligence (AI) monitoring.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

FRIDAY, 25TH OCTOBER 2024

THE SESSIONS WERE SELECTED FOLLOWING AN OPEN PUBLIC CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

COOPERATIVES AND COMMONING: EMPOWERING TRANSFORMATION IN ARTS AND CULTURE

Format: Case studies interactive presentation

Language: Bilingual - Maltese & English

Presenter:

Claudio Farrugia - Malta Co-operative Federation

This contribution examines the opportunities that cooperatives and commoning practices offer within the artistic and cultural arena. Being democratic and principled businesses that are people-centred, rather than investor-centred, cooperatives can promote equity, and can be ideal as a vehicle that can improve the socio-economic status of creatives. The presentation conveys thought-provoking ideas that can be the basis for eventual action applicable to the local Maltese context.

CULTURAL SPACES: ENABLING MORE AVAILABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE ENGAGEMENT

Format: Thematic forum

Language: Bilingual - Maltese & English

Presenters:

Marcon Borg Caruana; Andrew Borg Wirth - Office of the Archbishop's Delegate for Culture

Space is an essential enabler for the proliferation of the cultural ecosystem - however, space goes beyond simply the physical. Space is time, empathy, understanding, friction, dialogue, and even conflict. This forum will present two case studies that both aim to make cultural spaces more accessible. One case study will focus on the initial and experimental steps of the Office of the Archbishop's Delegate for Culture, as it heads into a period of institutional renewal, allowing the office to be informed by and bring about change from the outside. The other case study will explore how digital tools can innovatively enhance the availability, accessibility and affordability of cultural spaces and infrastructure, providing actionable recommendations for cultural managers and policymakers.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

FRIDAY, 25TH OCTOBER 2024

THE SESSIONS WERE SELECTED FOLLOWING AN OPEN PUBLIC CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

REPRESENTATION, LEADERSHIP AND DIS/ABILITY IN THE PERFORMING ARTS IN MALTA

Format: Thematic forum
Language: English

Presenters:

Angela Bettoni; Tyrone Grima;
Ilona Baldacchino and Jo Butterworth -
Opening Doors Association

This forum will examine the significance and potential of inclusive, collaborative practices, as an emerging approach towards further developing the representation and leadership skills of artists with disabilities in the performing arts, with a view to opening pathways to further development of their own artistic practice and progression in leadership roles. Participants will be invited to provide feedback on the feasibility of recommendations on what is needed to further restructure society that celebrates people with disabilities in Malta and increases their opportunities for professional work in the performing arts.

USING CREATIVE THINKING METHODS FOR MORE COMPREHENSIVE DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Format: Workshop
Language: English

Presenter: Christine Xuereb Seidu

The workshop proposes to implement the practice of using different creative thinking methods that seek a range of perspectives, solve problems and make decisions based on the experience of the artistic and cultural sector. Following the explanation of the different thinking methods, participants will work in groups to tackle some of the problems they deal with in their day-to-day working life, and explore decision making approaches, to come up with a solution proposal.



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FOR ANY QUERIES, PLEASE CONTACT

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