

## CURATORIAL STATEMENT

### *Insulaphilia*

Atlantis, Utopia, Robinson Crusoe's island: throughout recorded history, islands have been considered the antithesis to the mainland, but French philosopher Gilles Deleuze proposes islands as containing the intensity of the world itself. The possibility of an island is always the possibility of a world.

maltabiennale.art, happening in 2024, is conceived as a Mediterranean biennale that intends to investigate insular thinking, able to see the island not as a postcard utopia but as a delimitation that produces learning and encounters.

Far from being something pure, the island is always a principle of composition and invention. Located in the centre of the Mediterranean, the island of Malta is an ideal observatory to question current issues in the area and to imagine new possible futures alongside the artists' vision. Location is the immediate identifier of any isolated land mass; Malta's maritime lore dates back centuries, and its crucial role throughout history has been as a strategic crossroads in the Mediterranean.

Malta is adept at transformation, as a crossing of arrival and departure; as a nation-state, the Maltese identity emerges from centuries of colonisation. Indelibly linked to the various seafaring cultures that have dominated and declined through the region, Malta's natural harbours have provided shelter, refuge and trading outposts to all who sought to settle, conquer, and reign – from the Phoenicians; the Romans; the Byzantines; the Arabs; the Normans; the Order of St. John; the French; and finally, the British.

Malta's identity is hewn from stone, with each civilisation leaving its mark in the form of megalithic temples, ancient baths, catacombs, complex fortifications, baroque grandeur, army barracks, and dockyards. Malta's capital, Valletta, is an ideal creation of the late Renaissance, with its uniform urban plan inspired by neo-platonic principles, and is a protected UNESCO World International Heritage city.

maltabiennale.art seeks to delve into the concept of identity in a multiple and plural dimension, where the encounter and exchange with other cultures is its cornerstone, along with a dutiful and painful awareness of the trauma of colonisation.

Public space is to be investigated in the conflicting nature of the planning of underlying memories in the political contingencies that have traversed the Euro-Mediterranean geographic and social territory, marking and marching militarised borders and territories.

maltabiennale.art aims to engage a diverse demographic, claiming public spaces with arresting interventions, with the scope of providing a key for the public to discover the

complex of works and discourse, to be programmed over the course of two months in the spring of 2024.

A participatory configuration of invisible networks across the Mediterranean will connect the East to the West and the North to the South to stimulate exchange, vision and rereadings of the nomadic and traditional geographies and identities within the region.

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