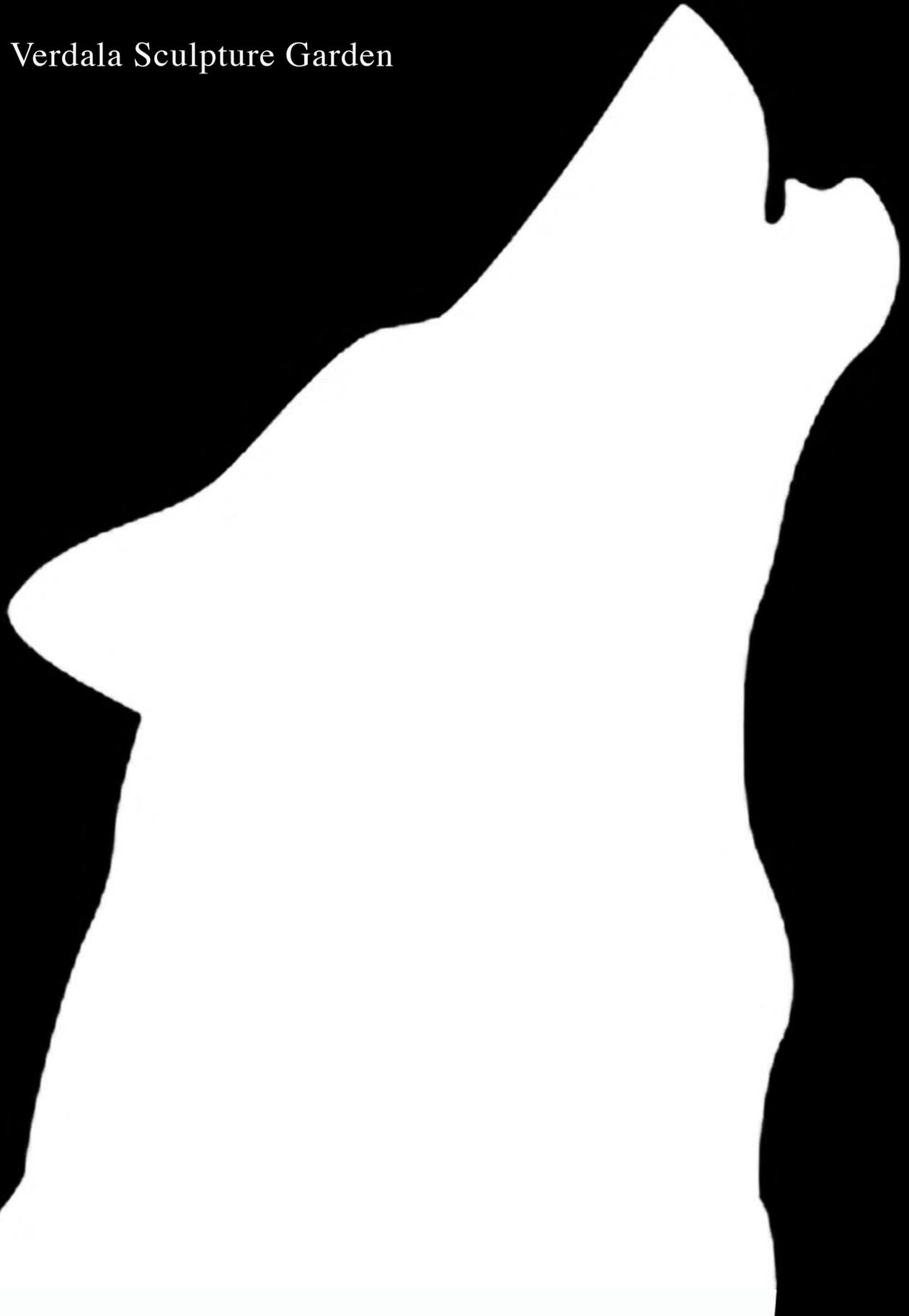


Spirit of the Wolf

Norbert Francis Attard

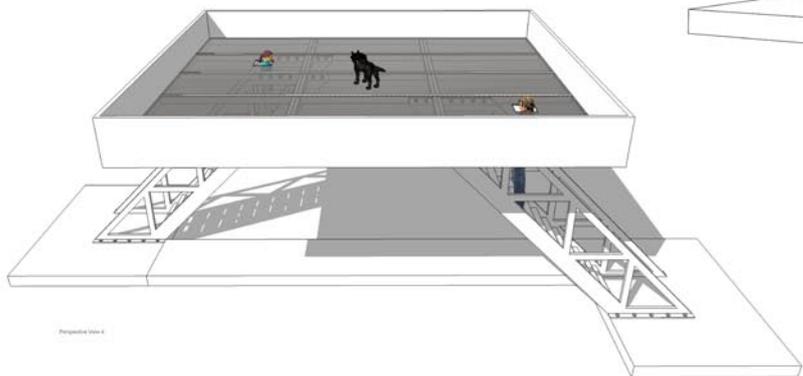
