

THE MEDITERRANEAN PEACE DONKEY

Gozo and Mdina, MALTA

Gozo - 15 January-28 February 2016

Mdina - 13 November 2015 – 7 January 2016

Curator: Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler

Sculptor: Dr. Reda Abdel Rahman

An exhibition of 21 life-sized fiberglass Maltese donkeys painted by noted Gozitan, Maltese, Egyptian and Western artists symbolizing the need for peace between the Middle East and West

Introduction

The **Mediterranean Peace Donkey** project is a strategic public arts initiative that focuses on the critical importance of building harmony between the Middle East and West by creatively communicating a message about “peace and compassion” toward the “other”.

The Mediterranean region, unlike any other in the world, with its 21 countries, represents both historically and contemporarily an intercultural bridge between the East and West. There has never been a more important time for the peoples of the Mediterranean countries to unite and stand together for peace in the region and globally. This unique art exhibition is a crucial example that people everywhere can participate and work together towards harmony, understanding and peace, both historically and contemporarily, representing an intercultural bridge between the East and West.

Within the Mediterranean, the country of Malta is a symbolic and historic icon of East-West interaction, both culturally and religiously. While today a member of the European Union, over its history the island has been ruled by a succession of Eastern and Western powers; Phoenicians, Romans, Moorish, Normans, Sicilians, Habsburg Spain, Knights of St. John, French and British.

The Maltese language illustrates this profoundly. Maltese is the only Semitic language in the European Union. The language descended from the now defunct Sicilian-Arabic dialect. Having a Semitic base, the language has a Siculo-Italian influence with French and English additions.

The Mediterranean Peace Donkey is an artistic expression by 21 noted visual artists from different cultural and religious backgrounds communicating a message about the importance of living in “peace and with compassion” towards the “other”.

The Mediterranean Peace Donkey exhibition is held within Malta in two venues where the East-West nature of the Mediterranean is so clearly represented; on the island of Gozo (at the Ta' Pinu National Shrine) and in the ancient city of Mdina, Malta (as part of the Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennial).

Strategically using the famous and rare Maltese donkey as a symbol for peace and compassion, 21 life-sized fiberglass “Maltese” donkeys have been produced by CARAVAN to be painted/decorated by 21 premier and emerging Maltese, Gozitan, Egyptian and Western artists: a donkey for each of the 21 Mediterranean nations.

The Mediterranean Peace Donkey Project follows in the footsteps of both the widely successful 2013 CARAVAN public art donkey initiative in Cairo, Egypt and London, which was seen by over 120,000 people, and also of an international approach to public art that has featured painted animals.

2013 "Peace and Compassion" Egyptian Donkeys at St. Paul's Cathedral, London



The Symbolism of the Maltese Donkey (Hmar Malti)



The Maltese Donkey

The form for the life-size "Maltese" fiberglass donkeys is based on the celebrated and endangered Maltese donkey, which has great symbolism. Through these Mediterranean Peace Donkeys we are attempting to focus international attention on four critical needs represented by the symbolism of the Maltese donkey.

1-The donkey is an **interfaith symbol** as it represents “peace and compassion” in the primary religions (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) and cultures of the Middle East and West. Examples are numerous, such as both Jesus and the second Muslim caliph, Omar Ibn El Kattab, each riding donkeys when they entered Jerusalem. This therefore highlights the importance of peace, harmony and tolerance between faiths. The painted “Mediterranean Peace Donkeys” serve as “Encounter Points” to help to change negative stereotypes of the “other,” encouraging intercultural and interreligious friendships.

2-The Maltese donkey has **historic symbolism for East-West relations**. Four of these Maltese donkeys were sent by the Marquis de Lafayette of France to George Washington in 1786 (soon to be the first President of the United States of America) as a gift from the Mediterranean to the West. Hence the Maltese donkey is in many ways an historic “East-West symbol,” hence these Mediterranean Peace Donkeys speak powerfully to today’s need of creating respect, developing understanding and encouraging friendship between the Middle East and West.

