

Art



Teresa Sciberras's triptych *Poi piove dentro* in paint and collage on wooden panels.

The world, our oyster

Charlene Vella

The metropolitan region that now makes up Brussels has in the past years become the home of a number of Maltese who move there mainly for the career opportunities it provides.

It is now also the permanent home of six Maltese artworks that have just been acquired for the European Parliament's (EP) art collection.

The six works are among the 79 exhibits from artists of the member states that joined the EU in 2004, and among the 500 art works in the collection of the EP to date.

To mark their acquisition and those of other new works of art from two other member states, namely Slovenia and Slovakia, an exhibition and official inauguration was held on April 19 at the EP.

This is the fourth exhibition marking the acquisition of new works from the member states of the 2004 EU enlargement. The three states collectively exhibited 19 paintings and a sculpture.

The speeches and literature that accompanied this exhibition stressed the EU's cultural diversity as one of its most important assets, and emphasised how it enriches Europe's cultural identity.

The exhibition eloquently testifies to the benefits of such a cultural admixture.

The Maltese paintings stand out. Grouped together to the left of the exhibition space, they all displayed painterly qualities and a diversity of subjects, ranging from portraiture to landscape, from meticulous interior scenes, to outwardly abstracts laden with paint and expression, from the factual to the more imaginative.

The artists represent different facets of Malta's contemporary art scene. The choice is a happy one, and includes, in addition to more established artists, the young and talented Teresa Sciberras, who stood out as the youngest exhibiting artists from the three EU states.

"The brightest and most expressive work is Pawl Carbonaro's *Tormento Rosso*"

Her work *Poi piove dentro*, a triptych in paint and collage on wooden panels, was already known to me from the BoV exhibition entitled *Relocation* last June, which I had reviewed. This is a notable work inspired by the *Divina Commedia* that admirably captures Dante's mystical experience in visual terms.

Kenneth Zammit Tabona's *View from the Window* is small in dimensions, but big in personality.

Together with Celia Borg Caradona's *Vittoriosa Quayside*, it provides a glimpse of a contemporary view of Malta, although an idealised one in the former.

The brightest and most expressive work is Pawl Carbonaro's *Tormento Rosso*, with the evocative use of red tones and vigorous forms that burst out of the centre of the canvas. James Vella Clark's *Waves in a Storm* is similarly laden with expression and is a highly personal interpretation of the Maltese landscape, particularly the shoreline.

Madeleine Gera's *Portrait of Alexi with a Glass* shows good painterly and expressive qualities, and brings out the best characteristics of the artist. It is Gera true to form.

In comparison to the Slovak and Slovenian exhibits, where bright, fluorescent colours abound, the Maltese appear more restrained and, perhaps, more traditional, but they are in no way less creative, and the result of hard work and a laborious process. They do credit to the Maltese contemporary art scene.

It is encouraging to see the effort the EU places on buying art works, and the importance, time and space devoted to art and culture.

It is to the artists' credit that their work will be displayed in some of the EU's most important offices.

It is finally thanks to Malta's accession to the EU that such new international opportunities have opened up to our artists. More than ever before, the world is our oyster, or at least, the EU is.