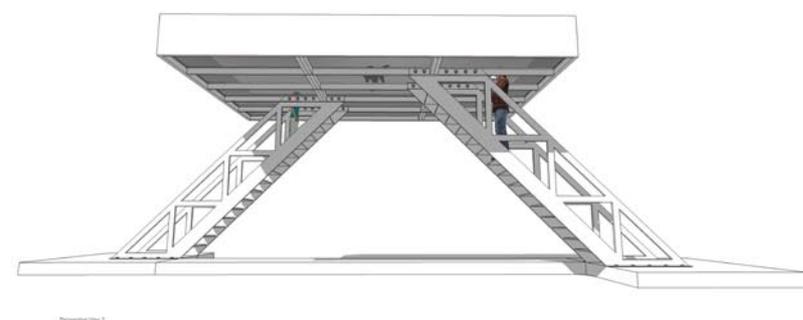
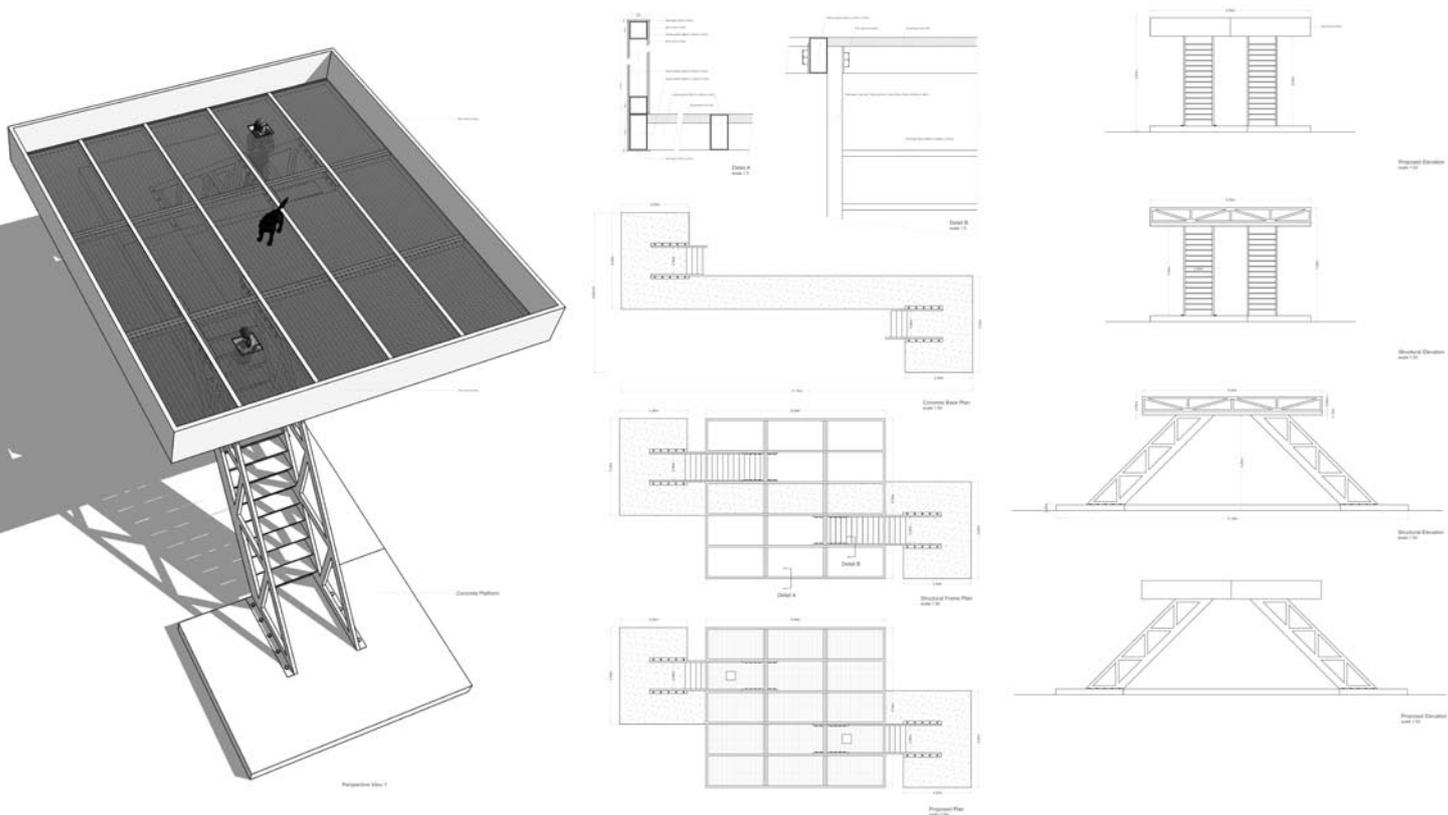
Verdala Sculpture Garden





