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## A joint adventure in exposure

### Eleven new artists bare their soul for the first time

Marika Azzopardi



Eleven in all. All spanking new artists baring their souls to public scrutiny for the very first time - that is the stuff New Faces 2008 is made of. Into its fourth successive year, this annual exhibition attracts wide attention mainly for its proven merits of eking out hidden talent. The criteria for participation are simple - the participants must have potential, be new to exhibiting and unknown. Age, social status or personality do not come into the picture.

Painting, sculpture, photography and more come into play here. Some works indicate well-groomed talent, others are more crude, and a good handful promise genius. And there is something to titillate the tastes of every sort of artistic bud.

Starting in reverse order, working my way from the upper floor down, I see the only abstract collection on the floor - belonging to Benjamin Whitney. A series of drip painting in the abstract expressionist style prove excellent control of the paint brush and a palette that is vibrant, intense and actively alive through the use of enamels and oils. Large canvases, impressive quality, decided action.

Next door is Joseph Ellul Vincenti with terracotta, stoneware and cloisonné works. For a neo artist, he shows great perspicacity in utilising the mediums to their best, bringing forth tongue-in-cheek images of land, sea and comic human abstractions. The works are small but pull the viewer in to peer closer and discover surprising elements of texture and colour.

Husband and wife are placed as neighbours in the show and rightly so – one walks into the next hall to view Margaret Ellul Vincenti's canvases. A painter of watercolours and mixed media, this lady is all about delicacy and a kindred spirit that speaks through the works. Beautiful Roses is more than a mere title to a work that is symbolic of all her diffused colours, exquisite floral exercises and then, surprisingly, a set of cartoons – a comic take on Jose Benlliure y Gil's Altar Boys. Godwin Muscat Azzopardi is the first to produce a typical "new

artist syndrome", providing an exciting miscellany of works, namely pastels and watercolours. Homogeneity is thrown out of the window but this makes for a more exciting discovery of paintings that stand out as do Maltese Colours II, Market Scene and Downpour. Rarely large, his paintings range from unfussy "young" compositions to broader and heavier colour schemes that indicate a rare perception of textural richness.

Another delicate artistic hand belongs to Christina Acar. I am pleasantly surprised that she openly acknowledges credit where credit is due since a trio of her watercolours of floral bouquets are adaptations of works by well-known foreign artists. And her rendering is exemplary as in Poppies, of careful study and studied attention to detail. An Evening in the Desert stands out typical of her own inspirations - excellent in perspective, miniscule but intense.

More watercolours and another lady - Martina Salomone. Very neat, outright and open works that range from Il-Menqa on to still life. Small works but incisive as in the case of a very succulent Pumpkin and more Flowers. This artist may be new to the public but her hand is definitely well trained in the verse of watercolouring.

One of the grandest surprises is Sergio Muscat whose medium is photographic prints. These works make one look closely at a sort of trompe l'oeil that speaks volumes - talent, innovation, perspicacity and verve. Colour images and monochrome come alive as in Mediterranean Atmosphere, Scars, Nebula or Spellbound. Certainly a show stopper if ever there was one.

Landscapes, landscapes, landscapes - Louis Mifsud is the first and only exhibitor who dedicates two whole walls to Malta's noblest yet simplest landmarks. This he does meticulously through watercolours and extreme correctness. Architecture comes through a photorealism that is precise to the last detail and indicates a firm intent to remain true to vernacular impressions.

Everything is minute around the works of Gulay Esinduy who utilises pastels, oils and watercolours for an intense collection of works.

The selection is multi-fold - from landscapes, to still life, to Japonaiserie of near perfection. Certainly she provides a different take on the still life colour scheme as in her tingling depiction of multi-character bottles.

The last two ladies in the New Faces 2008 exhibition vie with each other for prima donna status. First comes Sarah Calleja. Her works are crudely divided in four – a collection of decided charcoal drawings of the human figure, a set of nudes that speak of postural virtuosity, a quintet of watercolour landscapes that could very well be confused with those by Kenneth Zammit Tabona and a triptych in acrylics whose central character makes the viewer stop dead.

And then there is Doranne Alden. There is a lot of sea and sky here whether it is acrylics, watercolours, acrylic inks or watercolour pencils. There is something about her vibrant blues that is astounding, more so for her skill at capturing the colours of the Blue Lagoon like nobody else I know has ever done. And then there is a huge still life with four pears that are about warmth and mouthwatering mellowness.

Certainly an inspiring collection, worthy of a visit and more...

• *New Faces 2008 runs at Gallery G, Villa Gourgion, 4, Sir Ugo Mifsud Street, Lija, until Tuesday. It is open today from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.*