

Spazju Kreattiv: Programming and documenting the performing arts within Malta's national centre for creativity

300-word statement by Toni Sant

Malta's National Centre for Creativity at St James Cavalier in Valletta was established by the Government of Malta in 2000. For the first decade or so, it served primarily as a receiving house for contemporary theatre productions and visual arts exhibitions, with music events and an arthouse cinema making the environment a veritable arts centre in the heart of Malta's capital city. My engagement as its artistic director in 2014, was intended to address the need for a more cohesive programme structured around a strategic vision. This included the need to establish a systematic way to document the organisation's productions.

I approached my remit with a clear research question: **how does Malta's national centre for creativity develop a culture of active documentation and how can the artistic direction make significant use of this in the organisation's programming?**

The main aim of this approach is to ensure reference points for further practical engagement with works produced within the organisation's programme, while establishing a method for documenting further projects beyond the initial stage of the exercise under my artistic direction. In other words, a way to facilitate impact at organisational level through the method set forth by the research project while also providing a model for others to follow.

In consultation with the board of trustees at Fondazzjoni Ċentru għall-Kreattività, the quango that runs Malta's national centre for creativity, we embarked on a rebranding exercise in an attempt to establish a clearer identity for the organisation and in the process gave creative projects associated with it a sense of belonging to a strategic vision. The strategic vision revolved around three basic concepts, meant to be overarching yet fluid beacons for all aspects of the programme: identity, diversity, and legacy.

This approach was applied to as much as possible of the programming from the 2015/16 season onward. Special attention was given to a number of projects in the performing arts, some of which are the subject of this portfolio. This was achieved through oral history sessions, performances, and exhibitions.