SPIRIT OF THE WOLF

A rectangular steel structure is raised on two diagonal staircases, which the viewer must climb in order to peak through the opening in the rectangular space. The viewer then encounters a seemingly infinite visual landscape, since the perimeter of the rectangle is lined with mirrors. The exterior of the rectangular perimeter is likewise framed with a reflective surface, to mirror the surrounding natural environment abundantly filled with trees, a feature which strongly defines the function and aesthetic of the site. Atop the structure is a sculpture of a howling wolf. The viewer can picture themselves amongst the multitudinous reflections of the wolf and the infinite space rendered by the mirrors







SPIRIT OF THE WOLF ASSEMBLY OF STEEL STRUCTURE IN WORKSHOP AT GUDJA AND ON SITE AT VERDALA SCULPTURE GARDEN















The portrayal of the wolf in cultural history has been a paradoxical one, with the polarisation of the animal's character traits alluding to admirable values, and its image vilified by its wild demeanour. In fact, the representation of the wolf as developed over time has rendered the animal symbolically dichotomous; good and evil, positive and negative, spiritual and physical. Some legends and fairy tales have conveyed the threatening stereotypical illustration of the 'big bad wolf', with Adolph Hitler himself appropriating the image and consequently overshadowing the venerable aspects that the wolf possesses. Other narratives have depicted wolves as nurturing creatures with a reverent sensibility, such as the myth of the female wolf who nursed Romulus and Remus.

Above all these attributable oppositions, however, is the wolf's loyalty towards its family, and its simultaneous regard for freedom and individuality. The concept of the 'lone wolf' belies the tenet of Rome's initiation parable, yet these two idiosyncrasies are fundamental to the personality of this noble creature, and thus opposites are united within the wolf's natural instinct.

The gesture which represents this inherent contradiction is the wolf's howl, since this low-pitched call is both a collective action and one which allows wolves to identify each other and to reassemble into a pack if separated. This latter feature makes the wolf a spirit animal representative of deep faith and profound understanding, befitting to those who are capable of leading, and therefore an apt symbolic statement for Grand Master Hughues Loubenx de Verdalle, with the wolf being a hallmark on Verdalle's coat of arms. A statue of a wolf used to stand atop a column in Valletta, a vehement proclamation of Verdalle's motif.

