



MALTESE FALCON
NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD

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GILDED FIBREGLASS SCULPTURE, PHOTOGRAPH, SAND
FLOW, CURATED BY CHRIS BRIFFA ARCHITECTS
S&S BATHROOMS SHOWROOM, LIJA, MALTA, 2011

ART PATRONS CARLOS AND MELANIE ZERAFA AND ANDRE CAMILLERI
PROJECT MANAGEMENT BY ANNALIESE MUSCAT AZZOPARDI
CONCERTO BATHTUB AND WASH HAND BASIN BY CLAUDIO NARDI FOR TOSCOQUATTRO
NEUTRA MIXERS BY GUILIO GIANTURCO FOR CEA
CARDOSO 3D TILES BY LEA
SOFT ARCHITECTURE LIGHTING BY FLOS.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT ON TRANSPARENT PERSPEX BY CREATIVE WORKS, QORMI, MALTA.
SCULPTURE MODELING BY MICHAEL STROUD.
MOULD AND FIBREGLASS CAST BY CLIVE BUSUTTIL, VITTORIOSA, MALTA.
GILDING BY MARIO AND RUBEN CAMILLERI CAUCHI, GHARB, GOZO.

At FLOW, the conventional showroom layout was revisited and innovatively redefined. A number of bathing environments presented in a detached, self-contained niche; and each niche will house an evocative intervention by a local artist.

Essentially, FLOW is more hybrid art-gallery than commercial outlet: an idea that has been developing in the minds of its designers and owners for the past three years. Each environment was processed by a three-stage design exercise. The architects first developed a concept for each brand, fostering different themes: industrial, retro, minimalist, traditionalist, organic, surreal, morbid and others which aren’t that straightforward to define.

The second stage involved selecting commercial materials and products and meticulously assembling them in each niche, under idyllic lighting. Finally, thirteen different individuals were approached to revisit the spaces and add their own meaning, interpretation and media to each space.

KEYWORDS
ARCHITECTURE
INSTALLATION
COLOUR
LIGHT
METAPHOR
BIOGRAPHY
SCULPTURE
HISTORY
READY-MADE
MATERIAL
WATER
FILM NOIR
DESIGN
SEA





The bathroom is all about surface. The fixtures, wall coverings, and lighting reflect our use of the room to clean and modify our own dermal surfaces. We scrub, polish, shave, and moisturize ourselves in order to present our most confident looking and feeling selves. A properly accented bathroom becomes at some point a reflection of both our outermost selves refreshed and ready for whatever the day brings and our innermost private selves at the point of washing ourselves clean of that days ups and downs. The choice to place the Golden Man of Malta and the gold leafed Maltese Falcon in a bathroom appointed in black and gold is at first unsettlingly humorous. Who wants a gold encrusted human peacock with the volume turned all the way up on his fashion meter and a gilded fiberglass falcon looming over their bathtub?

Look deeper, beyond the tank top with a golden dragon running up stripes, beyond the knuckles ensconced in the aurum of status, beyond the hollow gleam of precious metal. The Golden Man is reflected in the room itself. Both of their surfaces are covered in black and gold, two colors that represent two distinct emotional and spiritual depths and directions. The gravity of black and the elevatory possibilities embodied by gold coupled with the sands of time on the floor representing our common human body provide a meditation point for the occupant of the bathroom at his or her most private moment. The visual relationship between the Golden Man and the falcon is one of warning, things may not be what they seem, things may be strictly empty beneath the surface. Yet the image of the man points in a different direction, our surfaces, our clothing and hair, our adornments, all the things that originate in the bathrooms and dressing rooms of our spaces, empower us in our daily lives. If we look good we feel good. The Golden Man is proof that what “good” looks like comes truly from within.

The room presented here is a Baroque space. Loud gold and somber black, the sand reminding us of peaceful moments on the beach, but also hinting at the transience of those moments and of all of our moments, blips in the course of time really. This room speaks to the very essence of surface as symbol, something the Baroque era held to be of key importance. The island of Malta is covered in Baroque architecture and its chiaroscuro of brilliant ores and deep shadows is embodied not only in the Golden Man but also in the representation of the Maltese Falcon. The version of the falcon that adorns the tub here is cast in fiberglass and gilded with gold leaf alluding to the allegorical nature of empty brilliance. In reality the falcon was a living bird paid in tribute every year to the Charles V King of Spain by the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. The knights, in a way, are embodied in this fiberglass rendition of the falcon. Proud and noble outwardly, yet dastardly and spiritually bankrupt inside, the order became a cruel parody of its original self. So, why the falcon on the tub's edge? What is it a harbinger of? What does it remind us of? One gets the sense that the falcon, more in tune with Dashiell Hammet's mythological version than with the real historical one, calls the occupant of the bathroom to be mindful of artifice. When symbolism and inferred meaning is taken beyond logical and responsible conclusion it can be dangerous and manipulative. It reminds us to be aware of our shells, to be responsible for the first impressions that we give off, for if we project a misplaced image it could spell disaster for us for some time to come. The artist's use of the falcon is at once playful and grave. He conflates this footnote in the history of his home with the mythopoetic representation of the Maltese Falcon as a means of humorously admonishing potential users of a space such as this one to be careful what they do here.

ROBERT PETERSON





MALTESE FALCON I & II
Photograph, two sizes: 100cm x 80cm and 50cm x 40cm. Edition 5 + 1 A.P. each size,



MALTESE FALCON
Sculpture, fibreglass gilded in 23 carat gold,
36cm x 18cm, Edition 5 + 1A.P., 2011









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