

# MICRONATION I & II

NORBERT FRANCIS ATTARD



The architectural design of the Royal Opera House/ Pjazza Teatru Rjal in Valletta has been controversial ever since its conception in the 19th century. A symbol of colonial Britain amidst the Italianate, Catholic Baroque of the Order, the Theatre was a representative of the stylistic changes ushered in by the new power structures determining Maltese history. In the 21st century, national conflict arose over Renzo Piano's progressive contemporary designs and their impact within the urban setting of a predominantly Baroque city. Two significant periods of recent Maltese history are deeply manifested within the building's construction; the years of British rule and the subsequent birth of an independent nation. These are set in dialectical relationship with the architecture of the Knights, creating a disharmony within the stylistic duality of the Theatre itself and the traditional Baroque environs of Valletta.



For Norbert Francis Attard, the dichotomy of harmony and disharmony is fundamental to the Malta Design Week 2014 theme, MICRONATION. A micronation, Attard elicits, is a counteraction to the norms of the social order, demanding something new and diverse to the status quo. The disharmony from the conventional which is generated through the founding of a micronation may itself be harmonious. The detachment itself may not result in chaos, but the discourse around it engenders antagonism between members of the nation and those of the micronation.

The controversy surrounding the stylistic dissonance embedded within the history of the Opera House/ New Theatre alludes to the harmony/disharmony binary essential to the occurrence of micronations. The element of isolation resulting from the establishment of a micronation is also formally represented at the Theatre, according to Attard. Two large plinths at the front left and right corners of the building, which are part of the original structure, remain dissociated from the whole design, and thus provide the ideal foundations on which Attard could render his project. Atop these plinths, the artist proposes to construct sculptures radically different in design to that of the Theatre and of Valletta, with influences from Modernist architecture and design, engendering a stylistic rupture from prior architectural traditions. Attard is to challenge himself to create a harmony within the disharmony, besides from the harmony of the singular constructions.

Such an eclectic display of architectural history and the corresponding factors between all the parts attempts to question beauty and public perceptions towards it according to the social context of the viewer.

NIKKI PETRONI

Art history graduate, University of London, UK



# MICRONATION SERIES I

Hard Stone from Gozo

Malta Design Week 2014

Pjazza Teatru Rjal, Valletta, Malta



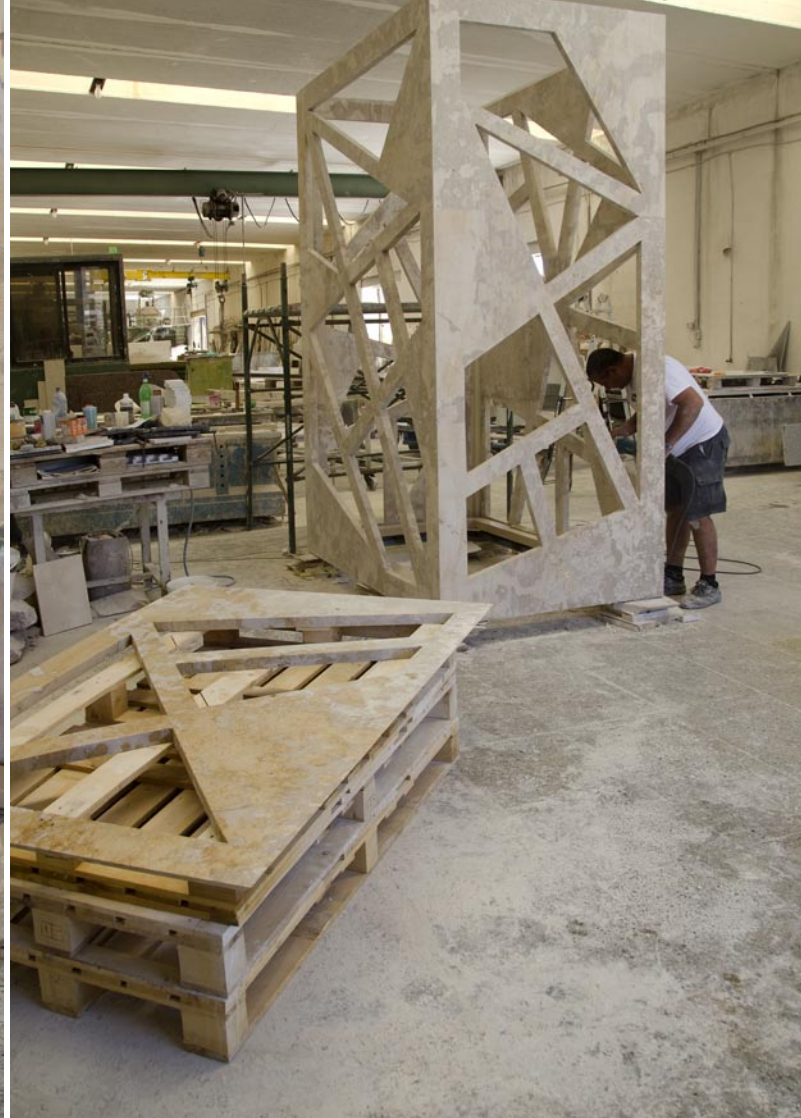














BOV Bank of Valletta

JOHN BUGEJA  
WATCH DEALER

STERLING







## **MICRONATION I**

Sculpture by Norbert Francis Attard

Hard stone from Gozo, hard stone chippings for flooring  
Malta Design Week, Pjazza Teatru Rjal, Malta, 2014

Construction by Halmann Vella, Mosta, Malta

Directors: Mark Vella and Simon Vella

Working drawings by Mark-Vincent Schembri

Workers:

Kevin Muscat

Manoel Coleiro

Charles muscat

Henry Meli

Jurgen Gauci

Ciarlo Falzon

Edward Camilleri

Brian spiteri

Jean Paul muscat

Manoel Lia

Eamon Gixti

Matthew Bezzina

Rashi Musah





# MICRONATION SERIES II

Galvanized and stainless steel floor grills,  
metal hollow sections, concrete slab  
and mosaic concrete columns

Malta Design Week 2014

Pjazza Teatru Rjal, Valletta, Malta





















## **MICRONATION II**

Sculpture by Norbert Francis Attard

Galvanized and stainless steel floor grills, metal hollow sections,  
concrete slab and mosaic concrete columns

Malta Design Week, Pjazza Teatru Rjal, Malta, 2014

Construction by Andrew Vassallo Limited, Gudja, Malta

Director: Andrew Vassallo

Managed by Adrian Vassallo

Foreman: Frederick Vassallo

Metal workers: Mohan Mano, Daniel D'Amato

Assistants: Carmel Vassallo, Chris Vassallo, Omar Moctar,  
Kaloyan Getsov, Joseph Cardona, Simon Azzopardi.

Floor grills supplied by Andrew Vassallo Ltd, Gudja, Malta

Marble chippings supplied by Halmann Vella, Mosta, Malta



Micronation Series I  
Hard Stone from Gozo  
Sponsored by Halmann Vella



Micronation Series II  
Concrete, metal grills and sections  
Sponsored by Andrew Vassallo