At Verdala's Palace in Buskett, Norbert Francis Attard will memorialise Verdalle and his family's wolf symbolism with an interactive installation piece. A rectangular steel structure will be raised on two diagonal staircases, which the viewer must climb in order to peak through the opening in the rectangular space. The viewer then encounters a seemingly infinite visual landscape, since the perimeter of the rectangle is lined with mirrors. The exterior of the rectangular perimeter is likewise framed with a reflective surface, to mirror the surrounding natural environment abundantly filled with trees, a feature which strongly defines the function and aesthetic of the palace. Atop the structure is a sculpture of a howling wolf. The viewer can picture themselves amongst the multitudinous reflections of the wolf and the infinite space rendered by the mirrors. At Verdala Palace, the howling wolf now calls out for his benefactor, and for the rest of his pack.

NICOLA PETRONI

Art History Graduate, University of London, UK







ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Like many of my past site-specific works, Spirit of the Wolf is conceptually and physically inextricably linked to the context of the site on which it is constructed. In this particular case, the physical location is a specifically chosen space within the woods surrounding Verdala Palace. The conceptual aspect is derived from the image of the wolf which adorns the coat of arms of Grandmaster Hughues Loubenx de Verdalle and the biographical history of this Grandmaster.

According to historical accounts, de Verdalle was a gentleman with a peace loving disposition, an enlightened figure and patron of the arts. The wolf, in many ways, symbolizes the spirit of the Grandmaster; an intelligent and faithful personality, yet also a powerful leader and an exemplary man. Of great inspirational significance was the essence of the wolf as an independent, insightful and loyal being and the existence of said qualities in the Grandmaster. It was this connection between man and nature, and their symbiotic emulation of each other, which compelled me to realize this project within de Verdalle's estate.

I designed the installation as physical representation of this dynamic relationship between the Grandmaster and the wolf. Having diverse visual perceptions within the same work was important to portraying the conceptual basis of the project. The experience of the construction from ground level is different from that of the upper space. I added the flight of steps as a means of communication between these two levels, but also as a means to render the work interactive. The spectator must climb these stairs to encounter the sculpture of the wolf displayed in the middle of the space above. It was vital for this to be an interactive piece since this is what I felt that the wolf is doing when he calls out to the rest of the pack; gathering his friends and family to a safe location. The spectator's participation reflects this communication.







Mirrors were added to increase the communicative aspect of the work even further. The outside mirror reflects the natural environment around it, making the structure look smaller than it really is but also making it look like some kind of spirit as part of the structure dissolves into its surroundings. The structure is integrated with nature whilst the space above engenders an intimate encounter between the spectator, the wolf and the reflected setting. The internal mirrors function as indefinite multipliers of the wolf and the head of the spectator. Communication with others and even with oneself becomes an integral part of the experience. Without such communication we stand to the lose the social sensibility which binds us together.e the social sensibility which binds us together.

NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD

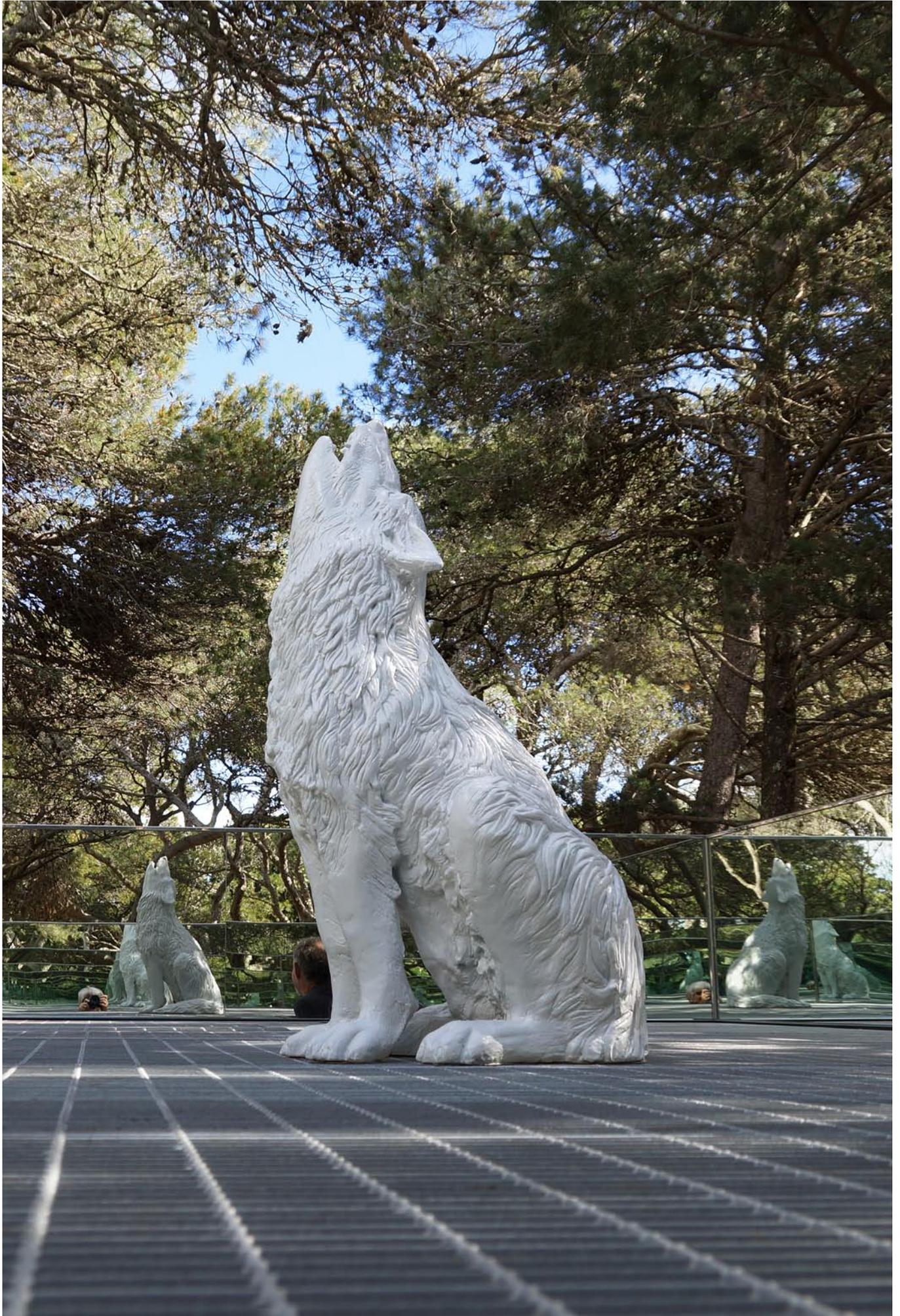


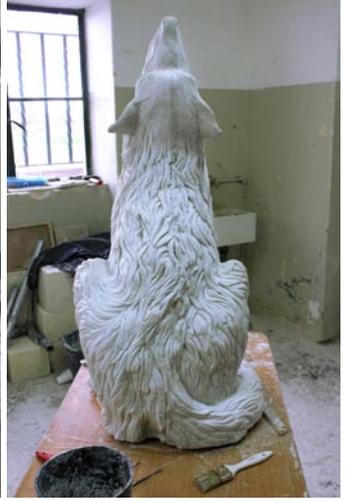
THE MAKING OF THE WOLF

The sculpture of the wolf was produced in collaboration with the sculpture department at the MCAST Institute of Art and Design in Mosta, Malta. Stephen Vella, director of the Institute, agreed that this would be a good learning opportunity for the students involved. He introduced me to the Head of the Sculpture Department, Stefan Priehyba who together with two of his students, Ayla Bailey and Luca Azzopardi was responsible for the making of the wolf sculpture.