3-The donkey is seen throughout the Mediterranean as a “beast of burden” for the poor and is therefore a **humanitarian symbol** that raises awareness about the difficult conditions and challenges facing working donkeys in the Middle East region. Our aim in this exhibition is to draw global attention to donkeys, raising their status from exploited animals to ones that should be treasured, and play an essential role in local economies. More specifically, CARAVAN is partnering with The Donkey Sanctuary, the global leaders in the field of donkey welfare, to highlight the plight of donkeys caught up in human conflict throughout the Middle East.

4-The donkey is a means of journeying, and therefore is also a **symbol of the thousands of migrants and refugees** passing through the Mediterranean region trying to reach to Europe, fleeing conflict or economic hardship in their own countries, and their desperate need for humanitarian assistance.

The Artistic Creation of “The Maltese Donkeys”

For The Mediterranean Peace Donkey project, a Maltese donkey was sculpted by the premier Egyptian artist Dr. Reda Abdel Rahman (who also sculpted the mold for the Egyptian donkey used in CARAVAN’s 2013 exhibition). In Egypt a mold was fashioned from this sculpture and shipped to Malta and then reproduced in fiberglass forms.



“Maltese Peace Donkey” form
(unpainted)

First two Maltese Donkeys being made (unpainted)



Participating Artists

The 21 artists selected for The Mediterranean Peace Donkey project include women and men, from premier contemporary artists to emerging younger artists from both Malta, Gozo, Egypt and the West. A variety of artistic mediums are used to illustrate the donkeys. Also, symbolically, the artists come from the three primary monotheistic faith backgrounds common in the Middle East and West.

Curator

PAUL-GORDON CHANDLER is the Founder and President of CARAVAN. An author, interfaith advocate, arts patron, social entrepreneur and a U.S Episcopal priest, who grew up in Muslim West Africa, he has lived and worked extensively throughout the Islamic world in leadership roles within faith-based publishing, relief and development agencies and churches. Most recently, he served as the rector of the Church of St John the Baptist-Maadi in Cairo (2003-2013). He has curated exhibitions on Trafalgar Square in London, and at St. Paul's Cathedral-London, Egypt's Museum of Modern Art, Washington D.C.'s National Cathedral, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, and St. Martin's in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, London.

Sculptor

Reda Abdel Rahman: Born in Ismailia, Egypt and having studied at the University of Minya at the College of Fine Arts, Reda Abdel Rahman is one of Egypt's leading contemporary artists. Enjoying a prolific and international career in the Arts, his artistic career has taken him around the world, from Latin America to Europe. He has also focused on encouraging emerging Egyptian artists and promoting the Egyptian art scene. He has been integral to the formation of internationally recognized events such as the Luxor Painting Symposium and the formation of the annual Aswan Sculpture Symposium. He has also led the Fustat workshops in Old Cairo that bring together a range of artists from around the Middle East. Reda was an important founding artist in the CARAVAN arts initiative and is also an ongoing participant artist in the CARAVAN exhibitions, seeking, as a Muslim, to use the Arts as a means to build bridges between the Middle East and West. Reda was the sculptor of the acclaimed Egyptian donkey used for the 2013 CARAVAN "In Peace and Compassion" public art initiative in Cairo and London.

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MEDITERRANEAN PEACE DONKEY GOZO

15 JANUARY- 28 FEBRUARY 2016

An exhibition of 21 life-sized fiberglass Maltese donkeys painted by noted Gozitan, Maltese, Egyptian and Western artists symbolizing the need for peace between East and West



Ta' Pinu Road, Għarb, Gozo - Malta
Tel. +356 2155 6187

Hall Opening Hours: 9.00am-5.00pm Daily

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MEDITERRANEAN PEACE DONKEY

An exhibition of 21 life sized 'Maltese' fiberglass donkeys painted by Maltese and Mediterranean artists symbolizing the need for peace between East and West.



Sculpted by Reda Abdel Rahman



artwork by Reda Abdel Rahman

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OPENING NIGHT
13 NOVEMBER 20h00
MDINA CATHEDRAL

www.mdinabiennale.org

www.oncaravan.org



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Program Partners and Sponsors

Integral to the implementation of The Mediterranean Peace Donkey project is a focus on partnership. CARAVAN's primary partners and sponsors are The Donkey Sanctuary, APS Bank, Ta' Pinu National Shrine, Gozo Culture & Information Office and United Religions Initiative (URI).



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