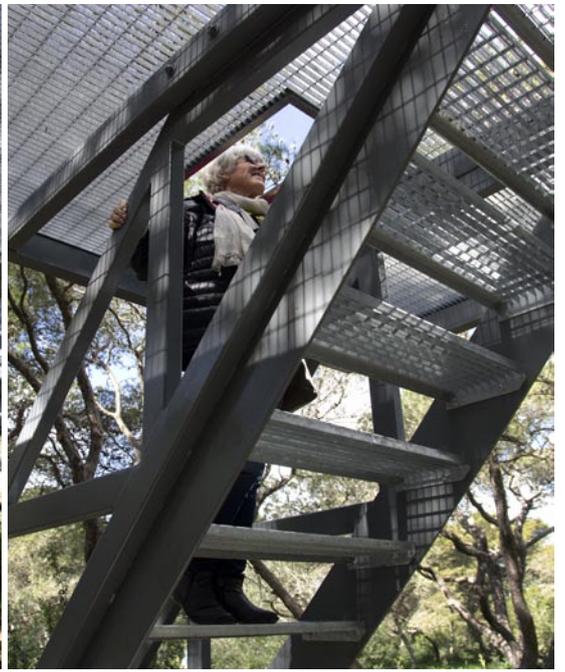
We had several meetings prior to starting work on the sculpture. Participation was achieved through these discussions which in turn, helped me to develop my initial ideas. It was during this dialogical stage that I decided to represent a howling wolf because it represented an integral aspect of the wolf's behaviour.

This part of the project was directed by myself and discussions were held at every stage to help guide all those involved throughout the entire process. Stefan Priehyba's used his invaluable expertise to instruct and direct the students during each phase of the sculpture's creation. His personal involvement was both instructional and inspiring to my project. All three made a lasting contribution to the final design of the sculpture.



























SPIRIT OF THE WOLF

Interactive Sculpture by Norbert Francis Attard

Concrete base, painted galvanized steel structure, galvanized floor grill, stainless steel sections, galvanized stairs, 6mm mirror, fibreglass sculpture of wolf sprayed white

Commissioned and inaugurated on 4th March 2014 by H.E the President of Malta, Dr. George Abela
Verdala Sculpture Garden, Verdala Palace, Buskett, Limits of Rabat, Malta, 2014

Project managed by Richard Dimech

Architect of Project: Kurt Mejlaq, JB Architects, Mosta, Malta

Financial controller: Joseph Church

Concrete base built in situ by Archimed Projects, Birkirkara, Malta

Construction of steel structure by Andrew Vassallo Limited, Gudja, Malta

Director: Andrew Vassallo

Managed by Adrian Vassallo

Company Designer: Noel Bonello

Foreman: Frederick Vassallo

Metal workers: Daniel Axisa, Mark Borg, Mohan Mano, Madou Zampou

Assistants: Carmel Vassallo, Chris Vassallo, Omar Moctar, Sabienne D'Amato,

Daniel D'Amato, Kaloyan Getsov, Joseph Cardona, Simon Azzopardi.

Galvanising in Sicily by Francis Caruana Limited, Xewkija, Gozo. Malta

Mirror supplied by Float Glass, Marsa, Malta

Sculpture of wolf in collaboration with sculpture department, MCAST, Mosta, Malta

Special thanks to Stephen Vella, director of Art and Design Institute, Mosta, Malta

Head of Sculpture Department: Stefan Priehyba

Students: Ayla Bailey and Luca Azzopardi and assisted by Kimberly Deguara

Wolf Sculpture sprayed white by Saviour Gauci, Victoria, Gozo, Malta

Technical drawings and 3-d views: Alex Spiteri

Thanks to Marisa Vella and Formosa Engineering, Xewkija, Gozo, Malta

Text by Nikki Petroni



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